



Maya Archaeology Reports

The Funerary Complex of Temple XX: Offering and Ritual in the Early Classic Period of Palenque

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In 1999 the Proyecto Grupo de las Cruces (Cross Group Project), a joint venture of the Pre-Columbian Art Research Institute and Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH), discovered a vaulted tomb with painted walls in a substructure of Palenque's Temple XX (Robertson 2000, 2001). From the moment of its discovery, there was a great deal of speculation about the characteristics, content, chronology, and historical significance of what seemed to be the tomb of an important personage. During the 2012 field season of the project, researchers excavated the substructure of Temple XX and revealed a funerary complex with a tripartite division composed of a central room and two small lateral rooms connected by a vestibule. Ceramics in the tomb were dated stylistically to Palenque's Motiepa phase (c. AD 350–550) (Table 1). This date from the Early Classic period (AD 250–600) was of particular interest given that, with the exception of Tomb III of Temple XVIII, all of the funerary complexes previously excavated in the civic-ceremonial core and habitational areas of Palenque dated to the Late Classic period (AD 600–900). Archaeological study of the tomb complex in the substructure of Temple XX has thus enriched our understanding of funerary customs during the period of the foundation of the dynastic lineage of Palenque in the early fifth century AD, or soon thereafter.

In this article we present details of this funerary complex on the basis of its architectural

Picota Phase	AD 200–350	Early Classic period
Motiepa Phase	AD 350–600	Early Classic period
Otolum Phase	AD 600–700	Late Classic period
Murcielagos Phase	AD 700–800	Late Classic period
Balunte Phase	AD 800–900	Late Classic period
Huipale Phase	AD 900–1000	Terminal Classic period

Table 1. Palenque ceramic phases.



Figure 1. The South Acropolis.
Map: Germán Aguilar Vázquez.

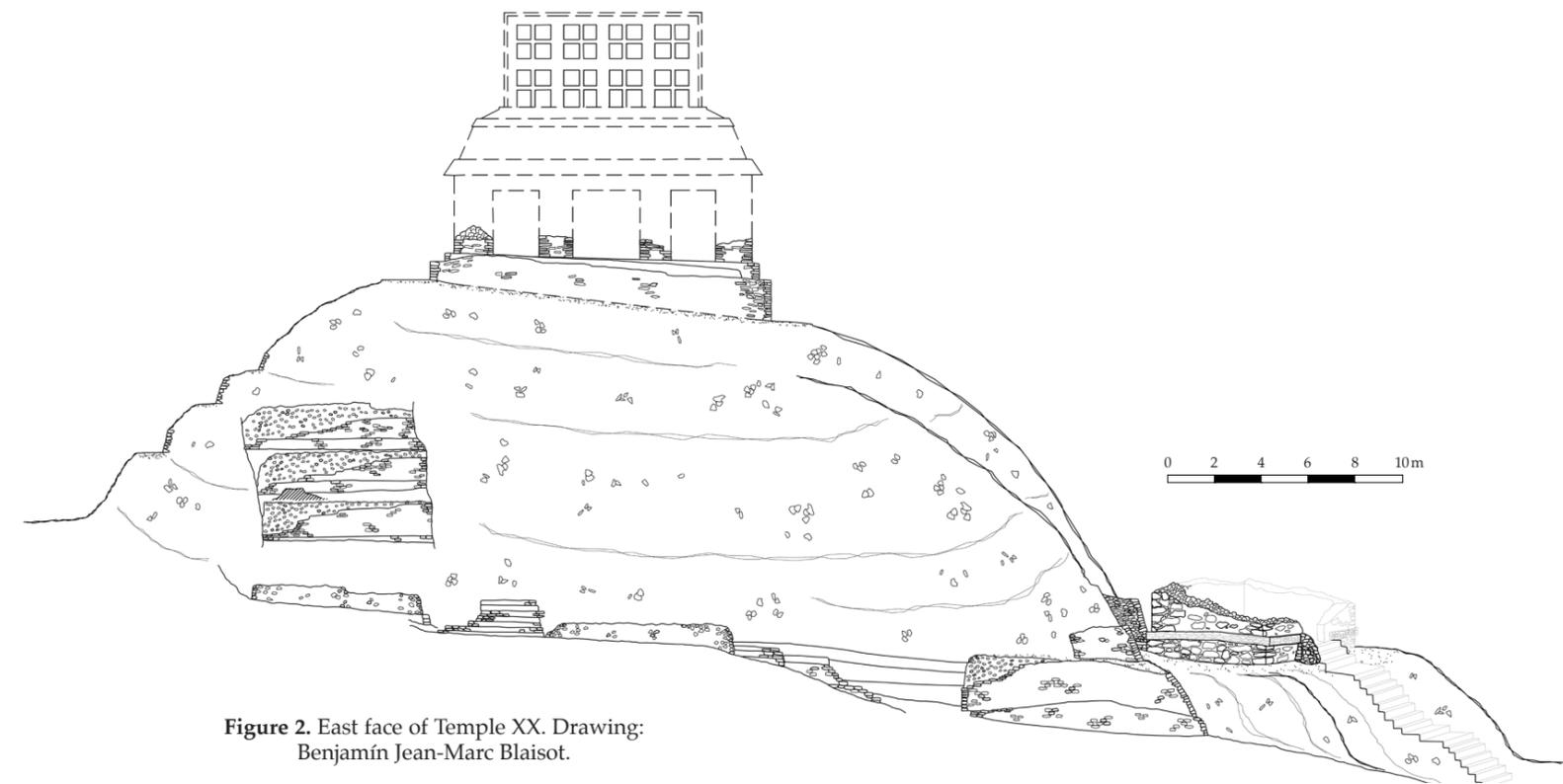


Figure 2. East face of Temple XX. Drawing:
Benjamín Jean-Marc Blaisot.

characteristics and the spatio-temporal contexts of its artifacts. With descriptive and analytic goals in mind, we use the term “funerary complex” to refer to the architectural space and to its tangible and intangible elements tied to ritualized mortuary treatment and ancestor veneration. Our analysis indicates that the complex was entered on multiple occasions before it was finally sealed and the substructure covered with fill. These repeated entrances resulted in the shifting of osteological remains and the movement of grave offerings as part of funeral ritual and ancestral veneration.

Temple XX in the Temporal Context of the South Acropolis and Palenque

Temple XX is located to the southeast of the Main Plaza in the architectural group known as the South Acropolis or South Group, immediately to the south of the Cross Group (Figure 1). Temple XX is the oldest building known in this sector, or indeed in the whole site, with a use-life lasting over 600 years. From the construction sequence and associated ceramics, we argue that the first occupation of the building occurred at some point

during the Picota phase (AD 200–350), in the form of a rectangular platform atop bedrock, but without a terraced basal platform.

During the subsequent Motiepa phase (AD 350–550), the temple’s builders created a terraced basal platform and a series of modifications to the upper part of this building. Temple XX had its most significant construction activity during the Otolum, Murcielagos, and Balunte phases (AD 600–900), a span that resulted in a terraced platform 20 m tall on its principal, eastern face (Figure 2). The superstructure acquired a layout with four pillars in a frontal gallery and a rear gallery consisting of one central and two lateral rooms. This plan mirrors the pattern of the temple-type buildings of the adjacent Cross Group (Balcells González 2007a; Marken 2007).

Other than Temple XX, the earliest buildings in the South Acropolis are the substructures of Temple XVIII and part of Temple XXII, both with evidence of Motiepa-phase remains (González Cruz and Balcells González 2014a, 2014b). Other buildings in the South Acropolis were contemporary with Temple XX only in its later construction phases. The substructure of Temple XXI has yielded Otolum materials, while the construction

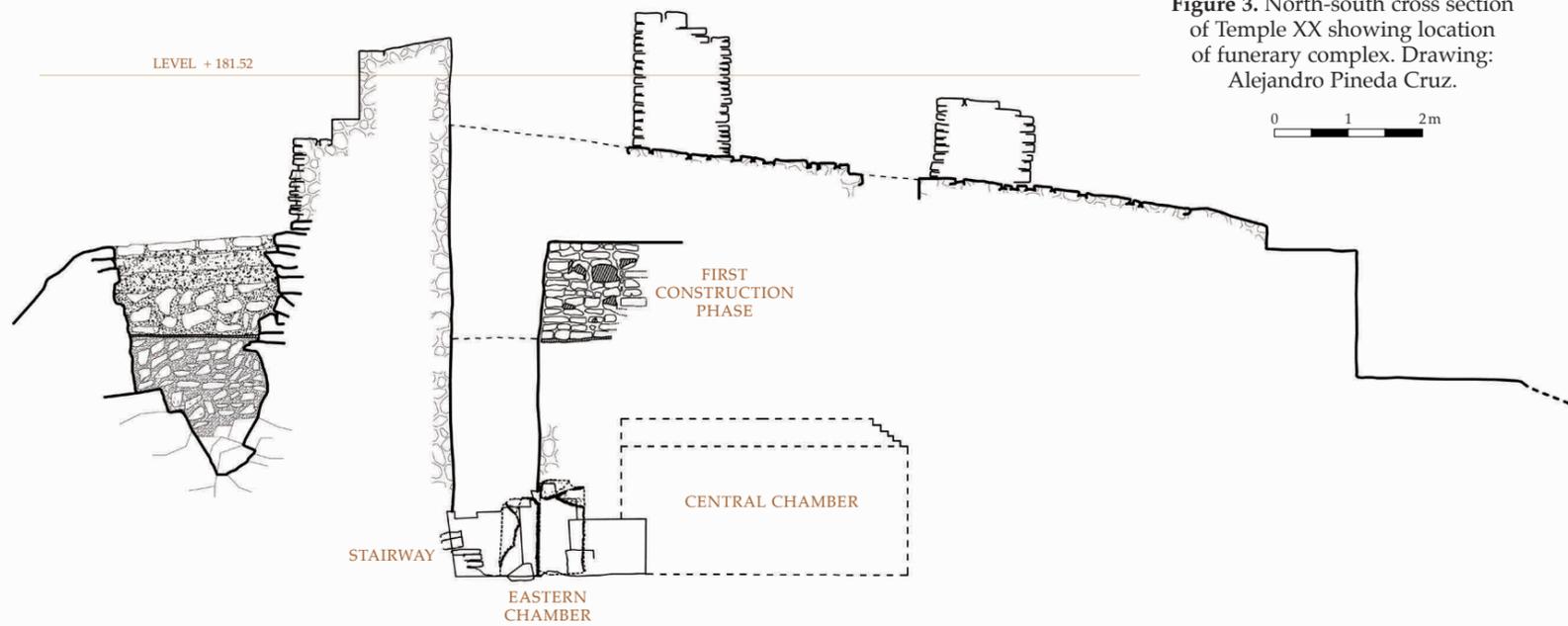


Figure 3. North-south cross section of Temple XX showing location of funerary complex. Drawing: Alejandro Pineda Cruz.

of Temples XVII and XIX appears to correspond strictly to the Murcielagos and Balunte phases. It would seem that Temple XXI was an architectural model for other constructions: during the Murcielagos phase, Palenque's builders would repeat its form in Temple XIX, if with greater dimensions. Such emulation and late construction of Temple XXI explain the absence of a substructure in Temple XIX—it was constructed *ex nihilo* (Balcells González 2007a, 2007b; González Cruz and Bernal Romero 2003a, 2003b, 2004; Straight 2003, 2007).

Outside of the South Acropolis, some monumental architecture is contemporary with Temple XX during the Motiepa phase, including the substructures of House F of the Palace, the North Group, and the central platform of Group IV (González Cruz and Balcells González 2014a; San Román Martín 2007:51). Ceramic materials from the Motiepa phase have also been found in the construction fill of the first platform beneath the Temple of the Inscriptions, as well as Groups XVI, I, and C, the ballcourt, and in various areas on the western side of the site where the earliest occupation occurs, dating to the Late Preclassic (González Cruz and Balcells González 2014a; López Bravo et al. 2004; San Román Martín 2007:54). Temple XX was contemporary with the substructure of Temple XIII during the subsequent Otolum phase, and with Group B and the buildings of the Cross Group during the Murcielagos and Balunte phases (González Cruz

1994a, 1994b, 2011; López Bravo 2000).

Architecture of the Funerary Complex: The Vestibule and Central Chamber

The funerary complex of Temple XX was built within the interior space of the first construction phase of the building, corresponding to the later part of the Picota phase. However, the tomb itself postdates this initial construction, reflecting the need to provide it with a stable foundation and surrounding matrix (Figure 3). During almost all of the construction sequence of Temple XX, the varied technological and stylistic modifications of the basal platform and superstructure resulted in progressive instability for superimposed buildings. The builders of the tomb probably decided to locate the funerary complex below the crudest part of the earliest construction phase, just atop bedrock and a little more than five meters below the floor of the latest construction phase, because they believed it to be the most stable, enduring, and symbolically significant location. Indeed, the funerary complex is more structurally sound than subsequent building episodes, which evince displacement and collapse of the east and north sides of parts of the sub- and superstructures of Temple XX.

Excavations into the substructure revealed a vestibule with a blocked doorway. This originally provided access to the central

funerary chamber. On the south side of the vestibule, two stairs originally provided access to the space from above. At some point these stairs were covered and blocked off by a wall that supports the final construction phase of Temple XX. The vestibule measures 1.50 m by 1.80 m and forms an antechamber with a stuccoed floor connecting to three rooms: a central and two side chambers, located on the east and west of the central space (Figures 4–6). The entrances to the side chambers were sealed with large stone slabs placed on edge.

The entrance to the central room was sealed by a double wall. The first of these was made of mortared limestone, inclined south toward the vestibule and away from the central chamber. The second consisted of two rectangular stone slabs wrapped in textile with a covering of stucco.

Once this second wall was removed it was possible to directly access the central tomb chamber. This central room is vaulted and follows along a principal north-south access. It has a rectangular floor plan measuring 2.85 m long by 1.52 m wide, and has a maximum height of 1.80 m at the top of the vault (Figure 7). The walls and the stepped portions of the vault above the springline were plastered with smooth stucco. The stucco was then painted with a reddish-orange background, the pigments for which were composed of whitewash, hematite, cinnabar, and organic binders. Over this background, artists applied painted imagery, the pigments of which consisted of lime, cinnabar, hematite, and organic binders, the precise composition of which are still being identified.

Because much of the painted mural has collapsed, it is no longer

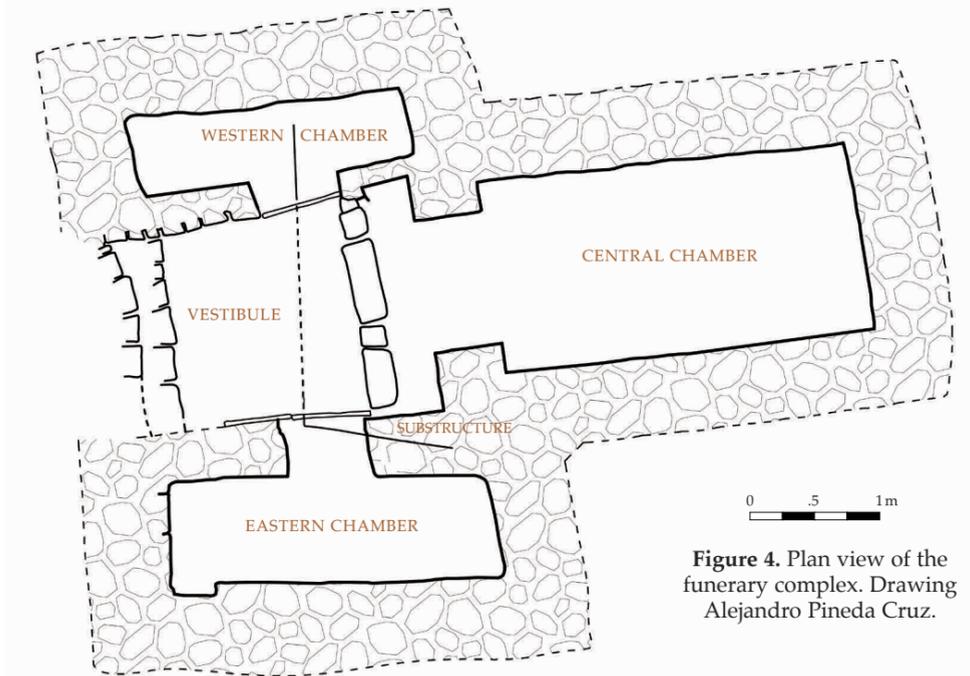


Figure 4. Plan view of the funerary complex. Drawing: Alejandro Pineda Cruz.

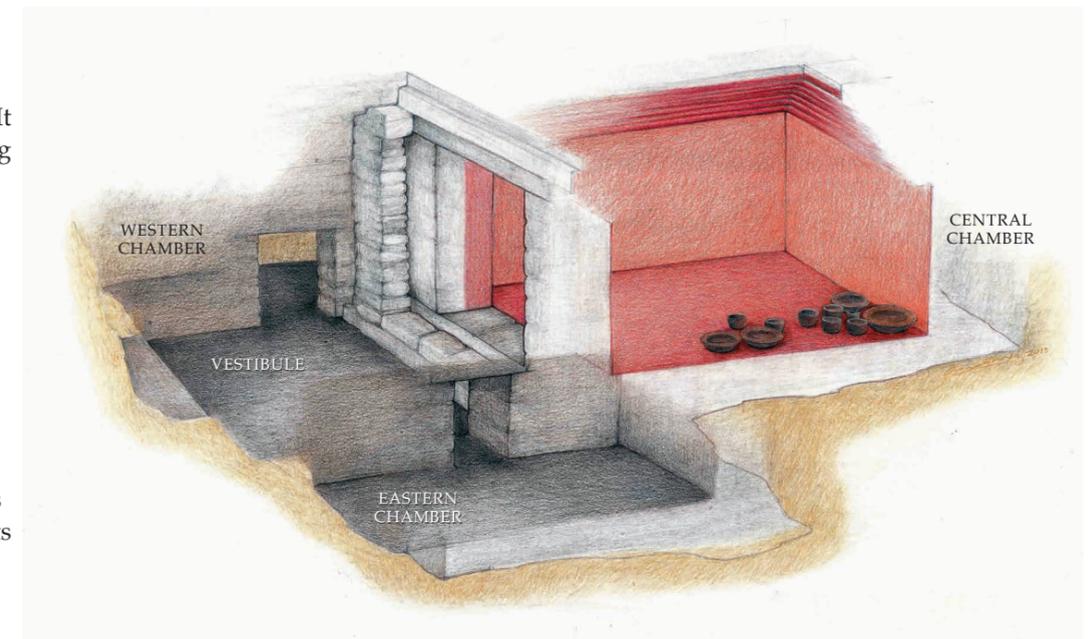


Figure 5. Reconstruction and perspective view of the funerary complex. Drawing: Constantino Armendáriz Ballesteros.



Figure 6. Vestibule and chambers of the funerary complex. Photo: Jaime Ovalle y Manuel Agüero.



Figure 7. Central room and ceramic funerary assemblage. Photo: Carlos García Hernández.



Figure 8. East wall of the central room. Photo: Samuel Galicia Gleason.



Figure 9. West wall of the central room. Photo: Samuel Galicia Gleason.



Figure 10. North wall of the central room. Photo: Samuel Galicia Gleason.



possible to fully understand the original iconographic program. However, there are nine male anthropomorphic figures, four on the east wall and five on the west wall. Each of these nine personages wears a kilt and loincloth held up by a waist belt with masks. They also bear pectorals and a plumed headdress with a chin strap. Each figure carries a staff in his right hand and a shield with a distinct center-piece in his left, and looks towards the north (Figures 8 and 9). A tenth person with possible zoomorphic features was painted on the north wall and was obviously the visual focus of the other nine individuals. The deterioration of the mural work makes identification of the tenth figure impossible, though what appears to us to be a deer ear is evident as a component of the head or headdress of the figure (Figure 10). We interpret these figures as the Nine Lords of the Night, an iconographic program repeated during the Otulum phase (AD 600–700) in the sculptural program of the funerary room of the Temple of the Inscriptions, which houses the remains of the ruler K'inich Janaab Pakal I.

Architecture of the Funerary Complex: Eastern and Western Chambers

The room accessed to the east of the vestibule also has a rectangular plan, with simpler architecture than the central chamber. The eastern chamber is constructed predominantly with masonry walls of square limestone blocks and roofed with a vault formed of stone slabs. However, the eastern and southern walls are in part delimited by modified bedrock. This room is smaller than the central chamber, measuring 2.40 m long by .87 m wide, with a height of .75 m. The eastern chamber was found in a state of near-complete ruin, the result of collapse in construction fill of the building covering this funerary complex. The side room to the west of the vestibule also has a rectangular plan, measuring 2.15 m long and .65 m wide, with a principal axis running north-south. As in the eastern chamber, the western and southern walls of the western chamber are formed by outcrops of clayey limestone bedrock, roofed with flat capstones.

Given the great abundance of artifacts in the chambers of the funerary complex, the excavation, registration, and sampling of the complex was controlled vertically with 1 cm levels and horizontally in 10 cm quadrants across the floor. Once excavated, all levels were assigned stratigraphic layers, the analysis of which allows depositional processes to be explained. A variety of instrumental analyses of the stratigraphic deposits and artifacts were conducted, including Raman spectroscopy, X-ray diffraction, chromatography, textural and chemicals analysis of soils, petrography, and scanning electron microscopy. Results of some analyses are discussed below.

The Central Room or “Room of the Paintings”

Above the ritual deposit on the floor of the central chamber was a dense concentration of gravel, formed by fragments of the facing stones and stucco, as well as scales of the mural painting dislodged from the wall (Figure 11). Excavations uncovered 70 beads, four earspools, five disks, and three small jade and serpentine celts. There were also 80 tesserae of shell and jadeite from two masks, one apparently associated with a belt and another that originally

Figure 11. Central chamber and eastern chamber. Photo: Carlos García Hernández.



Figure 12. Floor of the central room and offering. Photo: Samuel Galicia Gleason.

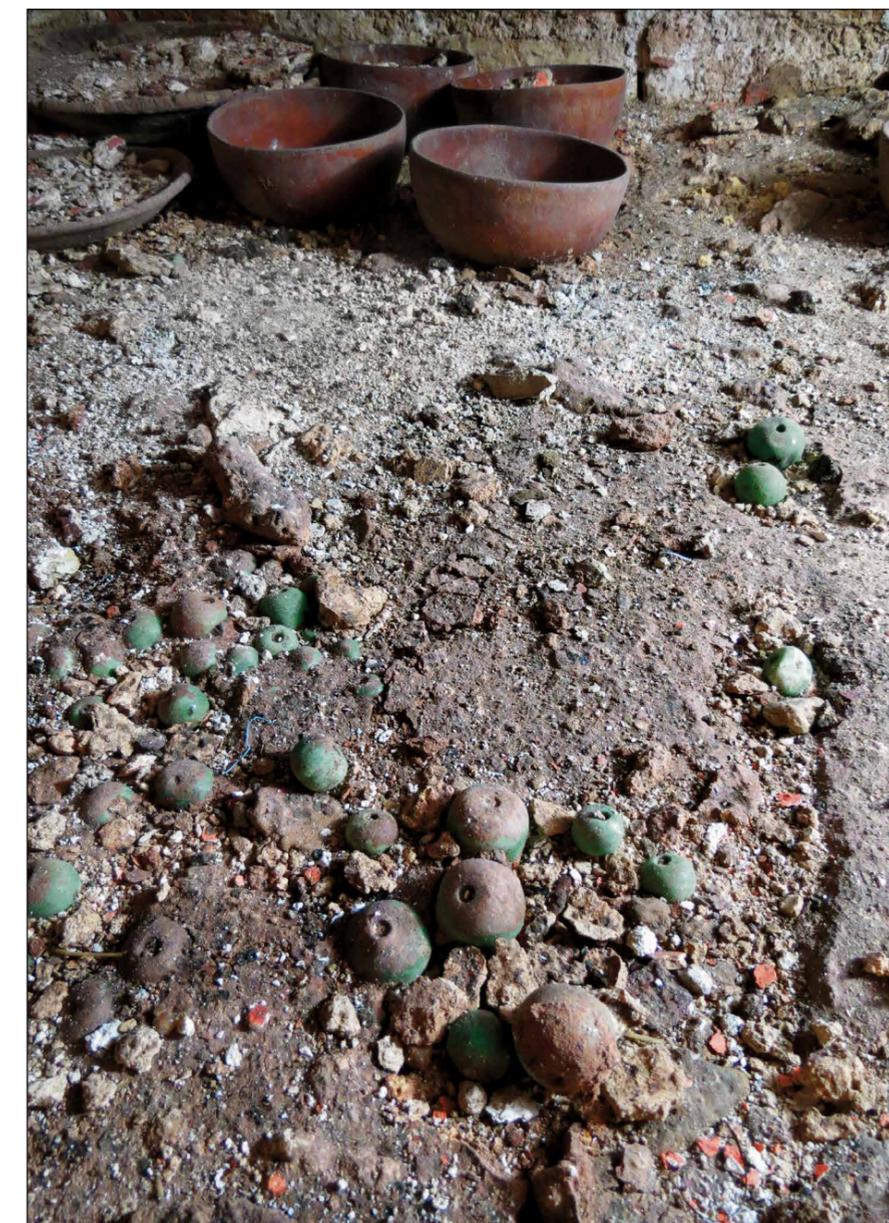


Figure 13. Detail of offering and ceramic assemblage on the floor of the central room. Photo: Carlos García Hernández.



Figure 14. Detail of jade and shell tesserae from the masks. Photo: Carlos García Hernández.

constituted part of a headdress. Other materials included a fragmentary hematite mirror, three fragments of obsidian prismatic blades, and the remnants of a textile, either an offering in itself or the wrapping for a mortuary bundle.

Eleven vessels in the chamber can be dated stylistically to the Motiepa phase. Among the 11, four were plates, one was a spouted bowl, and six were basins (Figures 12–16). All of these vessels are bichrome- or polychrome-decorated, with base slips of orange or red. In addition, 13 fragments of human bone

were recovered, among them a tooth, portions of long bones, and two fragments possibly from a mandible. The artifacts and osteological remains were found distributed through a 10 cm stratigraphic column characterized by horizontal and vertical discontinuities, with different thicknesses and densities of organic and inorganic remains in each layer. In some areas, four strata were identified; in others, up to eight were documented (Figure 17).

The discontinuities can be explained primarily as the result



Figure 15. Ceramics of the funerary assemblage. Photo: Carlos García Hernández.

of rodents and human reentry of the chamber on multiple occasions before it was finally sealed. For example, in Level 1, flakes of the painted mural were found below four of the six basins of the funerary vessels. In contrast, all of the plates were deposited and found directly on the floor or on a thin cap of rubble laying atop the floor towards the east. If one accepts the premise that all the funerary vessels correspond to the same time period (the Motiepa phase), these data suggest a change in the original distribution of some of the vessels, probably from acts of

ritual reentry.

More evidence of anthropogenic perturbation of the original deposit comes from the deposition of the mask tesserae (Figure 14). Although there was a dense concentration of these materials on the south side of the room adjacent to the door, others were found dispersed throughout the chamber, with no obvious articulations. They were distributed discontinuously throughout the stratigraphic column, together with, or below, ceramic vessels, and at the level of the floor or in direct contact

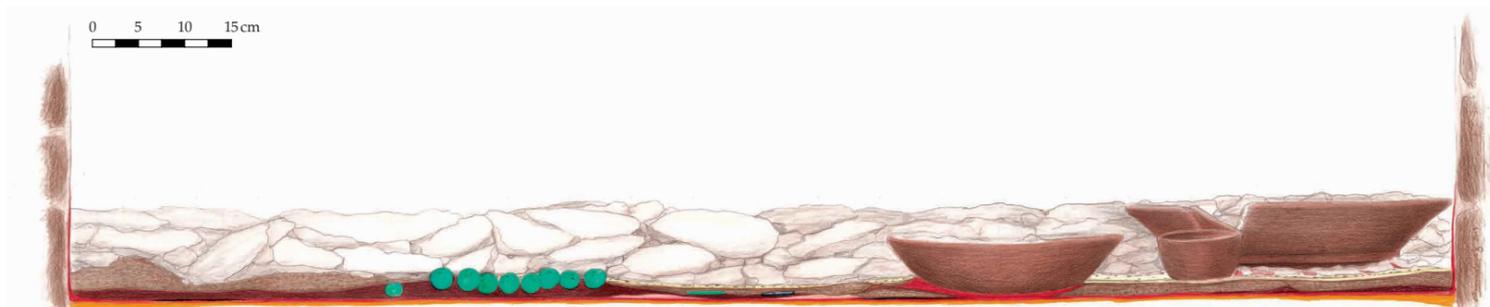


Figure 17. Cross section of the deposit on the floor of the central chamber. Drawing: Constantino Armendáriz Ballesteros.

with rubble collapsed from the uppermost layer. Taphonomic processes thus include: (1) initial construction of the architectural complex, completion of the mural painting, and primary deposition of body and offerings; (2) deterioration of the mural and its collapse over offerings on the floor; (3) one or more reentry events, leading to the movement of human remains and grave furnishings; (4) final closure of the chamber and filling-in of the substructure; (5) collapse of the finished mural and the roof over the final location of the burial goods and osteological remains; (6) rodent activity in the chamber.

Vestibule and Lateral Rooms

Eight stratigraphic layers were excavated to bedrock in the vestibule. In these were found 130 coral beads, two amazonite beads, three teeth, and five fragments of human phalanges. The beads appear to have formed a necklace or bracelet and were found in the order in which they were strung. Some of the beads were even found stuck, also in order, on the mud plaster of the wall. After removing the stone slab blocking entrance to the eastern chamber (Figures 18–20), it was evident that material from roof collapse covered the floor. Below this stratum lay a concentration of human bones, as well as beads of amazonite, jade, and coral (Figures 21–23). In total, the excavations distinguished three large stratigraphic layers: the collapse of the roof over the deposit on the floor, the floor of the chamber itself, and the floor's gravel ballast atop the bedrock. As in the central chamber, the context was highly disturbed by rodents and roof collapse.

The materials most affected were the human bones, all in a clayey matrix at the base of the chamber. Because of capstone fall and later exposure of the bones to water, stucco, and mortar, the bones fragmented into a poor state of preservation. Contact with the fallen mortar from the roof and water filtering through the deposit also affected the coral beads, which were found in conglomerations of two to six beads. In total, 7104 coral beads

were found including 6731 complete beads, 423 fragments, and 50 concretions. The total number of lithic pieces included 1320 amazonite beads (1286 complete, the rest fragmented), three amazonite earspools (two complete, one fragmented), and two fragments of obsidian prismatic blades. At first it seemed that all pieces of greenstone were of jade and turquoise. However, Raman spectroscopy revealed that the beads as well as the earspools consisted of amazonite ($KAlSi_3O_8$), a mineral not found in Chiapas. Amazonite is, however, present in the northern Mexican state of Chihuahua, as well as in Arizona and nearby regions of the southwestern United States.

Because the eastern chamber yielded a great quantity of archaeological materials, it appeared likely that the western chamber would follow the same pattern. This proved not to be the case: floor deposits were quite austere by comparison, with patchy, ill-preserved human remains and rodent bones. The first stratum in the western chamber consisted of the roof collapse, in a 3-cm-thick deposit composed of clayey earth, gravel, fragments of capstones, and rodent bones with mandibles. The second stratum contained a clayey matrix 10 cm thick, the excavation of which revealed human bones and a lower percentage of rodents. Human remains included molars, premolars, canines, and incisors, as well as phalanges and bones of the wrist and ankle. Three segments of long bone were found, including at least one fragment of an ulna. The remaining fragments were so deteriorated that identification was not possible. The poor state of the remains points to the conclusion that only partial bodies, perhaps in secondary context, were placed in the eastern and western chambers.

The third stratum in the western chamber was discontinuous, possibly due to anthropogenic changes, and was composed of a thin layer of stucco .50 cm thick over the level of the floor. This finished layer was intermittently broken by outcrops of the bedrock. As in the floors of the other chambers, red paint covered the finished stucco floor. In this western chamber the pigment



Figure 18. Exterior view of slab sealing eastern chamber. Photo: Jaime Ovalle and Manuel Agüero.

was concentrated in the northern and southern sides of the room, indicating removal of the plaster as a result of ancient reentry to clear out the room.

Spatiality and Offerings in the Funerary Complex

Funerary spaces at Palenque may be divided into one of four types: simple burials, cysts, crypts, and tombs. All of these may contain single or multiple interments. Human remains may be articulated in the form of a primary burial, or disarticulated so as to suggest secondary placement (González Cruz 2011:69). Some funerary chambers have been reported for Temple XVIII from the Motiepa phase. In the Temple of the Skull, Structure 3 of the

Murcielagos Group, Temple XV and XV-A, Group B, the Temple of the Cross, Group I, Group II, and the Temple of the Inscriptions, all burials date to the Otolom, Murcielagos, and Balunte phases (Ruz Lhuillier 1962; González Cruz 1994, 2011:86-90). The complex discussed here can be fitted within this typology.

The funerary complex of Temple XX shares spatial features with other Classic-period Maya sites. There is often a vaulted chamber in a central location, two side rooms or niches, offerings, and iconography or writing that alludes to rites of veneration. The configuration may vary and include the presence of a sarcophagus in the chamber and the remains of one or more accompanying burials to the sides without signs of special containers, as in the case of the Red Queen



Figure 19. Interior view of the eastern chamber. Photo: Jaime Ovalle and Manuel Agüero.

“La Reina Roja”) or the burial chamber of K’inich Janaab Pakal in the Temple of the Inscriptions (González Cruz 2011:218-219). In contrast to non-elite interments, elite burials typically have a spatial and social hierarchy of burial space, contrastive mortuary treatments and funerary chambers, distinct sets of artifacts, varied pre- and post-depositional preparation and ritual, and marked evidence of relations between supernaturals and those in the burial. No less important are extra-funerary treatments, including reentry of the tomb and re-arrangement of the grave furniture, ritual removal of objects, or sacrifice and deposition of additional objects long after (Tiesler 1999:95). While unique in their details, such patterns of tomb reentry at Palenque are in fact consistent with widespread practice in the Classic period (e.g., Buikstra et al. 2004; Chase and Chase 1996; Fitzsimmons 1998; Stuart 1998).

The placement of the funerary complex in one of the oldest buildings of the South Acropolis, within the civic-ceremonial core of Palenque, reflects its centrality and the hierarchical importance of its occupants. There are hints, too, of a triadic spatial hierarchy, in which the central chamber differs from the lateral rooms in form, size, style, and symbolism, acquiring a salience not present in other spaces nearby. Access to rare goods or materials (amazonite, jade, and hematite), esoteric knowledge and skill (witness the murals), and participation in broader religious understandings underscore the unusual importance of this burial. In a sense, the body of materials is unified by the unusual origins of these objects. With the exception of those funerary vessels manufactured locally, though stylistically close to contemporary ceramics from the Peten (see Figure 24), all offerings originate outside the Palenque region. There is



Figure 20. View of the eastern chamber from the vestibule. Photo: Jaime Ovalle and Manuel Agüero.

variation to be sure, and the rooms differ by quantity of offerings and array of primary materials.

There is localism as well. The finished elements of the central chamber focus on materials typical of an elite burial in Palenque and the Maya area: beads, discs, and tesserae of jade and shell used for necklaces, bracelets, earspools, and pectorals; tesserae of jadeite and shell that formed part of two masks; remains of a hematite mirror; obsidian blades; remains of textile that wrapped the offering bundles, and more. However, in the east chamber one type of offering predominates. These are the beads of coral and amazonite, consisting of 7000 and 1000 examples, respectively. There is also a single pair of obsidian blade fragments. Because the context of the chamber is so disturbed, and the bones so poorly preserved, we cannot say with certainty if the beads were components of bracelets, necklaces, or a pectoral. Another possibility is that, given the high number of beads, they were deposited as a loose offering rather than components of jewelry. In its deposits, the western chamber stands out, with a notable absence of beads, vessels, or any other offering. Only fragments of bone remained.

Another funerary feature of the complex is the use of a program of color and iconography that refers to the Nine Lords of the Night, imagery that centuries later would be repeated in the funerary sculpture of the Temple of the Inscriptions. Painted murals with iconography are unknown in the funerary contexts of Palenque, other than for Burial III in Temple XVIII A, also located in the South Acropolis to the front of Temple XX. From a spatial and artistic perspective, the slips of the funerary vessels are well-integrated with the mural work. The



Figure 21. Amazonite and coral beads on the floor of the eastern chamber. Photo: Jaime Ovalle and Manuel Agüero.

use of pastes and surface treatments in which the colors red and orange-red dominate was, it seems, purposefully selected to echo and emphasize the red tone of the iconography. In our view, the iconography of one of the plates depicts four scribes or painters adorned with brushes bearing red spots on their bristles (Figure 24). It is possible that these motifs refer to the painters in charge of the work, or even the identity of the main individual in the burial.

Funerary Treatments

Death can be understood as a phase within a vital cycle that begins with conception and birth, followed by learning and biocultural development, then reproduction and death. Among the Prehispanic Maya death did not represent the culmination of the cycle, but was instead a transitional phase: a symbolic continuity between vibrant life and decline was manifested in

the range of powers available to the individual at death (Tiesler 1999:85-86; Welsh 1988:1999). This does not deny the existence of inter- and intraregional differences in the conception of death as a symbolic process, in the mortuary treatment, or even in the places of deposition including domestic areas, civic-ceremonial spaces, caves, cenotes, chultuns, and others locations (Ruz Lhuillier 1991). The dead person in his or her non-corporeal state was able to achieve certain powers, such that his or her body became a relic, creating a connection with the supernatural. Because of this, exhumation and relocation of certain bones from primary to secondary deposits was not unusual.

Moreover, in Mesoamerican cosmivision the transition from death to the supernatural world required that the deceased be protected and prepared for the journey, the body and its housing equipped with various portable offerings and food, or animals sacrificed to accompany the deceased (González Cruz 2011:69).



Figure 22. Detail of coral and amazonite beads on the floor of the eastern chamber. Photo: Jaime Ovalle and Manuel Agüero.

When rulers and nobles died, they sacrificed servants to assist in this transition (Nájera 2003). For example, in the case of the Red Queen in Temple XIII of Palenque, the principal personage was placed within a sarcophagus and two people sacrificed and placed on the floor of the funerary chamber. K'inich Janaab Pakal, too, was accompanied by other individuals whose bodies were found on the threshold of the tomb. Osteological studies affirm that, in both cases, the accompanying individuals were sacrificed, an inference justified by marks on the bones signaling perimortem trauma (Cucina and Romano et al. 2004; González Cruz 2011:114-115). As with the fragmentary remains in the eastern chamber, the central chamber of Temple XX also had thirteen fragments of bones found in contexts other than their primary or secondary places of deposition. It is possible that that these came from acts of sacrifice, immolation, and later movement of the bones. Studies of these remains continues,

although their poor preservation makes analysis difficult

The consistent pattern of fragmentary skeletal remains found in both side chambers leads one to consider the absence of a complete skeleton or the movement of the remains. Such patterns are mirrored in other, later, deposits in Temple XX. In 2002 members of the Cross Group Project excavated a funerary niche located .56 m beneath the southwestern room of the southern gallery in the final superstructure of Temple XX. The cist contained 11 beads, two earspools of jadeite, and one fragment of a human molar (Balcells González 2007a). We can also point to the case of a cist located .49 m below the central room of the same southern gallery in the superstructure, which contained only scattered fragments of bone, four teeth (one with a jade inlay), a low bowl, and a cup dating to the Murcielagos phase (AD 700-750). Such movement of bones after decomposition, along with the presence of sacrifices, reflected the funerary cult of ruling



Figure 23. Detail of coral beads and fragments of bone in the eastern chamber. Photo: Jaime Ovalle and Manuel Agüero.

groups and their need to preserve dominance in this life and the next (McAnany 1993, 1995; Tiesler 1999; Welsh 1988).

Final Considerations

Until recently, it was thought that the buildings of the South Acropolis at Palenque dated solely to the Late Classic period, given that the inscriptions from Temple XVII, XIX, and XXI make reference to the reign of K'inich Ahkal Mo' Naab III (ruled AD 722–c. 736). However, ceramic analysis of materials from the substructures of Temples XX, XXI, and XXII suggests that construction activities began in the final part of the Picota phase and continued into the Motiepa phase. There was an obvious increase in construction during the Otolum phase, with the greatest bulk of construction during the Murcielagos and Balunte

periods. Nonetheless, there are shifts as well. Excepting the substructure of Temple XVIII, most of the funerary chambers in Palenque lack mural paintings, and those that do have them were constructed during the Late Classic period, during the Otolum, Murcielagos, and Balunte phases. Study of Temple XX thus yields unique, valuable information about the early funerary practices of Palenque's ruling families.

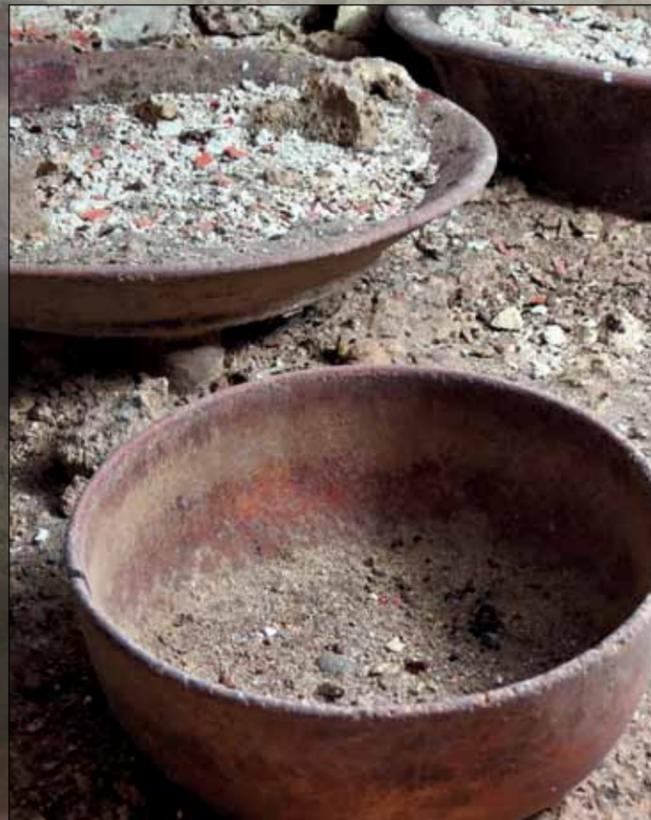
Because of its construction history and Motiepa-phase ceramics, we suggest that the funerary complex is related to some member of the governing dynasty during the Early Classic period, whether that is K'uk' Bahlam (AD 431–435), 'Casper' (AD 435–487), Butz'aj Sak Chiik (AD 487–501), or Ahkal Mo' Nahb' I (AD 501–524). One of these dignitaries was probably the main interment in the complex before subsequent acts of tomb reentry. Perhaps because of his importance, the body (or what



Figure 24. Polychrome plate from the funerary assemblage. Photo: Joshua Balcells.

was left of it) was removed for use as relics to be deposited in another location. The lack of primary human burials, the scarce osteological remains, and the presence of disturbed offerings are clear evidence that the ancient Maya reentered these chambers before they were finally sealed. The ritual of extracting the bones from their original tombs and placing them in new constructions erected by their successors had the purpose of maintaining connections with the ancestors, as well as reinforcing and legitimizing the power of the ruling

lineage through rituals of ancestor veneration. The individual who constituted the focus of the funerary complex in Temple XX was so important that the iconographic program of the central chamber was repeated at least two centuries later in the chamber of the Temple of the Inscriptions. All of the above provides solid evidence that part of the funerary ideology reproduced in the iconographic elements of the Late Classic had their roots in the funerary spaces and founding rulers of the Early Classic, as in Temple XX.



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