

The Nature of Female Rulership in the Classic Maya: ALS Burial 128

Presented to the faculty of Lycoming College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
Departmental Honors in Archaeology

by
Jazmin Jones
Lycoming College
5/07/2020

Approved by:



(Signature)



(Signature)



(Signature)



(Signature)

Royal women held a variety of positions in Classic Maya society as illustrated on carved monuments. A carved monument from Yaxchilan depicts a woman manifesting a spirit in a location associated with female divinity (Joyce 2009: 84). In this moment she represents a mediator between the earth and a cosmological realm. Women are also depicted channeling the ancestors through sacred acts of ritual bloodletting, which demonstrates their participation in ceremonial rites. Although these iconographic representations of Maya women reveal their spiritual and religious roles within society their political legacy remains unrecorded (Bell 2002). Inscriptions referring to Maya women were not as common as those mentioning male rulers, so we know little about the specific political titles they might have held. Despite this, scholars can use a gendered perspective in archaeology to understand the identity embodied by these royal women in the Classic Maya period.

Gendered archaeology can be used to understand the broader political context of Maya women. This approach allows working beyond biases to consider the ways in which Classic Maya royal women embodied political power alongside their male counterparts (Navarro-Farr et al. 2020). This approach is used to re-analyze the remains of a royal female burial identified as ALS B-128 found at the archaeological site, Altar de Sacrificios, Guatemala. The burial was excavated in the 1960s by Harvard University and was documented in detail within the original excavation report (Smith 1972); however, few interpretations were made about her identity and its greater context within the ancient Maya society despite being the largest and richest burial found at the site. In this paper, I re-analyze ALS-128 in comparison to more recently discovered and documented royal female tombs, including “The Margarita Tomb” found in Copan, Honduras and “The Red Queen” found in Palenque, Mexico. I use empirical data from all three burial contexts to interpret the embodied identity in the royal Maya women.

Background

Altar de Sacrificios is a Classic Maya settlement found in the lowlands of Guatemala. Unlike powerful economic and political centers of the Classic period, Altar de Sacrificios is a smaller secondary Maya settlement but has many characteristics of larger sites including hieroglyphic monuments, temple architecture, and funerary tombs. Burial 128, located at Altar, is a noteworthy topic to research because at the time of its discovery, it was the most elaborate burial found at the site of Altar de Sacrificios. It contains the remains of two female individuals, dozens of exotic goods, and is in one of the largest temples at the site (Smith, 1972). Excavated in the 1960s by a project run by Harvard University, the original monograph (Smith 1972) includes a detailed account of the burial goods and context, but very little has been published interpreting these findings in their wider social or political context since this descriptive report.

Archaeology and the focus of research has seen significant trend changes from the time of Harvard's excavations to contemporary times. In relation to the Harvard excavations, the 1950's and 1960's focused primarily on culture history. The aim of research and excavations focused on developing site chronologies and excavating monumental architecture. Understanding individuality, everyday people and the broader contexts of those themes were not the focus of academic research and excavations until more recent times. Contemporary scholars are now focusing on broader themes such as identity, gender, and inequality. One of the drivers for this change relates to the feminist movement and gendered archaeology which were both cross disciplinary movements. The combination of both the feminist movement and gendered archaeology questioned how scholars previously interpreted data, acted as agents, and conducted work in the field to provide a less biased approach to understanding individuality. Overall, analyzing ALS 128 burial in relation to comparative case studies and contemporary

archaeological theory can reveal more about elite power and the role of women from these burial contexts in the past.

Gender and Power in Archaeology

The archaeology of gender is the study of identity and representation of oneself within past lifeways. This field of study recognizes the representation of oneself and how a body acted within the past. This approach is important because it helps scholars recognize identity with little bias within the archaeological record which was not an area of importance historically. Scholars argue that a feminist stance allows one to work beyond unacknowledged biases and to consider the ways in which Classic Maya royal women actively crafted state politics alongside their male counterparts (Navarro-Farr et al. 2020). Archaeology of gender also acknowledges the complexity of identity formation in ancient times (Navarro-Farr et al. 2020). In response, it aims to understand how Maya women embody their identity in comparison to men and avoids distinguishing women as being lesser than their male counterpart. Moreover, it recognizes how the woman acted within her role while being equal to the male. Similarly, and relevant to this paper, I use archaeological theories of gender to understand women identity and power in the Mesoamerican record.

Gendered archaeology has become a prominent theoretical trend within the scholarly field since the 1960's and is still relevant in the contemporary world. The term "Gendered Archaeology" is defined as a cross-disciplinary trend that questions how scholars interpret data, act as agents, and conduct work in the field (Conkey and Spector 1984). The term is cross-disciplinary because it applies to all peoples in academia. Historically, narratives of premodern humans were "Androcentric," or male dominated (Conkey & Gero; 1997). These narratives contained biases from white males that held scholarly and economic power. Women challenged

such problematic interpretations through the feminist movement which gave way to the emergence of the archaeology of gender. The first important wave of gendered archaeology began in the 1980s and recognized biases from white males that held economic power in the field as previously mentioned (Conkey and Spector 1984; 17). This trend not only begins to recognize biases within scholarly context, but also makes way for questioning previously interpreted data. Feminist movements continue to be relevant since the 1960s. Moreover, there remains a heightened awareness of the gendered crisis (Conkey and Gero 1997). In response to this awareness, women are beginning to assert feminism within their acclaimed field. This also includes women's representation in the scholarly field. Representation includes an increase of diverse nationalities, races, and ethnicities within the scholarly field as well as representation in jobs (Hays-Gilpin, 2000: 97). A reevaluation of gendered studies is beginning to create an improved understanding of past peoples. A reevaluation allows scholars to interpret power and context with limited biases. Using a gendered archaeological lens to interpret burial contexts can create an understanding of what kinds of power women held during their time of existence thus making a model to use to interpret ALS 128.

Gender and Identity in Ancient Mesoamerica

Gendered archaeology is used to understand Mesoamerican identity. Mesoamerican identity is revealed through the processes of data collection, analysis of iconography and texts in addition to power and performance. The term "performance of gender" is defined as the way of being in the world and focuses on the performance of a body within society. In today's society, the way an individual interacts, speaks, acts, and live are all ways that could potentially define gender and identity. An individual's gender shapes their performance and vice versa (Joyce 2009: 7). In the Classic May case, we identify performance of gender by the roles that an

individual acted in. The “role” is learned and practiced by the individual. For example, weaving, an important duty, was practiced by women in the ancient Maya. Therefore, weaving can part of the identity of a woman. Women “perform” this task that is associated with their gender.

However, this would not the only way women are identified.

Maya women held a variety of roles ranging from various occupations. Earlier we briefly discussed how Maya women held spiritual roles however, their roles parallel elite status. They could hold positions of power and were influential. This meant that they held positions of court and positions of power such as queens and even warriors (Navarro-Farr et al. 2020). The Late Classic period places emphasis on the divinity of female rulership. This womanly rulership was granted with the title “*kaan*”. This title was a sign power and divinity and is translated to “holy snake lord” (Navarro-Farr et al. 2020). Political marriages with a *kaan* was used to achieve political dominance in the region. These marriage alliances were between a royal woman of a *kaan* to regional rulers of inferior status. In this case it was the woman that bestowed the power to the inferior individual who was a male. Women could also be warriors. Navarro-Farr discusses the iconography of “Lady K’abel”, a royal elite female who ruled during the Late Classic period. One of her commissioned stelae portrays her engaging in warfare which would have earned her military respect (Navarro-Farr et al. 2020). Women may also have been identified as weavers, ritualists that participated in ceremony and more. The importance of understanding the variety of roles is that woman may be identified through how she acts within her role but that is not her only role in society. There is not one role that women must conform to. Their political lives were not separate from but were paralleled by their roles as wives, mothers, and daughters (Navarro-Farr et al. 2020). Additionally, stelae glyphs support that Maya women were fit to rule similar to men and were acceptable occupants of rule (Sabloff 2019). They maintained the same authority

and responsibilities as men and can be credited with their own decisions (Sabloff 2019; Navarro-Far et al. 2020). Moving forward, using this model with a gendered lens, I begin to piece how women may have embodied their role as an elite woman and what that means politically.

Mesoamerican identity is revealed through gendered performance and can be seen in stela iconography, rituals and ceremonies. Joyce examines these performances through analysis of ceremonies, iconography, and costume (male vs. female). This analysis reveals “agency” or the right to act or perform as an individual in Mesoamerica. For example, the artifact captures the choice and agency of the individual to make that object. This act captures the ideals of gendered performances of that time because it demonstrates how an individual would have performed and acted within their identity. Performance is also seen through rituals and ceremonies and how that individual performed within their role. Individualized costumes can also represent identity. These features include hair, costume, and sexually neutral qualities. In addition, the author claims that the various garb the figures are depicted with can demonstrate gender status (Joyce 2009: 65). For example, some female figures lack blouses, long skirts and loincloth. Joyce suggests that there is fluidity within the roles of roles and expression of identity. For example, some iconography shows representations of women as males. They were represented as males through their choice of clothing. This representation also infers the equality of both men and women at the time. It was the ability for a woman to be depicted as a male that infers this quality. Overall, the agency to perform captures the ideals of gendered performances of that time and can be used to convey identity while interpreting Mesoamerican burials (Joyce 2009).

Scholars, like Geoffrey McCafferty, also recognize Mesoamerican identity through political power and agency. McCafferty suggests that premodern identity can be understood and

interpreted by iconography and historic documentation. However, one must be cautious not to apply western standards to indigenous roles. Avoiding biased interpretations allow scholars to understand Mesoamerican women in their own unique way. That is, not paralleling the Western women identity to the Mesoamerican women identity but recognizing the Mesoamerican one as a separate embodiment. McCaffery suggests that Mesoamerican women represented positions of power, warriors, and even representations of male (McCafferty 2009: 24). These roles that represent class are fluid positions that can translate to a personal identity. The relationship between identity and fluidity is women are not confined to one “identity.” There is not one accepted way to act or be as a woman. The archaeological representations and texts support these various representations. To conclude, McCafferty suggests that fluid roles may determine identity and that burial goods offer a way embody identity (McCafferty 2009).

Paula Sabloff also discusses agency and political power to understand Maya women through their various roles of power. Her conclusions are also applied to broader geographical contexts such as the Egyptians. Although there is little evidence that Egyptian queens held political power, they were influential individuals. For example, marriages from various city-states were arranged for the expansion of land and gain of economic and political power. As discussed earlier, the Classic Maya women also participated in marriage alliances. This is one way that women were able to consolidate their power within their role (Navarro-Farr et al. 2020). Sabloff suggests that women’s roles are structured and predetermined ones. Sabloff demonstrates that there is evidence of female rule. In comparison to their male counterparts, there was a duality in power of ruling. For example, this is seen in the Old Kingdom of Egypt. Women held the second highest position (following the ruler). Their positions were solidified when they gave birth. Main wives also controlled their household estates and agriculture, which can be viewed as

a type of wealth. Overall, this shows that women had political and domestic responsibilities, which they carried out through individual agency. Overall, women exercise political power through the positions that they act in (Sabloff: 2009).

To conclude, gendered archaeology is used to understand Mesoamerican identity in a variety of ways and reveals the way in which women would have acted their social and political role. The lens is used to give agency and legitimacy to the rule of Maya women and used to understand how royal women enacted their power while being associated with a male counterpart. In addition to gendered archaeology, analysis of burial contexts of royal women can be used to embody identity. Navarro-Farr suggests that choices about what materials to include in a funerary assemblage and the conveyance of the deceased reflect careful decisions made by the person during their lifetime. Moreover, the decision to include specific objects versus others within burial contexts reveals how their status, role or gender was expressed. The connection between this theme relates to how the goods that these women are buried with embody identity. Overall, using this theoretical framework, in addition to burial contexts allow for scholars to make cautious interpretations about how ancient Maya women identify themselves.

ALS B-128 Context

Burial 128 is dated to the Late Pasion phase (A.D 680-780) and was discovered in Structure A-III at Altar de Sacrificios, Guatemala (*see Fig. 1*). It is noted that she was first excavated by Timothy Frisk between the dates of 1962-1963. The burial was located behind a wall of the sixth terrace within the structure. The crypt is lined with limestone blocks. The dimensions of the crypt measure 1.50 by 3.50 meters. The crypt ceiling was probably formed by placing poles at right angles to the beams and covering it with matting to prevent silt from falling through. The beams that supported the ceiling were rotted through when they were discovered.

The crypt contained the remains of two women bodies, but archaeologists theorize that the crypt was built for a single individual (Burial 128). The main individual, Burial 128 was determined to have been an adult female of 40-44 years when she died. The other individual was also found in the same context as Burial 128. This individual is identified as Burial 96. There is believed to be a correlation between the two, yet the correlation is unclear (*see Fig. 2*).

Excavations of Burial 128 determined that the body was oriented in East-West position with the head facing east. Additionally, it is noted that the individual's arms were flexed. The left arm was crossed over right and the hands were located below shoulders (Smith, 267-268).

The burial offerings included 8,000-9,000 flints, 1478 jade beads, 58 shells, 39 shell beads, 18 stingray needles, some worked and unworked, 11 pottery disks, 10 "beads", 8 plates, 6 jars, mother of pearls (fresh water), 2 mussel shells, unworked shells, pottery earplugs, 1 mirror, 2 pottery bars, decomposed iron pyrites, decayed wood, plain plate weave, obsidian core and flakes (Smith, 267-268). It is important to highlight the presence of foreign material such as marine shells, stingray needles and pearls. Altar de Sacrificios is located inland so this means that long distance trade and communication were needed to attain these objects. I infer that the amount of work needed to gain these materials make them unique. Additionally, I infer that having specific goods were important offerings for elite burial assemblages.

The individual has various body ornamentation. First, there are small piles of charcoal found surrounding the feet, pelvis and skull. Also, there are remains of a mat on the floor, under the pelvis. The individual's upper teeth are all inlaid with jade (*see Fig.3*). Additionally, there was a jade bead located in her mouth. The mouth was then covered in stingray spines. Next an inverted plate was placed over the skull then "killed". Lastly there is an impression of red fabric between the plate and skull. Again, the presence of the stingray needles being placed over the

mouth suggests a correlation between preparing the deceased for burial and unique marine objects. Additionally, the presence of jade, a green stone associated with the spirituality and the earth, was heavily exploited during the Classic period. Jade represents a unique good to the ancient Maya and its appearance in graves suggests burial use in elite graves is important.

By considering theories of power and gender, analyzing ALS 128 may reveal more about elite power, gender and burial contexts. For example, could the contents of her burial reveal the context of her rulership? Does it provide an additional model to how we as archaeologists interpret females of the past? Each question could be answered through this research and can be a contribution to the field of analytical archaeology. Overall, I claim that ALS can be interpreted as an elite female who held power within her time of her existence.

Maya Royal Women in Comparative Context

As previously mentioned, Maya women held a variety of influential roles in Classic Maya society that expresses to their political and consolidation of power. Despite representation in some iconography, Maya women are often not represented in inscriptions. Therefore, scholars must rely on archaeological remains, especially those in burials to understand how they embodied their power. Their material remains may be used to cautiously interpret identity. This holds true for interpreting ALS burial B-128. Cross comparing material remains from ALS burial 128 with other burials allows for interpretation of Maya identity. The Margarita Tomb from Copan and the Red Queen from Palenque are both carefully documented Classic Maya female burials. Both offer a glimpse into the essence of being a royal woman during their time. Both analysis and cross comparative studies may offer a model in which to understand and reinterpret ALS burial 128 from Altar de Sacrificios.

The Margarita Tomb, Copan

An Early Classic burial, dated to A.D 426 is named The Margarita Tomb or “Burial 92-3” and is part of a centrally located burial complex (Bell, 2007). The tomb was discovered in 1993 (Bell, 2007: 385). Archaeologists have suggested that the Margarita individual was associated with a male counterpart. She is theorized to be the wife of the dynastic founder of Copan, Kinich’ Yax K’uk’ Mo’. The burial complex consisted of two vaulted masonry chambers, a lower burial chamber in which the individual was buried (1) and an upper offering chamber (2) with a walkway in between (see fig.7) (Bell 2007: 386). It is noted that the walls of Chamber 2 and the step-vaulted ceiling were painted red (Bell, 2007: 386). The choice to paint the final resting place of the deceased with red cinnabar demonstrates another unique and important burial practice. The choice of red cinnabar, used for ritual purposes, commemoration of the dead and more signifies its use as an important and necessary burial practice.

Inside the tomb is an adult female (see fig. 5 & 6). She must have been at least 50 at the time of death (Bell, 2007: 389). Archaeologists also note that she was about 5 foot tall. It is noted that the head of the individual is facing south (Bell, 2007: 386). The body was extended on a stone slab which later broke into pieces after the placement of the body (Bell, 2007). The left hand was noted to have been laying palm down on the slab (Bell, 2007: 386). Her skull was also artificially deformed (Bell: 2007: 389). The ancient Maya often made modification to the body in preparation of the deceased. Modifications include cranial modifications, teeth inlays, teeth filing and more. However, formal dental decoration is found among the elite. Although many of the teeth were lost pre-mortem (Bell: 2007: 389), Buikstra suggests that teeth may have been lost 1 year before death due to gingivitis (Bell: 2007: 389). Despite preservation issues archaeologists located an inlay in the upper right canine which would have been an example of a formal dental

decoration (Bell, 2007: 389). Lastly, the burial slab was covered with a fiber-based mat which the body and offerings were made (Bell, 2007: 400).

Pathological markers

Archaeologists have identified several pathological markers. Stable isotope ratio analysis shows that she spent her childhood near Copan (Bell, 2007: 390), so she appears to have been a local woman. She was also active while young. Her pelvis indicates that she bore at least one child (Bell, 2007: 389). Later in life, she experienced extensive knee and lower back pain. Additionally, she may have had gingivitis as her teeth are theorized to have been lost pre-mortem (Bell: 2007: 389). Evidence of osteoporosis is also clear from her skeletal remains (Bell, 2007: 389)

Body Ornamentation

Placement of the cranium suggests that the individual had no head gear (Bell, 207: 388). The exterior and part of the interior of the cranium were covered in red cinnabar (see fig. 5) (Bell, 2007: 388). Portions of the exterior include a dark brown organic material which is suggested to be decayed tissue. This find is crucial because it suggests that the skull was painted with cinnabar before the flesh completely decomposed (see fig. 5) (Bell, 2007: 388). Lastly, the vertebrae were also covered in the red cinnabar pigment (Bell, 2007: 389). The evidence of the cinnabar indicates that the ancient Maya ritualistically painted the deceased before decay of the body. This step would have been needed and crucial to properly bury the deceased. The choice to use red cinnabar also indicates that the material was important as well.

The individual was buried with various body ornaments. Strands of jade and turquoise of various sizes and shapes were located on both sides of the slab that the individual was placed. The left side included more than 9,000 tiny jade beads and were located on top of thick cinnabar

(Bell, 2007: 400). Scholars theorize that the 9,500 beads found on her left side could have been skirt. The right side included 2,000 tubular jade-blue beads (Bell ,2007: 407). The jade-blue beads on the right could have been part of a textile. Lastly, both sides were found on red cinnabar. The upper body was adorned with massive jade, shell, and pearl beads which formed a necklace that was painted red (Bell ,2007: 401). Again, like ALS 128, Copan is located inland and this individual's burial assemblage includes marine material and were painted with red cinnabar. Some beads showed evidence of smoke, indicating there may have been incense or other wood burned inside the burial chamber. Both sides of the individual included jade beads, carved shell beads, small flower-shaped ornaments and tiny pearls (Bell, 2007: 401). The individual also wore double strand arm bands made of large jade beads around forearms and wristlets (Bell, 2007: 401). Lastly, the waist was encircled with a belt of jade beads, two ear flared-shape ornaments, bird beaks and pyrite (Bell, 2007: 401). It is important to note that the burial assemblage was not found in one corner of the room. The body, however, was completely adorned with the brilliant red cinnabar, and exotic goods.

A noteworthy burial artifact is an innermost circle of jade pectorals. These pectorals are of varying shapes and representations. For example, a small carved head wearing a tri-lob headband shows a women head in profile. Additionally, there was a vulture headed bead and bead carved in monster headed fish. (Bell 2007: 401). Bell suggests that the various unique pectorals and beads suggests identity because no women are mentioned in known texts that refer to the period she lived (Bell 2007: 401).

There was also an Oliva shell found on her pelvis. Scholars note that this shell was worn by young girls to symbolize virginity (Bell, 2007: 401). This shell may have been unique to individual because not common among other burials in Mesoamerica (Bell, 2007: 413). A long,

rectangular jade pectoral was found in mouth of the individual (Bell, 2007: 417). Scholars suggested that the pectoral was found in or near mouth (Bell, 2007: 417). This bears a significant resemblance to ALS Burial 128. The individual in ALS 128 bore a single jadeite bead in the mouth as well. We have discussed the importance of jadeite to the ancient Maya. It was heavily exploited by the Mayans and theorized to be heavily used due to its connections to the earth and brilliant color. Lastly, the neck, torso, upper arms and pelvis were all covered in red cinnabar pigment (Bell, 2007: 412).

The bones of the toes were slightly twisted which suggested they had been wrapped in a constraining footgear (Bell, 2007: 388). Large deposits of brown material found near both feet suggest that those were the footgear buried with the individual (Bell, 2007: 388). The footwear included 1-6 rectangular shell plates which may have formed sandals with jade beads near her lower leg region (Bell, 2007: 405). A band of large jade beads appear to have been wrapped around each lower leg, above the footwear (Bell, 2007: 400). The sandals were painted with red cinnabar.

The Red Woman from Palenque

Tomb XIII, more commonly known as “The Red Woman” dates to the Late Classic Period 700-900 AD and was discovered in 1994 in Palenque, Mexico (see fig. 9 & 10) (Klimczak, 2018:1; Tiesler, 2004: 66). The tomb is specifically found in Temple XIII (Tiesler, Cucina, and Romano Pacheco 2004: 66). The temple was originally excavated by Arnoldo Gonzalez Cruz in 1994 (Klimczak 2018:1). The southern end comprises three chambers, the first and the last of which were empty, while the central one was blocked by perfectly placed stonework finished with a coat of stucco that still retained remnants of black pigment. The

limestone lintel indicated that the chamber was once functional before being completely sealed up (Cruz 2011: 5).

Important to note was that she was buried in a sarcophagus (see fig. 11) (Cruz 2011: 5). She is stated to have died while in her 50-60's (Tiesler 2004:69). She is estimated to be about 5 ft tall (Tiesler 2004:69) and her age at death must have been between 40 and 45 years (Cruz 2011: 9). Cruz states that the head was positioned towards the north. No inscriptions were found inside the chamber that could relate her to a female noble documented in Palenque (Tiesler 2004: 66). Like the Margarita Tomb, she is associated with a male counterpart. Scholars theorize that she may be Tz'ak-bu Ajaw, the wife of Pakal and the grandmother of the last Mayan king. They come to this conclusion because her burial is right next to King Pakal's elaborate and well-known grave (Tiesler 2004: 66). In the case of the Temple of the Inscriptions, the crypt and the sarcophagus present a unique decorative wealth on the mortuary chamber's walls in relation to the Red Women (Cruz 2011: 11). The proximity of the two graves suggests that women were a counterpart to men while living and death.

Moving forward, there were two individuals also in the tomb. There was 1 adolescent male (11-12 of age) found at the extreme western end of the sarcophagus. The skeleton was badly preserved (Cruz 2011: 7). The body was laid on its back, along a north-south axis (Cruz 2011: 7). One of its main features is cranial deformation (Cruz 2011: 7). The second was a female (16 of age Klimzack 2018:1). At the extreme eastern end of the sarcophagus [below], a second skeleton was found in an extended position face-down, along a north-south axis. This second skeleton belonged to a female whose age has been calculated to have been between 30 and 35 years at the time of death. Archaeologists theorize that the two individuals were sacrificed to accompany the main occupant of the tomb on her journey to the underworld (Cruz 2011: 8).

One individual was decapitated, other had their chest open and heart taken out. Archaeologists suggest that both were victims of sacrifice due to cut marks (Tiesler 2004: 67). Lastly, carbon 14 testing was used on this burial to determine biological markers such the date of death (Klimzack 2018:1)

Material Evidence

Artifacts found inside the tomb were pearls, shells, bone, needle, obsidian, and pottery. Most notably, the burial included 1140 pieces of a malachite mask. Jade and pearl objects, bone needles, shells, earspools and wristlets all adorned the skeleton (Cruz 2011: 9). Entombed inside the sarcophagus was a small limestone figurine. Again, like the previously discussed burials, the burial assemblage of the Red Queen, who is also inland, includes pearls shells and more associated with marine exotic goods. This is important because the presence of exotic goods and use red cinnabar are beginning to develop a pattern across women elite burials.

Body Ornamentation

Like the Margarita Tomb, the individual was completely covered in red cinnabar paint (Tiesler, 2004: 67) (Cruz 2011: 10). The individual was buried with a malachite mask and diadem made of flat circular jade bead which was worn around the cranium. Additionally, several rectangular pieces of an apple-green material also surrounded part of the cranium which were determined to be malachite. The chest also was covered in flat jade beads, as well as four obsidian blades (Klimczak, 2018: 1). Around both wrists small jade beads were found, possibly belonging to wristlets. The pelvis area was located three small limestone axes which may have been part of a belt. The left hand's phalanges and the eastern wall of the sarcophagus, we located a high concentration of jade plaques (Cruz 2011: 10). The ankles of the skeleton were found close together that the corpse must have been bundled inside a shroud before being placed in the

sarcophagus (Cruz 2011: 12). Again, like the presence of exotic goods and red cinnabar, the consistent use of jade further demonstrates its importance as a burial good.

Skull Modification

The individual is noted to have minimal wear to teeth and tartar accumulation (Tiesler, 2004:69). Cruz noted a mildly abrasive diet and bad oral hygiene (Cruz 2011: 12). Dental decoration attained through filing is present, resulting in the shape identified as type A1 (in the classification of Romero [1986]; Cruz 2011: 12; *see Fig. 4*).

Pathological Markers

No signs indicated stress during infancy, childhood or adult years (Tiesler,2004:69). The individual suffered from severe osteoporosis due to slender bones (Klimczak 2018: 1; Tiesler 2004:69; Cruz 2011: 12).

Interpretations

Comparative studies suggest that identity and power can be demonstrated through burial contexts. There are unique burial offerings specific to the Maya that may infer power in their own way. These offerings include foreign materials, jadeite stone, red cinnabar and formal dental decoration. First, the presence of foreign materials such as marine objects suggest long distance travel, communication and commodity to obtain such objects. The next material is jadeite. During the Classic period the Maya exploited Jadeite or “greenstone” (Andrieu, Rodas, and Luin 2014). This cultural choice is explained through importance of color “yax”. The term “Yax” designates that blue and green and associated with the center of the world, fertility and corn (Andrieu, Rodas, and Luin 2014). It is widely accepted that the intensity of green jadeite colored plays an important role why it was heavily used. Red cinnabar was also predominately applied to

the corpse for preparation for burial, commemoration and sacrifice (Vera Tiesler, Lopez, and Owen 2018). Last to note is formal dental decoration. This decoration includes tooth inlays (usually of Jade) and/or filing. Both forms were apparent and popular during the Classic period, however, tooth inlays were more rare, had less of a timespan and distribution than filing (Smith 1972: 229). Tooth inlays contained material of jadeite, iron pyrite potentially obsidian (Smith 1972). Overall, each of characteristic were similar in each burial used within the study and may represent sources of power and identity. Each of these patterns can tracked through ALS B-128, The Red Queen from Palenque and The Margarita Tomb from Copan. Patterns such as burial remains of both the body, treatment, and artifacts can be noticed among all cases. These patterns enable us to discern that foreign objects and certain burial practices were used to embody how a woman of elite status would have been buried. The consistent similarities of foreign material, red cinnabar jade and dental decoration all the cases reinforce and support the idea that these themes were important.

The red cinnabar is a common but important practice among the Classic Maya which may be evidence of status. This practice holds value as it appears across many burials. As previously mentioned, its use was evident in spiritual rituals in addition to the commemoration of the living and dead. Most of the offerings and the body in The Margarita Tomb and The Red Queen burial were also painted in red cinnabar. Analysis demonstrates the body from the Margarita tomb was likely to have been painted before decaying, which indicates that the body was painted before placement inside the chamber. It is interesting though that the body and the offerings were covered in cinnabar in the Margarita Tomb. The grinding stones may offer suggest that the pigment was potentially ground inside the burial. It is possible that this may have been the last “step” in the burial process. This interpretation makes sense as a vast portion of the burial was

covered in red pigment and cinnabar. Cinnabar is an important ritual to lay an individual to rest. This connection demonstrates a necessary practice that was conducted in the burial of these women. Ritual painting of remains, and artifacts is important, or else, why not do it?

The burial assemblages found in these burials are foreign. All of sites are located inland so, this demonstrates that travel to gain these materials is important. Most of these items include pearls, shells, stingrays, jade, etc. which are not available locally. Material such as obsidian, shell, pearls, jade and more are not native to Copan (Bell, 2007: 49). Because the material evidence is foreign and not native, several things are suggested. First, there was evidence of trade or travel. In order to acquire freshwater items, one must travel a vast distance due to the location of Guatemala. Second, the Mayans valued these objects. The items were chosen specifically for burial. This choice may relate to the Maya spiritual connection to the world around them. Maya religion and worldview were heavily related to the earth and cosmological planes. Moreover, the ancient Maya maintained a unique connection the earth and their landscape. Acquiring these items, found within their landscape can be linked to their importance to the ancient Maya and use in burial assemblages. The items and their quantity may also suggest that these items were for royalty and elite individuals. The pearl necklace found in the Margarita Tomb could have only been acquired through travel, trade and laborious process of production. Due to this fact, I claim that these items, derived from the landscape around the Maya, are sources of important goods.

Burial remains also embody status. This is specifically represented through weighted presence and use of jade in burial assemblages. As previously mentioned, jade is known for having significant importance to the ancient Maya due to its exotic color and linkage to the earth. One valued example of the use of jade in burial is represented through the funerary mask found from the Red Queen burial. Archaeologists have theorized that the mask is an indicator of how

the female looked. The mask is made from malachite, a valued green stone to the Maya. Most importantly, the Red Queen is the only noted Maya individual to have a funerary mask (Tiesler, 2004:70). The obsidian and jade pieces covering the chest are indicators that the “covering” may be another comparative practice. Lastly, the pectoral found inside the mouth of the Margarita burial also calls into question the resemblance of the ALS burial. I conclude that the jade stone is an indication of importance which may be linked to power. It appears that each burial deposit is on or near the body. More broadly, countless Mesoamerican burials show material remains of jade. This may be a common practice that the elite individual must be buried with some deposit on or near the body which explains why everyone have something on the body area. Jade or other greenstone have been found in vast abundance in all case studies. Due to this, I indicate that this material is a necessity for burial of elites. Jade is not found in areas close meaning; it must have been traded or obtained. Like the foreign material, I infer that the work needed to obtain the material makes the object unique and special to the ancient Maya.

Formal dental decoration is another source of power. Dental inlays and filing were both apparent and popular during the Classic Period, however, tooth inlays are more rare than filing (Smith 1972: 227). Dental inlays included pieces of jade. All three burial cases indicate that the individual’s teeth were either inlaid or filed. With ALS 128, all upper incisors, canines and premolars were all inlaid with jade (Smith 1972: 225). Significant to ALS 128, inlays in upper premolars, were rare (Smith 1972: 227). The rarity of this form suggests importance. The Red Women from Palenque’s teeth show that filing is present, resulting in the shape identified as type A1 (in the classification of Romero [1986]) (see fig.) (Cruz 2011: 12). The choice to make painstakingly modifications to teeth as a form of burial practice demonstrates the importance of its use. Additionally, the choice to inlay some teeth with jade demonstrate a form of elaborate

decoration which may be reserved for the elite. Overall, I conclude that formal dental modification such as jade inlays remains an indicator of status. Some other indicators of royalty relate to biological indicators. For example, minimal wear to teeth indicates that the individual had healthy teeth from the Margarita Tomb. The individual probably ate soft processed food which may indicate a more “elite” eating style.

Another important factor to note that in both burials, they are buried near their theorized male counterpart. Studies demonstrate that royal women are not mentioned in inscriptions (due to all case studies lacking inscriptions indicating name). Archaeologists have suggested that the Margarita individual is the wife of the dynastic founder of Copan, Kinich' Yax K'uk' Mo'. Due to the pathological markers, that means that she potentially moved to Copan in order to marry. Travel may explain her being “active while young.” Perhaps this pathological marker can be linked to her traveling to Copan. If she is indeed the wife, it can also account for the foreign and rarity or exclusive items found inside her tomb. (Bell,2002:99). The band iconography discussed in body ornamentation also suggests status and role. Archaeologists note the Red Queen found in Palenque may be Tz'ak-bu Ajaw, the wife of Pakal and the grandmother of the last Mayan king. They theorize this due to the burial being right next to Pakal (Tiesler, 2004: 66). The burial of Pakal nearly resembles an exact burial practice (Cruz 2011:11). In the case of the Temple of the Inscriptions, the crypt and the sarcophagus present a unique decorative wealth on the mortuary chamber's walls (Cruz 2011: 11). So, this calls into question: are royal/elite women buried next to their male counterpart? Overall, they theorize that burial placement is unique to elite individuals. For example, the Red Queen is parallel to Pakal, an elite male ruler who is found near the Margarita burial. The Margarita tomb is parallel to Kinich' Yax K'uk' Mo' due to location of both burials. Unlike Copan and Palenque, ALS B-128 was not found to be buried

near a male counterpart, however there may be enough cause why this may be. During the time of occupation, Altar de Sacrificios is a smaller settlement in comparison to larger political urban capitals such as Palenque and Copan. Size in comparison to other larger centers may suggest a of different organization of rulership and leadership at Altar. This may be the reason why ALS B-128 was not found near a male counterpart. It also brings awareness to the fact that the largest most elaborate burial found at Altar was ALS-128 and the individual was a woman. It can be theorized that womens' role and identity in larger political centers are associated with a male counterpart, while smaller occupations such as Altar are not.

Conclusions

Overall, using a theoretical framework such as gendered archaeology provides a base for understanding identity and reconstructing past identities. Using a gendered archaeological lens to interpret burial contexts can provide an understanding of how women embodied the power that women held during their life. In this case, gendered archaeology, in addition to burial remains, provided a model to interpret a case with documentation but no interpretation; ALS 128.

Understanding patterns between well documented burials such as The Red Women and The Margarita Tomb provide a framework which to interpret ALS 128. Overall, each case represents a burial of a women with political and economic power. Lines that support this include archaeological remains such as the body itself and burial goods. In this paper, the ritualistic use of red cinnabar paint, foreign material only attainable through trade, and dental decoration indicate important burial practices demonstrated by women elites. In this case, they were all used and found in each grave. Additionally, differences in burials may also indicate power dynamics as demonstrated with burial near a male counterpart. Differences in site size may produce different political and power dynamics. For example, The Red Queen and The Margarita burials

are buried with their associated male counterpart or “king”; ALS 128 was not associated with a king. This may a political and social relationship between the size of a center and burial practices. Additionally, did women have the capability to rule without a counterpart in the worldview of those who resided in Altar de Sacrificios? More research may be needed to evaluate. Furthermore, reevaluating preconceived narratives about premodern people may allow academia to reinterpret ancient lifeways, ask new questions about premodern life and give awareness to historically underrepresented disciplines, such as gendered studies.



Fig. 1. Burial 128 in Str. A-III (Smith 1972)

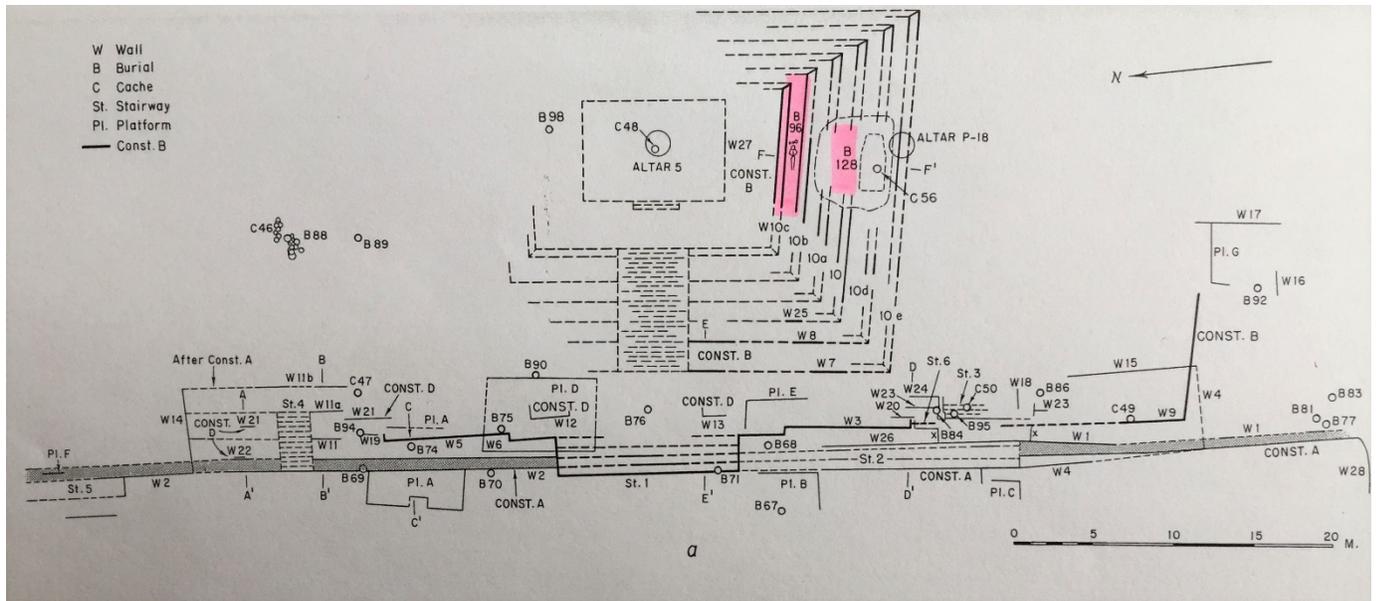


Fig. 2. Structure A-III. Highlighted ALS Burials 96 and Burial 128

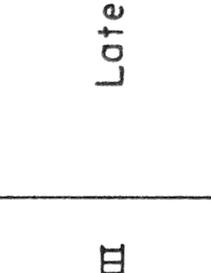
♀ 40-44		Upper incisors Upper canines Upper first pre-molars	j j j	Str. A-III	Late Pasión
------------	---	---	-------------	------------	-------------

Fig. 3. Dental Modification of ALS B-128 (Smith 1972)

TABLE 7. TYPES OF DECORATED TEETH AT ALTAR DE SACRIFICIOS AND ROMERO TYPE EQUIVALENTS (Romero 1958, fig. 2).

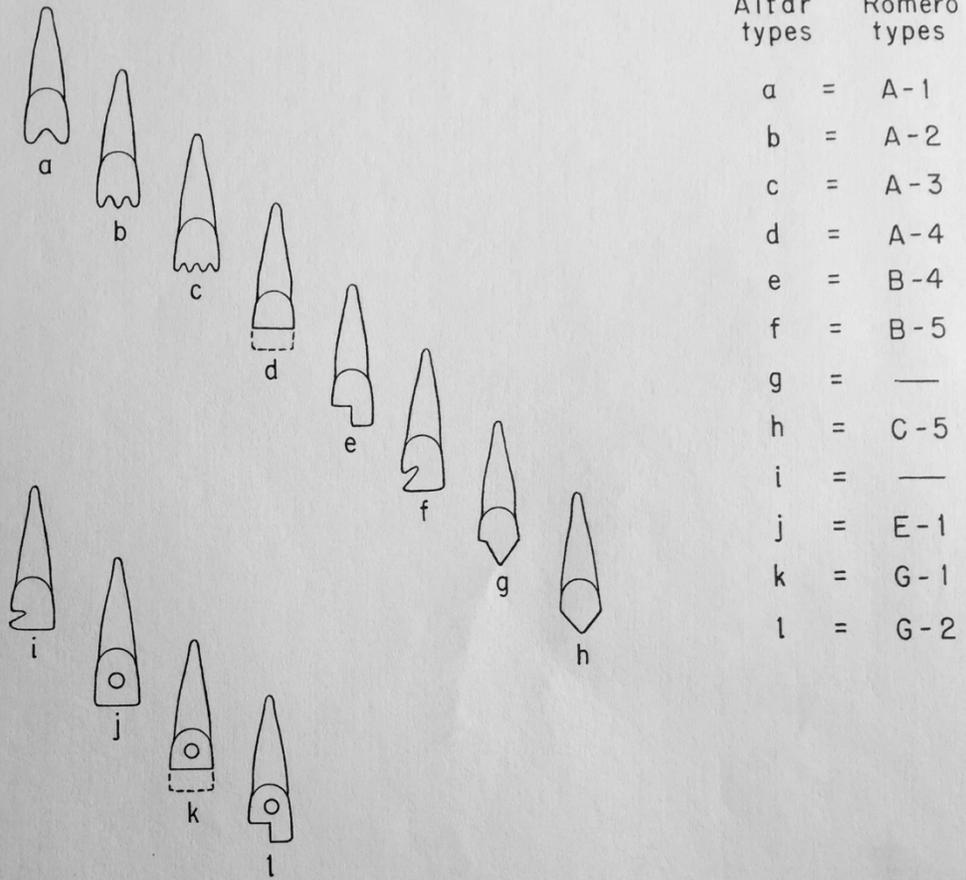


Fig. 4. Dental Modification Romero Type Equivalents



Fig. 5. The Margarita Tomb. Evidence of red cinnabar is clear.



Fig.6. Sketch of Margarita Burial

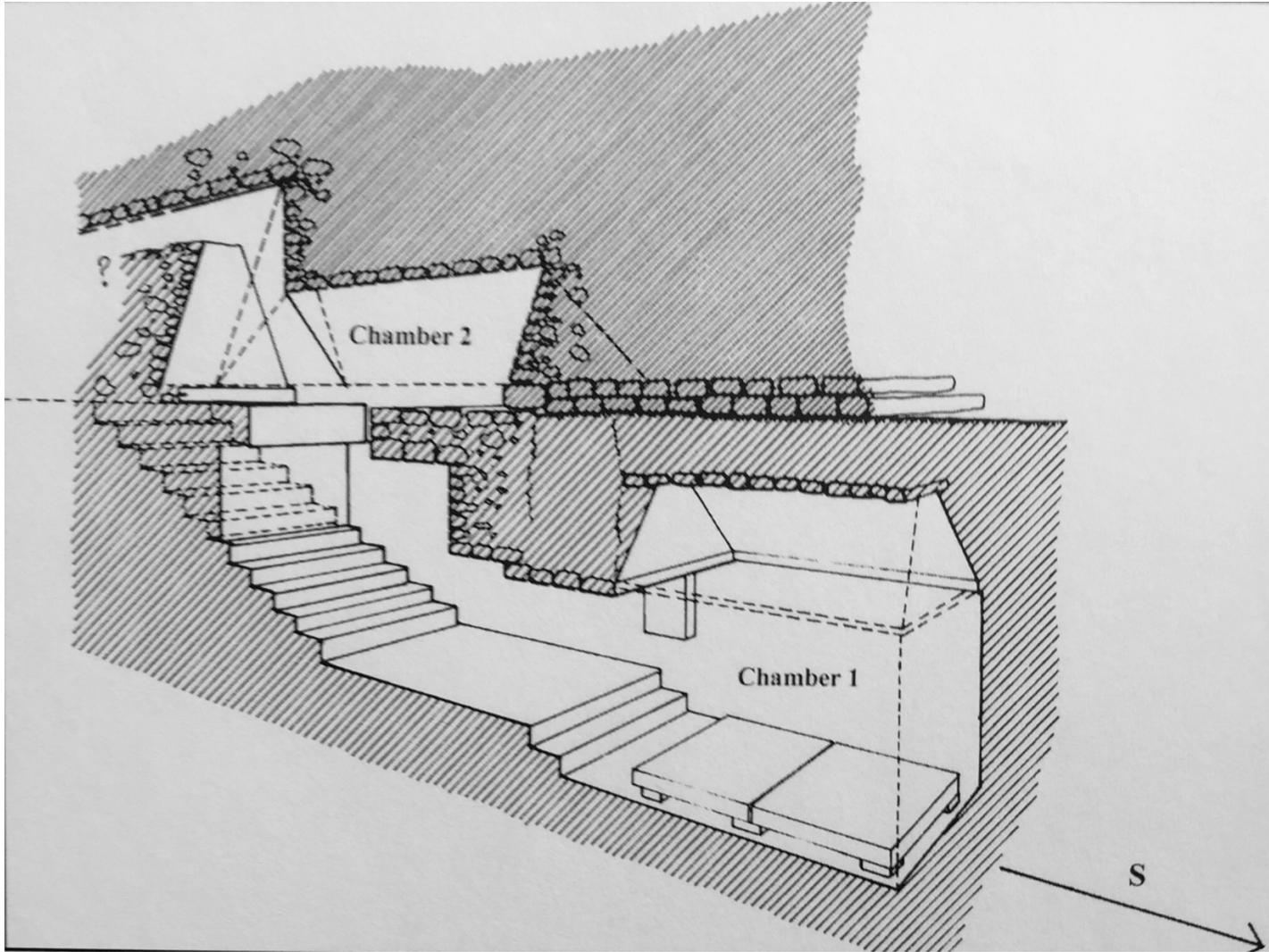


Fig.7. Sketch of Margarita Chambers



Fig.8. Margarita Cranium Profile

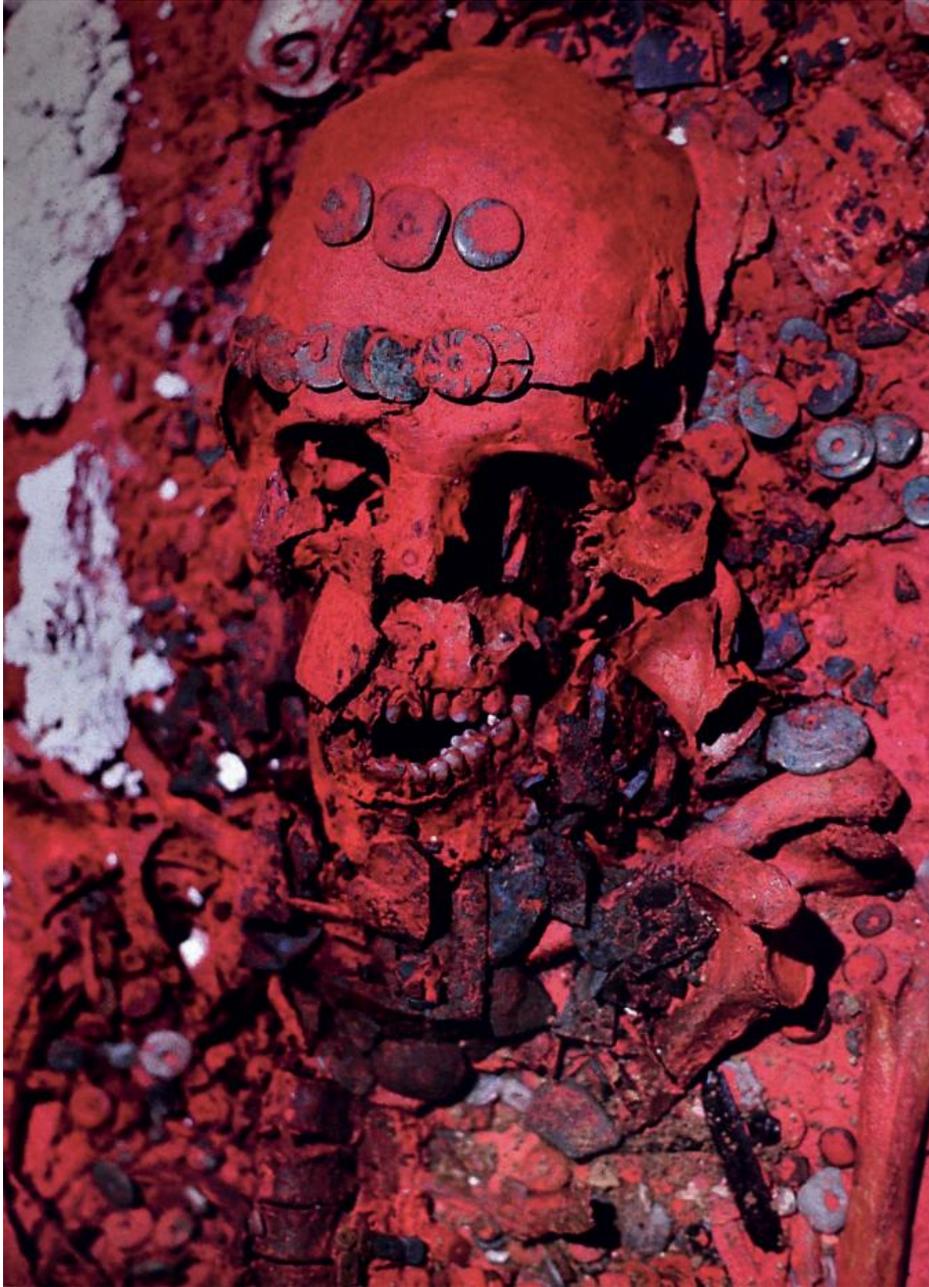


Fig.9. Burial of The Red Queen. Skull Shot. Evidence of red cinnabar is clear in the photo



Fig.10. Burial of The Red Queen. Body Shot. Evidence of red cinnabar is clear



Fig. 11. Sarcophagus of The Red Queen

Bibliography

- Andrieu, Chloé, Edna Rodas, and Luis Luin. 2014. "THE VALUES OF CLASSIC MAYA JADE: A REANALYSIS OF CANCUEN'S JADE WORKSHOP." *Ancient Mesoamerica* 25 (1): 141–64. <https://doi.org/10.2307/26300669>.
- Bell, Ellen. 2007. "Early Classic Ritual Deposits Within The Copan Acropolis: The Material Foundations of Political Power at a Classic Period Maya Center." University of Pennsylvania.
- Conkey, Margaret W., and Janet D. Spector. 1984. "Archaeology and the Study of Gender." *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory* 7: 1–38.
- Joyce, Rosemary A. 2009. *Gender and Power in Prehispanic Mesoamerica*. University of Texas Press.
- Klimczak, Natalia. 2018. "Unravelling the Mysteries of the Tomb of the Red Queen of Palenque." Text. 2018. <https://www.ancient-origins.net/history-famous-people/unravelling-mysteries-tomb-red-queen-palenque-006283>.
- McCafferty, Geoffrey G. 2009. "Hierarchy, Heterarchy and the Role of Women in Social Complexification." In *Que(e)Rying Archaeology*, edited by Terendy.
- Navarro-Farr, Olivia C., Mary Kate Kelly, Michelle Rich, and Griselda Pérez Robles. n.d. "Expanding the Canon: Lady K'abel the Ix Kaloomte' and the Political Narratives of Classic Maya Queens." *Feminist Anthropology* n/a (n/a). Accessed April 16, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1002/fea2.12007>.
- Sabloff, Paula L. W. 2019. "The Political Agency of Royal Women: A Comparative Analysis of Eight Premodern States According to Societal Rules and Roles." *Journal of Archaeological Research*, March. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10814-019-09131-y>.
- Smith, A. Ledyard. 1972. *Excavations at Altar de Sacrificios: Architecture, Settlement, Burials, and Caches*. Vol. 62, No. 2. Papers of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. Cambridge: Harvard University.
- Tiesler, V., A. Cucina, and A. Romano Pacheco. 2004. "Who Was the Red Queen? Identity of the Female Maya Dignitary from the Sarcophagus Tomb of Temple XIII, Palenque, Mexico." *Journal of Comparative Human Biology* 55 (102): 65–76. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jchb.2004.01.003>.
- TIESLER, VERA, KADWIN PÉREZ LÓPEZ, and PATRICIA QUINTANA OWEN. 2018. "Painting the Dead in the Northern Maya Lowlands." In *Painting the Skin*, edited by ÉLODIE DUPEY GARCÍA and MARÍA LUISA VÁZQUEZ DE ÁGREDOS PASCUAL, 43–55. Pigments on Bodies and Codices in Pre-Columbian Mesoamerica. University of Arizona Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvgs09xv.8>.