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The Taphonomy of a Sacrifice: Burial 6 of the Patio Hundido at el Teul

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The Taphonomy of a Sacrifice: Burial 6 of the Patio Hundido at el Teul

Abstract
El Teul’s eighteen centuries of continuous occupation, from ca. 200 b.c.e. till the Spanish conquest in 1531 offers a unique opportunity to understand aspects of ancient society in Southern Zacatecas. This poster focuses on a ritually-sacrificed male whose body was deposited as an offering in one of the main architectural complexes of the site during the early to mid-Classic (ca. 200 d.C. – 400/450 d.C.). Ritual landscape models currently applied to larger sites such as Teotihuacán using Huichol cosmology suggest the possible correspondence of this building with ritual sacrifice related to winter solstice with Venus playing an active role.

Keywords
bioarchaeology violence sacrifice

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The archaeological site of the ceremonial center of El Teul de los Roques is located in the southeastern extreme of the state of Zacatecas, Mexico. Composed of several well-known sites in the region, such as Quemada and Quemada Alta, el Teul de los Roques, both of which had occupations of around 5 to 6 hundred years (IC, 1992), has been shown to be continuously occupied for 17 to 18 centuries. The el Teul site is within the time of contact, the site's religious center of the now extant Casas, which would come to launch one of the most intense uprisings against the Spanish in 1544, known in history as the Matorral War. Due to the rarity of sites with this chronology, el Teul is significant in that it provides a unique study to human biology in the long term. This poster will focus on a human burial found recently in the center of a plaza in one of the larger structures in the site, el Patio Hundido ("the Sunken Patio Complex").

In this analysis, we draw on both the skeletal evidence and material culture of the sacrificial burial of burial 6 of the Patio Hundido at Teotihuacán, in conjunction with ritual landscape models using Huichol cosmology. This poster focuses on a ritual-sacrificial male whose body was deposited as an offering in one of the main architectural complexes of the site during the early to mid-Classic (ca. 200-600 CE). The analysis moves from the identification of violence and trauma, which requires a nuanced and detailed analysis of both material culture and human remains, to an ethnographic ethnography of the Huichol as it relates to the archaeological site. By combining the synthesis of the data (archaeological, ethnohistoric, and historic) we attempt to create an integrative interpretation of this particular piece of performance violence that took place at Teotihuacán.

Biocarchaeologists "look for life in patterns of death" by synthesizing biology and culture into a biosocial framework that allows for a more holistic interpretation (Martin, 1991). El Teul site offers an exceptional perspective on prehistory, because they provide an unparalleled documentation of how the biology of humans is affected by their cultural and environmental settings. Highlights of the "cosmic battles" that occur at this time between the army of the dark underworld, the stars, and a rising celestial Venus.

RESULTS

The sacrificial burial of Burial 6 is an adult male showing no evidence of blunt or sharp force trauma. However, it should be noted that the poor condition of the bone precludes a definitive analysis. The victim was placed on his right side in an extended position with the head facing south. The victim was placed in the burial offering on his face and the other at his head. This burial located near the victim head has the symbol of an eagle imprinted on it and it is very important, since the eagle to the Huichol is the "sun" and is also in the Mexican culture is associated with the rising sun out of the underworld which is the vital action during the winter solstice.

The victim appears to have been shot in the abdomen with an obsidian point. Based on the location of the point it appears that the deceased was standing above the victim where he was possibly housed and that arrow was fired downward into the abdomen terminating the near small intestine and the clipped. It appears that the arrow, the residual bial of the blade for bullet into a shaft or handle, before the arrow was being removed. Had this not happened we would have no indication of the possible cause of death. But because the point was in the abdomen we have a rounder clue regarding the purpose of this man's death. As you can see in the Huichol yam table in the "Purpose and Hypothesis" section of this poster a "cosmic battle" occurs between the army of the dark underworld, the stars, and a rising celestial Venus as the Morning Star. The arrows shot at the night stars at dawn (specifically into the obsidian) assisted the sun to emerge from the cost world, thus allowing for the sun to help the harvest and the earth in general. This sketch drawn by Jose Corona Nunez (1958, lám. 1) shows the location of the Patio Hundido (number 4). We have looked at the right axis and as discussed earlier the architectural complexes located in the north axis and as discussed earlier the architectural complexes located in the north axis of this poster a "cosmic battle" that occur at this time between the army of the dark underworld, the stars, and a rising celestial Venus as the Morning Star. The arrows shot at the night stars at dawn (specifically into the obsidian) assisted the sun to emerge from the cost world, thus allowing for the sun to help the harvest and the earth in general. This sketch drawn by Jose Corona Nunez (1958, lám. 1) shows the location of the Patio Hundido (number 4). We have looked at the right axis and as discussed earlier the architectural complexes located in the north axis and as discussed earlier the architectural complexes located in the north axis of this poster a "cosmic battle" that occur at this time between the army of the dark underworld, the stars, and a rising celestial Venus as the Morning Star. The arrows shot at the night stars at dawn (specifically into the obsidian) assisted the sun to emerge from the cost world, thus allowing for the sun to help the harvest and the earth in general.

Recent research in the last 5 years on the ritual landscape on the site of Teotihuacan using the now world-wide model, developed from recent ethnographic studies from the Gran Nayar of the West Mexico by his B.A. of the University of Massachusetts Amherst April 3-5, 2008. On the other hand, natural taphonomic data can also provide insight regarding place and time of death, transport, and human agency. In this analysis, we draw on both the skeletal evidence and material culture of the sacrificial burial of burial 6 of the Patio Hundido. The methodology used in this project integrates osteological analyses with archaeological data from Teotihuacan and assembles a new perspective on the historical and cultural landscapes of Teotihuacan. This poster will focus on the possible correspondence with the sacrificial burial/offering of burial 6 of the patio Hundido.

PURPOSE AND HYPOTHESIS

In situ photo of victim with obsidian point imbedded in his chest. The victim was placed in the burial offering on his face and the other at his head. This burial located near the victim head has the symbol of an eagle imprinted on it and it is very important, since the eagle to the Huichol is the "sun" and is also in the Mexican culture is associated with the rising sun out of the underworld which is the vital action during the winter solstice.

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