

Memo re Burial No. 5.

From stone vaulted tomb, about 18 feet long, 8 feet wide and not less than 9 feet high, with two niches in the walls and a stone bench or seat at one end.

A single burial, extended on back, except for fragmentary remains of two children, possibly sacrificed, one at the feet, the across the abdomen.

Body was richly ornamented. The ornaments have been divided equally with Guatemala, so that only half appear here.

The ear plugs actually worn by the body were jade, of which we have only one.

Ornaments included: (on the body)

20 ~~jade~~ pairs of round jade ornaments from the base of the headdress.

2 large jade earplugs

~~Beads~~

Shell labrets

Jade ~~and~~ clay and shell beads

Artificial clay "shells".

Scalloped jade ring and long jade beads.

Jade back ornament (jaguar)

Surrounding objects included:

Shell plaques (about 120), four inscribed.

Clay ear-plugs (?)

Clay pendants.

Pottery dish or plate.

Mosaic iron pyrite mirror

One-piece pyrite mirror.

Two pyrite mosaics, perhaps fillets.

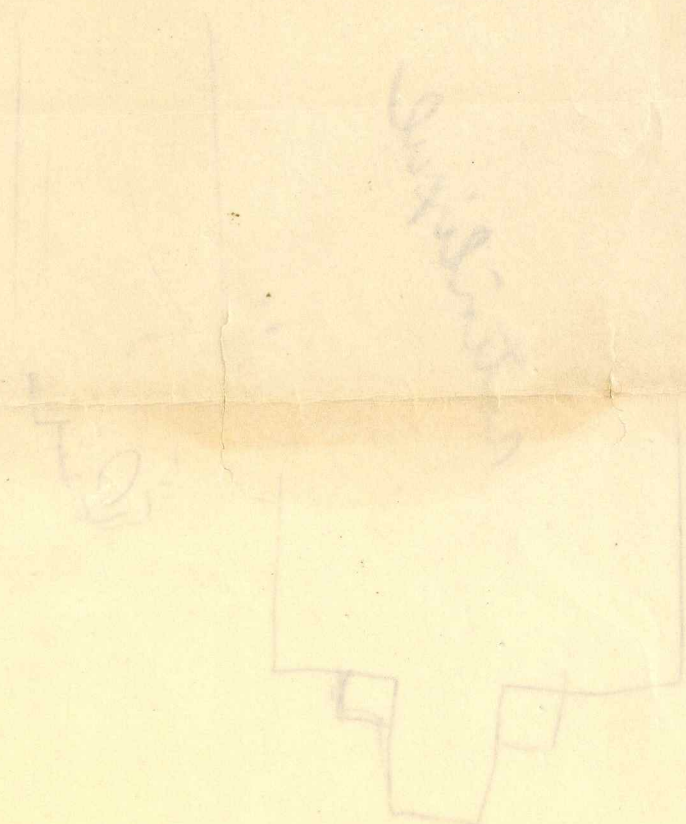
Sting-ray spines (some inscribed).

Bone bird effigy, probably Moan bird,

an emblem of death.

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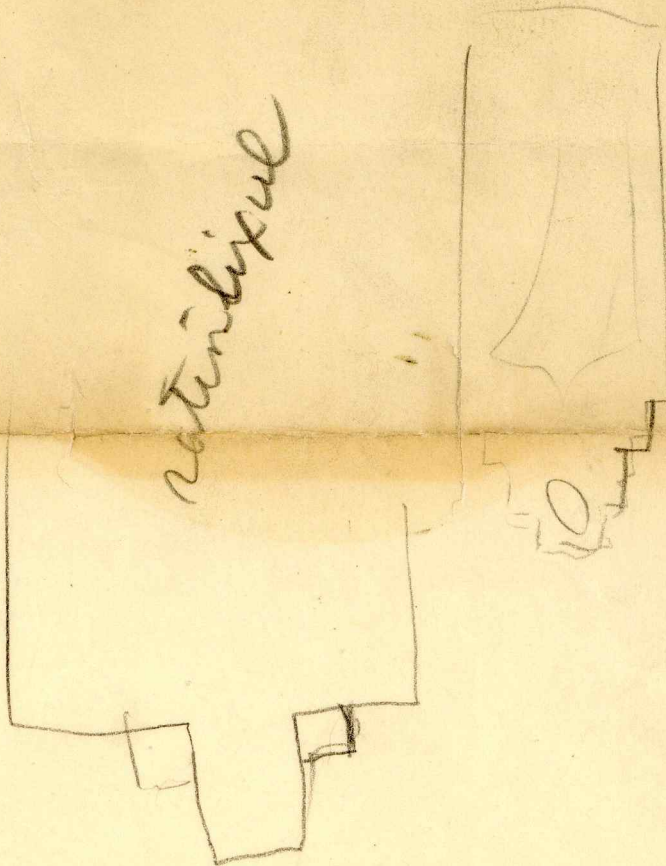
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catenilixul



Excavator's Notes on Burial 5

Burial 5 was in a large rather elaborate but carelessly constructed vault-roofed chamber, built within and below the surface of the platform known as Str. J-5. In its final form this is called Str. J-5-1st. Its surface was reached by a stairway leading up from Court 1 of the Acropolis (see map of site). An elongated depression in this otherwise flat surface led to investigation and discovery of the burial, the roof of which had collapsed. Figs. 1a - 1d, somewhat idealized, represent the chamber. Disregarding irregularities discussed below, it measured about 5.65 m. by 2.45 m., with walls about 1.60 m. high. As reconstructed, capstones were about .90 above the spring-line, that is, about 2.50 above the floor.

A point on the surface of Str. J-5-1st, taken as datum for the operation, was about 3.45 above the chamber floor and about 4.50 m. above the selected point on the latest Court 2 surface to the northeast. Though the floor of the chamber was at a level more than 1.00 m. higher than the court floor, the walls were based in part on bedrock which here rose higher, and which reduced the area of the floor proper.

Seldom is any deposit of debris at this site entirely sterile, and sherds, bone fragments and figurine heads were encountered well above the floor. Since debris covered the floor, the surface of which could not be fixed to the centimeter, it follows that a few objects may have been noted as "on floor" though they were not placed there originally as burial furniture. Certain sherds and two animal figurine heads probably fall in this category (Field Cat. W-17-10). It was noted at the time that "they probably were washed in while the roof was still partly in place", but the reason for this opinion is not recorded. There is, it is thought, little danger that anything has been

ascribed to the burial which was not placed there with it.

The writer returned here in 1933 to make a few observations. The SW end wall was broken through at this time to confirm a suspicion that earlier construction lay behind it.

Excavation

The chamber was cleared by the writer and two to three workmen in 1932. A pit was first sunk so as to locate and expose the northeasterly portion to a level about 2.80 m. below the surface. It was then judged that we were close to the bottom of fallen debris through which we had been passing. Digging was by arbitrary levels. The operation was then repeated until the entire chamber was cleared to this level. Thereafter the writer was present at all times, all digging and cleaning was with small tools and the actual exposure of practically all bones and objects below fallen debris was by the writer. A decision not to entrust this to a workman resulted in spreading out this phase of the excavation through about six weeks, since it had to be done from time to time as duties on other excavations permitted.

So far as possible, everything "on floor" was left in place until the job was finished. However, final over-all photographs are deemed too poor for publication. Close-up photographs of important areas were made from time to time and bones and objects were located on a plan as the work progressed.

Levels of a good many objects were noted, and these indicate that the floor was more or less level. But since it seems to have been of mere earth, at any particular point its precise level could only be inferred from the position of bone or object, or the base of debris fallen on it. The floor may have been uneven in places, and this is indicated by finding a large pyrite mirror which rested on earth, but at a considerable angle. It is even possible that some objects were buried in the floor, but if so, they were very close to

the surface. More probably everything found "at floor level" was left exposed on the floor, on the body, or on the floor of a niche.

The Burial Chamber

The long axis runs SW - NE, more or less parallel with Str. J-8, and more or less perpendicular to the NE of Str. J-5. It is possible that it was centered before a stairway leading to Str. J-8, or to a predecessor of it, but there is no real evidence on this point.

In addition to the low bench at the SW end, there were single niches in each longitudinal wall, near this end and beyond the feet of the subject of the burial. There was no provision for entrance, once the chamber was completed (unless through the vaulted roof, which seems unlikely). The roof had collapsed, but remnants remained in position or semi-position on all four sides.

The evidence was clear that vault material fell directly on the body and offerings, so they must have been left exposed on the chamber floor. Bones and some objects were badly damaged by the falling debris. Such debris reached the floor everywhere but it cannot be said whether or not it covered the whole floor suddenly, at one time. However, nothing suggests that there was ever any disturbance of the burial except by falling debris and by decay of perishable materials.

An unusual feature of this burial is that it must have been made after erection of Stelae 1 and 3, with contemporaneous Long-Count dates 9.13.15.0.0. and 9.14.0.0.0. An inscription on four shell plaques from this tomb gives four Calendar Round dates, the earliest of which appears on both of those stelae, and the next of which appears on one of them. There can be no doubt that all three texts refer to the same two dates, which, on the stelae, are fixed in the Long-count. Distance numbers on the plaques, from

a Long-count base thus determined, place the latest date on the plaques, 1 Caban Yaxkin Completed, at 9.14.17.14.17. The presence of this inscription seems to guarantee that the subject of burial was a calendar priest, and strongly suggests that he was alive at 9.15.0.0.0, the "contemporaneous" date assigned the plaques by Morley. However, it is much more certain that the burial was no earlier than 9.15.0.0.0 than it is that it was not much later. The shells may have been inherited by the person with whom they were buried; or if the inscription represents his own calculations, there is no proof that he carried them forward in time to a date which was a contemporaneous one for him. It would seem best to consider that our tomb was constructed some undetermined time after 9.15.0.0.0. (For a discussion of the shell inscription itself, see Morley 1938, Vol. 3, pp 169-173; J.E. Thompson, 1935, p 101; Satterthwaite, 1943, p 123).

The walls of the chamber were largely of blocks and small slabs, the vaulting of the usual local slab variety. One has the impression that the masonry is about the same as one would expect in a free-standing vaulted building at this site, except that it was very carelessly constructed and except that, so far as surviving evidence indicated, nothing was plastered and the floor was mere "earth".

It is interesting to note that, probably in the midst of the great period of Classic Maya art architectural carelessness and lack of finish were tolerated where they would not be seen.

Remarks on Drawings (Figs. 1a-1d).

Figs. 1a-1d give plan, sections and elevations, with reconstruction indicated by broken lines. A certain amount of idealization has been necessitated by failure to fully record irregularities. The principle ways in which the drawings may misrepresent actual fact are dealt with here.

There was apparently no specially prepared floor which seems to have been mere dirt. Its surface was recognizable only as the level where debris ceased and/or bones or objects appeared.

There is some evidence that tops of walls, hence vault-springs, were not everywhere at a single level, as shown in the drawings. The base of the vaulting on the SE side seems to have been about 15 cm. lower than that across the SW end, where the two soffits met at a corner. The record is not entirely clear, but if this is correct, careless work by the masons was very noticeable.

Up to a certain height, at least, the transverse soffit at the SW end was built first, a little longer than necessary, so that vaulting on the longitudinal walls ended against it. At the other end longitudinal and transverse soffits were structurally continuous, and without clearly defined lines marking change of direction at the corners, such as one would see in well constructed buildings, even without plaster.

The level of the base of the larger niche was fixed by the leveling instrument with reference to the surface of Str. J-5, and in relation to the vault-spring at the other end of the chamber. This information, combined with that of a photograph, shows that the height of this niche floor is approximately correct as shown, though this is about 15 cm. lower than indicated by scaling a field sketch. A comparable degree of inaccuracy may be applicable to the height of the smaller niche as given in the drawings, where scaling such a sketch only had to be relied on. This doubt as to precise level affects the early stone construction numbered "5" in Fig. 1b, for which the recorded level is with reference to that of the smaller niche.

The walls were not everywhere perfectly vertical, as shown in the drawings. Field sketches show that, toward the top, the NEly end wall, and

the SEly longitudinal wall sloped inward - away from the observer in the chamber. This was the case where stumps of vaulting were measured for the angle of slope of the soffits. If the lack of verticality of the tops of the walls was due to movement subsequent to construction, the soffit slope angle used in our drawings may result in too "flat" a vault. At other points masses of vaulting were in semi-position only, but here they seemed to be undisturbed. They gave approximately identical results, averaged to about 47 degrees from vertical. The surviving heights were 30 and 48 cm. The reconstruction assumes cap exposures of 30 cm. which, with the indicated angle of slope, gives a vault height of only about 90 cm. It may be noted that this low height is reached on the basis of the best evidence available, without reference to speculations as to the height of the Str. J-5 surface when the chamber was built.

The irregularities shown in the plan of the chamber proper are based on triangulation of selected points at base level, but the floors of the niches were probably not perfectly rectangular as shown. The smaller niche was roofed by two slabs, found in position. They were not parts of a single lintel-slab which had broken. The roof of the larger niche had completely collapsed. No large thick lintel-slab or its fragments were noted in the debris. The back wall of the smaller niche appeared to be merely the irregular fill stones of the Str. J-5 platform, but the back wall of this larger niche was of tabular stone, surviving to a height of 60 cm. At this level it ended to form a neat horizontal top running from side to side. It is possible that wooden lintel beams formed the roof at this level. The drawings show an alternative all-masonry possibility with question-marks to emphasize the lack of sure data. Any vaulted reconstruction of the roof of this niche requires a greater height

for it than otherwise, and a decision not to use wooden beams where they would soon rot may have been a factor in determining a wall height of 1.60 m. Lower walls would have permitted a floor at a higher level, passing over the bedrock which, in fact, occupied a considerable portion of the chamber area.

The burial was found by noting a long depression in the top of Str. J-5. This sunken surface area is indicated by the line of crosses in Fig. 1b, which gives only an approximate profile. The depth of the depression was not properly measured. It was certainly very much less than one would expect to result from collapse of the burial vault alone. Subsequent filling by some agency is indicated.

The excavation produced good evidence that this portion of Str. J-5 was once surfaced with irregular stone slabs, at a level below that of the final top. This level is indicated in Fig. 1b, on either side. Broken lines are used because, though shown as on field sketches, the precise level was not determined. The slabs were also noted over the area of the chamber. To represent them completely in Fig. 1b, as found, one would join the broken lines on either side by a line dipping down somewhat from either side, toward center, more or less parallel to the curving surface line. The position of the slabs over the chamber area is not thus shown because there is reason to think they were placed after collapse of the vaulting, and in the drawing that is indicated as still in position.

Sequences of construction.

It is clear that the earliest construction noted with certainty is a floor and a stairway or step-terracing rising from it. This was encountered behind the SW end wall of the chamber (See 5 in Fig. 1c). While the level of this floor is subject to allowance for error in the making of a scale drawing, it was almost surely about at the maximum height of the bedrock which was

permitted to protrude through the floor of the chamber, on the NW side. Where the longitudinal wall of the chamber is based on this bedrock, a well defined break in the masonry (indicated at 4 in Fig. 1d) suggests that the chamber wall is in part the face of an old platform, with a vertical face meeting a battered one, such as occurs on the "shoulders" of "megalithic" stairways at this site. A similar break was noted in the other longitudinal wall, and is suggested at 3 in Fig. 1c. opposite this one.

It appears possible, if not likely, that the architectural features at 3, 4 and 5 all rested on a single early floor system and/or on bedrock protruding only slightly above it; that these units were buried by the platform which we call Str. J-5-2nd; and that a pit for the burial chamber was thereafter sunk, cutting away the buried floor system when it was reached. That a floor was cut through at the SW end at least seems certain. It may well be that when the operation began there was no expectation that, at the planned depth, an asymmetrical and reduced floor area would have to be used for the burial, unless bedrock was to be removed.

If, alternatively, we suppose the chamber was built at the same time the J-5 platform was raised to contain it, the curious toleration of the protruding bedrock is hard to explain, since it could almost surely have been avoided by shifting the chamber a meter or so to the SE. But this is an alternative hypothesis not surely ruled out.

The evidence is good that at one time the surface of Str. J-5 was at the level of the slabs as noted in Fig. 1b, and that it was later raised. So we are dealing with a Str. J-5-2nd (earlier) and a Str. J-5-1st (latest). There was no excavation for burial construction from the higher level, for in that case slabs would have been found at the edges, of our excavation, but not

over the chamber. If the chamber was built without excavation , as the J-5-2nd platform was built, we are again led to the conclusion that it dates from before the final raising of the floor of the platform, i.e. it must pre-date Str. J-5-1st.

Whether or not the collapse of the vaulted roof of the chamber was sudden or not, eventually it was more or less complete. This being the case, the early floor (of Str. J-5-2nd) must have been completely destroyed in the area over the collapsed vault. This so, whether or not its top was always a slab pavement. Yet here, in the form of slab-pavement, it was found in semi-position, merely settled down a bit, like the final surface of Str. J-5-1st above it. We are driven to the conclusion that the vault collapsed and the resulting deep depression was filled up, before the final raising of the J-5 platform. All slab-paving may date from this time; or if it existed before, that portion over the chamber would represent a repair job.

The upper portion of the deposit below the slab pavement and over the chamber consisted of "principally large and small fill stones, slabs, earth and pockets of floor pebbles". This agrees with our conclusion. Presumably the sinking of both floors above the chamber, producing the depression which led to excavation here, resulted from settling in the area of the chamber only; this differential effect probably resulted from the fact that here the floor was based ultimately on naturally fallen debris, and not on carefully laid fill stone.

The inscription found in this burial has a bearing on any attempt to tie architectural stratifications on the Acropolis into the Long-count. The sequence here may be summarized as follows:

Earliest architectural features at this spot on the Acropolis

Their burial by Str. J-5-2nd; The Burial 5 chamber constructed at beginning of or more probably during this period, and no earlier than 9.15.0.0.0; hence period of Str. J-5-2nd probably began before but did not end until after 9.15.0.0.0.

Collapse of Burial 5 chamber, filling of depression, laying (or repair) of slab pavement of J-5-2nd, some time after 9.15.0.0.0
Raising of platform floor (Str. J-5-1st), some further time after 9.15.0.0.0; period continued till abandonment.

The dating for erection of Str. J-5-1st as after 9.15.0.0.0 is entirely consistent with re-building activity at the nearby Str. J-6-1st, almost surely by Throne 1 at 9.17.15.0.0. A temptation to speculate that Str. J-5-1st and Str. J-7-1st were built at the same time to produce a balanced arrangement on either side of the court should be resisted for two reasons. It is Str. J-5-2nd which corresponds more closely with Str. J-7-1st in height, (being about 65 m., rather than about 1.20 m., higher); and Str. J-7-1st can hardly be so late as 9.15.0.0.0, since it was built before Court 2, which had an obviously longish history.

It may well be that Str. J-5-2nd was built to establish a balance with Str. J-7-1st, after the area at the top level of that platform had been reduced by Court 2; but we lack any real evidence.