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SPECIAL SECTION: RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AT THE MOON PYRAMID, TEOTIHUACAN

INTRODUCTION

This is the twenty-fifth Special Section published in *Ancient Mesoamerica*, and therefore it represents something of a milestone in the history of the journal. The goal has been to present in each special section a collection of related papers from a single project or region or on a selected topic to provide readers a tightly integrated summary of current research and interpretations. Certainly one of the most compelling and provocative special sections we have published was "Urban Archaeology at Teotihuacan" which appeared in vol. 2, no. 1 (1991). This collection of papers featured two stunning articles on the Feathered Serpent Pyramid, then often referred to as the Temple of Quetzalcoatl. Constructed in the early third century A.D., the Feathered Serpent Pyramid, along with the Sun Pyramid and the Moon Pyramid, was one of the three most powerful monuments in the sacred urban landscape of Teotihuacan. Rubén Cabrera Castro, Saburo Sugiyama, and George L. Cowgill (1991) reported on excavations in the 1980s of the Feathered Serpent Pyramid and the investigation of more than 137 sacrificial burials, including more than 70 males identified as soldiers because of associated offerings, discovered at the base of and underneath the pyramid. In the second article, Alfredo López Austin, Leonardo López Luján, and Saburo Sugiyama (1991) presented their brilliant iconographic analysis of the sculptural facades of the Feathered Serpent Pyramid, arguing that the monumental structure was dedicated to the myth of the origin of time and calendric succession, a tangible cosmogonic proclamation that Teotihuacan was "the place where time began."

In a recent book, Sugiyama (2005) has elaborated further on sacrificial rituals, militarism, and the symbolism and ideology of rulership at Teotihuacan, presenting further detailed evidence and interpretations from the investigations of the Feathered Serpent Pyramid. Sugiyama (2004:7) refers to the distribution pattern of the sacrificial burials as a "materialization of the Teotihuacan worldview" because they occur in numerical groupings evocative of cosmological and calendrical concepts. And in two recent papers, Michael W. Spence et al. (2004) and Christine D. White et al. (2002) presented biocultural and oxygen-isotope analysis of 41 of the sacrificial victims and the human maxillae worn as pendants by four of the sacrificed soldiers, concluding that many of the soldiers were from Teotihuacan while others were recruited from foreign regions, many of the trophy teeth derived from foreign individuals, and most of the nonmilitary sacrificial victims were not Teotihuacanos. As many as four foreign regions are implicated as the places of origin of members of the Teotihuacan military, raising the possibility of mercenary recruitment or tribute service. This evidence clearly reveals the intention of the ruling elites of Teotihuacan who presided over this mass sacrifice to display their sacred power as a symbolic expression of military might that could be imposed not only in the Basin of Mexico and the central highlands but throughout Mesoamerica. Nevertheless, the role of the military in the rise of the Teotihuacan state and its political structure remain poorly understood.

In this issue's Special Section, we present some of the results of a recent long-term interdisciplinary and international project at the Moon Pyramid, directed by archaeologists of the *Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia*, Aichi Prefectural University, and Arizona State University from 1998 to 2004. In all, five different nations were represented: Mexico, Japan, Canada, France, and the United States. The Moon Pyramid Project was prompted by the investigations at the Feathered Serpent Pyramid and questions raised by this research. It is fitting that these questions be addressed by investigations of the Moon Pyramid since it was built in a sacred, central space near the most ancient early locus of settlement and ritual practice in the city. The first paper, by **Saburo Sugiyama** and **Rubén Cabrera Castro**, provides the historical background and the intellectual context of the project. They enumerate the major issues that emerged from the investigations of the Feathered Serpent Pyramid, especially the need to explore the connection between the institution of sacred rulership and the state military apparatus and how these developed and functioned throughout the history of the city. They point out that before this project the Moon Pyramid was the least understood of the three major architectural monuments of Teotihuacan. Now, thanks to the efforts of the Moon Pyramid Project, it is quite well-understood, and Sugiyama and Cabrera Castro describe seven overlapping architectural stages with five dedicatory burial/offering complexes embedded or entombed within the construction fill including humans, predatory animals, and a wide range of symbolic, sumptuous offerings.

In the following paper, **Saburo Sugiyama** and **Leonardo López Luján** provide exquisite detail on the five burial/offering complexes. These exhibit a dazzling range of variation in terms of mortuary facility, body treatment and disposition, and associated grave goods, suggesting correlations with dimensions of ethnicity, social class, and political roles of the sacrificed individuals in life. They interpret the burial/offering complexes as an expression of political authority in ritual and mythical terms. The majority of victims were bound, probably gagged, and likely dispatched with brutal violence. Beheading as a manner of execution was not uncommon. Each burial/offering complex is fascinating, but especially intriguing is Burial 5 which contained the remains of three high-ranking

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individuals, two with exceptionally rich jadeite ornaments, and an impressive array of associated grave goods evoking their high status. All three were buried in seated, cross-legged ("lotus") position that rarely occurs in Teotihuacan burials. There is no indication that they were bound, and their interment, judging from body disposition, appears to have been a respectful one. Sugiyama and López Luján present overwhelming evidence that these individuals were foreign dignitaries from a Maya city. Significantly, these three individuals did not constitute a foundational sacrifice like the other burials in the Moon Pyramid but were placed in a grave pit in the nucleus of the fill of Building 6 (the penultimate construction stage) as it was under construction, dated by Sugiyama and López Luján to approximately A.D. 350 $\pm$ 50. Of course, these data will have a bearing on the debate concerning the nature and degree of social and political interaction between Teotihuacan and the Early Classic Maya. Astute readers will have already noted that the estimated chronometric range for this burial aligns well with the recorded date of the Teotihuacan *entrada* into the Maya lowlands led by lord Siyaj K'ak' in A.D. 378 (Martin and Grube 2000:29; Stuart 2000).

The following two papers deal with osteological and isotope analysis of the human remains of the 37 individuals recovered. These and the recently published papers cited above clearly illustrate the great potential of bioarchaeology to complement and extend the interpretations derived from the analysis of archaeological context, patterns, and artifacts. **Michael W. Spence** and **Grégory Pereira** present an overview of the human skeletal remains of the Moon Pyramid. They provide age and sex evaluations and stature estimates as well as data on stress, trauma, health factors, cranial modification, and dental decoration. **Christine D. White**, **T. Douglas Price**, and **Fred J. Longstaffe** present the results of their analysis of oxygen-isotope and strontium-isotope ratios from Burials 2-5 to reconstruct individual histories of residence since childhood. They find that all of the sacrificed individuals, with one possible exception, appear to have been born in foreign lands, suggesting that they were war captives or natives of distant regional polities under Teotihuacan control. They also offer some very interesting comparisons between the burial population of the Moon Pyramid and that of the Feathered Serpent Pyramid. The two populations show significant isotopic differences, indicating a range of different places of residence of the individuals in early childhood and differences in the length of time they had spent in the city before they met their respective deaths.

Finally, **David Carballo** offers an artful analysis of the manufacture of obsidian weaponry and the production of ceremonial objects expressing themes of warfare and sacrifice. These production activities took place in highly specialized workshops located adjacent to the Moon Pyramid. Carballo argues for administered production related to the interests of a ruling elite in state expansion through coercive force. He presents an extremely detailed technological analysis of the artifacts recovered from three massive deposits, and, working with primary debitage, he calculates detailed production estimates for dart points, large bifaces, and eccentrics pointing to a prolific industry manned by highly skilled knappers. The major importance of this paper, however, lies in Carballo's contextual analysis which stresses the symbolic significance of martially themed obsidian implements and objects to promote and express the ideological interests of a militaristic ruling elite.

The majestic, awe-inspiring city revered as the Place of the Gods has provided a wealth of precious new data on the importance of ritual and symbolic practice in the early formation and consolidation of the Teotihuacan state and the integral role of the military in this political expansion. The research from the Moon Pyramid and the earlier investigations of the Feathered Serpent Pyramid demonstrate the intricate, tightly bound association of religion, warfare, and sacrifice, mediated through sociopolitical institutions, so well-known through the archaeological and historical study of subsequent Postclassic Toltec and Mexica Aztec cultures. The continuity among these cultures never ceases to astonish, but equally important are the differences through time in the great Mesoamerican civilizations that the research presented in these papers allows us to appreciate more fully. No doubt future research at Teotihuacan will continue in this direction, adding immensely to the archaeological record while addressing major theoretical issues on the nature of power and the ancient state.

William R. Fowler

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