

and material (archaeological) manifestations associated with the processing and disposition of the royal corpse and its accompanying soul(s). In bringing together different sources of information, Fitzsimmons is careful to point out the many instances in which interpretations of religious beliefs and rituals based on epigraphy or iconographic analyses outstrip what is known archaeologically. He is on firmer ground describing burials and tombs and reconstructing likely behaviours from the archaeological data, while expressing greater caution in attributing meanings to the artworks and texts, although the latter is his principal goal. Moreover, significant variation in religious beliefs and mortuary practices existed across the royal courts of the Maya lowlands. Fitzsimmons seeks to convey this variation but primarily intends to suggest commonalities among the funerals of kings.

The author draws upon the analytical concepts of Emile Durkheim and his followers, Arnold van Gennep and Robert Hertz, for an anthropological framework, treating mortuary practices as collective representations of self and society and as rites of passage. Employing these notions as an organizational scheme, Fitzsimmons proposes a hypothetical idealized sequence of actions involved in the preparation and entombment of the body following biological death, as well as rituals associated with 'social death' and the destiny of the spiritual or metaphysical components of royal persons. From Hertz's seminal analyses of secondary mortuary rituals, he suggests attention be paid to dynamic interrelationships that link the decomposing body, the journeying soul(s), and the changing statuses of mourners in funerary and post-funeral rituals. Thus, a major theme Fitzsimmons develops is death as a process rather than an event, in some cases a very long, involved process occasioning interregna and delayed succession rites. The ultimate goal of most royal funerals was the transformation of the deceased into a venerated ancestor, a process involving substantial resources and varying amounts of time to accomplish. A second recurrent motif revealed in various chapters is that the Maya recorded little direct information in the inscriptions about their mortuary rituals, despite the extravagant treatments they gave the royal dead, often laid out in richly bedecked tombs under huge pyramidal temples. In a related vein, Fitzsimmons remarks a number of times how much of Maya scholars' interpretations regarding souls, the afterlife, and similar religious beliefs are based on imagery, including scenes painted on Late Classic pottery, for which no confirming names or descriptions have been found in the hieroglyphs.

Following the introductory chapter, the author examines Maya (and related Mesoamerican) cosmologies that shaped beliefs and practices associated with death. These include metaphysical and literal linkages of the life courses of humans to the earth and the maize cycle, an agricultural metaphor for death and rebirth, as determined from imagery. In Classic period texts, however, such information is less explicit. Death was sometimes alluded to as the expiration of 'white flower breath' and as 'entering a road'. Information from colonial and contemporary Maya sources as well as neighbouring societies is added to readings of

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Although archaeological evidence of pre-Hispanic Maya funerary practices has previously been compiled (Welsh 1988) and the deaths of named Maya individuals have been determined from hieroglyphic inscriptions (e.g. Martin & Grube 2000), Fitzsimmons's book is the first comprehensive study of mortuary practices that readily combines these two types of information, material and textual. The analysis is necessarily limited to the only subset of the dead for whom inscriptions are available, principally kings but also some queens. The subject matter is further circumscribed temporally and spatially because such texts were written principally during the Classic period (AD 300–900), most of them in major capitals of the southern Maya lowlands. Nevertheless, within these boundaries there is a great deal of information on the royal dead, some of which can be extended to Maya beliefs and practices more generally. An especially valuable component of this book is a compilation of the available archaeological evidence on Maya royal burials in the form of tables, the longer ones constituting several appendices.

The author explains his investigative objective as interpreting the various 'languages' of hieroglyphs, imagery

the hieroglyphs to elucidate various notions of the 'self' and 'soul'. However, beliefs in the spiritual components of a person's being and their after-death dispositions did not constitute a standard theology; thus, Fitzsimmons works through the fragmentary and elusive evidence for different qualities of soul. These include breath (*ik'*) and a kind of animal-spirit companion or alter-ego (*way*). For the most part these individual readings are not new, but here they are examined in a more comprehensive context in association with related iconographic and archaeological data. In addition the author reveals how difficult it is to determine Maya beliefs concerning the afterlife and the ultimate destiny of souls because of spotty and inconsistent information. For example, both the Underworld and the celestial sphere appear in imagery as places associated with the dead and with ancestors, although the proper name of neither location has been definitively read. The author suggests that if death were indeed a lengthy process, then the Underworld may have been only a temporary location, perhaps a place of trials endured by souls who would eventually come to inhabit a different otherworldly residence. Despite the author's recourse to ethnographic information, contemporary Maya beliefs in the transference or recycling of souls were not discussed in terms of their possible relevance to the Classic period.

The subsequent three chapters treat body processing and disposition, grave preparation and ornamentation, grave furniture, the ritual events of funerals, the places of the royal dead — tombs and temples — and subsequent tomb rituals. For this last category there is both archaeological and epigraphic information for tomb re-entry, often as a kind of fire ritual. Other post-funeral activities include tomb reuse, removal of body parts and the final sealing of the tomb entrance. Even after that last event, royal ancestors were contacted via various rituals, and they continued to be invoked, even to the point of being 'present' to witness rituals undertaken by their descendants. In these chapters Fitzsimmons provides more descriptive detail for certain well known royal dead to illustrate the variability in funerary treatment within the Classic Maya world.

Relying on iconographic and epigraphic interpretations by leading Maya scholars, Fitzsimmons reads the symbolism in a direct sense as manifesting Maya cosmology. While acknowledging difficulties in dealing with fragmented and incommensurate bits of information, he is less concerned with the hermeneutic difficulties inherent in the fact that writing, rituals and burials are all symbolic representations with political implications. This factor would seem especially relevant in the case of semi-divine persons who in life embodied the centrality of sociocosmic order necessary for the well-being of their polities, and after death became a fount of legitimizing authority for those who claimed them as ancestors. In most cases funerals and inscriptions were commissioned by the royal family, and dissenting or disinterested opinions were not recorded.

Other aspects of royal death that could have been considered lay beyond the author's stated objectives or were only briefly mentioned. These include the physical characteristics of the dead as determined by physical

anthropologists, which have sometimes been found to contradict representations of those persons in images and inscriptions (e.g. Tiesler & Cucina 2006). The inclusion of other humans in graves as sacrificial victims was excluded from consideration, as was the reuse of human bones as artefacts placed in royal tombs. Although Chapter 4 'Death and Landscape' provides descriptions of individual tombs and temples, the larger dynamic landscape linking the dead to the living in Maya capitals remains to be developed. The sixth and final chapter, 'The Dead King and the Body Politic', considers whether royal funerals were public or private rituals and the relationships of corpses to mourners (mainly the immediate family rather than society at large), but is brief in its discussion of the politics of the dead. The contexts and consequences of regicide, such as execution following capture in warfare as known from texts and imagery, were also not considered. Fitzsimmons's work should therefore provide the impetus and groundwork for a systemic historical overview of royal death at a regional level, including consequences of the demises of important kings on the politics of succession and the fortunes of other capitals and secondary centres (allies and enemies), as well as the emulation of funerary practices and the spread of cults associated with the dead.

The book is based on the author's 2002 dissertation, and the intended audience is Maya specialists who do not require an introduction to the Classic Maya civilization or explanations of the different Maya calendars, iconography or epigraphy. Each chapter except the last is well illustrated with black and white line drawings and photos, a few of the latter also reproduced as colour plates. Among the drawings are snippets of hieroglyphic texts and pictures of artefacts with complex imagery, but with virtually no guide to their identifications. Nevertheless, the writing is clear and accessible, such that the perspicacious non-specialist reader should be able to comprehend key ideas and evidentiary arguments.

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