



The Bones of K'inich Janaab Pakal: A History of the Controversy Over His Age At Death

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Discovery of the Secret Chamber

In 1949 the Mexican archaeologist Alberto Ruz Lhuillier began exploring and excavating the Classic Maya site of Palenque, Mexico. After four swelteringly hot seasons of work in the Temple of the Inscriptions where his crew dug the debris out of the hidden interior stairs, Ruz discovered a tomb that had been buried for more than 1200 years. The discovery happened in 1952, at a time when very limited anthropological methods were available to determine age at death. Ruz's physical anthropologists made an osteological determination that the occupant in the tomb was between 40 and 50 years of age at death. This determination was made by two of Ruz's colleagues from the National Museum of Anthropology named Eusebio Dávalos and Arturo Romano (Ruz Lhuillier 1954). In his archaeological report written soon after the discovery, Ruz stated that this age determination was based upon a preliminary *in situ* study. Even though it was only a tentative study, over the next 28 years Ruz would go to great lengths defending it as absolutely correct.

The Mysterious Block

When Ruz found the chamber, he thought he had discovered a giant elaborate altar inside an abandoned chapel (Ruz Lhuillier and Mason 1953:96). It was on June 15, 1952 that Ruz and his crew found it at the base of the hidden interior stairs of the Inscriptions temple (Ruz Lhuillier 1954:6-7). On top of the altar was an elaborate carving that Ruz believed "must be something very essential about the Maya religion" (Ruz Lhuillier 1952b:9). As he

and his workmen set about cleaning and recording the contents of the chamber, they could not keep their eyes off of the carving. In addition to the low-relief sculpture on the top, there were hieroglyphs all around the edges. This discovery happened at the beginning of the rainy season. According to Ruz, when the rains began, water ran down the walls and down the stalactites inside the chamber, and the constant dampness was too much for the crew (Ruz Lhuillier and Mason 1953:97). They ended their work for the season but they were on pins and needles to try to understand the nature of this large, mysterious block, so Ruz planned to return for a second season that same year. The first season began on April 28 and ended July 5, and the second season took place from November 15 until December 21—this last was a special 37-day session. Both endeavors were minimally funded by Ruz's employer, the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH). The news of a secret chamber found in the Maya jungle made world-wide news headlines. Between the first and second seasons, Ruz's public speaking engagements were many (Ruz Buenfil 2010). He wanted to get the word out about the discovery, and I suspect that at the same time he hoped that he could raise money to continue to excavate the secret chamber. Nelson Rockefeller, the American benefactor who had earlier provided funding for the project, had ceased funding it after the 1951 season (Schele 2012:159).¹ However, he began funding it once again at the urging of Rosa Covarrubias after she

¹ By the end of the project in 1958, Rockefeller had funded forty percent of it.

saw a presentation Ruz made about the discovery of the elaborate tomb (Covarrubias 1954).² Also during this time, Ruz presented a paper and published at least two articles and a report in which he discussed the altar and the iconography of the carved lid. The presentation was at the Thirtieth International Congress of Americanists held in Cambridge, England; one article was published in the periodical *Tribuna Israelita* and another in *Cuadernos Americanos*; in addition, there was his 1954 archaeological report to INAH.

As stated above, there were glyphs all around the edge of the lid, some of which were dates. At the time of discovery, the dates were the only glyphs that could be read. Without understanding the meaning of the other glyphs—perhaps they were the names, the verbs, and the nouns to which the dates referred—scholars could not discern anything about historical events. An additional problem was the fact that all the dates were Calendar Round dates and were not anchored to a Long Count date. Maya Long Count dates are similar to our count of the years from the birth of Christ wherein we can anchor a date from an origin point instead of only using our month and day names.

But if Ruz could find a Long Count date on another monument at Palenque with the same Calendar Round as a date found on the lid, it could be possible to place the Calendar Round date into a 52-year cycle, thereby positioning an event in time. One date in particular stood out from the rest, and it was carved in a very prominent spot. It was the first glyph on the left, on the south side, a side that would have been seen first as one entered the chamber—that glyph was 8 Ajaw. Later, when he realized that there was a tomb under the large elaborate lid, Ruz began to call the deceased by this tzolk'in date, Uaxac Ahau³ (8 Ajaw), believing that this date was the birthday of the occupant of the tomb. Many years later it would be discovered that 8 Ajaw was indeed the occupant's birthday in the 260-day Maya sacred calendar. The birthdates on the lid were identified after Tatiana Proskouriakoff deciphered the hieroglyph for "birth" in 1960. This glyph was located on the lid edge immediately following the Calendar Round date of 8 Ajaw 13 Pop. Drawing upon his knowledge of other Mesoamerican cultures, Ruz believed that 8 Ajaw could have been the tomb occupant's birth name. Among the Aztec and the Mixtec, it was the custom to name the child by the date (coefficient and day-name) on which they were born (Boone 2007:29; Terraciano 2004). We now know that the name of the deceased was written as "K'inich Janab Pakal." According to Peter Mathews, this king "was one of the most documented of all Classic Maya individuals" in the inscriptions (Mathews 2014).

Mathews found 100 entries for him at the site, although some of them do not specifically mention him by name but give background information. In addition, there was a "Janaab Pakal" the elder who died in AD 612 and two other kings at Palenque named Pakal, adding to the puzzle of individual king identification.

In all three of his publications written between the field seasons, Ruz anchored the Calendar Round date of 8 Ajaw 13 Pop at AD 603. In his paper presented to the 30th International Congress, he noted that of those eighteen hieroglyphs found on the side of the lid, thirteen or fourteen were Calendar Round dates (Ruz Lhuillier 1952b:9). He stated that the Calendar Round date 8 Ajaw 13 Pop is also found on the House C stairway of the Palace, and he wrote that it was most likely associated with the Long Count date of 9.8.9.13.0, which in our calendar falls in AD 603. In effect, Ruz accepted this interpretation of the dates and the placement of them as pertaining to events in the early 600s AD. In addition, he wrote that the date 1 Ajaw 8 K'ayab, also found on the lid, is located on the Tablet of the Cross and corresponds to 9.10.0.0.0, which is a period ending. He thought that this was the dedication date for the monument. The Long Count date from the Palace, as well as the one for the Tablet of the Cross, was given to him by Eric Thompson, the project epigrapher (Schele 2012:95). Years later, it would be discovered that 9.12.11.5.18 was the actual dedication date of the "altar" and also the day that Pakal died. However, almost 20 years later Ruz would deny the placement of the 8 Ajaw 13 Pop date because it did not support the argument that the occupant was between 40 and 50 years old when he died.⁴

In his archaeological report on the 1952 season at Palenque published by INAH in their *Anales del Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Historia y Etnografía* (Ruz Lhuillier 1954), Ruz again discussed the carved hieroglyphs all around the sides of the sarcophagus lid. As before, the section of the report about the inscription was written when Ruz thought that it was only an altar and he did not know that a tomb was under it. But after

² In her letter to Rockefeller, she wrote: "I don't know how you will receive this, but last night I attended a lecture by Alberto Ruz, our archaeologist of Palenque. The lecture was on Palenque, and it was marvelous, with colored slides and movies of the latest finds. The last year's discoveries are the most important in Mexican archaeology. A burial tomb like the Egyptians and a formidable person in situ, with all his jewels, the face covered by a mosaic jade mask. The stone covering the tomb is a spectacular work of art."

³ Waxak Ajaw in current orthography.

⁴ He would eventually move the first date on the edge of the lid, 8 Ajaw 13 Pop, forward by 52 years to AD 655.

| | | |
|-------------|---|---|
| South side: | 8 Ajaw 6 Etz'nab | 13 Pop 11 Yax |
| North side: | 2 Kimi | 14 Mol |
| East side: | 5 Kaban 7 Kib 9 Manik' 7 Ajaw 11 Chikchan 2 Eb | 5 Mak 4 K'ayab 5 Yaxk'in 3 K'ank'in 3 K'ayab (Ruz thought it should be 4 K'ayab) 0 (or 10) Keh |
| West Side: | 3 Chuwen 4 Ok 1 Ajaw 13 Kimi | 4 Wayeb 13 Yax 8 K'ayab 4 Pax |

Table 1. Calendar glyphs on the edge of the Sarcophagus Lid as written by Ruz (with the spellings updated from Colonial orthography).

discovering that a tomb lay under the carved lid, he applied common logic to the task and stated that somewhere in the room there should be glyphs that tell the date of birth and death of the person buried there (Ruz Lhuillier 1954:94). He concluded that most likely these glyphs would also describe some of the occupant's accomplishments, since the man inside was a major figure at Palenque.⁵ He reasoned that the Calendar Round dates were associated with the fundamental facts about the great lord that had been buried in the tomb, although "it would be impossible to define the exact time in terms of absolutes and of course even more impossible to relate them to actual events" (Ruz Lhuillier 1954d:94).

In total, Ruz counted fifty-four carved hieroglyphs on the edge of the lid, with twelve on the south edge, six on the north, and eighteen each on the east and west. He displayed the dates in a table that I have reproduced in Table 1. He sorted them based upon their distribution with respect to the cardinal directions.

Ruz thought it curious that the date 1 Ajaw 8 K'ayab on the west side of the lid was sandwiched between two other Calendar Round dates. He commented that this was a highly irregular way for the Maya to express Calendar Round dates. As mentioned previously, he and Thompson inventoried some of the other Calendar Rounds at Palenque that corresponded with the ones found on the lid, hoping to find some kind of pattern or clue. Table 2 represents all four of the dates that Ruz noted in his report that were found in other Palenque inscriptions available at that time.

According to this information, the latest date on the lid was 9.12.11.5.18, 6 Etz'nab 11 Yax,⁶ which

⁵ Ruz did not realize that the inscription on the edge of the lid was not solely about the man in the tomb, but instead referenced the protagonist's ancestors, justifying Pakal's right to rule.

⁶ This Calendar Round date is anchored correctly, but Ruz did not realize that it recorded the death of Janaab Pakal the elder.

| CR Day | CR Month | Long Count | Comment |
|-----------|------------|--------------|---|
| 8 Ajaw | 13 Pop | 9.8.9.13.0 | From the stairs of Palace, Building C Temple of the Inscriptions Tablet, according to Eric Thompson |
| 6 Etz'nab | 11 Yax | 9.12.11.5.18 | |
| 7 Ajaw | 3 K'ank'in | 9.7.0.0.0 | Temple of the Inscriptions Tablet, according to Eric Thompson |
| 1 Ajaw | 8 K'ayab | 9.10.0.0.0 | Temple of the Inscriptions Tablet, according to Eric Thompson |

Table 2. Inventory of the site of Palenque calendar glyphs corresponding to those on edge of the lid (CR = Calendar Round).

was 3,132 days or 8.7 years away from the k'atun ending on 9.13.0.0.0,⁷ so Thompson believed that the "altar" was dedicated on 9.13.0.0.0 in order to celebrate the k'atun ending (Ruz Lhuillier 1954:94). This conclusion is not surprising, since they both thought it an altar, not a tomb. In reality, the date of the monument dedication was 6 Etz'nab 11 Yax, August 28, 683, the date of Pakal's death. The k'atun ending date of 9.13.0.0.0 fell on the Calendar Round date of 1 Ajaw 8 K'ayab and is associated with Lady Sak K'uk', Pakal's mother (Peter Mathews, personal communication 2003).

At this juncture, Ruz did not realize that the person depicted on the lid was the person in the tomb. Even as late as 1970, Ruz did not believe that the "youth" on the sarcophagus lid was the same person who occupied the tomb. He wrote of the image, "If this were a tomb of the European Renaissance, we would say that this figure represented the buried person inside. But the religious essence of Maya art is so strong that it is more likely a symbol, perhaps of man in general, that is, humanity, or perhaps the god of corn, as well, since he is commonly represented as a young man" (Ruz Lhuillier 1970:117).

The Second Season of 1952

Returning to the drama taking place in the tomb chamber, Ruz and his crew were extremely anxious and curious to know the purpose of the large stone block and its carved top. They did not want to wait until the 1953 season to solve the mystery and to unlock the altar's secrets. With this in mind, they returned to Palenque on November 15, 1952 for a special 37-day season. The goal was to determine if the altar was one solid block of stone, i.e. an altar, or if it was hollow inside. If it was solid there would be nothing to investigate under the carved stone and it would not be advisable to lift the lid and possibly damage a carving of extraordinary value.

Drilling the holes

It was with this cautionary note in mind that they began using a hand auger to drill holes into the side of what they thought was probably a one-meter-high massive table altar (Ruz Lhuillier and Mason 1953:97). The northeast and southwest corners were the easiest places to access because there were lateral buttresses obstructing the other sides. Holes were drilled into the corners horizontally and at different heights.⁸ A few days later, at the northeast location, they drilled at a depth of 1.75 meters in the middle of the stone block and since they still did not find a hollow cavity, they

stopped. When they drilled on the southwest side, they reached a depth of 1.05 meters and finally hit a hollow spot. Later, in his book *The Civilization of the Ancient Maya*, Ruz wrote that discovering that the altar was hollow "moved me almost as strongly as the discovery of the crypt itself" (Ruz Lhuillier 1970:114). He instructed his workers to insert a wire into the hole and as they removed it they saw that it had red particles on it. They widened the opening and directed a light inside and saw a wall of what Ruz described as "red paint." Ruz knew that the presence of the "paint" was another indication that this might be a sarcophagus. He wrote in his 1954 *Anales* report that in Maya and Aztec cosmogony, red is associated with the east and usually is present in tombs and is sprinkled upon human remains (Ruz Lhuillier 1954:95). He made the decision that the carved lid must be raised.

In his 1952 report on the tomb in the *Anales*, Ruz (1954) did not explain how they were able to raise the five-ton carved lid from atop the stone block. He simply wrote that on the 27th of November they lifted the carved tablet using car jacks positioned on top of tree trunks that were placed at each corner of the large stone block. He also wrote that it took 24 consecutive hours of cooperative hard work from many colleagues and workers. The details of that cooperative work reveal much about the excitement of the moment, Ruz's colleagues, and about Ruz himself.

Calling his Friends

How did a handful of men working in a hot, humid, isolated jungle environment and in a very confined space lift a five-ton horizontal slab? To piece the story together, I refer to writings that Ruz completed after the 1952 event and upon accounts written by others who were present. When Ruz realized that the block was hollow, he rallied all the resources that he could muster before attempting to lift the large stone. According to his friend, the historian and folklore specialist José Servin Palencia, Ruz and Ruz's good friend Dávalos in Mexico City began calling colleagues at INAH asking them to come and assist him in the difficult and delicate task of raising the heavy lid. Servin wrote that he received a phone call from Dávalos, requesting that he come to Palenque with several other people because there had been an amazing

⁷ There is only one instance of this Long Count date for the Temple of the Inscriptions and it is found on the West Tablet (Peter Mathews, personal communication 2014).

⁸ The person drilling these holes may have been a master stonemason from Oxcutzcab, Yucatan, named Juan Chablé (Stuart and Stuart 2008:7).

discovery.⁹ Ruz did not tell him the details, only that Servin needed to bring his photographic supplies, including large supplies of film and equipment (Servin Palencia 1981:11).

Another person, among many others who were summoned, was the physical anthropologist Arturo Romano Pacheco. Years later, in an interview with Antonio Bertrán, a reporter with the newspaper *Reforma*, Romano said that Ruz had called him and asked him to come to Palenque and to “bring all your equipment” (Bertrán 2002). Romano owned two 35-millimeter Leica cameras and several other pieces of photographic equipment that he had used when he had worked for Ruz at Chichén Itzá.¹⁰ The team also brought osteometric tools such as spreading and sliding calipers, an osteometric board, and index tables from Mexico City for use in the tomb (Romano Pacheco 1980a; Tiesler and Cucina 2006:7). In time, Romano would be coauthor with Eusebio Dávalos of the Appendix to the *Anales* report on the 1952 season (Ruz Lhuillier 1954) wherein they wrote of the preliminary in situ examination of the bones in the tomb.

As Ruz had requested, his friends and colleagues gathered together in Mexico City to get ready for the trip to Palenque and the next day they left on the first available plane for Villahermosa and then another that took them to Palenque. The following people were on board: Alfonso Ortega Martínez, the Secretary of the INAH; Eusebio Dávalos, the director of the National Museum of Anthropology (Servin Palencia 1981:11); José Servin, photographer, historian, and specialist in folklore; and Gustavo Durán de Huerta, who was a journalist (Bertrán 2002).¹¹ Arturo Romano and Carlos Pellicer, the noted Mexican poet and at the time head of the Tabasco regional museum (Romano 1980), arrived by plane a little later with the luggage. They landed on a gravel field at a small airport three kilometers north of the town of Santo Domingo de Palenque. Then they all got into a jeep that took them to the site where they headed for the camp to see Ruz (Servin Palencia 1981:11).

Servin wrote that he will never forget the look on the faces of Ruz and his principal assistant César Sáenz when he first saw them sitting at the camp dining room table. As they sat there, elbows on the table and chins resting in the palms of their hands, they looked very tired, downcast, and sad, not noticing the arrival of their colleagues. As the day progressed, they all began to understand the magnitude of the problem that Ruz faced. He told them that the budget for the project had been completely depleted and that work would need to be suspended on Saturday afternoon, after the weekly payroll was done.¹² He told them that this was his

second Palenque season for the year 1952 and consequently he had pushed his meager budget to its limit. I believe that having his friends present at the opening of the tomb served several purposes. One was for moral support at the opening of such an important tomb, but I speculate that the most important reason for their presence was to have them experience the exhilaration of entering the tomb chamber. If they were part of the discovery he could make a strong case that the project should be continued and funded.

Ruz tried to explain to his friends what he had found—the long dark stairway into the belly of the pyramid, the bones of the sacrificed youths outside the chamber, the secret chamber with the carved lid, and the hollow stone box under it, but they wanted to see for themselves. He took the group down to the bottom of the inner stairs to the chamber and showed them. Servin (1981:12) wrote that that the group was astonished to the point of being speechless. During the visit, Ruz gained assurances from Alfonso Ortega, the Secretary of INAH, that future funding would continue, and he began making plans during their evening meal regarding the things that needed to be done the next day (Servin Palencia 1981:13).

In situations such as this, Ruz’s ability to direct and delegate tasks always emerged. He began dividing up the jobs, giving each person an assignment based upon his individual specialties (Servin Palencia 1981). However, he gave the historian and photographer Servin the supervisory job of finding and cutting *barí*¹³ tree trunks in the Palenque forest. The trunks had to be cut into four proportionate

⁹ Servin writes that this happened on Saturday, November 29 (Servin Palencia 1981:11); however, according to Ruz, it was November 27 when they raised the lid.

¹⁰ In addition to the task of taking photographs, he said that he was eventually assigned the role of general “handyman.” He had to keep the power supply and the hydraulic pump operational. They also gave him the job of taking care of the supplies, and thereafter, of supervising the operations of the archaeological camp (Bertrán 2002).

¹¹ Romano reported that Gustavo Durán participated in the nightly meetings set up by Ruz and was given briefings so that Durán could send out communications to the public about the developments happening in the tomb.

¹² From 1949 to 1951, Ruz had been receiving money from both INAH and Nelson Rockefeller. During those three years, he had received a total of 315,000 pesos, but for the year 1952, Rockefeller stopped funding the project and Ruz received only 40,000 pesos from INAH for the entire year.

¹³ This wood is from a tree with the scientific name of *Calophyllum brasiliense* and one of its common names is “barí.” It is a hardwood native to the area and is easy to manipulate. The bottom portion of the trunk is branch-free, a characteristic that would have been an asset in this case, since the workmen would not have to spend precious time trimming the branches off the trunk.

sizes and rolled down the inside stairs; then they would be used to help lift the heavy lid. After bringing them down the stairs, they realized that one of them had ants inside it and for a while these created great discomfort for those working in the chamber. Ruz explained the strategy of using the logs to remove the lid:

They sawed four short, thick trunk sections, brought them along a path deep in mud, carried them up the steps of the pyramid and lowered them by ropes down the inside stairway to the crypt. These logs, standing on end, served as solid supports for the jacks. And as the carved cover slab protruded sufficiently over the sides of the underlying stone box, it was possible to place a log and jack under each of the four corners. (Ruz Lhuillier and Mason 1953:97)

Lifting the lid

Evening approached and they were finally ready to begin the process of lifting the five-ton lid. In his excitement Ruz had lost all track of time and in the dark, artificially-lit chamber it was hard to know what time of day it was. However Ruz's foreman Agustín Álvarez told him, "Six o'clock, patron. And the men have worked twelve hours without eating. Hadn't we better knock off until tomorrow?" Ruz replied, "We're going to work till we get to the end of this! ... Send for some tortillas, beans and coffee for all of us" (Ruz Lhuillier and Mason 1953:97).

After eating, they returned to working with the jacks.¹⁴ It was the evening of November 27, 1952. They were anxious to get into the tomb cavity so that they could quickly consolidate the bones and make drawings (Servin Palencia 1981). Servin remembered, "As the work of hoisting the slab began, I have in my mind's eye, the picture of Ruz standing up, directing the very careful and slow ascension of it, holding both arms up like the gesture of a conductor" (Servin Palencia 1981:13).

The lid slowly rose, inch by inch. Underneath the carved monument they were surprised to find another cavity that was sealed by a highly polished stone having been embedded with four holes capped with plugs. The cavity was carved in an oblong and curvilinear manner that ended in what Ruz calls the "tail of a fish" or an omega (Ruz Lhuillier 1954).¹⁵ Each time they jacked up the lid, they placed a board under it in case one of the jacks failed to hold. As soon as the space was about 38 centimeters wide, which was enough room for Ruz to get under the lid, he said, "I can't wait any longer, boys" and took two of the plugs out, shined his flashlight in one hole, and looked through the other. He wrote "a few centimeters from my eyes

—was a skull covered with pieces of jade" (Ruz Lhuillier 1970:115).

My first impression was a mosaic of green, red and white. Then it resolved itself into details—green jade ornaments, red painted teeth and bones, and fragments of a mask. I was gazing at the death face of him for whom all this stupendous work—the crypt, the sculpture, the stairway, the great pyramid with its crowning temple—had been built, the mortal remains of one of the greatest men of Palenque! This was a sarcophagus, the first ever found in a Maya pyramid. (Ruz Lhuillier and Mason 1953:97)

According to Ruz, by placing ropes through the holes in the second lid, they lifted it off in a manner that must have been similar to the way that the ancient Maya priests had put it in place (Ruz Lhuillier 1970:115). They rested this second lid upon the northern buttress. Then the funerary container and its contents could be clearly seen. The cavity had been carved so that all around the edges of the larger cavity there was a sort of ledge measuring about ten centimeters wide, allowing the nine-centimeter-thick stone cover to rest without disturbing the corpse below. The carved-out area measured 1.98 meters long, 0.95 meters wide, and 0.36 meters deep.

Something interesting happens to the psyche of an archaeologist when he/she finds a tomb as remarkable as this. Ruz's name and his future career would forever be associated with this tomb and its occupant, just as the name of his teacher and mentor Alfonso Caso would always be associated with Tomb 7 at Monte Alban. In an additional twist to Ruz' story, he began to closely associate himself with the occupant of the tomb and with the site itself. To illustrate this, I relate an interview with Ruz in the *Saturday Evening Post* with J. Alden Mason almost one year after the discovery of the tomb (Ruz Lhuillier and Mason 1953). Mason recounts a story told to him by Ruz. One of Ruz's workmen, Guadalupe Pech, asked Ruz, "Can you read that writing, chief?" (referring to the glyphs on the side of the lid). Ruz replied, "Only the dates. There's one that comes out to AD 603 and another is January 27, 633. January 27 is also my birthday."¹⁶ Pech replied, "Then certainly what that stone says

¹⁴ These jacks were either automobile or builder's jacks.

¹⁵ Later, Ruz wrote that the shape was of a stylized womb, thus the person in the tomb was returning to mother earth, the source of all life (Ruz Lhuillier 1979:114). He also subsequently restated that it was in the shape of a fish.

¹⁶ Later, it would be discovered through decipherment that the 603 date was the birthdate of the man in the tomb and that the 633 (January 27th) date is a period-ending celebrated by Ix Sak K'uk', the man's mother.

is that you would come someday to discover what is buried down here; it's prophecy."

Opening the Tomb and the In Situ Study

The inside of the tomb cavity was polished and painted with what Ruz called "red paint," but according to Dávalos, the physical anthropologist who made the osteological examination, the substance was probably cinnabar (Dávalos Hurtado and Romano Pacheco 1954). Ruz told Mason in the 1953 interview referred to above, that after they lifted the second lid

...there the great man was, laid out full length, at the bottom of the deep stone basin, the interior of which had been painted red. Although the bones were so decayed and fragile that we could not make precise measurements to determine his physical type—and the skull was in bad shape—he appeared to have been a robust man of forty or fifty, and of good height—about five feet, eight inches. (Ruz Lhuillier and Mason 1953:97)

At the moment they opened the tomb, they could see the bones breaking down due to the impact of the new air entering the chamber. In addition, the skeleton was much deteriorated due to the high humidity, and Servin (1981:13) wrote that he and others expeditiously went about conserving the bone. Because the height of the man was greater than most Maya, Ruz believed that he must have been of non-Maya origin (Ruz Lhuillier 1967:367). He also noticed that the teeth were not filed or incised as was typical for most ancient Maya elite persons. He believed the person to be a priest and noted the large volume of jade jewelry that accompanied him into death.

Ruz's physical anthropologists, Eusebio Dávalos Hurtado and Arturo Romano Pacheco spent three days in the chamber (Tiesler and Cucina 2006:7), presumably examining the remains and conducting forensics on the bones.¹⁷ It must have been a very difficult task to reach into the crypt because the ancient builders had "buttressed it with rude masonry that filled the greater part of the chamber almost up to the level of the carved slab cover" (Ruz Lhuillier and Mason 1953:97). Ruz thought that the six buttresses surrounding it must have been placed there (Ruz Lhuillier 1954) to protect it from additional cracking.¹⁸ A three-and-one-half page study done by the physical anthropologists was included in the *Anales* appendix. Intended to only be a preliminary investigation, it was entitled "Estudio preliminar de los restos osteológicos encontrados en la tumba del Templo de las Inscripciones, Palenque" (Dávalos Hurtado and Romano Pacheco 1954). Dávalos and Romano

believed that the skeleton belonged to an adult male who was 1.65 meters tall and had a stout build, with no skeletal pathology (Dávalos Hurtado and Romano Pacheco 1954). They reported that his approximate age was between 40 and 50 years.¹⁹ Although they did not specifically explain this in the report, the age estimate was partly based upon the fact that the wear on the teeth was very slight (Tiesler and Cucina 2006:7-8).

Their assessment was verified by Ruz and Romano many years later (Romano Pacheco 1980a; Ruz Lhuillier 1977a; Tiesler and Cucina 2006). However, in the 1950s, if a person died after the age of 40 or 50 years, the methods and the technology were not available to assess the age of death past middle age (Urcid 1993:2). They only yielded approximations. In 1980, Romano would look back on the experience and shed more light upon what happened in at least two academic papers, one found in the edited book *Palenque: esplendor del arte maya*. Here he reported that the bones were extremely deteriorated with fractures and cracks but they could see that there were no "macroscopic defects" or injuries to the bones (Romano Pacheco 1980a:292). He wrote that they made measurements without touching or moving them. He wrote that because of the position of the feet they believed that the body was not shrouded; however, at the time of the discovery it was thought that it had been coated in red, based upon what Ruz wrote in his archaeological report to INAH (Ruz Lhuillier 1954).²⁰ The "shroud" was no longer evident, but the red pigment had survived and was still attached to the bones and to the jewelry. The condition of the bones was deteriorated and the conservation efforts did not help. The facial skeleton was the best preserved part, but looking at it with a magnifying glass they could see that many fractures had occurred when new air entered the tomb. Of all the bones, the jaw bone was in the best shape. Romano also wrote that the cranial vault was most likely intentionally flattened like the carvings of the faces of important people on the site's monuments. Long bones and back bones broke to the

¹⁷ Romano (1989:1419) wrote that all those in the chamber were told by Ruz not to touch anything until everything had been photographed to accurately document what they found. Romano stayed in the tomb longer than anyone else in order to take as many photographs as possible (Romano Pacheco 1980a:285).

¹⁸ The altar had cracks in it from ancient times.

¹⁹ Many years later, the reported age of this ruler was disputed due to epigraphic evidence that indicated that he lived to the age of 80.

²⁰ In a twenty-first-century study it would finally be determined that he was not shrouded but was instead coated with an organic black substance.

touch, but they could see that there were no injuries to the bones before death. The teeth had been intact when the tomb was opened but soon fell out “leaving only the roots in their sockets, shedding their crown” (Romano Pacheco 1980b:296). There was dental mutilation and according to the classification of Javier Romero (1958), this could be classified as type B-1 and B-2. The skull “presented skull oblique tabular intentional deformation” (Romano Pacheco 1980b:298). He wrote nothing else about the teeth. When Dávalos, Ortega, and Servin returned to the site, they agreed to remove all of the facial skull fragments, including the jaw in order to carefully study them in the Department of Physical Anthropology at the National Museum of Anthropology. However, this follow-up study was not done until 1977 right before the Second Palenque Mesa Redonda, which was a symposium of Maya scholars and enthusiasts that will be discussed below.

Determining the age at death of the bones in the tomb was just one of many important tasks that needed to be accomplished, and they had to act quickly because it was the end of the season and they had no money. In a personal communication to Peter Mathews in the early 1970s, Romano told Mathews that Ruz and the excavation team were more concerned with trying to secure the tomb from looters than they were with dating the skeleton. Soon they would be leaving the site and would not be back until the 1953 season. This situation caused them to focus a substantial amount of their attention on security measures (Peter Mathews, personal communication 2014). In addition, Romano was charged with other duties in the chamber such as taking additional photographs.

Of the two physical anthropologists, Romano and Dávalos, Romano was the junior and he continued to work with his cameras in the chamber until December 21. He had many problems with producing good photos, including trying to get the cameras to focus and dealing with the explosions of his flash bulbs as water dripped down on them from the ceiling of the chamber (Bertrán 2002). He used both black and white and color film, but the color rolls had to be sent to the United States for development and he was under great distress for an entire month while he worried over whether or not the film would be returned. In the end, the photos came back without incident and all the pictures turned out well.²¹ According to the reporter, Bertrán, Ruz had asked Romano to make three copies of each picture because they “might be useful someday” (Bertrán 2002). There is no information about how long the other physical anthropologist Eusebio Dávalos stayed and worked in the chamber. At this time, Dávalos was the newly appointed

director of the National Museum of Anthropology, so his many duties must have called him away.

Who was this physical anthropologist Dávalos?

In addition to being a long-time friend of Ruz's, Eusebio Dávalos Hurtado was the physical anthropologist who led the osteological study on Pakal's bones. One of the benefits of being present at the opening of the tomb was the elevation of Dávalos's status as a scholar. They were very close friends—he and Ruz had graduated from the Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia (ENAH) the same year, with Ruz being the first archaeology student and Dávalos the first anthropologist. Dávalos already had a medical license. Then as graduate students, he and Ruz traveled to France for a study abroad program, where they lived and studied together for a year. Dávalos became Director of ENAH in 1950, then director of the National Anthropology Museum from 1952 to 1956. During his tenure at the latter, he began a process of museum modernization and expansion, the most important component of which was the National Museum in Chapultepec Park. Accomplishing this required that he negotiate with three presidents, so his political savvy was considerable. According to his friend and fellow anthropologist, Luis A. Vargas (1999), Dávalos initiated and created museum after museum.

Regarding his skills as a physical anthropologist, Tiesler and Jaén (2012) believe that it was due to his pioneering efforts that paleopathology became a distinctive discipline in Mexico. He conducted the study of the bones of Hernán Cortés and diagnosed him with Paget's disease and nonspecific osteosis, which is a noninfectious chronic inflammatory condition. He did not see any signs of syphilis in Cortés, in contrast with what had been written in the history books. Over the years Dávalos became an influential giant in Mexican archaeology and anthropology whose administrative influence rivaled Ruz's. He eventually became head of INAH and held that office for twelve years, from approximately 1956 until his death in 1968. Through his leadership and effective collaboration with Jorge Gurría, INAH began to publish high-quality documents in several languages that were well received, both by scholars and the public. Another Dávalos achievement was the raising of money for large archaeological explorations in Teotihuacan and in Cholula, whose budgets became larger than that of INAH itself. He understood the close relationship between

²¹ These are the celebrated color photos that were taken of the red bones of the tomb occupant, Pakal.

tourism and entertainment. He was the first to install sound and light shows at archaeological sites, specifically concerts at Tepoztlan and sound and light shows at Teotihuacan. He was able to shape and train many new archaeologists. His biographer Eduardo Matos Moctezuma names organization after organization where Dávalos served as secretary, treasurer, or president. Dávalos died in 1968, before the inception of the controversy about the study he coauthored of Pakal. In 1976 the Mexican government changed the name of the National Library of Anthropology and History by adding the name Dr. Eusebio Dávalos Hurtado. 1968 was also the year of the Tlatelolco massacre and a very dangerous time for Mexico. This situation will be discussed below in the section "1973 - The First Palenque Mesa Redonda."

1958 – Yucatan and Dávalos

There is one more item of note about the relationship between Ruz and Dávalos. In October of 1958, when Ruz was director of Mexico's northeast archaeological zone and the director of Chichen Itza, he became entangled in a dispute with Agustín Franco, the governor of Yucatan. Ruz had angered the powerful Barbachano family because he would not let them use Chichen Itza for a movie set (Castro 1959; Ruz Buenfil 2010). The film director and crew did not have the required permit from INAH to film at the site. Ruz had recommended against the permit because he thought the script was degrading to the Maya culture (Ruz Buenfil 2010). In a ploy to divert Ruz away from the site, he was arrested for a hit-and-run accident he did not cause, but he was locked up twice for several hours. Ruz's site guardian at Chichen Itza was threatened and beaten. A few days later, in retaliation for the mistreatment of Ruz, Dávalos as head of INAH revoked an agreement that had been signed between the governor and INAH earlier that year. The agreement would have created the Yucatecan Institute of Anthropology based in Merida, with a relative of the Barbachano family as its director. The story of Ruz's arrest was published in the local newspaper *El Diario de Yucatán* and subsequently in a Mexico City newspaper (Ruz Buenfil 2010). The incident became a major problem for the officials in Mexico City since they did not relish a fight with Yucatan. Generally, Yucatan and its people have harbored the feeling that they were not really part of Mexico. This sentiment has a long history that goes back in time to at least the Yucatan secession (1839–1843) when the people of this region attempted to break away from the central government in Mexico City. Thus, Ruz owed a great deal to his friend Dávalos. After looking

at all the evidence, I believe that Ruz's loyalty to Dávalos was unshakable. He would have never tarnished the good name of this great man, who was also his friend, by admitting that the 1952 in situ study was flawed or incomplete. It is interesting to note that 1958 was also the year that Ruz learned from Heinrich Berlin that the inscription on the side of the sarcophagus lid indicated that the man in the tomb was 80 years of age.

In 1959, Ruz entered the field of academia and by choice he never worked as an archaeologist again. He began teaching at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) in the Institute of History (de la Garza 2001:1) and eventually he founded the Seminario de Cultura Maya.

1959 – Who was Heinrich Berlin?

Another major scholar who worked with Ruz at Palenque was the archaeologist Heinrich Berlin. Berlin had worked there previously under Miguel Ángel Fernández. He began working under Ruz in 1956 when they excavated Temple XVIIIa. Berlin was originally from Germany and had moved to Mexico in 1935, just five years prior to his work at Palenque with Fernández (Stuart and Stuart 2008:91). This was same year that Ruz immigrated to Mexico from Cuba. Berlin and Ruz moved to Mexico during the administration of the liberal Mexican President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–1940), a populist/socialist leader who opened Mexico's doors to people from all over the world seeking asylum from war-torn places such as Nicaragua, Cuba, and Russia, and from Spain's civil war.²² Berlin attended UNAM's Facultad de Filosofía y Letras from 1935 to 1939. From 1940 to 1945 he did his fieldwork in Palenque under Fernández and graduated with a master's degree from UNAM in 1942. He received a doctorate in anthropology in 1947 from that same university (Báez Macías 1989). His areas of interest were Maya archaeology and colonial history, but his most important future contributions would be in the field of epigraphy (García Moll 1985:265). In 1943, he published a paper called "Notes on Glyph C of the Lunar Series at Palenque," the first of many papers regarding Maya hieroglyphic writing. George Stuart writes:

In the beginning, these [papers] dealt with chronological matters (Berlin 1943), and included important identifications such as the rare

²² Randall H. McGuire (1993:106) states that this policy of Cárdenas's was influenced by Diego Rivera who had "become a Marxist while studying in France, and in the 1930s he influenced the socialist president of México...to grant asylum to republican refugees from the Spanish Civil War and later to Leon Trotsky."

head variant of the number 11 (Berlin 1944). By the 1950's, he had begun to concentrate increasingly on the non-calendrical content of Maya writing. In 1958, this effort resulted in a key breakthrough. (Stuart 1992:38)

That breakthrough was the identification of what Berlin called "emblem glyphs," glyphs that appeared to refer either to specific city-states or to their ancestral lineages (Stuart 1992:38).

Ruz published the drawings of the hieroglyphs on the side of the lid in 1954 (Ruz Lhuillier 1954:Fig. 9). Berlin was the first scholar to propose that several of those glyphs represented named individuals (Berlin 1959). Berlin concluded this via an analysis of all the texts found in the chamber and the texts of the tablets of the temple above it. In his 1959 paper called "Glifos nominales en el Sarcófago de Palenque," he focused on the images that display humans sprouting from trees that are located on the side of the sarcophagus body. He noted that each human/tree had hieroglyphic groups near it; he then found five of those groups in the East and West Tablets in the temple above. He also noted that these same name-phrase glyphs appear on the edge of the sarcophagus lid (Berlin 1959:6-7). He wrote that the key to understanding the inscription would be to identify the quincunx glyph and its affixes.²³ Eventually this quincunx glyph, plus its affixes was deciphered as "enters the road" (a metaphor for death).

As stated above, Ruz did not believe that the person depicted on the lid that covered the tomb was the same person as the one in the tomb,²⁴ nor did Ruz believe that the carved figure was an identifiable person. But if the figure were a "symbol" or a man in general as Ruz believed, who or what is referenced on the hieroglyphs on the side of the lid? Perhaps these referred to the man inside the tomb? Berlin did not believe that the inscriptions found in the secret chamber contained the names of gods since he saw no resemblance to the god faces seen in the codices (Berlin 1959). He believed that they referred to real people. He wrote, "The main argument in favor of the hypothesis that one is dealing with historical persons resides in the fact that their hieroglyphic names also appear in inscriptions, especially in the chronological sequence of the same sarcophagus, where they are associated with Calendar Round dates that are not circular" (Berlin 1959:8).²⁵ As indicated above, Berlin would later write two papers addressing the possible reading of the sarcophagus inscription by using those found in other parts of the site and the upper Temple of the Inscriptions. One of those papers written in 1968 was called "The Tablet of the 96 Glyphs." In that article he named the man in the tomb "Subject A" (Berlin 1968). In 1969 the great

American art historian George Kubler called him "Sun-Shield" (Kubler 1969). According to Peter Mathews (2014), there are a total of 26 different proposed names for this king, including the one that Ruz gave him (Uaxac Ahau). Now we know that his name was K'inich Janaab Pakal.

1964 and Ruz's Efforts to Get Mexico to Focus on Glyphs

Even after Ruz left archaeology and began a challenging job as a university professor, he still remained fascinated with the glyphs in the tomb. He began to pursue the decipherment of Maya hieroglyphs by establishing a commission on the subject and gathered some of the best minds together to work on the problem.

The discovery of the sumptuous tomb at Palenque sparked the imagination and focused the attention of the world and the attention of Mexico itself upon Maya archaeology. Yet the same attention was not yet focused upon Maya epigraphy, but Ruz intended to tackle this problem. As stated previously, Ruz had begun teaching at UNAM in 1959. In addition to founding the Seminario de Cultura Maya he also began to formulate another academic center in 1964 called the Comisión para el Estudio de la Escritura Maya (CEEM). This was the first working group ever formed for the purpose of deciphering Maya hieroglyphs. Some of the members of this commission were María Cristina Álvarez, Maricela Ayala Falcón, Juan Ramón Bastarrachea, Daniel Cazés, Martha A. Frías, Leonardo Manrique Castañeda, and Juan José Rendón.

Ruz needed start-up funds for this endeavor. Since INAH's budget had been reduced substantially, he approached his longtime friend and benefactor Nelson Rockefeller. In January 1965, he received funds from Rockefeller in the amount of \$2,500 to help with this new effort (Boyer 1965). That same year, he also received funds from the Wenner-Gren Foundation. In March of 1966, Ruz again sent a funding request to his friend, Nelson Rockefeller, this time to ask for help in funding the world's first Maya hieroglyphic decipherment

²³ This quincunx glyph appears at least ten times in this inscription.

²⁴ Possibly the first person to make this connection was Linda Schele. In an audio tape labeled "Palenque Seminar December 1974," she refers to the figure on the lid as "Pakal." This was a recording from the Second Palenque Round Table.

²⁵ I believe that here he refers to the part of the inscription that has a Calendar Round date in position number 44 (a day glyph) that is interrupted by a tun seating (number 45) followed by the month glyph at position 46, such that the Calendar Round is split in two. Berlin wrote this before anyone knew how to read the tun-seating glyph.

seminar (Ruz Lhuillier 1966). It was to take place in Merida but they had to overcome some very serious financial issues. Ruz wrote in his letter

This year we are again meeting with serious economic difficulties because of the unexpected position of the National Institute of Anthropology and History, whose research funds have been curtailed, and we fear that we will soon be obliged to suspend our research. This situation is all the more regrettable in view of the work that was done during 1965, a summary of which we enclose, and of the first International Seminar on the Study of the Mayan language which we have scheduled to meet in Mérida, Yucatán, on December 4 to 10, 1966, in accordance with the enclosed notice. It is obvious that suspension of our research because of lack of funds will put us in an embarrassing position in connection with the International Seminar and its possibilities of success. (Ruz Lhuillier 1966, Rockefeller staff translation)

Unfortunately, Rockefeller denied the request for additional funding (Boyer 1966), yet the international seminar took place from December 4–10 that same year. According to Ruz, this was because of special INAH funding made available to them by his longtime friend and director of INAH, Eusebio Dávalos, who unfortunately died six months later (Ruz Lhuillier 1968:25).²⁶ Eventually, the venue was changed to Mexico City instead of Yucatan, due to the damage caused by a hurricane. Alfredo Barrera Vásquez, director of the Instituto Yucateco de Antropología e Historia, helped Ruz organize it. Those in attendance would later become some of the most well-known and respected Maya epigraphers and linguists. Thanks to Nicholas Hopkins, we have a chronicle of what took place at the meeting since he not only attended and presented, but also published a review of the conference (Hopkins 1967). In addition to Hopkins, the North Americans present were David H. Kelley, Floyd Lounsbury, Michael Coe, George Stuart, and Judy Kathryn Josserand.²⁷ Ruz had plans to repeat the conference every year, but they only managed to meet the next year. According to Hopkins (personal communication 2011):

After that things fell apart in Mexico, following the Tlaltelolco massacre (October 1968); most of the Mexican anthropology students were involved in the movement. I think UNAM was shut down; at least people fled or kept their heads down... Cazés went to France and didn't return until the 80s, Rendón went to Oaxaca and became a rural schoolteacher, etc.

This effort appears to be Ruz's last in trying to

position Mexico as the leader in Maya hieroglyphic decipherment. What a bitter pill to swallow when he discovered in the early seventies that foreigners at the Palenque Mesas Redondas were going to be the leaders in decipherment.

1969 – George Kubler and the Sun-Shield Glyph

George Kubler was a professor at Yale University. In his 1969 book *Studies in Classic Maya Iconography* he included a chapter that he called "Dynastic Ceremonies" and in it he discussed the archaeological site of Palenque. He was one of the first scholars to write about a glyph that he called "sun-shield." He counted its appearance seventeen times on the three Tablets of the Cross. He reasoned that it might be a "lineage" glyph (Kubler 1969:20) or perhaps an "appellative" or a personal name, and he stated that "no other appellative reappears as frequently at Palenque as sun-shield" (Kubler 1969:20). Because the sun-shield has many variations, he thought it likely that it was a dynastic name or a "personal badge of the ruler whose remains are in the sarcophagus of the crypt" (Kubler 1969:22).²⁸ He also noticed that it was frequently followed by a "birth" sign, a sign that he had also seen on the sarcophagus lid inscription. He reasoned that Berlin had proven that historical persons and their glyphs were shown on the walls, the body, and the legs of the sarcophagus, therefore these same persons should also be mentioned on the edge of the lid. He also thought that he saw two references to females in the glyphs and stated that the dates in Ruz's 1954 *Anales* report span 111 years "and may recapitulate a lineage and three marriages leading to his reign" (Kubler 1969:22)

²⁶ This is the same physical anthropologist who co-authored the in situ study that placed the age of death of the man in the tomb at 40–50 years.

²⁷ These same people would attend the Palenque Round Table meetings in 1973 and in the future would significantly contribute to Maya decipherment.

²⁸ He also tells the reader that in a letter from Proskouriakoff she told him that she thought that "sun-shield's reign began about 9.12.0.0.0." It is interesting to note that this same date is very close to the date that Ruz writes about in his 1973 book on the Temple of the Inscriptions, as the beginning of the reign of the occupant of the tomb that equals AD 683 in our calendar. This might indicate that Ruz either read Kubler's book or he was in communication with Proskouriakoff about the dates on the lid before he finalized his book on the Temple of the Inscriptions. In 1962 Proskouriakoff became friends with Ruz and his family in Mexico City when she worked on the Jaina figurines at the anthropology museum.

Ruz's Book about the Temple of the Inscriptions

There is no available record that informs us how long it took Ruz to write *The Temple of the Inscriptions of Palenque*, a book about his unique discovery that was published in 1973. We may assume that he had begun working on it soon after the discovery, twenty-one years prior to its publication. The part of the book that is relevant to our discussion is his section called "Epigrafía" that begins on page 111. Here he discusses the dates of the East, Central, and West Tablets found in the temple pyramid. He tells the reader that these dates had been worked out by epigraphers Spinden, Thompson, and Berlin.

Also in this section, he included a subsection on the glyphs found on the "lápida," the carved stone top to the sarcophagus. He related again what was written in his archaeological report, including the preliminary reading of the Calendar Round dates shown in Table 1 of this paper. He stated that the inscription consisted of 54 hieroglyphs—twelve on the south side, six on the north, and eighteen each on the east and west. There was no Initial Series, nor any indication about where to begin the reading (Ruz Lhuillier 1973a:116). As stated earlier, the only glyphs that had been deciphered on the lid so far were the thirteen Calendar Round dates. He stated that as one faces each side of the lid, the glyphs should be read from left to right as is the custom of Mayan epigraphy.²⁹ He references Berlin's 1951 paper called "La inscripción del Templo de las Leyes en Palenque"³⁰ as one of his sources but also mentions a letter that he received from Berlin dated March 5, 1958 (Ruz Lhuillier 1973a:116). He cites this letter many times in this section; I speculate that this correspondence may have contained a draft version of a paper that was given to Proskouriakoff much later (Peter Mathews, personal communication 2014), and which was finally published in *Estudios de Cultura Maya* in 2008. I believe that Berlin's letter signaled the first time that Ruz was told that the birth and death dates on the lid did not correspond with the physical anthropologist's report stating that the man inside the tomb died at age 40 to 50 years. Thus in the *Inscriptions* book, Ruz found it necessary to adjust the dates in favor of the Dávalos's report. According to Vera Tiesler (personal communication 2015), who was a close friend of Romano, Ruz informed Dávalos and Romano of the discrepancy, but as of this writing, I do not know any details about their response.

Berlin informed Ruz that the two dates recorded on the south side of the lid—8 Ajaw 13 Pop and 6 Ets'nab 11 Yax³¹—appear in other Palenque

inscriptions including the West Tablet located in the temple above the tomb at positions E3-F3. Ruz writes:

The second one [6 Ets'nab 11 Yax] in the T5 position on the West tablet is part of a secondary series that connects it to the first one. Therefore, these two Calendar Rounds must be linked together on the sarcophagus lid since they are linked in the temple tablets, which reinforces Berlin's interpretation that both Calendar Rounds are in long computations that must be identical to the tomb and temple, i.e. respectively: 9.8.9.13.0, 8 Ajaw 13 Pop, and 9.12.11.5.18, 6 Ets'nab 11 Yax. The first of these dates is also carved on the steps of Building "C" at the Palace. (Ruz Lhuillier 1973a:116)

Ruz reminds the reader that in his informe published for the 1952 field season, he had written that logically there should be some reference in the carved text to the person buried there including the date of his birth and his death, with a mention of his deeds, their dates, or the major events of his administration. He and his researchers expected the thirteen dates to fall within the period of a person's life and for their time-span to accord with the osteological results proving that he was 40 to 50 years of age at death.

However, Berlin found no time progression in the arrangement of the Calendar Rounds, thus Ruz surmised that the dates may not correspond to events of the individual's life, since that kind of information is usually recorded in a chronological order (Ruz Lhuillier 1973a:117). Table 3 displays Berlin's proposed dates:

Berlin had formulated several Long Count dates that he thought should be associated with Calendar Round dates on the slab. Ruz (1973a:117) used the following parameters as outlined by Berlin:³²

- 1 The dates must fall within the 9th Baktun, since the history of Palenque is between AD 435 and 830;
- 2 The Calendar Round date 7 Ajaw 3 K'ank'in found on the lid is followed by a glyph

²⁹ This inscription consists of one long row of 54 glyphs.

³⁰ In English this translates as "The Temple of the Laws," a name given to the structure by early explorers because of the long glyphic tablets on the wall.

³¹ These dates were also first noticed by Ruz and Thompson and are recorded in Ruz's 1952 informe.

³² At this point in time, Berlin's knowledge of the Long Count dates found in the inscriptions at Palenque was extensive since he had already written three papers on the hieroglyphs of Palenque.

| | | |
|--------------|-------------|------------|
| 9.6.11.0.16 | 7 Kib | 4 K'ayab |
| 9.6.16.10.7 | 9 Manik' | 5 Yaxk'in |
| 9.6.18.15.12 | 2 Eb | 0 Keh |
| 9.7.0.0.0 | 7 Ajaw | 3 K'ank'in |
| 9.7.2.17.17 | 5 Kaban | 5 Mak |
| 9.7.9.5.5 | 11 Chikchan | 3 K'ayab |
| 9.8.8.3.10 | 4 Ok | 13 Yax |
| 9.8.9.13.0 | 8 Ajaw | 13 Pop |
| 9.8.18.14.11 | 3 Chuwen | 4 Wayeb |
| 9.8.19.4.6 | 2 Kimi | 14 Mol |
| 9.10.0.0.0 | 1 Ajaw | 8 K'ayab |
| 9.10.10.1.6 | 13 Kimi | 4 Pax |
| 9.12.11.5.18 | 6 Etz'nab | 11 Yax |

Table 3. Berlin's proposed Long Count dates for the sarcophagus lid's Calendar Round dates ordered chronologically

indicating "end of Tun." 7 Ajaw 3 K'ank'in is also recorded on the East Tablet of Temple of the Inscriptions, and it has a Long Count date of 9.7.0.0.0 associated with it. Not only is it an "end of Tun" date, it is also a K'atun ending which Berlin thought was even more evidence that the 7 Ajaw 3 K'ank'in date on the lid corresponded to the Long Count date of 9.7.0.0.0.

- 3 The date 1 Ajaw 8 K'ayab (at position 43–45a) is also followed by a sign that marks the "end of the Haab," in this case meaning "end of the Tun." This date is also on the East Tablet of the temple where a Long Count of 9.10.0.0.0 (at R12–T3) is given. It is also termed the "end of K'atun," so this date should correspond to the Calendar Round 1 Ajaw 8 K'ayab on the slab;
- 4 8 Ajaw 13 Pop is a very important date for Palenque. It is associated with the Long Count date 9.8.9.13.0 which is registered on the steps of the staircase of House C of the Palace, and it is found two times on the Tablets of the Temple of the Inscriptions. One of them is linked by a Distance Number (4.1.10.18) to the Long Count date of 9.12.11.5.18 6 Etz'nab 11 Yax, which is also found on the south side of the lid next to 8 Ajaw 13 Pop.

Ruz stated that based upon the above parameters Berlin created a table wherein he associated Long Count dates with each of the Calendar Round glyphs found on the lid, and he reproduced this table in his book (Ruz Lhuillier 1973a:118). As stated earlier, he ordered the date glyphs chronologically and noted that they do not correspond with the reading order. In addition, Ruz subtracted the oldest proposed Long Count date (9.6.11.0.16)³³ from the youngest (9.12.11.5.18) and found that

there was a 120 year time-span.

Even though Ruz gave credence to Berlin's solid and coherent arguments for these proposed dates, he still could not accept or reconcile that the dates sculpted on the lid did not correspond with the physical remains of the "great priest" that lay beneath it (Ruz Lhuillier 1973a:118–119). Thus he attempted another interpretation of the dates by associating different Long Count positions with the Calendar Round dates than those chosen by Berlin. Ruz then reminds the reader that the Calendar Rounds repeat every 52 years (2.12.13.0 in Long Count units) so it is feasible to consider alternatives.

The following are the premises upon which he based his assumptions regarding his proposed date series:

- 1 All the evidence now points to the hieroglyphic inscriptions on Maya monuments as historical records and/or the recording of dynastic lineages, as suggested by scholars such as Proskouriakoff (1960:454–475) and Bowditch (1903:13). If we accept this interpretation, then the hieroglyphs that accompany the images of certain individuals on Maya monuments refer to major events in their lives. This is the case at Piedras Negras, Yaxchilan, and at other sites and so it must be at Palenque. Thus the inscriptions carved on the imposing sarcophagus of the Temple of the Inscriptions concern the life and history of the illustrious personage buried there (Ruz Lhuillier 1973a:119).
- 2 The dates 9.7.0.0.0 7 Ajaw 3 K'ank'in, 9.8.9.13.0 8 Ajaw 13 Pop, 9.10.0.0.0 1 Ajaw 8 K'ayab, and 9.12.11.5.18 6 Yax 11 Etz'nab are found in the Temple of the Inscriptions tablets and were used by Berlin³⁴ to create a calendrical framework, but the dates cannot all refer to the tomb occupant's life because they span more than a century of time.
- 3 The text carved on the edge of the lid most likely begins on the south side since this is the side that is visible when you enter the crypt.
- 4 Following a counter-clockwise direction, the hieroglyphic sequence proceeds from the south to east, north, and west.

³³ In reality, this date was not the earliest date on the lid. Berlin incorrectly placed the date found at position 16 (5 Kaban 5 Mak) in the Long Count at 9.7.2.17.17. Later he would realize his mistake and place it at 9.4.10.4.17, so the time span would have been longer than 120 years.

³⁴ These dates were also listed by Ruz with Thompson's help in Ruz's 1954 *Anales* report and are seen in Table 2 of this document.

| Calendar Round Dates | Series One | Series Two |
|----------------------|----------------|---------------|
| 8 Ajaw 13 Pop | 9. 8. 9.13.0 | 9.11. 2. 8.0 |
| 6 Etz'nab 11 Yax | 9. 9.18.10.18 | 9.12.11.5.18 |
| 5 Kaban 5 Mak | 9. 9. 15.12.17 | 9. 12.8.7.17 |
| 7 Kib 4 K'ayab | 9. 9. 3.13.16 | 9.11.16. 8.16 |
| 9 Manik' 5 Yaxk'in | 9. 9. 9. 5.7 | 9.12. 2. 0.7 |
| 7 Ajaw 3 K'ank'in | 9. 9.12.13.0 | 9.12. 5. 8.0 |
| 11 Chikchan 3 K'ayab | 9.10. 2. 0.5 | 9.12.14.13.5 |
| 2 Eb 0 Keh | 9. 9.11.10.12 | 9.12. 4. 5.12 |
| 2 Kimi 14 Mol | 9. 8.19. 4.6 | 9.11.11.17. 6 |
| 3 Chuwen 4 Wayeb | 9. 8.18.14.11 | 9.11.11. 9.11 |
| 4 Ok 13 Yax | 9. 8. 8. 3.10 | 9.11. 0.16.10 |
| 1 Ajaw 8 K'ayab | 9.10. 0.0.0 | 9.12.12.13.0 |
| 13 Kimi 4 Pax | 9.10.10.1.6 | 9.13. 2.14. 6 |

Table 4. Ruz's tentative Long Count date series, an alternative to Berlin's dates.

Table 4 displays his two tentative Long Count date series as an alternative to Berlin's suggested dates mentioned in Table 3 above. Each "series" column of dates is 52 years apart. In effect, he is throwing out the Long Count positions that he and Thompson had established in 1952 (see Table 2 at the beginning of this paper) by moving them forward by 52 years.

Ruz writes that he prefers the "Series Two" dates even though they do not fit into the chronological context of the Temple of the Inscriptions, the building within which the tomb was found. He also notes that the use of Series Two will eliminate some dates from the text that are undoubtedly of great importance such as 9.8.9.13 0.0 and 9.10.0.0.0 (Ruz Lhuillier 1973a:119).

He notes the following:

- 1 The earliest date, corresponding to 8 Ajaw 18 Pop, appears precisely in the first position on the side of the lid that is visible from the entrance and therefore this is the beginning of the text.
- 2 This earliest date is immediately followed by a hieroglyph that Proskouriakoff (1960:454, 460) called the "upended frog glyph." This glyph is often the first date recorded on these monuments, and it was thought to be a birth date or the calendar name of the person whose story is told, or it could be some ceremony related to childhood.
- 3 The very last Calendar Round date in the series (13 Kimi 4 Pax) is also the last one recorded on the west side and marks the end of the hieroglyphic text.
- 4 The distance between these two dates (2 k'atuns, 0 tuns, 6 winal, and 6 k'ins) is roughly

equivalent to 40 years, the minimum age assigned by physical anthropologists who studied the skeletal remains of the tomb (Ruz Lhuillier 1973a:120).

Ruz then proposed that the person buried in the tomb of the Temple of the Inscriptions was born in the year 655 (9.11.2.8.0 8 Ajaw 13 Pop), and ascended the throne at age 28 in 683 (9.12.11.5.18 6 Etz'nab 11 Yax). He noted that on the east side of the lid, there are dates perhaps corresponding to ages 14 through 32 years. Based upon Series Two above, the dates on that side correspond to the years 680, 669, 674, 677, 687, and 676. Obviously they are not in chronological order. On the north side there is a single date, equivalent to 664 when the individual would have been nine years old (Ruz Lhuillier 1973a:120). The last recorded date on the tombstone is that of his death, which occurred at age 40 years in 695.

Ruz fully understood that his assumptions and proposals are questionable, but he could find no other way to associate these dates with the life of the person buried in the tomb and reconcile them with the physical evidence. He lists the following "debatable points" (Ruz Lhuillier 1973a:120):

- 1 Under his Series Two above, the dates are not in chronological order, except on the south side, where they mark birth and death.³⁵ However,

³⁵ This passage indicates that Berlin knew the birth and death of the occupant of the tomb even before 1973, the date of the publication of Ruz's book. Again, this information apparently was found in the 1958 letter that Ruz references throughout this section. Ruz's citation of this letter is thus the first time anyone had published the accurate birth and death dates of the man in the tomb. Ruz would, however, negate this and use his own series.

Berlin's proposed Long Count dates also lack chronological order, but this was a common practice for Maya scribes, with earlier dates wedged between more recent ones when they are intended to reference earlier events.

- 2 One of the issues with moving the dates 52 years forward (from ones chosen by Berlin: 9.12.5.8.0 instead of 9.7.0.0.0 for 7 Ajaw 3 K'ank'in, and 9.12.12.13.0 instead of 9.10.0.0.0 for 1 Ajaw 8 K'ayab) is that these new dates are no longer "end of tun" Long Count dates. He stated that this is especially troubling considering that each of these tun-ending date glyphs is followed by the glyph indicating "end of tun" and in addition, these two end-of-tun dates are found on the tablets of the temple above. He stated that the series he had chosen were not "end of tun" dates and do not appear in the tablets. So excluding these two tun-ending dates leaves out a vital part of the life of the deceased (Ruz Lhuillier 1973a:121). He adds that perhaps the first date refers to an old event that occurred about 80 years before the person was born, and about 20 years before the second date, but because of its importance in the history of Palenque the ancient people felt it imperative to put it into the burial record. It may relate to his ancestors.
- 3 He wrote that his selection of the Long Count 9.11.2.8.0 in association with the Calendar Round 8 Ajaw 13 Pop instead of the one that immediately preceded it by 52 years (9.8.9.13.0) was counter to Berlin's evidence. Berlin believed that the two Calendar Round dates of 8 Ajaw 13 Pop and 6 Etz'nab 11 Yax are respectively associated with 9.8.9.13.0 and 9.12.11.5.18 and that these dates are found on the tablets of the temple. One is even mathematically linked by a Distance Number of 4.1.10.18. The fact that 8 Ajaw 13 Pop was in the first position of the text and immediately followed by the glyph for "birth" was an important clue in the effort to identify dates relating to the person's life.

He believed that the person's death date was either 9.12.11.5.18 6 Etz'nab 11 Yax, as per Berlin, or 9.13.2.14.6 13 Kimi 4 Pax, as per Ruz (1973a:121). But if the death was on 9.12.11.5.18 and the physical evidence argued that he died between 40 and 50 years of age, the only dates from the lid that could correspond to his birth would be 9.10.0.0.0 1 Ajaw 8 K'ayab or 9.10.10.1.6 13 Kimi 4 Pax. This would mean that no other dates on the lid concern his life as a high priest or ruler of Palenque. In contrast, by taking out the Long Count dates of 9.7.0.0.0 and 9.10.0.0.0 from Berlin's proposed series, all the dates would fall between the proposed birth and

death dates except for one that was thought to be erroneously recorded.

Ruz 1973 and *Estudios de Cultura Maya*

The same year that Ruz published his book on the Temple of the Inscriptions, he also published an article in *Estudios de Cultura Maya*, a journal of which he was the editor. The article's title was "Mas datos históricos en las inscripciones de Palenque," and in it Ruz noted in detail the idea that Mayanists have realized over the last few years that the hieroglyphs, instead of just containing calendrics and astronomy, also featured the histories of kings and their cities. He noted that during the time of Spinden, Morley, and Thompson it was believed that the inscriptions did not contain history, primarily because only the calendar glyphs had been deciphered. He observed that this situation changed fourteen years prior when Berlin discovered what he called "emblem glyphs." When these glyphs also appeared at smaller cities but near larger ones, it suggested a sphere of hegemony for the latter. He considered the quincunx sign and Berlin's speculation that it meant "birth, marriage, death, conquest, reign, etc." (Ruz Lhuillier 1973b:94). He mentions Proskouriakoff's groundbreaking paper (1960) on Piedras Negras wherein she proved that the inscriptions contain personal histories. He also mentioned David Kelley's work (1962) on the monuments of Quirigua as further evidence of historical content. When Ruz began to write his book on the Temple of the Inscriptions twelve years prior to this article, his interpretations about the glyphs were based upon Berlin and Proskouriakoff's work, but in the article he presented a fuller interpretation of his own, with some modifications from previous proposals. He noted that the glyphs on the south side of the lid were painted red, unlike the other three surfaces, and suggested that this was another sign that the reading should begin here.

Below is a table Ruz created that contained four possible Long Count date ranges for the sarcophagus inscription that he considered reasonable (Table 5). He labeled the sets of dates I-IV—with all ranges having a span of about 40 years. In effect, he is sliding the 52 year interval back and forth to see where they would fit. These are based upon the Calendar Rounds at the beginning and the end of the inscription which stops on the west side.

He noted that although the four series fall within the florescence of the site (9.8.0.0.0 to 9.18.0.0.0), the dates in series III and IV are positioned after the latest Long Count date of 9.13.0.0.0 recorded on the Tablets of the Inscriptions. Therefore he

| | | | |
|-----|------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| I | from 9.8.9.13.0 | to 9.10.10.1.6 | (from AD 603 to 643) |
| II | from 9.11.2.8.0 | to 9.13.2.14.6 | (from AD 655 to 694) |
| III | from 9.13.15.3.0 | to 9.15.15.9.6 | (from AD 707 to 747) |
| IV | from 9.16.6.16.0 | to 9.18.8.4.6 | (from AD 759 to 798) |

Table 5. Ruz's list of possible Long Count dates relating to the life and death of the person found in the tomb (all dates are based upon a lifespan of 39–40 years of age at time of death).

thought that they should be discarded. In addition, the first two Long Count dates on the list are found on the tablets as well as the lid. Ruz opted for the Series Two date range. He reasoned as follows:

If the person buried in the crypt was the same person who ordered the construction of the tomb, the pyramid and temple, including the inscriptions carved on the temple tablets, it is likely that the inscriptions on the carved stone are associated with the later inscription on the Tablets and not the earliest. (Ruz Lhuillier 1973b:101, author's translation)

He thought that the dates of the k'atun endings recorded on the Temple of the Inscriptions tablets spanned from 9.4.0.0.0 to 9.13.0.0.0 and that the events associated with these dates had already occurred when they finished building the temple. The dates in Series II covered the last two k'atun endings registered on these tablets; therefore, Ruz chose the second series.

Then follows a discussion of each glyph block, including those that are not dates, with speculation about what the scribe was recording. I will not address each of his interpretations and readings here, but will only highlight several of interest to our discussion about the person in the tomb.

Ruz wrote that the date 8 Ajaw 13 Pop is the birthdate of the subject in the tomb, but he also believed that the protagonist of the inscription was called by his calendar name "Uaxac Ahau" (8 Ajaw). The next date in the sequence he believed to be Uaxac Ahau's accession date at age 28. He believed that the three tablets in the temple were commissioned by the person in the tomb.³⁶ The final date was registered toward the end of his reign and after the inauguration of the temple. The four tun glyph at position six, Ruz interpreted as "four years completed"³⁷ and according to Berlin the glyph next to it might mean to enthrone (Ruz Lhuillier 1973b:103).

Ruz noted the existence of elements in this inscription that look like shields and stated that the shield had also been mentioned in Berlin's 1968 paper on the Tablet of the 96 Glyphs. Ruz acknowledged that it is an important sign and that it might be possible that the buried person was known as

8 Ajaw-Shield. He noticed the shield-like offering held by the central female character on the Tablets of the Palace and of the Slaves. He thought that it could have been associated, in later times, with the name or lineage of the person that he calls "8 Ajaw." On the east side inscription at position 15, which Ruz designated as "C," he noticed what he thought was the head of the young goddess referring to a female protagonist in the inscriptions. He could not identify the glyphs preceding this head but postulated that the female head designated the wife of 8 Ajaw, whose marriage might have taken place on the date shown in the glyphs immediately following. He also believed that some of the glyphs represented names of people and most likely were 8 Ajaw's relatives.

Ruz admitted that his interpretation was hypothetical and partly erroneous, but he felt that it was close to the characterization and content of the inscriptions. He believed that a tomb as important as this—arguably the most spectacular tomb ever found in Precolumbian America—would contain a record about the king and the events of his reign. Ruz concluded that the inscription was about the history of the individual in the tomb—his birth, accession, marriage, partnerships, vassalages, and family predecessors and contemporaries (Ruz Lhuillier 1973b:113).

Again Ruz humbly admitted to probable errors in his interpretation, but he was optimistic about future decipherment of the glyphs. However, this optimism would not be extended to the U.S. scholars who were about to make considerable progress in the decipherment of the Palenque texts at the 1973 Mesa Redonda the same year that his article was published.

1973 – The First Palenque Mesa Redonda

The first Palenque Mesa Redonda was held 21

³⁶ These three tablets were dedicated by Pakal's son, K'inich Kan Bahlam on either 9.12.11.5.18 (Peter Mathews, personal communication 2014) or 9.12.18.4.19 (Stuart and Stuart 2008:171).

³⁷ This phrase was later determined to mean that Pakal had completed 4 k'atuns.

years after the discovery of the tomb. It took place in December. This was a gathering of mostly U.S. scholars and Maya enthusiasts who wanted to learn more about Palenque and its undeciphered hieroglyphs. In 1952, when the discovery of the tomb in the Temple of the Inscriptions brought world-wide attention to Palenque, one of the outcomes was that more attention was directed toward decipherment, in particular the inscription on edge of the sarcophagus lid. People such as Berlin, David Kelley, and Floyd Lounsbury turned their attention to it as well as to other Maya inscriptions. One day these glyphs would reveal unequivocally the identity of the occupant of the tomb. Perhaps the quest helped spawn this first Mesa Redonda.³⁸ It was organized by U.S. scholars; Ruz was not in attendance even though he was invited (Coe 1999:207).³⁹ Michael Coe attributed Ruz's absence to his dislike of foreigners and the anti-gringo mood in Mexico stemming from the leadership of president, Luis Echeverría Álvarez (Coe 1999:208) who took office in 1970.⁴⁰

Prior to 1970 and going back to the 1930s, there was a long tradition of close cooperation at Mexican archaeological sites between the archaeologists of INAH and those from the United States (Michael Coe, personal communication 2015). After the Tlatelolco massacre in 1968, Mexico entered a politically dangerous time. There was "an atmosphere of greater political tension and uncertainty than had existed in Mexico for decades" (Suchlicki 1996:142). Also, in the mid-1960s news was circulated about how the United States, through the Camelot Project had "enlisted cultural anthropologists to gather information to assist, both knowingly and unknowing, in CIA-backed counterinsurgency efforts in Latin America and Asia" (McGuire 2008:151). Apparently archaeologists were not involved in this covert data gathering (Palerm 1980:27), but the scandal was enough to cause the Mexicans to mistrust the motives of U.S. archaeologists, anthropologists, and ethnographers—mistrust that has lasted for decades (McGuire 2008:151). In addition, the Mexicans questioned the quality of the U.S. archaeological fieldwork and the lack of excavation documentation (Lorenzo 1981:201-202). On the other hand, McGuire wrote, "...Mexican archaeologists were concerned that the North Americans were bringing superior resources to bear in Mexico and using them to engage in academic debates that were irrelevant to Mexican concerns. The North Americans largely carried out these debates in English-speaking journals and showed little interest in, or respect for, the concerns and work of Mexican archaeologists"

(McGuire 1993:110). McGuire further states that it was after these mid-1960s events that Mexico increased its requirements for permitting and even began denying permits to U.S. archaeologists, some of whom were well-known scholars. This was also a time when INAH turned its attention toward Marxist ideology, applying it to archaeology (Michael Coe, personal communication 2015). All these extenuating factors most likely contributed to Ruz's absence from the First Palenque Round Table. However, there were also personal reasons for his absence. There was a long-standing mutual antipathy between Alberto Ruz and Moisés Morales,⁴¹ the man who so generously made his family compound available for the gathering of the round table scholars. When this dislike developed is debatable. Both men had strong personalities. Morales (personal communication 2010) saw Ruz as an arrogant INAH bureaucrat who milked the government for easy jobs in academia. According to Morales' son Alfonso (personal communication 2014), this dislike stemmed from the fact that Ruz thought he "owned" the archaeological site, since he had once been the lead investigator there.

Most of the Round Table gatherings took place in an open-air *champa* built by Morales and at Merle Robertson's house, which was a place affectionately called "Na Kan-Balam" (Robertson 1974:iii). All of these accommodations were within the Morales family compound called "La Cañada." Moisés Morales had moved to Palenque with his family in 1957, almost at the end of Ruz's excavation tenure at the site.⁴² Very soon after moving there, Morales became a tour guide at the ruins so that he could feed his very large family (personal communication 2010). Even though Ruz did not live at Palenque after his excavations ended in 1958, he was a frequent visitor because he was often asked by INAH to lead Palenque tours for important

³⁸ For more information about how the idea for the Palenque Round Tables came about see Coe (1999:196).

³⁹ However, there were three scholars from UNAM present: Beatriz de la Fuente, Paul Gendrop, and Marta Foncecerra de Molina.

⁴⁰ For more information, see my paper about Ruz's early life and his feelings toward the United States (E. Schele 2012b).

⁴¹ Several sources, including Moisés Morales himself (personal communication 2012) have informed me that Ruz and Morales did not like each other.

⁴² Ruz resigned his position as Head of the Southeast Area, Bureau of Prehispanic Monuments of the National Institute of Anthropology and History in mid-1959 (Castro 1959).

people, so Ruz's and Morales's paths frequently crossed.⁴³ Added to this dislike of Moisés Morales were Ruz's natural territorial instincts regarding the study of Palenque and its famous tomb. How could these Palenque Mesa Redonda people know more about it than Ruz? In addition, the meetings focused on Mexico's archaeology and patrimony and what right did foreigners—however well-meaning—have to correct or expand on Mexican scholarship? George Stuart, in the preface of his coauthored book *Palenque: Eternal City of the Maya*, wrote the following regarding Ruz's reluctance to attend the first Mesa Redonda: "Alberto later told me that he had his own good reasons for being wary and, besides, he was somewhat resentful of this group of enthusiasts suddenly descending on a place to which he had devoted his career" (Stuart and Stuart 2008:8-9).

However, as Michael Coe points out, Ruz would not be the one who would uncover the identity of the person in the sarcophagus, nor would he be the one to discover this king's pivotal role in the history of Palenque (Coe 1999:195). Those who would make these discoveries were the participants in the Palenque Mesas Redondas. Ruz only attended and presented at the second meeting. Linda Schele stated in a May 11, 1974 letter to George Kubler that she had not read Ruz's paper—the one that he would present at the Second Mesa Redonda—but while she was at the first Mesa Redonda meeting, Beatriz de la Fuente and Marta Molina (both friends from ENAH, the same school where Ruz taught) told her what it contained. Since Ruz did not present a paper at this Mesa Redonda, they might have been referring to the paper that he published in the *Estudios de Cultura Maya* or a revised draft that he planned to present at the Second Mesa Redonda in 1974. For the remainder of the letter Schele made her case for the readings that she and Peter had offered for the dates and names on the lid saying that "all the dates for death, birth and accessions are confirmed by multiple readings from different texts spanning the entire 9 K'atun history covered for our paper."⁴⁴ Our death date for Pacal⁴⁵ is recorded in the last passage of the TI West Tablet with a glyphic text that is 90% translated."

One of the major outcomes of this first conference was the production of a list of Palenque kings and the dates that they reigned; no one had ever done this for a Maya site before. This outcome was from a collaboration between Linda Schele, Peter Mathews, and Floyd Lounsbury. The paper that Mathews and Schele wrote for the conference publication was called "Lords of Palenque: The Glyphic Evidence" (Mathews and Schele 1974). In a 2005 interview with Coe, Peter Mathews

stated that he insisted the paper be subtitled "The Glyphic Evidence" because he was unsure about what kinds of arguments it would ignite. "But I was aware that this was going to cause some problems and some debate." By using this title, he was trying to demonstrate an epigraphic viewpoint as opposed to the physical anthropological side. They thought that "if the bones could be redated, that we might be vindicated. But of course, saying that explicitly to Alberto Ruz and his colleagues, and to any archaeologist, in fact, was simply impugning their methodology. So we kept quiet on that."

The character and the details of this first Mesa Redonda and the spin-offs from the meetings have been well documented in Michael Coe's book *Breaking the Maya Code* (1999:193-217), and it is beyond the scope of this paper to recount those events. In her 1992 paper entitled "A New Look at the Dynastic History of Palenque," Linda Schele retrospectively acknowledged the work of two epigraphic pioneers of the Palenque inscriptions whose analysis predated the Mesa Redonda meetings—Heinrich Berlin and George Kubler—stating that the work they did was the beginning of a twenty-year effort to unravel the history of ancient Palenque through the decipherment of the inscriptions. She characterized the First Mesa Redonda as the next phase of this effort.

From that important conference came the first systematic study of the full dynastic history (Lounsbury 1974; Mathews and Schele 1974). The important advancements made at the Mesa Redonda were nurtured by Elizabeth Benson, who sponsored a series of miniconferences at Dumbarton Oaks between 1973 and 1977. These

⁴³ Alfonso Morales (personal communication 2014) told me of an occasion when one of the French presidents came to Palenque. Ruz volunteered to be their guide. Because the president knew that Moisés Morales spoke French, he arranged for Moisés to help guide the wife and other guests. After viewing the tomb in the Temple of the Inscriptions, the president and his group went down the back accessway while Ruz went by himself down the very steep front steps. Halfway down he became wobbly and the only one who noticed was Moisés who went running and grabbed him and made him sit down. He called the French paramedics who were part of the delegation. They arrived with a stretcher and an oxygen tank. As they were taking him down the steps, they placed an oxygen mask on Ruz's face but somehow the oxygen tank was upside down and the water in the tank was pushing into Ruz's lungs. Moisés pulled the mask away and saved him from death for a second time. When Ruz recovered somebody asked him what it was like to feel so close to death. He answered, "The only worse thing than death is to be saved by your worst enemy." He offered no words of thanks to Moisés, according to Alfonso Morales.

⁴⁴ Here she refers to their 1973 Mesa Redonda paper.

⁴⁵ As Pakal was then spelled.

critically important meetings provided the forum in which major methodological advances were pioneered and the details of Palenque's history were fleshed out (Schele 1992:82).

In other words, while the first Mesa Redonda was important because it brought many people together to discuss the inscriptions, it was the resulting long-term collaboration between Mathews, Schele, Lounsbury, and David Kelley (at first through Mathews⁴⁶), that facilitated most of the progress in decipherment. An excellent example of this collaboration is seen in correspondence filed in the Linda Schele archives written soon after the first Mesa Redonda. In February of 1974, a few weeks following the meeting and before Betty Benson started her mini-conferences at Dumbarton Oaks, they began writing letters to one another in which they continued to discuss their ideas and work out Palenque's dynastic sequence and associated calendar dates. For instance, on April 8, 1974, Floyd wrote:

...as you will see from my last week's letter which I enclose, I now agree that there were two people with the same name, or at least mostly the same name, at 17 and 21.⁴⁷ Not only that, for there were two Pacals also: the one at 40 is not the same person as Pacal the Great who is named at 8 (with a doubly pictographic glyph this time) and who is inside the sarcophagus...

In a letter written by David Kelley to Lounsbury, Mathews, and Schele on May 30, 1974, 22 days after the one above, he comes to the same conclusion—that there are two Pakals mentioned on the edge of the sarcophagus lid, a fact that was not discovered at the first Mesa Redonda.

Because of this fluidity of interaction and discovery that fostered glyph decipherment, the papers presented at the first Mesa Redonda were not the well-developed written versions that were published later. For instance, according to Elizabeth Benson, Lounsbury prepared and presented a paper on a carved vase (Coe and Lebrun 2005b:5); however, the carved vase was not the subject of the article he wrote for the conference publication. Benson stated that instead Lounsbury turned his attention to the study of the inscriptions with Schele and Mathews:

And what was exciting was that [with] these three people who hadn't known each other before suddenly everything clicked, and the most extraordinary things came out of it... so Floyd Lounsbury's paper that was published in the Mesa Redonda publication was not on his vase, but a much more rich and interesting one on the Palenque sarcophagus and the inscriptions on the tomb of the ruler Pakal. (Coe and Lebrun 2005b)

That paper was called "The Inscriptions of the Sarcophagus Lid at Palenque" (Lounsbury 1974) and within it he correctly placed each of the floating Calendar Round dates at their Long Count positions. He also named the protagonist for each of the dates and at the end of the paper stated that the "Quincunx" glyph, which he nicknamed the "Q" event, was the "termination" of each of the persons mentioned in the inscriptions.⁴⁸ He stated that the first and second dates on the lid are the birth and death dates of the person in the tomb and that the inscription recounts the "terminal" dates of the eight to ten other persons who were perhaps ancestors of the man in the tomb (Lounsbury 1974:18). He does not, however, state the age-at-death of the deceased. Perhaps this is why Ruz did not target Lounsbury when Ruz later began his writing campaign against Schele and Mathews.⁴⁹ They explicitly wrote about this important date after the meetings; it was published in their paper in the 1974 Mesa Redonda volume.

The paper that Schele presented at the first Mesa Redonda was her first professional paper, and it was about the carved accession images in the Cross Group compared to the death iconography in the famous tomb. Mathews did not have a prepared presentation. In the 1973 Mesa Redonda conference proceedings publication which came out in 1974, Schele's paper called "Observations on the Cross Motif at Palenque" (1974b) appeared as well as her coauthored paper with Peter Mathews, "The Lords of Palenque: The Glyphic Evidence" (Mathews and Schele 1974). In this latter paper they convey their more refined information about "Lord Shield-Pacal" and his age at death.

They explained that this paper was a follow-up to the Mesa Redonda meeting regarding the royal lineage at Palenque. They recount the discoveries made by Berlin and Kubler, already mentioned above. They state that it was David Kelley who "first pointed out to Mathews the probable existence of a ruler at Palenque with the name "Pacal" (Mathews and Schele 1974:63). Pakal is the same person as "Sunshield" and Berlin's "Subject A."

⁴⁶ Mathews was an undergraduate and eventually a graduate student of David Kelley's.

⁴⁷ These numbers refer to a glyph numbering system associated with the inscription on the side of the sarcophagus lid.

⁴⁸ However, on page 18 he states that "death" is not the meaning of the quincunx sign but instead "only that this is the meaning of the composite glyph which consists of this together with the two mentioned affixes."

⁴⁹ He also included a footnote on the first page with a very long list of the people that he wanted to thank and one of those was Alberto Ruz, so perhaps this acknowledgement helped to favor him.

Mathews and Schele (1954:94) state that Ruz, in his archaeological report, had stated that the 6 Etz'nab 11 Yax date was the deceased's death date; however, in his paper called "Gerontocracy at Palenque?" (Ruz Lhuillier 1977a), Ruz refuted this and emphatically stated that the date immediately after the birthday was not the death date of this man.⁵⁰ Because of this misunderstanding, it might be possible that Mathews and Schele thought that Ruz would have agreed with their conclusions that the age of the man that they called Pakal was over 80. In their paper, they did not mention the osteological report of the physical anthropologists (Dávalos Hurtado and Romano Pacheco 1954) who believed that the bones were of a man 40–50 years of age. This omission is one that Ruz referred to in several publications, so obviously he was very insulted that it was not cited by Schele and Mathews. I spoke with Mathews in 2013 and he told me that they knew of the results of the anthropological report, but that he did not recall why they did not acknowledge it in their paper. As stated earlier, he told me that they titled their paper the "glyphic evidence" as opposed to the evidence found by the physical anthropologists, meaning that they were presenting the evidence found in the hieroglyphs, not the total body of opinion on Pakal's age.

The 1974 Mini-Conference at Dumbarton Oaks and Participant Relationships

During the same period that Schele, Mathews, Lounsbury, and Kelley were writing letters to each other and preparing their papers for publication, they were also attending the mini-conferences at Dumbarton Oaks. These soon became a fertile venue for the progress begun at the first Mesa Redonda (Coe 1999:210). It was in this open environment at Dumbarton Oaks that Schele, Mathews, and Lounsbury rediscovered the synergy they had found at the Mesa Redonda.

The first mini-conference began with Schele, Mathews, Lounsbury, Proskouriakoff, her student Joyce Marcus, David Kelley, Merle Robertson, Michael Coe, and George Kubler in attendance. But according to David Kelley,

Betty [Benson] made one tremendous error. She did not invite Ruz Lhuillier who had actually excavated the tomb of Pacal at Palenque, who was in many ways the leading authority. Now, her reason for this was because she knew he was on sabbatical in Paris and she had heard indirectly that he wanted to stay in Paris, he didn't want to do other things like flying to Washington. But she did not contact him and talk to him about this and it made Ruz into an enemy for our group and he had been friendly. And I was very sorry; I had been a fairly good

friend of Ruz's for quite a long time and this lost me Ruz's friendship, even though it wasn't anything I did. (Coe and Lebrun 2005a)

Kelley, in that same interview made the following observation about the mini-conference:

...there had been various rather formal presentations... Tania gave a talk about some of the things she'd been doing, and she said something about one monument at Palenque, and Linda immediately piped up and said, "That can't be right!" And of course, Tania was not used to having people tell her she couldn't be right, particularly someone who had no status of any sort interrupting her. And she didn't like any of that. And it was this divergence in style between herself and Linda that led to a situation where the two never were able to communicate effectively, and unfortunately Linda wanted to talk with Tania, and she wanted to let Tania know how much she respected her work, but she was never able to get past this barrier that was set up the minute she said that.

Linda was a very brash person, and she was trying to give the impression of being an Alabama hillbilly, although she was anything but... In this particular case she was right, and Tania was wrong. When she said, "You can't be right," she knew what she was saying. But it was the wrong way to say it. And I don't think Linda ever quite understood that. She liked to shock people, but she didn't really understand all of what shocking people meant.⁵¹

Because of friction between Schele and Proskouriakoff, the only remaining participants at the end of the session were Kelley, Schele, Mathews, Robertson, and Lounsbury (Coe and Lebrun 2005b:18). Char Solomon, in her 2002 biography of Proskouriakoff, explained that even though both of these women had entered the field of Maya studies from the perspective of art, there were vast differences in the way that they approached their work.

Schele burst onto the scene with enthusiasm, passion, and an eagerness to push forward with Maya decipherment. Proskouriakoff was rigorous in her research and cautious about presenting her results. Offering none of the generous support she had shown other young women entering the

⁵⁰ Mathews and Schele most likely got this information from Kubler's 1969 publication *Studies in Classic Maya Iconography*, where Ruz was misquoted.

⁵¹ Part of Schele's "shock effect" was the use of expletives to emphasize her points, although in this instance Kelley says, "I think she perhaps wasn't cussing quite as much as usual."

field, Proskouriakoff never got over her distrust of Schele. She remained uncharacteristically and bitterly critical of her work (Solomon 2002:163).

One of Proskouriakoff's graduate students, Joyce Marcus, in a 2015 personal communication to me wrote, "Tania was low key, modest, and liked relationships to evolve very slowly and naturally. Tania and Linda were very different. Linda was enthusiastic and loud and funny and sure of herself; Tania was quiet and introspective and would not throw out guesses or speculations." Marcus, who was also her close friend and knew her very well could tell that "Tania was startled and uncomfortable in Linda's presence." Linda had even changed some of the labels for the glyphs that were designated by Proskouriakoff and her colleagues, and Proskouriakoff saw this as a lack of respect for their work. Proskouriakoff was a careful and modest scholar who used a logical and scientific method to construct sound arguments. On the other hand, Linda was one who espoused ideas that "stimulated new research and promoted a very open convivial environment" (Joyce Marcus, personal communication 2015).

This unfortunate chemistry between them continued into the future. For instance, on January 17, 1977, Schele sent a letter to Proskouriakoff that included a paper that she had written, asking her to review it. Schele stated that she hesitated to send it to her because she was anxious about Proskouriakoff's opinion of her, especially since she had been so outspoken against Schele's work. Proskouriakoff responded, stating that it was not Schele's work that she was critical of, but instead it was her "manners." Then she added, "You have deeply hurt the feelings of Alberto Ruz, who is a fine archaeologist, and my friend of long standing, but if you are ready to mend fences, I will meet you half-way" (letter from Proskouriakoff to Schele, 1977). She then gave her advice, urging her to "let your ideas simmer a bit while you consider alternatives before you put them down on paper." She also made an out-of-context suggestion that most likely references Pakal's tomb and maybe other royal tombs, even though she does not say so: "Have you considered the possibility that tombs may have been reused?" It is interesting to note that later Berlin would present a related possibility—that the tomb may not contain the bones of the man who was the subject of the inscriptions on the side of the lid. His ideas about this will be discussed below.

The keys to the decipherment of an ancient script are at least three-fold. One is collaboration,⁵² another is having a large body of script, and the last is to know the language in which the script is written (David Stuart, personal communication 2014). The mini-conference participants had the

advantage of all three of these, particularly the first two. They were studying all the available inscriptions and dates at Palenque, and there was no doubt that the effort was collaborative. The ancient language of the glyphs was still in question, but they were able to draw upon Lounsbury's knowledge of lowland Mayan languages (Coe 1999:199). This multipronged approach was in stark contrast to the manner in which Ruz and Berlin conducted their decipherment of the glyphs on the sarcophagus lid.

The Bodega Project Summer of 1974

In their quest to include every inscription possible in their study of the glyphs, Schele asked INAH for permission to take pictures of the carved inscriptions in the Palenque Bodega, a storage area at the site. This happened in the summer of 1974. Some of these inscriptions had never been photographed and recorded (Schele letter to William Schenk, June 20, 1974). To her surprise, INAH asked her to photograph and catalogue the entire bodega, and she agreed to do this, working together with Peter Mathews. In conjunction with this effort she visited the Seminario de Cultura Maya in Mexico City where Alberto Ruz was the director. He generously allowed xerox copies of his Palenque informes to be made in order to help with the catalogue (Schele and Mathews 1979:v).⁵³ Robert Rands, who had worked with Ruz during the excavations of the 1950s, accompanied Schele. In a 1984 interview with Michael Coe, Schele stated that she had never had any contact with Ruz until the Second Mesa Redonda in December of 1974, so perhaps it was only Ruz's staff that she came into contact with at the Seminario, not Ruz himself.

The XLI Congreso Internacional de Americanistas, September 2–7, 1974

Schele presented a paper at the Congreso Internacional de Americanistas in Mexico City in September of the same year as the first Mesa Redonda. She called it "The Attribution of

⁵² Schele states in her interview with Michael Coe in 1997, "Tania took me off to the side and told me that the way to work was to work by yourself, figure out what's going on and then just publish it and people could either take it or leave it as they wanted to. She absolutely wanted nothing to do with any kind of collaborative work."

⁵³ It is of interest that in their acknowledgments to the Palenque bodega book Schele and Mathews offer the following comments: "Alberto Ruz is a generous and careful scholar. Work done under his authority is the most consistently documented in the history of Palenque. His willingness to share the data was of tremendous importance to the final publication. He has our respect and gratitude for the quality of his work and for his immense generosity."

Monumental Architecture to Specific Rulers at Palenque," telling her audience that in December of the previous year she had participated in the Primera Mesa Redonda de Palenque and that she, Mathews, and Lounsbury had deciphered the dynastic history of Palenque. She stated that "Shield-Pacal was the first major king and the single most important individual in the history of Palenque. He was born 9.8.9.12.0 8 Ajaw 13 Pop, acceded to the throne on 9.9.2.4.8 5 Lamat 1 Mol, and died on 9.12.11.5.8 Etz'nab 11 Yax" (Schele 1974a). She attributed various buildings to his reign as well as to his successor Chan-Bahlum⁵⁴ and to those rulers that came after him. Her presentation must have seemed very dubious to those who were not present at the first Mesa Redonda where these events were brought to light through the reading of the dates and the hieroglyphs. As mentioned previously, Ruz, whose reputation in Mexican archaeology was very well established, had just published his book on the Temple of the Inscriptions that previous year. He had also published the article in the journal *Estudios de Cultura Maya* called "Más datos históricos en las inscripciones de Palenque," and both publications used the dates on the side of the lid to prove that the man in the tomb was approximately 39 to 40 years of age.⁵⁵ Thus most Mexican Mayanists would have been skeptical of Schele's findings. Ruz did not present at this Congreso, but he may have heard some of the presentations. However, Arturo Romano, the physical anthropologist who coauthored the report on the 1952 in situ study was on the Congreso organizing committee. Schele's presentation was in English so I do not know if all who heard her talk could understand what she was saying—that the man in the tomb was over 80 years old, not the 40–50 year old that Ruz's physical anthropologists had originally attested. The topic of her presentation panel was "Arquitectura prehispánica." Others on the panel were Salvador Díaz, Olga Orive, Paul Gendrop, Horst Hartung, Edward B. Kurjack, and Augusto Molina Montes.

The Second Palenque Round Table: December 1974

The Second Mesa Redonda was held in December 1974. Ruz again was invited and this time he attended. According to the seminar publication, Merle Greene Robertson presented right before him. She titled her paper "Physical Deformities in the Ruling Lineage of Palenque and the Dynastic Implications."⁵⁶

Ruz presented his paper in Spanish, and it also published in Spanish.⁵⁷ It was entitled "Nueva interpretación de la inscripción jeroglífica en el Sarcófago del Templo de las Inscripciones." Many

of those present were not Spanish speakers, so some members of the audience might not have understood all that he said. He began the paper by stating that when he discovered the tomb and the glyphs, he thought that they related to the occupant, his birth and death, and his exploits. He thought that since the dates were only Calendar Round dates that most likely scholars would never be able to place the dates or the actual events associated with them, and at that time, the greatest epigraphers, Thompson, Spinden, and Morley believed the glyphs did not relate to anything historical (Ruz Lhuillier 1975:87).

When he began to write his monograph on the Temple of the Inscriptions fourteen years prior, he focused on the dates and the work of Berlin, Proskouriakoff, and Kelley to try to find the "storyline" of these hieroglyphs. Then he referred to the recent article he had written in *Estudios de Cultura Maya* where he not only looked at the dates, but also the historical context. Here is a summary of his conclusions:

He believed that the most easily understood part of the inscription is where the text begins—on the south side and from left to right. Then the reading proceeds east, north, and west. He believed this to be the case because it is the side that is visible when one first walks into the tomb. In addition, that side is the only side painted with cinnabar. In regard to the inscription, he related almost the same information and dates as in his *Estudios* article. Once again he moved the Long Count dates forward by 52 years from the dates he originally proposed in his *Anales* report on the 1952 season (Ruz Lhuillier 1954) and thus eliminated the two

⁵⁴ The ruler now known as K'inich Kan Bahlam II.

⁵⁵ Ruz changed the original age at death proposed by his physical anthropologists to an age range that he thought better matched the dates on the lid.

⁵⁶ Ruz, in one of his rebuttal papers to Schele and Mathews, would later use Robertson's theories as another example of what he thought were ridiculous ideas that the Mesa Redonda people were proposing. He wrote, "We do know that the skeleton of the deceased has no physical deformities such as a club foot and that it is 'unfounded' that his right foot showed a congenital deformity due to intermarriage" (Ruz 1977b:16).

⁵⁷ The Maya archaeologist, Edwin M. Shook related a humorous story to Winifred Veronda, an author who wrote an account of Shook's life. It revolved around an event that took place in the 1950s at Chichen Itza. Shook explained that Ruz's English was limited and he could only speak in broken English sentences. Ruz would take a group of Americans into an ancient structure and say, "This is a room." "Then he'd go into another structure and say, 'This is a room.' Once, a visiting group arrived at the top of the Castillo, and a guest just ahead of Ruz said, 'And this is a room?' Of course everybody laughed. Ruz would tell these stories on himself, you see. He was a great fellow" (Shook and Veronda 1998).

K'atun endings that Berlin proposed as being located on the east and west side of the lid inscription.

In his conclusions, he wrote that he was not totally positive about his interpretation and that he was aware of the other recent interpretations by Kubler, Lounsbury, Mathews, and Schele and that they were contrary to his view (Ruz Lhuillier 1975:92). Here are his major points:

- 1 The person in the tomb is the same as the one who ordered the building of its pyramid temple.
- 2 The inscription on the lid is about the person in the tomb and is most likely limited to "events closely associated with him."
- 3 The reading starts on the south side and then goes east, north, and west
- 4 The first date relates to the birth of the man in the tomb and the last date is that of his death
- 5 The Long Count dates are totally within his life-span.
- 6 The life-span should be no more than 40 years of age, just as the anthropological report suggested. Another argument for this age of death is that most people of North America in Prehispanic times only lived to about that age.

Having put these principles forward, Ruz could now claim that the anthropological study was backed up by his interpretation of the dates—the man in the tomb was in his fourth decade of life when he died. Not only did he believe that he had physical proof from the bones, he now thought that he had epigraphic proof. And yet, how did the debate over the age of the bones eventually become an argument between physical anthropology and epigraphy, even though Ruz developed his own epigraphic proof corroborating the osteological report of the physical anthropologist? One explanation is the possibility that few people understood enough about the calendar to realize what he had done; the other is that those who did understand thought it mistaken and chose to ignore it. Perhaps it was a little of both factors.

He believed that in order to solve this puzzle, the approach should be undertaken slowly to reach the truth:

... in order to not mistake the course, we must be careful, not failing to use our imagination, but taking great care not to stray upon paths of fantasy. Circular claims about points still debatable and even dismissible, based not on proven facts but on hypothesis, however attractive they may be... such claims, in addition to being premature, are ultimately dangerous and remove scientific weight from any decipherment effort, however well-intended and properly guided it

may be. (Ruz Lhuillier 1975:93, translation by Barbara MacLeod)

In this passage, I think that he is also tactfully trying to discourage some of the free-flowing ideas coming out of the Round Table regarding not only in the readings of the glyphs, but also in the interpretation of Maya iconography.⁵⁸ Then in a footnote he states that before the second Palenque Mesa Redonda, he had asked Arturo Romano, Head of the Department of Physical Anthropology of INAH, to conduct a new examination of the bone material. The skull and the cervical and dorsal vertebrae were still in INAH's possession at this time. Romano's examination validated the 1952 study that was made by Eusebio Dávalos and himself. Under the direction of Arturo Romano a new examination of a fragment of the cranial cavity was conducted (Tiesler and Cucina 2006:11).⁵⁹ The results of the unpublished study, conducted by Drs. M. A. Balcorta and F. Villalobos, was that the bones had a robust skeletal age of around 40 years and that there were no outward signs of skeletal pathology.⁶⁰ Ruz wrote that the conclusions were based upon a "histological" study of a fragment of the "cranial cavity." Later, physical anthropologist and archaeologist Javier Urcid (1993) wrote that a "histological method aimed at measuring the degree of mineralization" is not a standard method of determining age at the time of death and was not in any of the published manuals. Urcid quotes Ruz as stating that since there was "uniform mineralization indicating an active and stable osseous metabolic state, one can say that we are dealing with a post-pubertal individual with a skeleton age within the fourth decade of life" (Ruz Lhuillier 1977a:293).

Closing Speeches at the Second Mesa Redonda

According to Alfonso Morales (personal communication 2014) who was present at this second

⁵⁸ One "free-flowing" idea that Linda Schele had formulated was that both Palenque and Copan had "Venus doors" and she believed from looking at the iconography that Palenque was the entry point into the Underworld and that Copan was the exit. She writes about this in a 1974 letter to Michael Coe.

⁵⁹ Perhaps related to this unpublished report is one by Romano found in the files of INAH's Dirección de Antropología Física called "Los restos craneales del personaje de la cámara sepulcral del Templo de las Inscripciones en Palenque, Chiapas: su estado de conservación."

⁶⁰ Note that the report uses the age of 40 years instead of the original estimate of 40–50 years. This change fit more closely with Ruz's new determination that the age of the man in the tomb was 39, based upon his new reading of the glyphs and the dates.

Round Table, during the closing speeches Ruz got up and told the participants that they should not “go wild with ideas” and that they should follow his example by using scientific methods. Ruz was “very patronizing and condescending” in his attitude. Moisés Morales was the next speaker to give closing remarks, and his son Alfonso informed me that his father stated, “Thank you Don Alberto but these two years of craziness have produced more than your twenty years of scientific research.” Merle Green Robertson (personal communication 2010) gives a more graphic portrayal of what happened, stating that after Ruz talked,

Moisés Morales got up and damned everything that Ruz had said. Everyone was furious at Moisés... Ruz was then mad at everyone at the Mesa Redonda. Linda finally went to Mexico City to see him and try to smooth things over. But Ruz would not agree to the sarcophagus dates because they were from the Mesa Redonda people.⁶¹

In a personal communication (2015) Joyce Marcus who was at the meeting told me, “At Palenque I spent much of the dinner hour with Linda at a table and later, when Ruz came near our table, I was drawn to him because I saw he was hurt. I knew Tania admired him for his meticulous excavation of the Temple of the Inscriptions and I did too. He was elegant, graceful, with European flare and intelligence. He was charming. My overwhelming feeling at that moment was that he should be praised for his excavations, not diminished because he was wrong about the text on the sarcophagus lid.”

Berlin and *Signos y significados en las inscripciones*

Three years later, Berlin published his book *Signos y significados en las inscripciones* (Berlin 1977). In that publication he brought to light many different and interesting ideas such as the contention that the ancient Maya kept track of lineages in Maya culture. He noted that it was important during the time of Diego de Landa (1978); therefore, he reasoned, it must have been important for the man in the tomb he called “Solar-Shield,” using the name first coined by Kubler in 1969. He also noted that the ancient Maya tended to record very special events such as enthronement by using the glyphs T648 and T644, “aggrandizement” by the glyphs T713 and T757, and consecration with T700, or a variation of this.

He recounted the list of the rulers of Palenque found on the Tablet of the Inscriptions and believed that the names on the tablet were the ancestors of the man in the tomb—that they were

either biological descendants or his predecessors. He believed that one of the people named was a woman and her name was also on the edge of the sarcophagus lid. Just as many before him had done, he cited the steps of House C of the Palace as supplying the Long Count for the 8 Ajaw 13 Pop Calendar Round date on the side of the sarcophagus lid—a date also found on the West Tablet of the Temple of the Inscriptions and on a tracing of a slab once exhibited in the Pasadena Art Museum in California. He wrote, “it seems fair to assume that the designated person [Solar-Shield] actually originated around 9.8.9.13.0.” This is the date of birth also proposed previously by Schele and Mathews. He wondered about the favorable symbolism of the birth date 8 Ajaw 13 Pop. He speculated that perhaps this date might have been chosen in substitution for the real birth date so that the birth could have added significance based upon the calendar date “Ajaw.”

Berlin also referred to the day that he believed that “Shield” was enthroned and which is found on the Temple of the Inscriptions tablet. Since the man would be only thirteen, he doubted that he would have been given full reign, but instead he was given various ceremonial titles. He reviewed the dates and the meanings he associated with glyph blocks E–H. He noted that the glyph with T585 as its main sign had been interpreted as representing the termination or the death of an individual. He believed that the birth date occurred on the Long Count date of 9.8.9.13.0 and the death date was 9.12.11.5.18. He stated clearly that the man in the sarcophagus died at the age of 81. However, he then cited Ruz’s book on the Temple of the Inscriptions (Ruz Lhuillier 1973a:253) and noted that the bones in the tomb had been dated by physical anthropologists as belonging to a man between the ages of 40–50 years (Berlin 1977:141). Remarkably, and perhaps out of loyalty and respect to his friend Ruz, he wrote, “There is an error

⁶¹ In a letter of February 8, 1978 from Bob Robertson to Linda written while preparing for the next Palenque Round Table, Bob expressed his hope that Moisés would be out of town during the meetings so that he would not “embarrass us by insulting as he did with Marta and Ruz. The repercussions from the latter are still felt.” Then he admits that maybe he is being harsh on Moisés, but having lived there for one year, he had “seen all sides to him.” The Marta that he referred to is Marta Foncerrada de Molina, a female Mexican art historian that Linda later collaborated with in putting together a Palenque Mapping project in September of 1976. Merle Greene Robertson had also worked with Molina in 1976 when she was asked by Molina to photograph the murals of Cacaxtla for Molina’s presentation at the Third Palenque Round Table in 1978.

somewhere in our reasoning, so now we have to check to see if our eagerness to suddenly resolve this intriguing situation has led us too far." He felt certain that "Solar-Shield's" name was associated first with 9.8.9.13.0 and finally 9.12.11.5.18. He suspected that the person in the tomb was Solar-Shield but suggested that perhaps he should adjust the dates since the bones show a man who was at most 50 years old.

He derived two sets of Long Count dates to make the dates fit the age of 50 years and then concludes that the man was either: (1) born on 9.8.9.13.0 and died 9.11.0.0.0; or (2) died 9.12.11.5.18 and was born 9.10.0.0.0. He believed that only the first instance seemed possible or else the physical anthropologists were wrong. He then changed the subject and directed his attention to a different ruler and his dates.

2008 Publication by Berlin in *Estudios de Cultura Maya*

Other important writings by Berlin regarding the Temple of the Inscriptions lid included a monograph entitled "El texto del sarcófago y su relación con otros textos palencanos," published in the journal *Estudios de Cultura Maya* in 2008 but written between the dates of 1958 and 1977.⁶² In this, Berlin makes several noteworthy observations about those inscriptions. Berlin wrote that he had analyzed the inscription on the side of the lid and realized that he needed to change two of the dates that Ruz had proposed, but he did not tell the reader where Ruz had published those dates. I believe they are from Ruz's 1973 book on the Temple of the Inscriptions because the data from the table in Berlin's article mirrors the tables in Ruz's book (Ruz Lhuillier 1973a:119). The dates that Berlin corrected are shown on the right in Table 6 and are shaded. Note that the date glyphs on the south side were not listed here because he thought that he knew with absolute certainty where those were anchored and they are the birth and death dates for the protagonist.

The following are the changes that he made:

- 1 He changed the 4 Ok Calendar Round date to 4 Chikchan; he changed its Long Count date from 9.8.8.3.10 to 9.10.7.13.5 and switched its chronological place to below the 1 Ajaw 8 K'ayab Calendar Round date.
- 2 He changed the Long Count date for 5 Kaban 5 Mak from 9.7.2.17.17 to 9.4.10.4.17.

Just as he as noted in previous papers, he pointed out that at the center of the east and west sides of the lid there are dates that commemorate two "tun endings." Neither of these dates have the

usual volute supports found under date glyphs. These tun endings are the Long Count dates of 9.7.0.0.0⁶³ and 9.10.0.0.0, and they mediate between the two extreme dates creating a division of the inscription into three equal parts. He regarded this carving as another manifestation of the triadic arrangement so often seen at Palenque. He posits that because the k'atun ending date of 9.7.0.0.0 is earlier than the k'atun ending date on the west side (9.10.0.0.0), it makes logical sense that the reading starts on the east side, "which would be consistent with the Maya custom of starting a tour of the four cardinal points precisely in the east" (Berlin 2008:196). He wrote that the southern text should be the end text.⁶⁴ Since the two Long Count anchor dates for the k'atun endings had been determined, he felt confident that he could find the other nine Long Count dates.

He also noticed that the other nine dates are followed by the T585 glyph, which later would be read as "enters the road" (a metaphor for death). He noted that 8 Ajaw 13 Pop and 6 Etz'nab 11 Yax on the south side of the lid were easily anchored in time because "both dates occur several times in Palenque and the dates are undoubtedly 9.8.9.13.0 and 9.12.11.5.18 respectively" (Berlin 2008:196). For instance, 6 Etz'nab 11 Yax appears on the West Tablet of the Inscriptions. Next to it is the Distance Number 4.1.10.18, which leads to the Long Count date of 9.8.9.13.0 8 Ajaw 13 Pop. In another location on the same tablet, it appears again at E3-F3. He noted that the Temple of the Inscriptions tablets register the seatings of all nine k'atuns between the Long Count dates of 9.4.0.0.0 and 9.13.0.0.0.

In order to show more direct connections between what is written on the three Tablets of the Inscriptions and the inscription on the sides of the

⁶² I am using these dates because 1958 was the year that Ruz (1977) received a personal communication from Berlin where he included much of the same material written in this section of this paper. The 1977 date comes from the oldest date listed in the bibliography for the article in question, but the bibliography was created by the *Estudios* staff. According to Peter Mathews (personal communication 2014), Berlin had given a draft document containing the same information as the article in question to Tatiana Proskouriakoff for her review. We do not know what year. According to Linda Schele (audio tape of a 1984 interview with Michael Coe), Berlin told her that he decided not to publish this paper because he did not want to "hash over Floyd's paper." She was referring to Floyd's Lounsbury's 1974 paper from the First Mesa Redonda called "The Inscription of the Sarcophagus Lid at Palenque." However, Berlin's paper was mostly likely the earliest of the two.

⁶³ It is a 7 Ajaw date and this date is also recorded on the East Tablet.

⁶⁴ Previously he had thought that the text on the south side was a stand-alone text.

| Ruz | | | Berlin | | |
|--------------|-------------|------------|-----------------|-------------|------------|
| 9.7.2.17.17 | 5 Kaban | 5 Mak | 9.4.10.4.17 | 5 Kaban | 5 Mak |
| 9.6.11.0.16 | 7 Kib | 4 K'ayab | 9.6.11.0.16 | 7 Kib | 4 K'ayab |
| 9.6.16.10.7 | 9 Manik' | 5 Yaxk'in | 9.6.16.10.7 | 9 Manik' | 5 Yaxk'in |
| 9.7.0.0.0 | 7 Ajaw | 3 K'ank'in | 9.7.0.0.0 | 7Ajaw | 3 K'ank'in |
| 9.7.9.5.5 | 11 Chikchan | 3 K'ayab | 9.7.9.5.5 | 11 Chikchan | 3 K'ayab |
| 9.6.18.15.12 | 2 Eb | 0 Keh | 9.8.11.6.12 | 2 Eb | Fin Keh |
| 9.8.19.4.6 | 2 Kimi | 14 Mol | 9.8.19.4.6 | 2 Kimi | 14 Mol |
| 9.8.18.14.11 | 3 Chuwen | 4 Wayeb | 9.8.18.14.11(?) | 3 Chuwen | 4 Wayeb |
| 9.8.8.3.10 | 4 Ok | 13 Yax | 9.10.0.0.0 | 1 Ajaw | 8 K'ayab |
| 9.10.0.0.0 | 1 Ajaw | 8 K'ayab | 9.10.7.13.5 | 4 Chikchan | 13 Yax |
| 9.10.10.1.6 | 13 Kimi | 4 Pax | 9.10.10.1.6 | 13 Kimi | 4 Pax |

Table 6. Comparison of Ruz's and Berlin's dates.

lid, he methodically laid out all the evidence and arguments in several pages of narrative. A summary of his data is given in Table 7. He then cited other text examples found throughout the site.

He briefly considered the "Sun Shield" glyph, which is a "famous expression that deserves a separate study" (Berlin 2008:199); however, he thought that it pertained to the occupant of the sarcophagus. He went through several of the birth, enthronement and death dates for the individuals shown in Table 7 and determined their age at death. Returning to the dates of 8 Ajaw 13 Pop and

6 Etz'nab 11 Yax, which are on the south side of the lid, he associated them with the Long Count dates of 9.8.9.13.0 and 9.12.11.5.18. Moreover, he also observed that any dates associated with "Solar Shield" at Palenque always fell between those dates. Then he stated that Solar Shield, according to the inscription, died when he was 81 years old, and that this can only mean that the person in the tomb cannot be Solar Shield because the anthropological report made at the time of discovery stated that he died at the age of 40–50 years. In addition, the skeleton had an almost complete set of teeth

| Inscriptions Tablets | | | Sarcophagus | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|------------|
| A1-A6 | 9.4.0.0.0 | Cauac I | 9.4.10.4.17 | 5 Kaban 5 Mak | I |
| C5-D6 | 9.4.6/7.7.17 9.5.0.0.0 | | | | |
| F7-F8 | 9.6.5.3.3 (??) 9.6.10.0.0 (?) | Kan Dolor de Muelas " | 9.6.11.0.16 | 7 Kib 4 K'ayab | II |
| H8-G9 | 9.6.11.?? 9.6.13.0.0 | Cauac II " | 9.6.16.10.7 | 9 Manik' 5 Yaxk'in | III |
| I5-I6 | 9.6.17/18.?? 9.7.0.0.0 | Tigre " | 9.7.9.5.5 | 11 Chikchan 3 K'ayab | IV |
| L5-L6 | 9.7.10.3.8 9.8.0.0.0 | Ix-Kan-Ik " | 9.8.11.6.12 | 2 Eb Fin Keh | V |
| M1-N2 | 9.8.11.9.10 9.8.13.0.0 | Pluma Kan " | 9.8.19.4.6 | 2 Kimi 14 Mol | VI |
| O2-P3 | 9.8.19.7.18 9.9.0.0.0 | T348.793b "Helice " | 9.8.18.14.11(?) | 3 Chuwen 4 Wayeb | VII |
| R12-S3 | 9.9.2.4.8 9.10.0.0.0 | Escudo Solar T744.58 Kan-Tigre | 9.10.7.13.5 9.10.10.1.6 | 4 Chikchan 13 Yax 13 Kimi 4 Pax | VIII IX |

Table 7. Summary of Berlin's data.

suggesting that the deceased was not 81 years of age.⁶⁵ In a meeting with Berlin in 1974 that took place in Mexico City, Schele and Mathews remembered a conversation with Berlin about the teeth (Coe and Lebrun 1997). They were having coffee in a nearby coffee shop. Schele stated,

Berlin had this little tiny demitasse cup of coffee, and he put four heaping spoonfuls of sugar as he sat there. And as he drank this ultra-sweet coffee he said, "I just can't believe someone 80 years old had teeth that good. I've had trouble with my teeth my whole life!"

Ruz - "Lo que se sabe y lo que no se sabe de Palenque"

In early 1977, Ruz published an article in a small-circulation periodical called *Revista del Sureste* entitled "Lo que se sabe y lo que no se sabe de Palenque" or "What we know and what we do not know about Palenque." At the end of the article, it becomes clear that his purpose for writing it was to address rumors going around that the man found in the famous tomb at Palenque was an alien from space.⁶⁶ He wrote that "Senor 8 Ajaw was a real Maya...not at all an astronaut from a faraway planet invented by a writer of science fiction novels and that other writers, radio and TV announcers helped introduce this to the minds of people..."

Then, without naming names and with biting sarcasm he made reference to some of the theories put forth by the participants at the early Palenque Round Table and by their colleagues.⁶⁷ He associated them with the fantastic science fiction theorists saying, "The difference is only quantitative since one theory is as fantastic as the other. Their authors, for different reasons, are similar in their imagination/fantasy, sensationalism and misuse of science." According to Schele (1989), Ruz made copies of this article and distributed it to several scholars including her. She noticed that Ruz had used her drawing of the Palace Tablet in the article but had cut off her name so that it was not visible and he did not credit her.

That same year, Ruz's article "Gerontocracy at Palenque?" was published within the edited volume *Social Process in Maya Prehistory* (Hammond 1977). Ruz had begun writing it prior to 1975, according to Norman Hammond (personal communication 2015) because it was sent to him that year. In it he refers to the Palenque Round Table paper written by Mathews and Schele (1974) where they laid out the dynasty of the lords from AD 615 to 785. He listed what Mathews and Schele proposed as the kings' birth and death dates and then their age of death, all of which fall between the ages of 60 to 80. Then he discussed the available osteological

data for the kings of ancient Mesoamerica and their ages at the time of death. Almost none of them had reached the age of 80, as was claimed in the reading of the Palenque inscriptions by Mathews and Schele. He wrote, "The study of the Palenque inscriptions made by Mathews and Schele (1974) is of interest, but I believe that their youth or inexperience or excessive enthusiasm has led them to stray from the more reliable, more rigorous, more scientific path which Proskouriakoff has followed all her life" (Ruz Lhuillier 1977a:291). One of the unintended spinoffs of Ruz's writing campaign was that some scholars in the United States began to lose respect for Ruz's scholarly work and saw him as a close-minded bitter man.

Then he criticized the name that Mathews, Schele, and the Palenque Round Table participants had given the dead king. Ruz could not accept the possibility that the king was named "Pakal" ("Shield" in English). They had deciphered the name from the presence of T624 (the shield glyph) on the side of the sarcophagus lid. Ruz argued that this glyph appears at Palenque 30 times on different monuments and also at many other sites in the Peten, along the Usumacinta River, and the Motagua River. He noted that it is also found in the codices and states that Thompson cited 53 examples of T624. Therefore, he reasoned, all of these could not refer to the man in the tomb. He also pointed out that this same shield motif is an object that people on the carved monuments carry, even those on the walls of the tomb. He believed that, "The objects must be symbols, attributes of power, on the same basis as a European monarch's scepter and crown" (Ruz Lhuillier 1977a:292).

He lamented that Mathews and Schele continued to insist that this symbol was associated with the king's name, even though they also acknowledged that it was associated with other names and titles at Palenque. Still they were certain that 8 Ajaw

⁶⁵ Here he referred to the additional studies done right before the Second Palenque Round Table in 1974.

⁶⁶ He was referring to the popular 1968 book by Erich von Däniken called *Chariot of the Gods* that was turned into a "documentary film." In that book, the author claimed that the sarcophagus lid shows an alien star traveler sitting in his rocket like a modern astronaut. The author also mistakenly wrote that the lid was found at Copan. It is also possible that Ruz might have been referring to another book written by that same author and at about the same time called *Gods from Outer Space*, where he claims that the figure on the lid is Kukulcan at the controls of his rocket.

⁶⁷ He also lists ideas such as giving the deceased king the name "Pakal," the idea that he had a club foot, that he was married at the age of twelve, that he was married to his mother and then to his sister, that he was then "reduced" to a midget in a ceremony where he handed down his rule to his son, then dying at the age of eighty.

was 80 years old when he died. Ruz believed it unscientific to use the inscriptions to date the bones, especially since a scientific study had already been conducted in 1952, one that had been ignored by Schele and Mathews. He seemed insulted that they did not even criticize, refute, or acknowledge this. In addition, the process of decipherment was not complete, and therefore he believed that their interpretation was speculation. He believed that the result of his study of the ages at death for ancient Mesoamerica contradicted their conclusions.

Hence the data concerning the supposed Lords of Palenque on which their hypothetical age of enthronement and of death are based are surprising, falling as they do completely outside what is known both about mortality and about the dynastic rules. We have not found a single case of longevity beyond the age of 75 nor of an individual ascending the throne at a later age than 35. Palenque would represent a phenomenon completely alien to the Middle American context, with a veritable gerontocracy within which the rulers, with the exception of one child, came to power at an average age of 50 and died at an average age of 68 years and 9 months. (Ruz Lhuillier 1977a:293)

Ruz's continued public criticism of Schele, Mathews, and the Palenque Round Table participants perpetuated the rift that had developed between Mexican and U.S. archaeologists as well as between physical anthropologists and epigraphers that had originated at the Second Round Table. For instance, Merle Greene Robertson was having difficulty getting her permit for the 1978 Mesa Redonda approved, and she suspected that it was because of some of the fallout over what happened with Ruz at that meeting. Originally it had been approved, but then she found out that the permit had been cancelled for some reason. INAH told her that they had made a mistake and corrected the error (Merle Greene Robertson, personal communication to Linda Schele 1977). In December 8, 1977, Michael Coe wrote a short note to Schele saying that he was relieved that Robertson had resolved all the problems with getting her permit and then complained that her trouble with getting permission was due to Mexican bureaucracy. He also attributed it to their problems with Ruz (who was head of the National Museum at the time) and his resentment toward ideas generated by the Mesa Redonda "people."

Another example of just how toxic the debate had become is seen in a letter from Merle to Linda dated October 15, 1977. In it, Merle gave Linda advice on a "TV deal" that would take place at the Mexican National Museum that someone—perhaps Marta Molina, one of Schele's friends—had

proposed. Merle did not elaborate on the "deal," but apparently Schele was soliciting advice from her about whether she should do it. Merle wrote, "I wouldn't do it. It's a frame-up. Ruz is director of the museum and the only way he would sanction such a thing would be as an opportunity to tear apart on TV and in the papers those gringo incompetent, unqualified bastards of the Mesa Redonda" (Merle Greene Robertson, personal communication to Linda Schele 1977). I suspect that Schele was concerned that if she were interviewed on TV it would cause Merle to again lose a permit that was needed in order to have the Palenque Round Table in 1978.⁶⁸ Robertson also wrote that she had "heard" that Berlin's book was out now and speculated that Ruz now found that he needed "to defend himself."

In that same letter she then told Schele that five people from INAH had come to Palenque to prepare the bones of Pakal that were still in the tomb for a trip to Mexico City.⁶⁹ The plan was to photograph the process of taking the bones out of the tomb, prepare and preserve them in Mexico City, and then send them back to Palenque. They would be placed in a glass case so that they could be presented at the inauguration of the site museum when the president and his wife would be present. However word spread throughout the Palenque pueblo about what was afoot and the entire town rose up in protest against removing the bones. Two days later, Merle Robertson's husband Bob also wrote to Schele. He related that Ruz just happened to be in Villahermosa at the time this story broke, but he did not say whether Ruz was involved in any way. People sent telegrams and called the governor and the president and many other authorities. A meeting made up of the mayor and Morales family members Carlos, Daniel, and Moisés and other concerned citizens was called. Even the school children got involved and marched to the site in protest. A sound truck rolled through the town announcing the opposition. Bob Robertson wrote that the headline from the Sunday paper from Villahermosa read "INAH Steals Bones of a Prince." He quoted part of the article as stating "snobs and traitors call the prince Pacal and international stupids say he was an astronaut." Finally one of the INAH officials set the

⁶⁸ I have been unable to determine why Robertson needed this permit, since the Mesas Redondas were not located at the site. However she often conducted studies at the site that did indeed require permits, and I assume that she did not want to ruffle any more feathers than she had already.

⁶⁹ The skull had been taken to Mexico City by the physical anthropologist Romano in 1952, where it remained until it was returned in 1979.

mayor straight by telling him that they were trying to preserve the bones of Pakal and “promised the skull will be brought back.”⁷⁰ Then on November 7, Schele received another letter from Bob Robertson telling her “The tomb has been closed – no bones taken out.”

Other examples of hard feelings between Ruz and Schele are found in a letter dated April 11, 1978. Schele sent a letter to Marta Molina about preparations for a glyph workshop at UNAM that Schele was organizing with Kathryn Josserand and Nick Hopkins. Among many other specifications and demands, she wrote:

I very much want Nicholas and Kathryn Hopkins⁷¹ and their associates to attend. I wish to repeat that I do not want to get involved in a war with Ruz and his friends. For this reason I do not want to be in any newspapers or filmed interviews. I do not want to have to face hostile people in the audience, especially anthropology students who hate “gringos.” I would not limit attendance as long as everyone comes to listen. My presentation does not have to be accepted as the truth, but I would at least like to present it to an unbiased and non-hostile audience. I know I am probably overemphasizing my position on this issue, but we have gotten very hostile and generally unfair press in Mexico over the last few years.⁷² I cannot ethically or emotionally become involved in a fight waged in the public press.

Then she goes on to empathize with Marta telling her that she knew that Marta had friends on both sides of this “debate.”

After the untimely death of Ruz due to a heart attack in 1979, the controversy over the bones of K'inich Janaab Pakal seemed to calm. As decipherment of the glyphs progressed, the age of man in the tomb at the time of death continued to be confirmed at 80 to 81 years of age and a chronology for the all the ancient Maya elite began to unfold.

Arturo Romano, the physical anthropologist who assisted in performing the original *in situ* forensic study, published two articles after the death of Ruz that expanded our knowledge of the events that happened immediately after the discovery of the tomb. The one published in 1980 was a chapter in the book *Palenque: esplendor del arte maya* (Romano Pacheco 1980a). There he makes no mention of the age-at-time-of-death estimates of the bones, but instead furnishes us with more details of the burial including the work he did in photographing the tomb. In this publication and the one he published in 1989 described below, he wrote that the burial was believed to be a “primary” burial (Romano Pacheco 1980b:295, 1989:1418). As stated previously, in the years after the discovery

there would be those who questioned whether the man buried in the tomb was the one referenced on the lid because of the discrepancy between the inscriptions and the physical anthropologists’ osteological report. Some of those who raised this question were Proskouriakoff (personal communication to Linda Schele 1977), Marcus (1976:96, 1992b:235), and Berlin (1977:245). However, if the burial was truly a primary one, then there should be little doubt that the man in the tomb is the same as the one referenced on the lid.

The other Romano publication noted above was published in 1989 and was from the proceedings of the Second International Symposium of Mayanists. In it Romano wrote that the subject in the tomb was a tall man that probably died between the age of 40 and 50 years and that the age had been confirmed by the dates on the side of the lid. According to him, the man was born in AD 655, was enthroned in 683, and died in 694 around the age of 39 years and not 80, as some had stated.⁷³ Even though it mimics what Ruz had written earlier, the article is very helpful because he added details about the bones that were not included in the original *in situ* report. For example, he amplified the description of the teeth. He wrote: “The strong chin and jaw exhibit well developed teeth with little wear on the chewing surfaces” (Romano Pacheco 1989:1421). We can infer from this that the condition of the teeth was one of the factors that helped them determine that the man was middle-aged at the time of death.

Romano then quoted from a speech given by Ruz on November 30, 1977 at a conference commemorating the 25th anniversary of the finding of the tomb: “...[I]t has been argued in meetings and

⁷⁰ According to Gallegos Ruiz (1979), the skull was returned to the tomb on September 10, 1979, two weeks after the death of Alberto Ruz. However, Arturo Romano wrote in 1980 that it was returned on September 6th. It was transported to Palenque by Romano, the man who had originally taken it to Mexico City 27 years prior at the instruction of Alberto Ruz. Romano delivered it to the first lady of Mexico who was waiting at the top of the stairs. Her name was Carmen Romano de López Portillo and she took it down the tomb stairs to deliver it to the site archaeologist, Cesar A. Sáenz, who placed it back in the tomb (Gallegos Ruiz 1997:33).

⁷¹ Kathryn retained her maiden name Josserand. Also, right before they were scheduled to give their introductory talk on the glyphs, they developed typhoid fever and could not attend. Instead, Ruz’s graduate student, Maricela Ayala Falcón stepped in (Nicholas Hopkins, personal communication 2015). Maricela would eventually become a student of Linda Schele at the University of Texas.

⁷² I do not have a record of those newspaper account to which she refers.

⁷³ Here Romano is using Ruz’s calendrical calculations written about earlier.

has been reported in scientific publications that the man buried in the tomb is called Pakal, meaning shield, that he died at 80 years, that he had acromegaly, that he also had a left foot that was a club foot..." In Ruz's defense, Romano refuted all of these claims, stating that they were all without scientific merit, "For example, the supposed age of death of 80 years is not in any way consistent with the dental and osteological evidence..." (Romano Pacheco 1989:1421).

In 1992 the controversy was reignited in the United States by Joyce Marcus (1992a:444) when her book *Mesoamerican Writing Systems* was released. Its publication marks an added twist to the dialog for the controversy of the bones of Pakal. Instead of focusing upon the age at which Pakal died or the correct placement of the dates on the lid in the Long Count, Marcus's target was the believability of the inscribed dates and the supposed gullibility of the new epigraphers who were reading them. By changing the focus of the controversy, some believed that her goal was to belittle the field of epigraphy, while elevating the role of "dirt" archaeology (Hopkins 1994).

In her chapter "Falsifying Birth Dates and Life Spans," Marcus attempted to make the case that elite Maya rulers were not truthful about their recorded accession dates or their length of rule. She was particularly skeptical of accession dates of the Palenque kings and highlighted the data regarding the famous tomb of Pakal. She wrote that Ruz had the king's bones aged and sexed in two different studies and that the "skeleton is that of a man approximately 40 years of age" (Marcus 1992a:345).⁷⁴ Thus the reader should question the reliability of texts that state that a Prehispanic ruler lived to the age of eighty.

Her book was read by many scholars over the next three years. At least seven book reviews were published and the reviewers' comments fanned the flames of the controversy as much as the book itself. Most of the reviewers acknowledged that Maya scribes must have manipulated some of the facts in the inscriptions, but they asserted that Marcus had not presented enough systematic evidence for a pattern of falsification since she lists only two "examples" of this—both from Palenque. Her first example was Pakal and the other was clearly a mythological reference and thus not true history (Cervantes 1995; Coe 1993; Hopkins 1994; Houston 1994). Coe, Hopkins, and Houston pointed out that even though Marcus paid homage to the Maya epigraphers of the past such as Tatiana Proskouriakoff, Eric Thompson, and Heinrich Berlin, she ignored the recent accomplishments in decipherment by the new epigraphers. In addition to that, they noted that she did not recognize the

large corpus of deciphered dates and hieroglyphs that were found across many different sites, allowing scholars to cross-check names and places for greater accuracy and veracity (Coe 1993; Hopkins 1994; Houston 1994). Coe (1993:706) believed that her evidence was "hopelessly out of date."

Marcus proposed that the new epigraphers were so enamored with the study of Maya hieroglyphs that they were misled by the inscriptions. This is a charge that Houston admitted had some merit, but he stated that just because a few of the inscriptions are falsified, it does not mean that all are so. Cervantes expressed his opinion that Marcus was exaggerating the amount of naiveté of the epigraphers. Hopkins (1994) proposed that Marcus had a hidden agenda in writing the book. He thought that she distorted the facts for political ends, in a very similar manner in which she accused the ancient Maya kings and queens. He referred to the very last sentence of the book where he believed her hidden agenda was revealed: "If a truly objective history is ever to emerge from prehispanic Mesoamerica, much of it will have to emerge at the point of a trowel" (Marcus 1992a:445). He charged that she wanted the reader to believe that "Mesoamerican ethnohistorical sources are so flawed as to be useless and should be ignored" (Hopkins 1994:385).

On the other hand, Joseph W. Ball (1994) believed that Marcus presented a convincing argument that Mesoamerican elites used their writing systems for prestige and for political and territorial gain. He also wrote:

The book is especially timely as a caveat in light of a number of newly emerging non-archaeological "histories" based on largely uncritical readings of classic Lowland Maya texts. Mayanist epigraphers, in recent years have become so enamored of their newly found ability to read the ancient texts—and seemingly so intoxicated with exhilaration at the achievement—that they have all but entirely foresworn critical textual analysis in interpreting and presenting these texts and so have produced a body of modern literature whose nature as history, fiction, myth, political propaganda, or some blend of these is

⁷⁴ In another publication that same year, Marcus (1992b:235) wrote that the physical anthropologists determined this age "on the basis of a study of suture closings and other standard physical anthropological measures of age." According to Javier Urcid (1993:2), she was simply guessing at the methodology they used because it was not written in the report. In that same publication, she also reminded the reader that in 1977 Ruz had the bones examined again to determine age at the time of death and it was estimated by M. A. Balcorta and F. Villalobos that this man died in his fourth decade.

very much open to legitimate question. (Ball 1994:1433)

He then he lists *Forest of Kings* (Schele and Freidel 1990) and *Breaking the Maya Code* (Coe 1992) as examples of those suspect histories. However, Ball saw many flaws in the Marcus text and noted that by its own terminology, the book itself is propaganda, and yet it is helpful to scholars because it warns of the "severely overreached historiography of Classic Lowland Maya inscriptions and texts (Ball 1994:1434).

With two exceptions, the reviewers recommend the book, but with caution. For instance, Houston wrote: "I regard this as a book that should be purchased by all Mesoamericanists. Along with this recommendation, however, I would urge cautious, deliberative reading, with an eye to seeing how its ambition comes to fruition and how it fails" (Houston 1994:718).

In 1992, the same year that the Marcus book was released, Linda Schele wrote an article called "A New Look at the Dynastic History of Palenque" in which she defended the veracity of the epigraphic data that she and others had worked out about the age of death of the man in the tomb. This paper was published 19 years after Schele and Mathews first presented their dynastic data on Palenque kings; since then there had been substantial progress in recreating a sweeping chronology for the ancient Maya kingdoms. Yet there was still controversy over the age of Pakal. She wrote:

...I can affirm that the epigraphic data are among the most firmly grounded chronologies known from the New World. Since colleagues and the public continue to question the discrepancy between the two age estimates, I perceive that the epigraphic evidence is not well understood by nonspecialists. (Schele 1992:92)

She tried to make it more explicit by clarifying how the calendrical data and the epigraphy found throughout the site of Palenque verify the birth and death date of Pakal. She explained how the scribes wanted to insure that the dates were unambiguous; one way they did this was to carve on the edge of the sarcophagus a statement that the king had seen four k'atuns. "These were 9.9.0.0.0, 9.10.0.0.0, 9.11.0.0.0 and 9.12.0.0.0." She then went through all the Palenque dates that relate to Pakal, using text examples to illustrate her points. Lastly, she stated that some people disagree with the chronology and believe that

...in some way the epigraphers do not understand what the Maya intended to say—that, for example, two people are being named as one person, that the history is a fabrication, or that some special way of dealing with the time

is being used. Concerning these possibilities, I can only say that each of these propositions requires that all of the inscriptional data that use the same calendrics or historical glyphs must be thrown out with the Palenque data, including all knowledge about the Maya and the Mesoamerican calendar in Precolumbian, Colonial and modern contexts. This includes the entirety of Tatiana Proskouriakoff's "historical hypothesis" and all of the histories that have been published for all Maya sites. Palenque's history and the readings of the inscriptions associated with Pacal, in fact, lie at the heart of a matrix of knowledge that involves all we think we know about the Maya calendar and history. We cannot selectively decide to disbelieve the inconvenient part of this matrix without tossing it all out the window. (Schele 1992:95)

Also within this publication is a footnote where Schele (1992:106) discussed archaeological research done at Christ Church in Spitalfields, London, on skeletons buried in the cemetery from a wide cross section of the population during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In contrast to many archaeological investigations, there were substantial burial records available to the research team that contained, among other things, the age of death. To insure that age data would not influence their estimates of the age of each individual, they first aged the skeletons using standard anthropological techniques. Their study demonstrated that the standard techniques used by physical anthropologists regularly underestimated the actual age of very old skeletons by twenty to thirty years (Hammond 1994; Molleson and Cox 1993; Schele 1992).

"Huguenot Weavers and Maya Kings" (1994)

Others realized the significance of the Spitalfields research to Maya archeology, especially its impact upon dating the bones of Pakal. Maya archaeologist Norman Hammond joined Theya Molleson, one of the scholars involved in the Spitalfields Project, in publishing a follow-up article in 1994. They began by discussing how the controversy over the bones of Pakal had "resulted in a broader dispute over the reliability of age assessment from skeletal material, and the credibility of the recent advances in decipherment of the Classic Maya hieroglyphic script" (Hammond and Molleson 1994:76). They viewed the Spitalfields results as a key to understanding the basic problem and roots of the controversy. They first summarized the history of the controversy over the bones and in conclusion stated that "the very old may not look as old as they actually were at the time of death" (Hammond and Molleson 1994:76). They wrote

that at the current time there is no good scientific way to determine their age, so until there is "we should not dismiss the epigraphic evidence for Pakal's proclaimed age at death in favour of any anthropological age determination..." No doubt this was also the case in 1952 at the time the bones were aged by the physical anthropologists.

The Code of Kings 1998

In their 1998 book *The Code of Kings*, Schele and Mathews wrote a footnote on page 343 giving a short history of what happened beginning in 1973 after they first presented their dynastic history of Palenque and its most important king, Janaab Pakal. It generally mirrors what I have outlined in detail above, but they have added their own reflections on the issues, and they had the advantage of hindsight over the previous twenty-five years. Again, they were extremely confident about the birth and death dates assigned to the tomb's occupant because by 1998 all the dates for Palenque and many other dates at other Maya sites had been established and corroborated. There was now a fixed chronology, which meant that their proposed dates from the lid fit nicely within the larger picture of Palenque's dates. In addition, they added credence to their defense of the dates which comes from the Maya scribes themselves, as written in various monuments at the site.

To prevent ambiguity, Palenque's scribes tied Hanab-Pakal's birth, accession and death dates to the Long Count and to named k'atun-endings that recur only once every 375,000 years. And as we discussed above, they also tied his birth and accession dates to the end of the first piktun, which will occur in A.D. 4772. Thus, if his dates are to be changed, they must move at least 375,000 years into the past or future. (Schele and Mathews 1998:343)

Mathews and Schele wrote that the debate is popularly known as one of science versus non-science. In other words, the physical science side of anthropology is juxtaposed against the new field of Maya epigraphy. They noted that some have said that the history written on the stones is only propaganda set forth by the king and it should be ignored. They clarify by stating, "We think that the debate should be reframed as a challenge to the techniques employed to age ancient populations and the way resulting interpretations can be used" (Schele and Mathews 1998:343). They mention Urcid (1993) who questioned the methodology used by Ruz's physical anthropologists; they observed that the Spitalfields Project archaeologists "dismissed the method as too subjective." In 1989

Romano finally published the process he used to determine the age of Pakal, and it was primarily based upon the teeth. They quote Urcid: "The amount of dental wear varies greatly among populations and even individuals within the same populations because of differences in diet, occlusion, or use of teeth as tools." They refer to an additional source, this time a personal communication (1996) from Allen Christenson, a dentist with forensic experience, who told them that "wear is not a factor in elite dentition as they likely had a diet with more boiled *atole* which caused little wear" (Schele and Mathews 1998:344)

In support of the epigraphic side of the argument, Simon Martin and Nikolai Grube, in their 2000 book *Chronicle of the Maya Kings and Queens*, called attention to the work at Copan where excavations verified a written record that had been in doubt for many years. They also believed that if Maya kings had falsified records, contradictions in the records would be seen more often, a point they make with an appropriate note of caution:

It is significant, for example, that no two sides claim victory in the same battle (somewhat surprisingly, given the often inconclusive nature of war). Yet we must remain sensitive to the rhetorical purposes of the inscriptions, and it is necessary to assemble a wider regional and supra-regional context in which to judge the history of a particular kingdom. (Martin and Grube 2000:127)

Finally, in 2003, an international team of experts presented eleven papers at the 68th Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) containing scientific findings about Pakal's age at death. The findings were a result of a four-year multidisciplinary and collaborative project that included both Mexican and U.S. scholars.

Out of that 2003 SAA conference, a scholarly volume entitled *Janaab' Pakal of Palenque: Reconstructing the Life and Death of a Maya Ruler* was compiled and edited by Tiesler and Cucina and published in English in 2006. In a joint chapter, Tiesler and Cucina (2006) summarized and recounted the controversy over the bones. According to them, techniques to assess the age at death of an individual by simply examining osteological remains were not available in the early 1950s at the time of discovery; therefore it could be concluded that an important part of the age assessment by Dávalos and Romano was based upon the lack of attrition in the teeth (Tiesler and Cucina 2006:9). Because of the debate over the study's conclusions regarding age at death, Tiesler and Cucina were surprised that there were no follow-up in situ studies in the 1970s to resolve the issue (Tiesler and

Cucina 2006:10). They categorized the controversy as the alienation of two camps that eventually became nationalistic. On one side were the physical anthropologists and on the other the epigraphers. The academic discussion created alienated camps based upon nationalism, entrenched in their own viewpoints.

According to the Prologue, the purpose of the Tiesler and Cucina edited volume was to “to clarify secular academic controversies” (Arroyo 2006:xii). Contained in it are writings of scholars who looked at all the evidence of the past accounts of the life of Pakal and then added to it were the latest available techniques to determine age at death. Their approach was multidisciplinary, applying epigraphy, anthropology, and bioarchaeology. They looked at Pakal’s age at death, his medical history, and his role as a Maya king in light of the application of modern technology that was not available fifty years ago when the bones were discovered (Tiesler 2006:45). Below I describe some of the findings that resulted from the use of new technologies in evaluating the age of the bones.

Physical anthropologists Jane E. Buikstra, George R. Milner, and Jesper L. Boldsen used a method called “transitional analysis,” a new macroscopic method to determine Pakal’s age at death. It has been shown successful when working with older skeletons, but there must be an appropriate bone sample. They relate a story of how Tiesler and Buikstra, while revisiting the skeleton in the tomb, found that the pubic symphyses were “obscured by collapse and subsequent application of a preservative” that was applied when the tomb was first opened (Buikstra et al. 2006:50). Because these portions of the bony pelvis were hidden, they believed that it is very unlikely that Dávalos and Romano evaluated them during their analysis in 1952. By using these bones, Buikstra, Milner, and Boldsen were able to apply transitional analysis. “Of the three parts of the skeleton—the pubis, the ilium and the cranium—the pubic symphysis provides the most accurate estimates of age, consistent with the results of standard age-estimation techniques” (Buikstra et al. 2006:53). Using this method of analysis, they found that the skeleton was that of an older individual. They wrote that the results “... indicate that there is a 95 percent probability that Pakal died between 67.5 and 90.7 years. Based on this work, we feel confident that Pakal did not die as a young or middle-aged man—he was, by any measure, old” (Buikstra et al. 2006:55).

In chapter 4 of the book, physical anthropologists Sam D. Stout and Margaret Streeter (2006:60) were able to determine several histomorphometric parameters of bone that show distinct

age-associated changes. Their conclusions confirm the results from the study conducted by Buikstra, Milner, and Boldsen:

The preponderance of the evidence from this histological analysis of a rib sample from the skeletal remains of Janaab’ Pakal suggests that he was quite old when he died, consistent with his documented age of 80 years. His small absolute and relative cortical area, especially when compared to ribs from other individuals from Palenque, is evidence of an elderly individual. Indeed, his extremely small cortical area and osteon size are consistent with modern clinical values reported for severe osteopenia or senile osteoporosis, which is associated with aged individuals. (Stout and Streeter 2006:66)

Also involved with this team of scientists was Arturo Romano, one of the authors of the original 1952 osteological report published in 1954 that stated the bones were from a 40 to 50 year old man. In this book chapter, however, the topic is not the age of the bones at death, but instead is in regard to whether or not Pakal had supernumerary toes or a club foot. Its title is “Did Pakal Suffer from Deforming Diseases? True Facts and Iconographic Myths” (Romano Pacheco 2006). As mentioned earlier in my narrative under the topic of the Second Palenque Round Table, Robertson, Scandizzo, and Scandizzo (1976) had proposed that Pakal had physical deformities including a clubfoot. Ruz refuted this claim in 1977. The evidence they cited for the malformations was based upon visual examination of some of the low relief carvings at Palenque. Romano had also refuted this idea in his 1989 paper on the tomb in the Temple of the Inscriptions (Romano Pacheco 1989:1421). In his book chapter, he dismissed it once again based upon another visual examination of the bones of the feet and hands.

Conclusions

After studying all the evidence, I believe this long-lived controversy could be classified as a tragedy of errors on many levels. For instance, the perception that there was a standoff between the two disciplines of physical anthropology and epigraphy is incorrect because Ruz was not antagonistic toward the advancement of Maya decipherment. On the contrary, he had founded an academic center for its study; he sought advice from Tatiana Proskouriakoff, a towering figure in the field, and he was guided by his respect for Heinrich Berlin, another leading figure in the history of Maya epigraphy. His goal was to reconcile the findings of the physical anthropologists with

those of epigraphy. While he had complete faith in the scientific method of physical anthropology, he was less inclined to respect the standards of evidence used by the Mesa Redonda group in some of their publications. Robertson, Scandizzo, and Scandizzo (1976) had published findings based on iconography with no recourse to the evidence of physical anthropology, and it was in this context that Ruz was disturbed when Schele and Mathews (1974) made no mention of the study by the physical anthropologists.

Certainly personalities entered into it. Ruz's friend and advisor Proskouriakoff did not have a high opinion of Schele. When Ruz presented at the Second Mesa Redonda he was insulted and belittled in front of the entire group by one outspoken participant. This added to Ruz's resentment of the Mesa Redonda group. In addition to this affront, Ruz was not invited to the Dumbarton Oaks mini-conferences that were an offshoot of the Mesas Redondas. Beginning with the Second Mesa Redonda, scholars began to take sides—sometimes it was those from the U.S. against the Mexicans and sometimes it was Maya physical anthropologists and archaeologists against the Maya epigraphers.

Ruz began a writing campaign against the Mesa Redonda participants Mathews and Schele. Eventually his tone became sarcastic and insulting against these new and inexperienced scholars. After the death of Ruz in 1979, the physical anthropologist Arturo Romano, who coauthored the original in situ osteological report, continued to support and reiterate Ruz's position as well as their original findings—that the man in the tomb was not older than 40 years. The remarks of Ruz and Romano further alienated the North American scholars from those of Mexico.

Schele and Mathews fought back by pointing out that the chronology at Palenque was now secure, including the dates for Pakal's birth, reign, and death. Those, as well as other dates had been cross-checked against the glyphic records at other Maya sites. If one date is moved, they all need to be moved. Schele and Mathews also believed that the basis upon which the anthropological studies were built was incomplete and the science to determine the age of a skeleton was not available in 1952, nor was it available in 1994 at the time that they published this statement. It was only in the twenty-first century that the technology to determine the age at death was applied to the bones of Pakal and it was determined that he died at an advanced age, well past 40 years.

It is my hope that this paper has shed light upon this famous and long-lived controversy. I have tried to objectively lay out all the events, the

issues, the mistakes, and the misunderstandings that took shape, and I hope that this paper will put to rest some of the controversy's misconceptions.

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