

Research Notes

Mapping and consolidation work at Santa Rosa Xtampak, Campeche

CAMPECHE (Antonio Benavides C., INAH), BERLIN (Iken Paap, Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut IAI – SPK). 2018 saw different advances for the comprehension of the ancient Maya society at Santa Rosa Xtampak (SRX). This ancient city was founded several centuries BC, reached its apogee during the Late Classic (approx. 700–1000 AD) and was later abandoned around 1200 AD.

Traveling by road, Santa Rosa Xtampak is located 130 km northeast of Campeche City, but it is only 90 km away as the parrot flies. Among the monumental buildings at the site are very good examples of Chenes architecture. A recent contribution by Hasso Hohmann (2017) carefully documented

architectural features of the Palace, an emblematic three-story building with 44 vaulted rooms and two interior staircases.

A new detailed map of the ancient city's monumental area is now being prepared by an IAI-INAH program (download at: http://publications.iai.spk-berlin.de/receive/reposis-iai_mods_00003049), which considers previous efforts by researchers of the Carnegie Institution of Washington (Pollock 1970), Brigham Young University (Stamps 1970), Oregon University (Andrews 1997) and Autonomous University of Campeche (Morales and Folan 2005, 2006).

The site-planning of Santa Rosa Xtampak is clearly indicated by the distribution of the principal structures, forming regular quadrangular plazas and patios (some having a 50 m module). Due to the location of its principal buildings on top of a hill, water acquisition relied heavily on the construction of large subterranean deposits (*chultunes*) and their surrounding paved surfaces (*cfr.* DeBloois 1970).

First archaeological investigation of the site began during the late 1960s (DeBloois 1970, Stamps 1970), while systematic restoration of the site's structures started in the early 1990s (Benavides 1992, 2010). Several years later, another consolidation program headed by Renée Zapata (2005, 2007) explored several buildings from 2001 to 2012, but the work was not concluded.

The epigraphic information of Santa Rosa Xtampak has been studied by Daniel Graña Behrens, who first analyzed the eight stelae of the site (Graña-Behrens 2004) and worked with the 64 glyphs of Altar 1, the latter having been reported by Karl Herbert Mayer several years ago (1989). The altar was retrieved in 2018; its two sections were restored and can be seen today at the entrance to the site cottage.

Mapping of the monumental site core

In order to provide a firm basis for future research, we decided to verify and complement the existing map of the center of the site (Jansen, Paap and Urdapilleta Caamal 2019; Paap and Benavides 2019). The basis of any SRX map published up to the present was the rather schematic and “straightened” one, prepared by Brainerd, Roys and Ruppert in 1949 and published by Pollock (1970: Fig. 56). It was updated by Stamps (1970) and by DeBloois (1970) in some details, but obviously without having verified the previous measurements. Andrews (1997) added details for the Cuartel and the Southeast Quadrangle.

In 1989, the mapped area was extended considerably by Morales and Folan (2005: Fig. 4), however, they likewise copied the previous versions of the central zone of the site without major modifications. Obviously, the map of the monumental nucleus was hardly updated after 1949.

An actualized version of the SRX map published by Juárez Cossío et al. (2015: 15) represents considerable progress, since it includes new details of the consolidated buildings at the core of the site as well as several corrections regarding the relative positions of the structures. In its general layout, this map also follows the one from 1949.

All the consolidated structures at the site core were re-mapped in 2018 to correct the existing maps (Figure 1). Fieldwork was carried by Philipp S. Jansen (Berlin), Iken Paap (Berlin), Ivan Urdapilleta Caamal (Campeche) and Rolando Yah Poot (Teabo). We worked by means of an electronic total station and a laser scanner. In several cases we had to



complement our data with photos taken with a drone in 2017 and 2018 or with the results of previous research. The latter applies especially to the “Palace” (Structure 1), where we used Hohmann’s (2017: 26, Fig. 22) data to draw the interior rooms not reached by the scanner.

In the course of the analysis of the new data, it turned out that the spatial placement of the mapped structures – especially the distances between them – differ considerably from the previous maps:

The Cuartel is located 15 m further east, with reference to the Palace main plaza. The Southwest Group has to be moved 27 m to the southwest, the main staircase of the Great Pyramid was recorded 7 m further south and the Southeast Group 23 m further southeast.

Consequently, the existing map degrades to an extent that can no longer be corrected by means of isolated and marginal adjustments and must be considered with extreme reserve and caution.

Mapping of the East Group

The East Group was first described by DeBloois (1970: 36–37). In 2018, we achieved a complete 3D documentation of the East Group and registered 19 structures in the area east of Building 24 and south of Pyramid 25 (Figure 2).

On the surface we encountered some ceramic fragments, seemingly of Terminal Classic contexts. Between and above the platforms are a few carved stones, as described by DeBloois. Those that stood out on account of their size and/

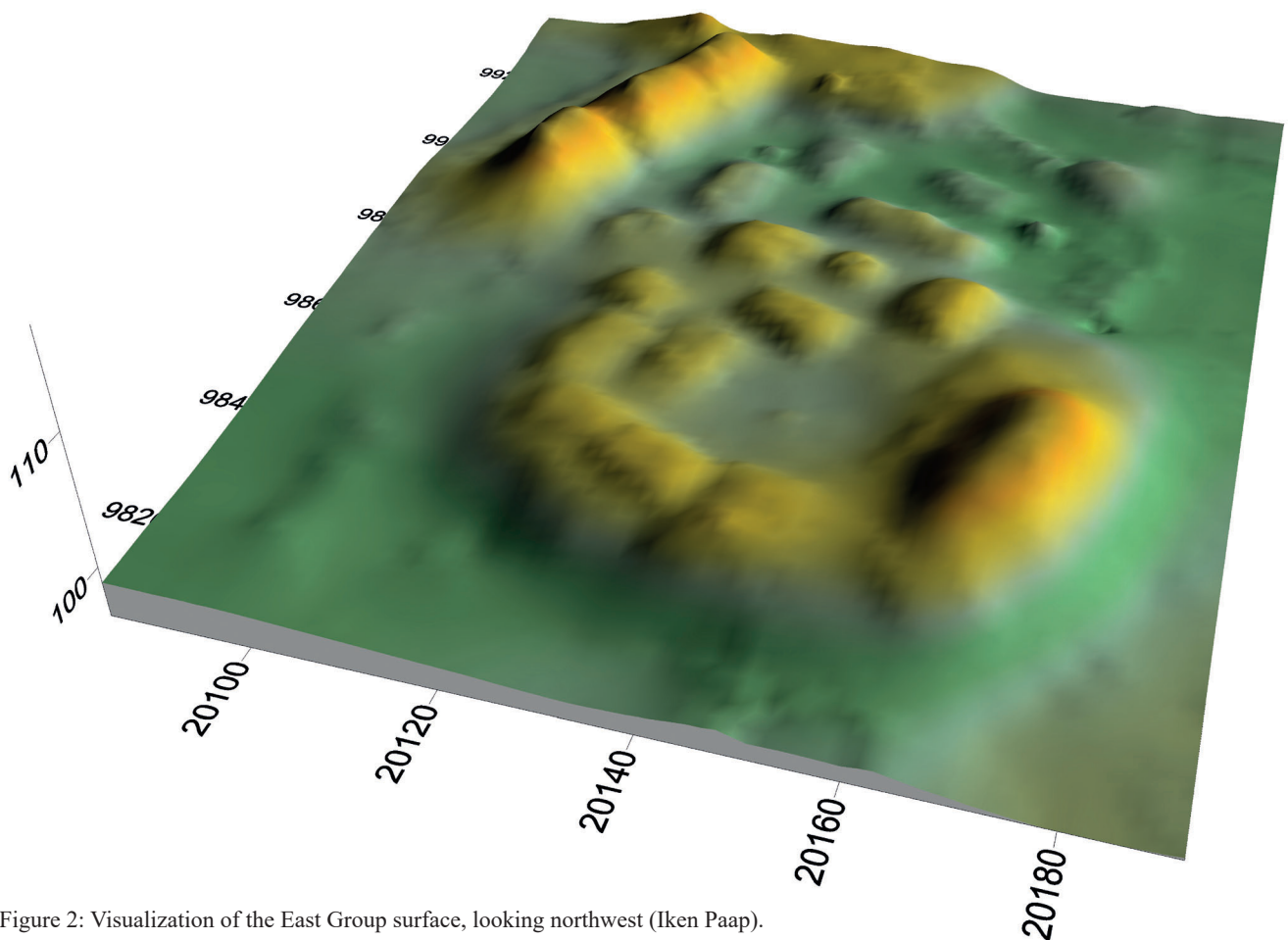


Figure 2: Visualization of the East Group surface, looking northwest (Iken Paap).

or shape (corners, capitals, columns, moldings, etc.) were documented in the mapping. It is worth mentioning that in the whole investigated area no *metates* or *pilas* were found.

In the eastern part of the group, two meters from the south side of Structure 308, we documented a chultun with an opening of 60 cm in diameter. Its water catchment system (ring, etc.) was not preserved.

Excavation and Consolidation

An excavation program to restore abandoned structures also began in 2018. The field season helped to solve conservation problems affecting Structure 66, located just south of Structure 8 – the building that closes the Palace main plaza on its southern side. Structure 66 is 20.50 m long by 4.60 m wide. It was first reported by Teobert Maler (1997: 217, Plate 169), who named it the Building with the Serpent Heads, alluding to the mosaic stone elements preserved on the central part of the northern façade (Figure 3).

Structure 66 was explored in October and November 2018. The vegetation covering it was cut away and the walls that had not been consolidated after their excavation in 2012 were exposed. A 2m by 2m grid helped to systematically clean each sector. Some veneer stones had to be dismantled, each one marked with a key-number to be later reinstalled in its original place. Dirt and roots were removed, as was the old mortar, which was to be replaced with new limestone mortar. Consolidation work in the western room included an interior bench located on the eastern side. Seen from above, the bench evokes the letter C, measuring 2.75 m long by



Figure 3: The 'Building with the Serpent heads', photo from Teobert Maler, 1981 (courtesy of Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut – SPK, Berlin).

1.44 m wide (maximum) and 95 cm (minimum). It is only 50 cm high (Figure 4).

The central room is a little broader than the others; around 6.50 m instead of 5.80 m. It was also cleaned and consolidated with new limestone mortar. The entrance on the northern façade is flanked by three masks on each side. The left and right sides of the masks have diagonal blocks forming the mat motif.

The 2.20 m high by 1 m wide representation is an ingenious mosaic of veneer stones of different dimensions originally covered by stucco applications in order to form details like

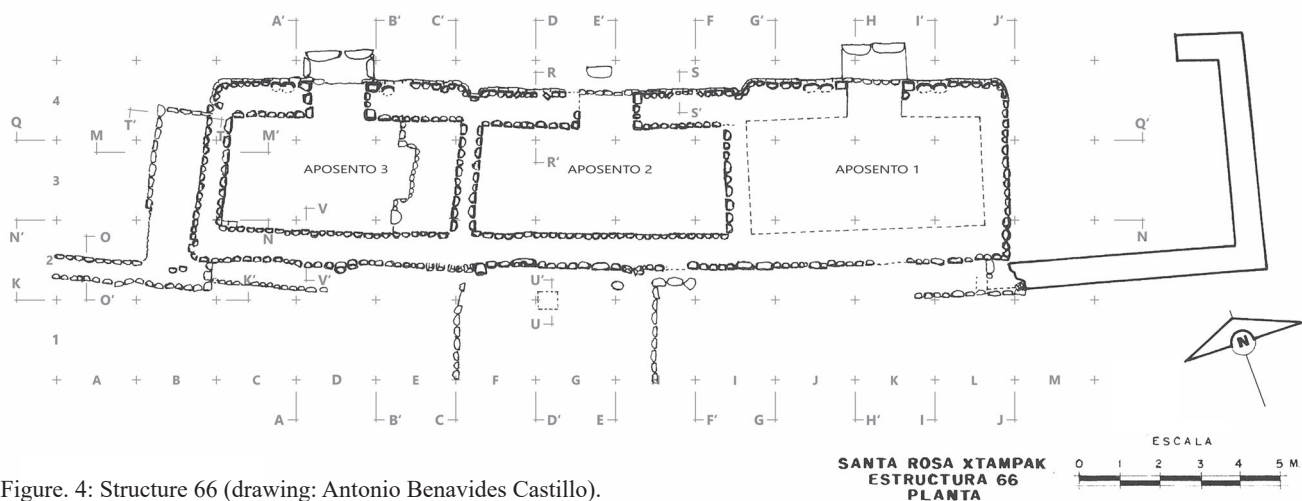


Figure 4: Structure 66 (drawing: Antonio Benavides Castillo).



Figure 5: Restored masks on the northern façade of Structure 66 (photo: Antonio Benavides Castillo).

eyes, earrings, brows, mouths, antennae, most of which are now eroded or lost. The smaller blocks are square, some used to form the earrings and others to adjust the mosaic. Mouths and eyes were represented with square sunken sections. The biggest stones were used to form the down-curved snouts of the masks. Red paint is still evident in some sections.

To restore this façade, we used the very useful photographs made by Teobert Maler in 1891 (1997: Plate 169) and by Harry Pollock in 1936 (1970: 60, Fig. 82). Analysis of these photographs helped us to identify the still existing blocks and those that had collapsed (Figure 5). The nearest masks to be compared are located around 150 meters away, at the southern side of the northern Cuartel range, where we find very similar elements.

The eastern room of Structure 66 has not been explored. Research and interior exploration are planned for another field season. But consolidation of Structure 66's central and western rooms is now complete, as well as the remaining exterior walls of the building. During explorations around the structure we also found large stone waterspouts. Near

the southwestern corner, for example, a 1.08 m long, 20 cm wide and 14 cm high drainpipe was found, its stucco covering was still evident.

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