



# **Mortuary Landscapes of the Classic Maya: Rituals of Body and Soul (Linda Schele Series in Maya and Pre-Columbian Studies)**

*Andrew K. Scherer*

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From the tombs of the elite to the graves of commoners, mortuary remains offer rich insights into Classic Maya society. In *Mortuary Landscapes of the Classic Maya: Rituals of Body and Soul*, the anthropological archaeologist and bioarchaeologist Andrew K. Scherer explores the broad range of burial practices among the Maya of the Classic period (AD 250–900), integrating information gleaned from his own fieldwork with insights from the fields of iconography, epigraphy, and ethnography to illuminate this society's rich funerary traditions.

Scherer's study of burials along the Usumacinta River at the Mexican-Guatemalan border and in the Central Petén region of Guatemala—areas that include Piedras Negras, El Kinel, Tecolote, El Zotz, and Yaxha—reveals commonalities and differences among royal, elite, and commoner mortuary practices. By analyzing skeletons containing dental and cranial modifications, as well as the adornments of interred bodies, Scherer probes Classic Maya conceptions of body, wellness, and the afterlife.

Scherer also moves beyond the body to look at the spatial orientation of the burials and their integration into the architecture of Maya communities. Taking a unique interdisciplinary approach, the author examines how Classic Maya deathways can expand our understanding of this society's beliefs and traditions, making *Mortuary Landscapes of the Classic Maya* an important step forward in Mesoamerican archeology.

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