



Forest Resources, Chiefdoms and Mortuary Practices in the Neotropics: Preliminary Archaeobotanical Analysis from El Caño Funerary Complex (Coclé Province, Panamá)

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El Caño site is situated on the Pacific side of Panamá, near the Río Grande. It's a funerary complex comprising different types of structures (stone structures –basalt columns, groups of sculptures and a causeway-; earthen mounds and canals; burials). The excavations supervised by Julia Mayo between 2008 and 2011 allowed to discover several lavish burials estimated to date between 700 and 1000 AD (Mayo & Mayo 2012). The data recovered has served as source of information for the pre-Columbian chiefdoms and their mortuary practices. There was carried out a detailed taphonomic study to register the complex formation processes of these burial deposits, and the significant post-depositional transformations (anthropogenic and natural processes) (Mayo & Mayo in press). Also during the excavations were recovered archaeobotanical samples; most of them charcoals. The laboratory work process consisted in the exhaustive description of the anatomical features of the different taxa identified during the charcoal analyses (the identification level varied from species to family, although in several case we couldn't propose any taxa). These samples were concentrated in structures, and in few cases dispersed in the sediment. Some of the samples analyzed were large pieces of charcoal of the wooden beams from ancient wood structures, and other pieces of charcoal and vegetable fibers were related directly with the burial practices. The charcoal analysis results aim to contribute to the knowledge of the exploitation of forest resources, of the territories where these resources were collected, and of the production process (chaîne opératoire). These results were complemented with the exhaustive review of written sources (spanish chronicles), ethnobotanical studies and archaeological data of other sites in this area.

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