

Balankanchè

“Throne of the Tiger Priest”



Cha'ak

Caves provide an essentially different kind of setting than surface architecture, typically dealt with in art historic studies. Cave art however, mainly address paintings, petroglyphs and hieroglyphics as found in caves of Mesoamerica, the southern highlands and lowlands of Mexico, the Peten of Guatemala and the **Maya Mountains** of Belize.

Among known caves in the Maya lowlands, **Balankanchè** received less attention than it deserves perhaps because, with the exception of few positive hand prints, it lacks other painted motives, hieroglyphic paintings or petroglyphs. It is an integral part of the great complex of **Chichen Itza**, for which it bears its name: *“Throne of the Tiger Priest”*. (E. Willis Andrews IV, 1970).

The cave was intermitently used from the Formative period, until up to contact with the Europeans, a span of about 3000 years. It is during the Modified Florescent phase (860BC +/- 90), with the strong continental Mexican influence referred to as the *“Rise of the Toltecs”*, the period of most intensive use as identified in ceramic and stone offerings, that illustrate complex and sustained rituals.

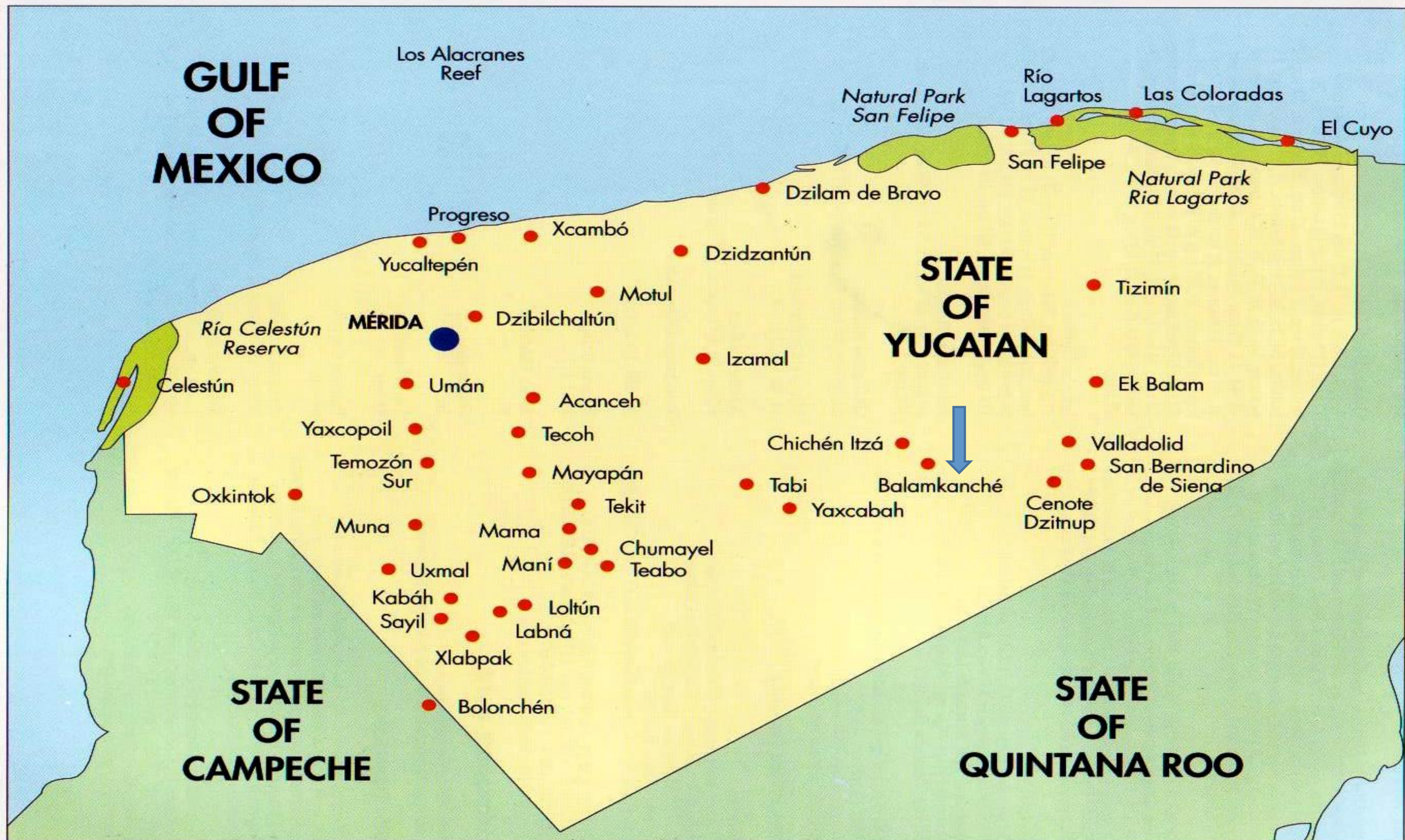
Balankanchè's significance can fully be understood when set within the monumental secular site above ground, integrating the religious seat of spiritual power underground, **Cha'ak** ancestral domain (Annex.1). The interaction between the surface elements and those of the cave, shed an unusual light, on the life of the great metropolis. The scope of the lecture shows the last great ritual that took place in 1959, the ceremony of **Tsikul T'an Ti'Yuntsilooob**, photos and surface sketch of the site never published before, and explain the role and importance of the cave within **Chichen Itza** cultural complex.



Actun Usil, Oxkintok – Puuc Area, Edo. Yucatan – Caves are central to world cultures' cosmologies and used by humans from the Upper Pleistocene (or before), to our days. They are places where benevolent and malevolent deities, protectors and disruptors of communities and individuals' lives, are believed to be associated with powerful natural forces and food crops. They are also adobe of the ancestors that are believed to dwell in caves. The dual personality of gods and deities manifest both positive and negative aspects in perpetual balance, often antagonistic.

So let's visit one of these great caves, where deities and men struggled over this unbridgeable gap between **Fields of Opposite**, or between **Nature** and **Culture**. ©MWI

Balankanchè geographical location, and E. Wylls Andrews IV description below, relates the discovery, mapping and Importantly, the ceremonies that took place in the cave to placate de Lords in 1959, is the only record of such event from which this presentation draws; the author gratefully acknowledge **MARI-Middle American Research Institute – Tulane University, New Orleans, LA**. The cave is located 3.9 km. SW of **Chichen Itza** archaeological site, and its name can either be written: **Balankanchè**, **Balam Ka'anchè** or **Canchè Ba'alam** the first is the one most commonly used. Map Courtesy Monclém Ediciones SA de CV, Mexico DF





Chichen Itza – Uuc Yab’nal “Mouth of the Well of the Water Magicians” (Román Piña Chan, 1980), also **“Mouth of the Well of the Itzaes”**, was a secular and religious power center whose history spans from Late to post-Classic. Its **Sacred Cenote** (sink hole), was dedicated to rituals while the other cenote, the **Xtoloc** (*iguana*), supplied water to the community. Close proximity to **Balankanchè** shows that the cave was an integral part of **Uuc ‘yab’nal**, the city’s ancient name, for religious and traditional rituals and ceremonies. ©MWI



Chichen Itza is Yab'nal in the Itza language. The Chontal, also called Putuun from southern Campeche and Tabasco (of Yocotan dialect), on the periphery of the Classic Maya period, were not as advanced in art, architecture and astronomy as their Maya neighbors. They controlled the sea routes around the Yucatan peninsula, where a branch of their people, the Itza, settled on the island of Cozumel and, from Polè (Xcaret), Xhelha and other Yucatan coastal caribbean locations, had their foothold on the continent, peneratred inland and conquered a number of cities, including Yab'nal (+/- 918AD), an historic event referred to as the *“big descent”*. (Lizana: 1893:3-4, Roys:1933:204, Thompson:1970:11).

Settled at Chichen Itza, they opened trade communication South and West, and since they already were under Mexican influence and spoke Nahuatl, they received Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl (K'uk'ulkan in Yucatek and Waxak'lahun Uba'Kan' among the Classic Maya), fleeing from his enemies in Tula Grande on the central plateau of Mexico, 1100-1150AD. The Toltecs came with their retinue of gods and deities, among them Tlaloc that will take precedence over local deities, among which was Cha'ak god of rain, storms and thunder, with similar powers as those of the Tula deity. This second group coming from the West, brought stronger Mexican influences, with those of Tula dominant, and is referred to as the *“little descent”*. (Lizana:1893:3-4, Thompson:1970:4-10, Román Piña Chan, 1980:13-15). ©MWI



Balankanché is a strikingly beautiful work of nature; the high place of a culture now seen, and partly understood, through the foggy veil of time, that consigned its myths and beliefs in gods, deities and the ancestors, to the mineral world. ©MWI



Balankanchè – Unpublished partial surface map by Luis Pentora – INAH, courtesy Edward B. Kurjack, Ph.D

East of the cave main entrance (blue arrow), is shown structure 51 at right marked *Cueva* > Cave (red arrow), probably another access to one of the passageways (at end of Group VI?), not accessible from Group-1 now sealed, nor identifiable above ground.

© Luis Pentora – INAH-Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico May 1998, courtesy Edward B. Kurjack, Ph.D

Surface scattered mounds and remains of structures are what is left after the work of stone robbers over the years. The collection of surface broken pottery sherds were identified from the *Yucatan Formative* to the *Florescent*; the overwhelming bulk is assigned to the *Second Modified Phase* (1100-1200AD) of the *Florescent* (800-1000AD). Remains of veneer stones, but no boot shaped stones, indicate the absence of vaults. The structures are similar to those found at **Mayapan** and **Chunchucmil**. < ©MWI >





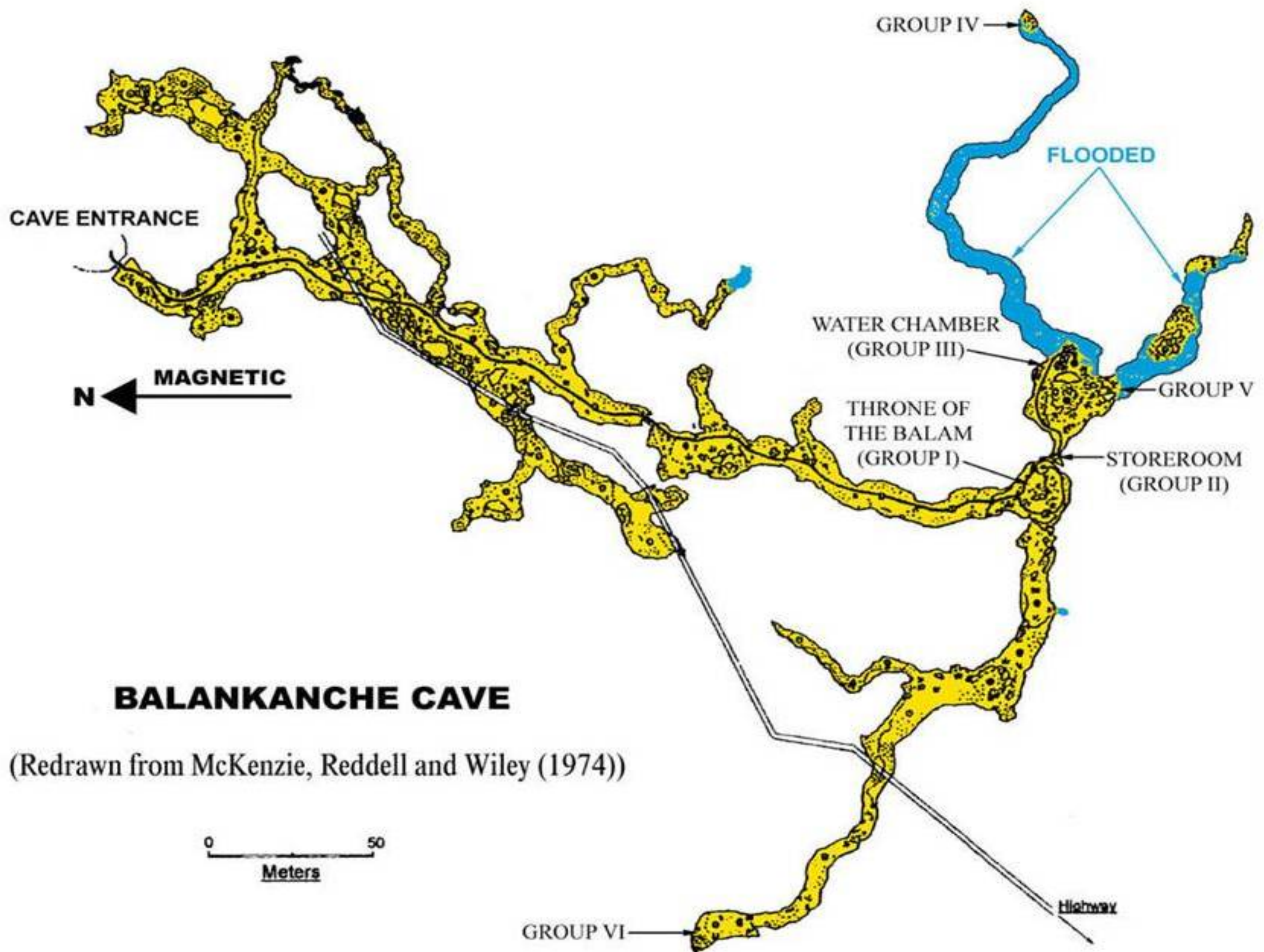
Section of the Circular *Tulum* or fortified wall, was 12 feet wide at the base; estimated height: 4 feet rock base plus 6+ feet of perishable material enclosure. ©MWI

Remains of the dry Masonry circular fortified wall enclosing the entrance to the cave. The reason for such a strong defensive wall is not known, and may pre-date **Toltec** arrival. Diameter: 115+ feet, width: 12 feet at the base, estimated height: 10+ feet – with enclosure. <©MWI>



The cave entrance at the center of the circular walled area on the surface, (may not be the original); from ground level one abruptly goes down to a depth of 30ft/10m, then the corridor branches off. < ©MWI >







Main Corridor – the explored parts of the cave consist of more than a mile of passageways, that vary considerably in shape and size, from broad and flat as much as 30 feet wide and 15 feet high, or narrow to crawling spaces, others are no longer passable. ©MWI

Sections of main tunnels, some of which reach the water table at 70+ feet deep from the surface in at least four places; water depth vary with seasonal rains. There may be another corridor under the main ones, half submerged and difficult of access.

G.E. Stewart schematic in E. Wyllys Andrews IV, Courtesy MARI Tulane University, 1970, Fig.3



FIG. 3 — GRUTA DE BALANKANCHE
Schematic sections along principal north-south and east-west passageways. Drawing by George E. Stuart.



Balankanche - Discovery

In 1958, Jose Humberto Gomez' past time had been, for ten years, the exploration of the cave; after this much time, he discovered what seemed to be a false section of the wall of one of the chambers; on examination it turned out to be crude masonry sealed with mortar that covered a small access way to the newly discovered chambers; previous archeological expeditions had come within feet of the wall not realizing what lay beyond. ©MWI

Balankanchè team project 1959-1960: **National Geographic Society** with **MARI-Middle America Research Institute, Tulane University**; the **Dzibilchaltún** Project, with **INAH-Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia** – Eusebio Davalos Hurtado, George E. Stuart, Ignacio Bernal, Alfredo Barrera Vasquez, Ramon Arzapalo, Edward B. Kurjack and the Dzibilchaltun support group, and team leader E. Wyllys Andrews IV.

Alfredo Barrera Vasquez taking notes below, with *H'men* and *It'saks* in "*The Water Chamber*"

Wyllys Andrews IV , Courtesy, MARI-Middle America Research Institute - Tulane University, New Orleans, LA., 1970, Fig.60a



Balankanche, Throne of the Tiger Priest

E. Wyllys Andrews IV

With Appendices:

*I The Ceremony of Tsik'ul T'an Ti' Yuntsiloob
at Balankanche: Description of the ceremony
by Alfredo Barrera Vásquez*

*II The Ceremony of Tsik'ul T'an Ti' Yuntsiloob
at Balankanche: Transcription and translation
of the Maya text by Ramón Arzapalo*

*In cooperation with Instituto Nacional de Antropología e
Historia de México*

Publication 32

*Middle American Research Institute
Tulane University*

New Orleans

1970



One of the puzzling features of the cave is the distribution of sizable carbon deposits, clearly fire pits, in nearly all the chambers. In the long sealed section of the cave, there is little interior ventilation (other access point(s) may have been naturally sealed), with saturation-point humidity, and somewhat lack of air beyond Group-I. ©MWI

Witness to the use of caves as ceremonial centers since the dawn of humans, **Positive** hand imprints found in caves may have been a mystical way to interact with the mineral world, believed to be alive and, through elaborate ceremonies, chants and incantations, prints once applied were believed to **Reach Through** the rock, to the world beyond — I

Balankanchè – 500 > 800AD, Group-I

Positive red ochre hand print on calcite column of the “**Altar**”

E. Willys Andrews IV , Courtesy, MARI Tulane University, 1970:169/49a

The **Chauvet Cave**, France – 29,000 > 32,000BC

Positive red ochre hand prints on calcite panel

La Grotte Chauvet – © Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 2001:82/74



Since the dawn of humans, **Negative** hand imprints in caves, could be a mystical way to interact with the mineral world, conceived to be alive and, through elaborate rituals, chants and incantations, prints once applied, were believed to **Reach Out** of the rock **From** the World Beyond – II

The Cosquer Cave, near Marseilles, France - **25,000 > 28,000BC**

Negative - blown charcoal hand prints on rock wall

The Cave Beneath the Sea – © Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1994:70/39



Ca'actun Cave, Yucatán – **400 > 600AD**

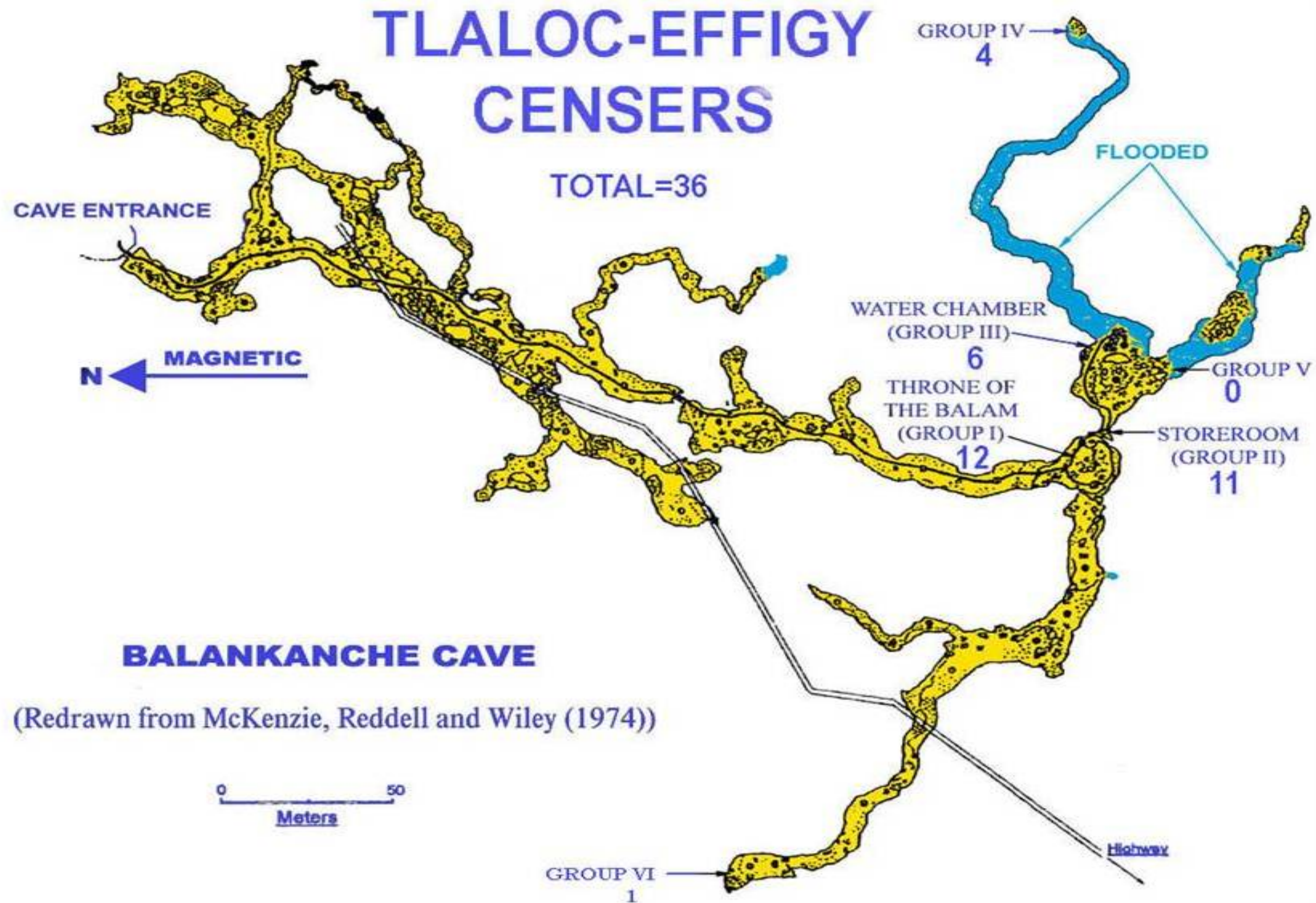
Negative - red ochre hand print forming arrow like design.

Images from the Underworld – Andrea J. Stone,

© University of Texas Press, Austin 1995:72/4-58



Group-I – Main Chamber





Group-I “*The Altar*” – this impressive sanctuary created by nature but conceived by men as an altar for their god, **Tlaloc**, (Annex.2) was walled in about 842AD during the Classic collapse; in 1959, were found a large number of ceremonial ceramic and carved stone effigy censers, set into cavities in the complex stalagmitic formation, and also simply laid on the domed floor. ©MWI



Group-I – 29 large **Tlaloc** effigy ceramic and stone censers found on the *Altar*, together with miniature *manos* and *metates*, plates and other offerings, dated *Florescent* 800-1000AD to *Modified Florescent* 1100-1200AD (+/- 100); the essential Maya gods of fertility, rain and childbirth are present at the cave, in particular the Moon Goddess **Ix Chel**, patron of childbirth, sexuality and fertility.

© Edward B. Kurjack



Group-I – Offertory **Tlaloc** type ceramic and stone censers found in drip holes at side of the “**Altar**” as found *in situ*, some holding a dozen, intentionally or accidentally broken. The bi-conical censers were manufactured for ceremonial use, and made of porous paste, tempered with coarsely ground limestone, with occasional crystalline calcite; after firing, the vessels were painted in a variety of bright colors.

E. Wyllys Andrews IV – Courtesy, MARI - Tulane University, New Orleans 1970, Fig.46a



Tlaloc (Annex.2), is associated with water and the wind deities, the *Pauhuatuns*, and the lightning gods: *Bolon D'zacab*, together with the aged deities of the underworld, the thunder and the pillars of the sky: the *Bacabs*. Effigy incense burners were common and found in both Classic and post-Classic sites; with a marked increase of their use in post-Classic time since, if half a dozen censers were found at **Uaxactun**, Guatemala, while several thousands are recorded at **Mayapan**, Yucatán (1300-1450AD). ©MWI

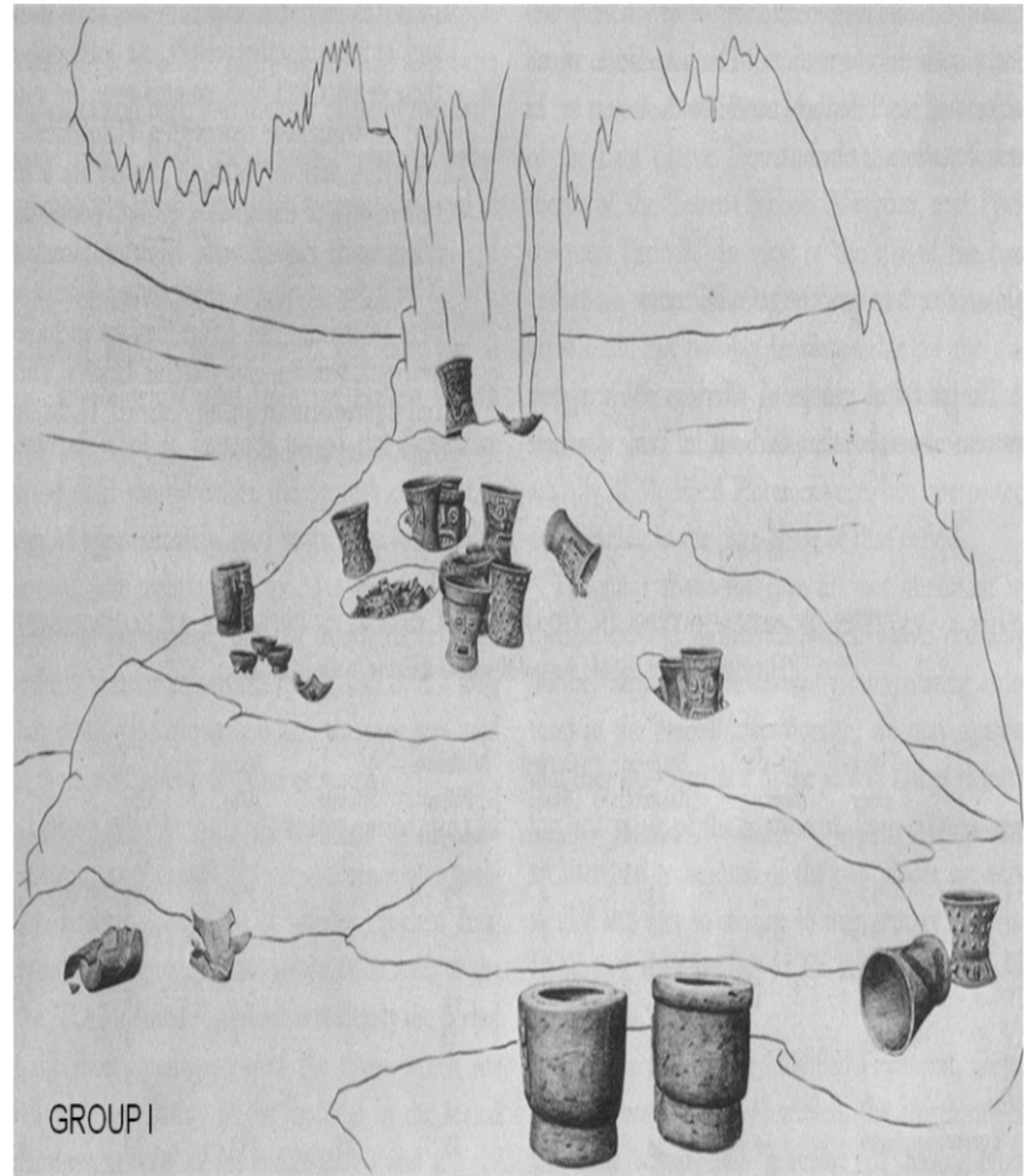


Balankanchè – Group I – the “*Throne of the Tiger Priest*”

Its central column, symbolizes the **Ceiba**, the mythological “*Tree of Life*” (Annex.3), set in the mineral world, with branches reaching to the heavens while its roots are sunk deep into the underworld. The veneration of this place can only be understood in the context of the vision of a dual perception of the world, and the unavoidable field of opposites. ©MWI

Group.I – Ceramic and Carved Stone Censers Ritual topography was a critical concept in pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican religion, as earth and all of its topographic extensions were considered to be alive and, as living life forms, interact in human affairs. The common belief, in Mesoamerica and other cultures, is that there are no boundaries between the mineral and animal worlds; a belief based on a cognitive model of space in which “community” and “wilderness” form binary but inter-related poles , that underlines the *nature-culture* dichotomy

Schematic at right from George Stuart 1959 in E. Wyllys Andrews IV , Courtesy MARI-Tulane University 1970:10/4





Group.I – Tlaloc Effigy Ceramic Censers – Class: *Modified Florescent*, Medium Redware – 1100-1300AD, hallmark of **Toltec** prominence at **Chichen Itza**; as a rule, censers are bi-conical, 19-34 cm. in height and 20-29 cm. in width, the upper conical component generally larger than the lower.

The face of the central highland deity was added after first firing, in applique strips, formed of a down curving mouth at the two sides enclosing from 3 to 5 elongated and sharply pointed fangs; the eyes are surrounded by circles a characteristic of the deity, and slab ears and nose are added last.

Courtesy Edward B. Kurjack, Ph.D

Group I – Central Mexico **Xipe Totec Limestone Carved Censers (*Modified Florescent* horizon)**

Figure shown is dressed in a flayed human skin, but retains the scrolls below the circled eyes and the knot above the nose symbolizing **Tlaloc**, a surprising association of the two cults.

The practice of flaying humans, and priests wearing the victim's skin over their own and dancing, is central to the cult of **Xipe Totec** from central Mexico; there are few references in the Maya Area, but **Chichen Itza** and **Mayapan**; historical references to such practices in Yucatan are recorded by Landa and Herrera.

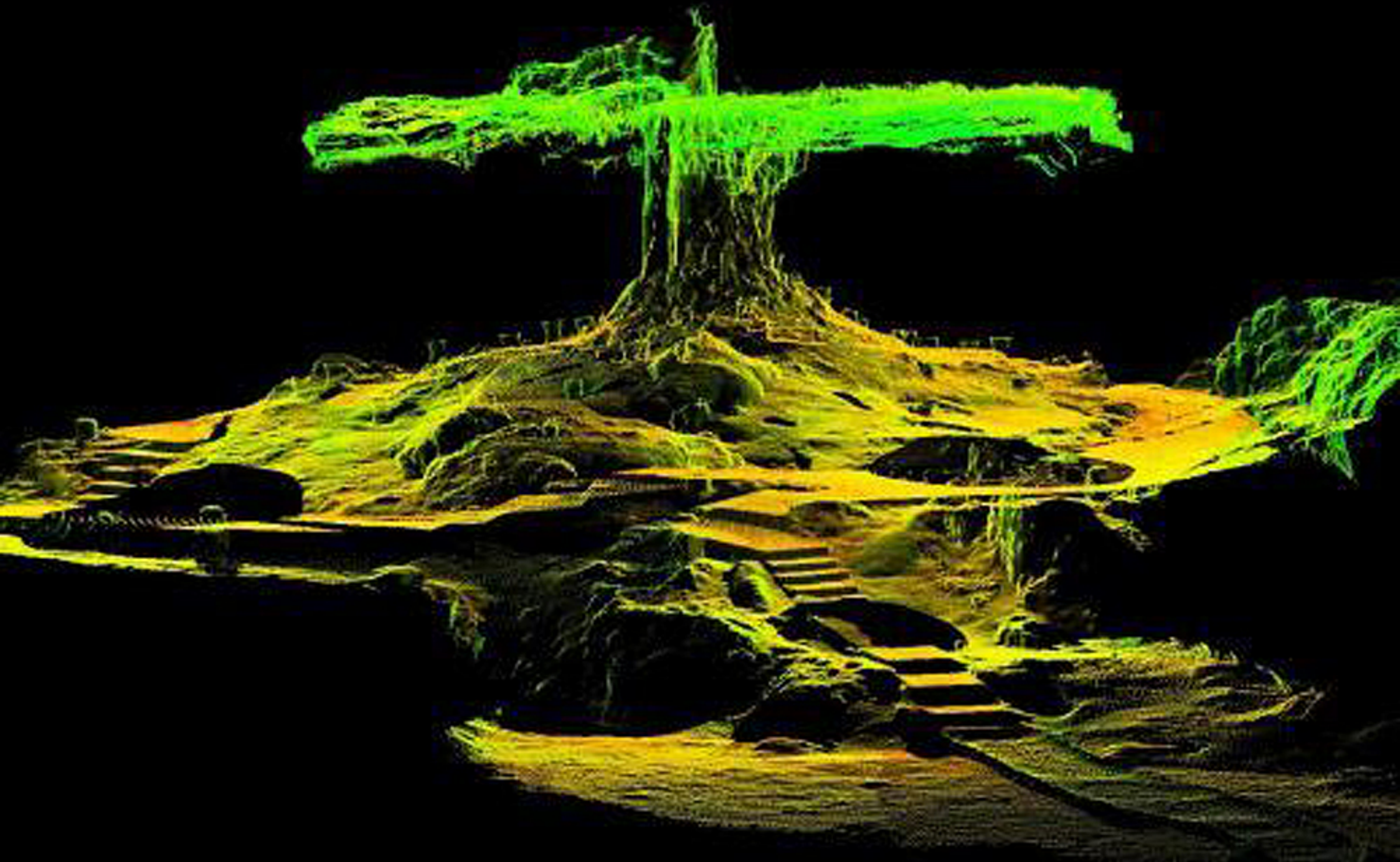
E. Willys Andrews IV in *Balankanche, Throne of the Tiger Priest* – Courtesy, MARI - Tulane University, New Orleans, 1970, Fig.52e





Group.I – the “*Throne of the Tiger Priest*”

Caves are mystical topographic shrines , integral to a culture sacred geography; they are universally understood as homes of deities and the ancestors because the mineral world is believed to be alive and, above all, caves are places of initiation and rituals. ©MWI

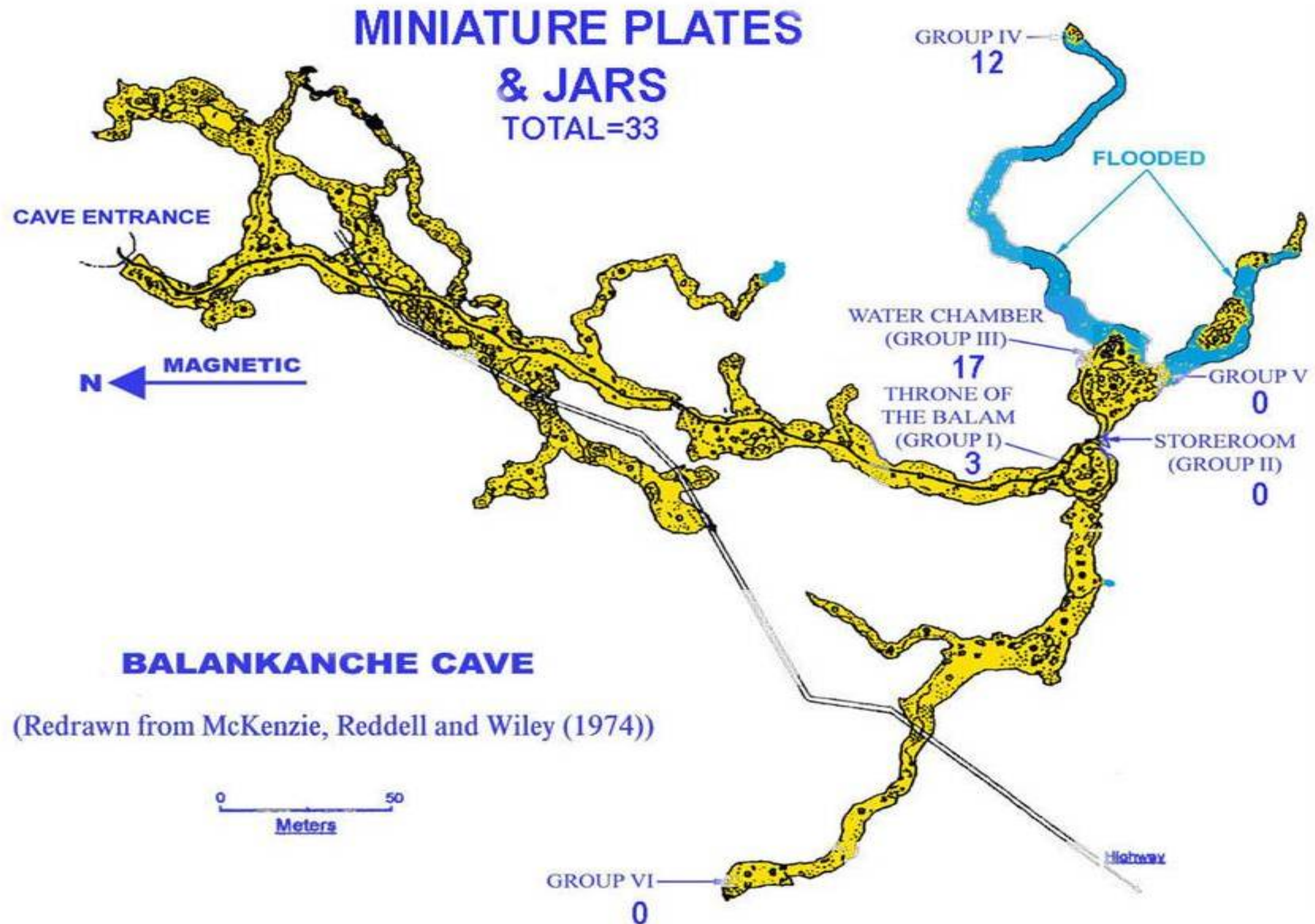


From CyArk.org, that digitally preserve cultural heritage sites, this laser scan of Group-I, and its striking resemblance to the actual

Tree of Life the **Ceiba** (Annex.3) - © cyark.org

Group-II – the “*Storeroom*”

So named by George Stuart as it seemed to him the storage place of Group-I





Group II – the “*Storeroom*”

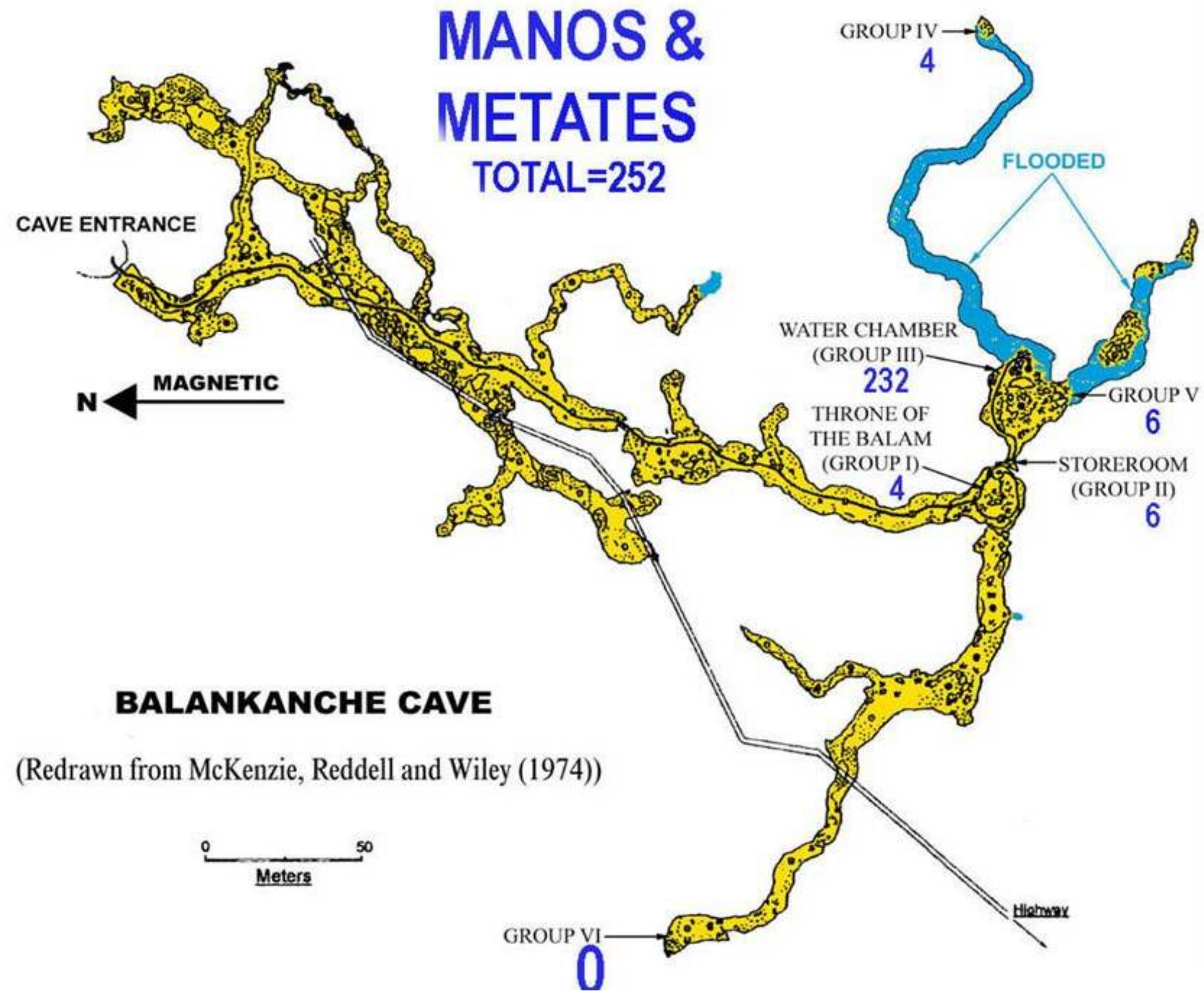
Located at the foot of stalactites, are ceramic censers collecting *virgin* water dripping from stalactites above. *Zuhuy’ha* is regarded as the most sacred water in *Maya* rituals, from a long lost past to date. Water collection from stalactites, known as the “*Nipples of the Earth*”, is sanctified because *zuhuy’ha* never touches the ground and, being transferred directly from Nature to Culture, i.e. to the collection urns made by man, acquired the highest ritual value. ©MWI



Group II – the “*Storeroom*”

In Mesoamerican cosmology, the world is surrounded by primordial waters; the **Yucatec Maya** believe that the underground rivers, found in caves and *cenotes*, actually support the earth crust; the “counter image” of the cave is, of course, the mountain. **Tlaloc** effigy urns for water collection, found *in situ* in 1959. — E. Wllys Andrews IV in *Balankanche, Throne of the Tiger Priest* – Courtesy MARI-Tulane University, New Orleans, 1970:165/Fig.45a

Group-III – The “Water Chamber”





Group-III – the “*Water Chamber*”

The underground lake extends about 35 meters from the shore, then dips below the ceiling of the cave and turns Northeast for another 100 meters before rising again above the water table, and reach Group-IV. ©MWI



Group III: On the underground lakeshore, mini *metates*, *manos* and plates were found together with censers and spindle whorls, the largest number of offerings in the cave. Their small size, particular to **Tlaloc** (Annex.1) offerings, and distinctive purpose, point to their use by small children and females, underline the prominence of the **Maya** Moon Goddess, **Ix Chel**, **Itzamna**'s consort, that rules over underground pools. Abundance of weaving tools strongly point to the fact that certain women were involved in ritual practices in caves during pre-contact times.

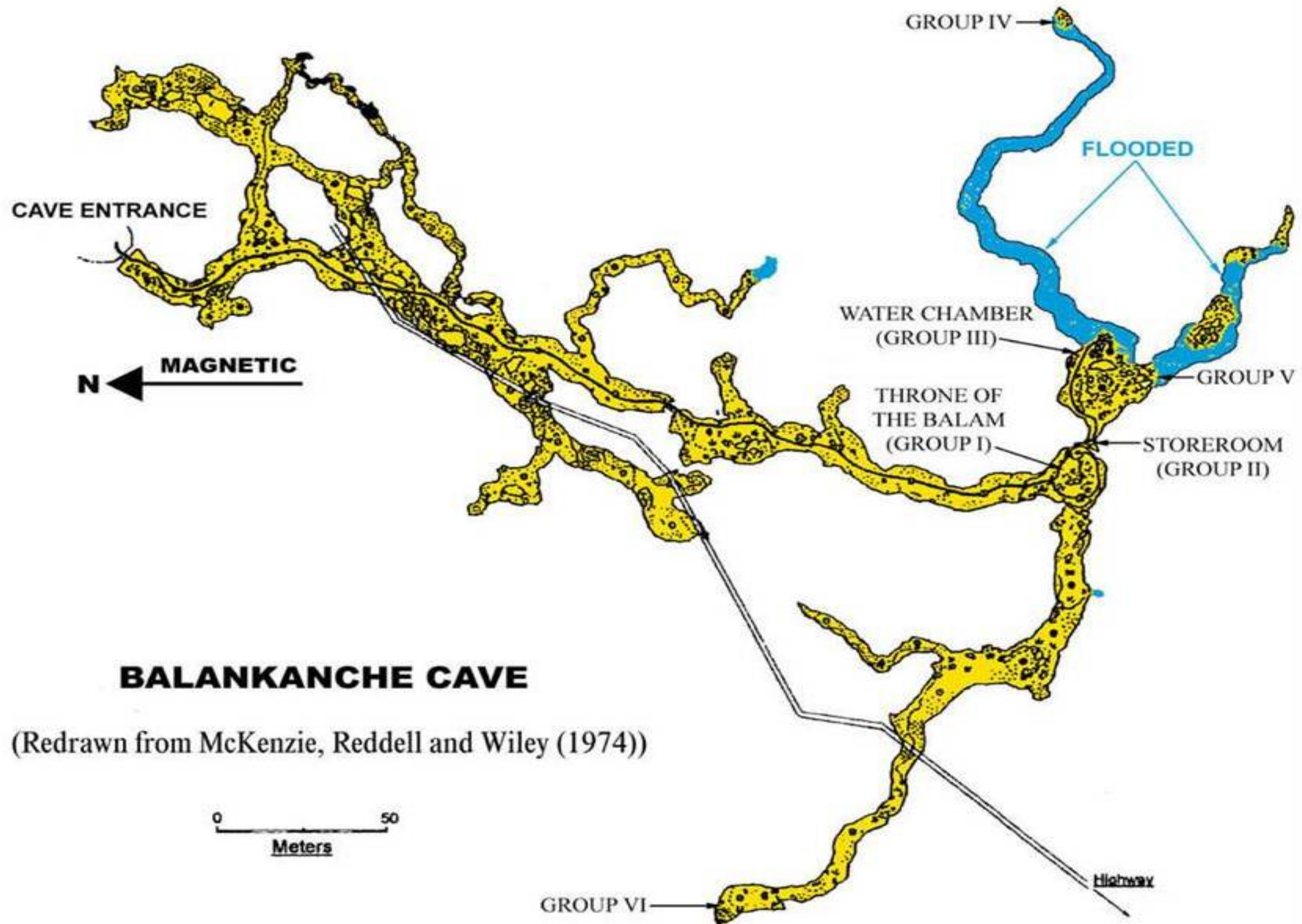
(Ishihara:2008) ©MWI



Group III — 232 items, from diminutive *metates* and *manos*, 25 **spindle whorls** and 17 **miniature vessels and plates** in “*Chichen Slate*” style, as well as 15 large **ceramic censers**, were found, as shown above, by archaeologists in 1959. Ethnographic accounts throughout Mesoamerica document miniature objects as offerings, often associated with rain-making rituals, the female gender, and young children, favored by **Tlaloc**. The presence of spindle whorls underline the symbolic significance of weaving that has been documented to be associated with females and **Chak Chel**, the aged goddess of curing and child birth, in Classic and post-Classic times, and **Ix Chel** the Moon Goddess.

E. Wyllys Andrews IV in *Balankanche, Throne of the Tiger Priest* – Courtesy MARI Tulane University, New Orleans, 1970:165/Fig.45b

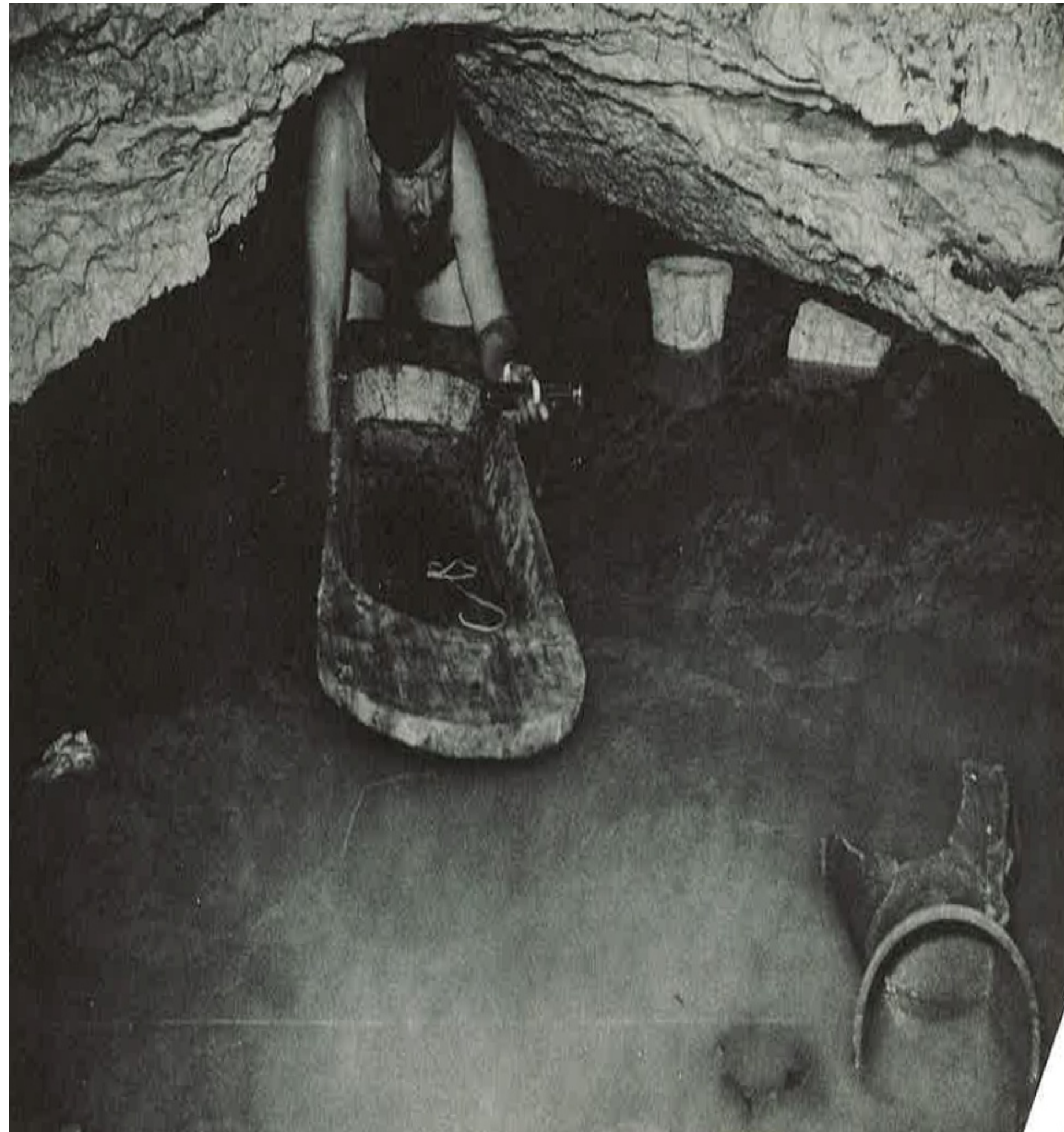
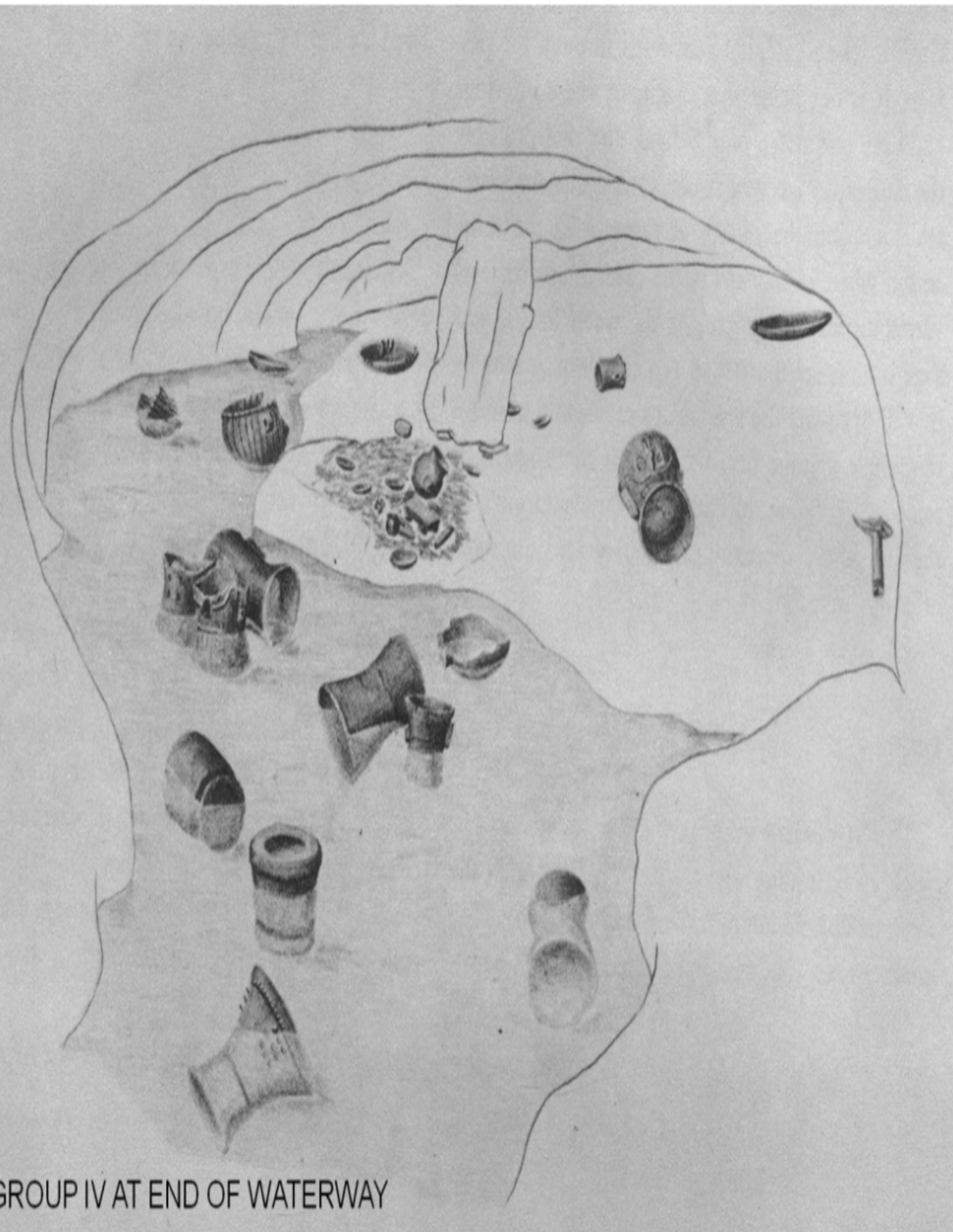
Group-IV – The Waterway



Group IV – the “*Waterway*” (drawing: George Stuart, 1959); mostly flooded since it is the top of the water table; held numerous ceramics and stone censers in the water and on outcrops; at the end of the elongated lake is a chamber which seems to be the limit of human penetration in this direction; the average depth is 4-5 feet, with about half that depth in mud.

The muddy floor of the waterway was scattered with offerings, from **Tlaloc** (Annex.2) effigy censers, studded censers and a variety of pottery offerings, with a distribution densest near the shore.

© E. Wyllys Andrews IV in *Balankanche, Throne of the Tiger Priest* – Courtesy MARI Tulane University, New Orleans, 1970:14/7, a-schematic by George E. Steward, and b-1970:167/47b





Balankanchè - October 13-15, 1959 the *Tsikul T'an Yuntsilo'ob* Ceremonies ©MWI



Cha'ak is a **Maya** agricultural deity associated with rain, lightning and thunder, returned in 1959 to **Balankanchè** and was celebrated over 3 days and nights with appropriate ceremonies and rituals in the cave, that regained its spiritual prominence among **Maya** people as a **Yucatec** deity, and will remain the patron god of **Yucatán** communities. Like **Tlaloc** whose ceramic censers remained in the cave, it is closely associated with **cenotes** and the water world, as well as with other guardian deities, the **Pauahtuns** and the **Bacabs** ©MWI

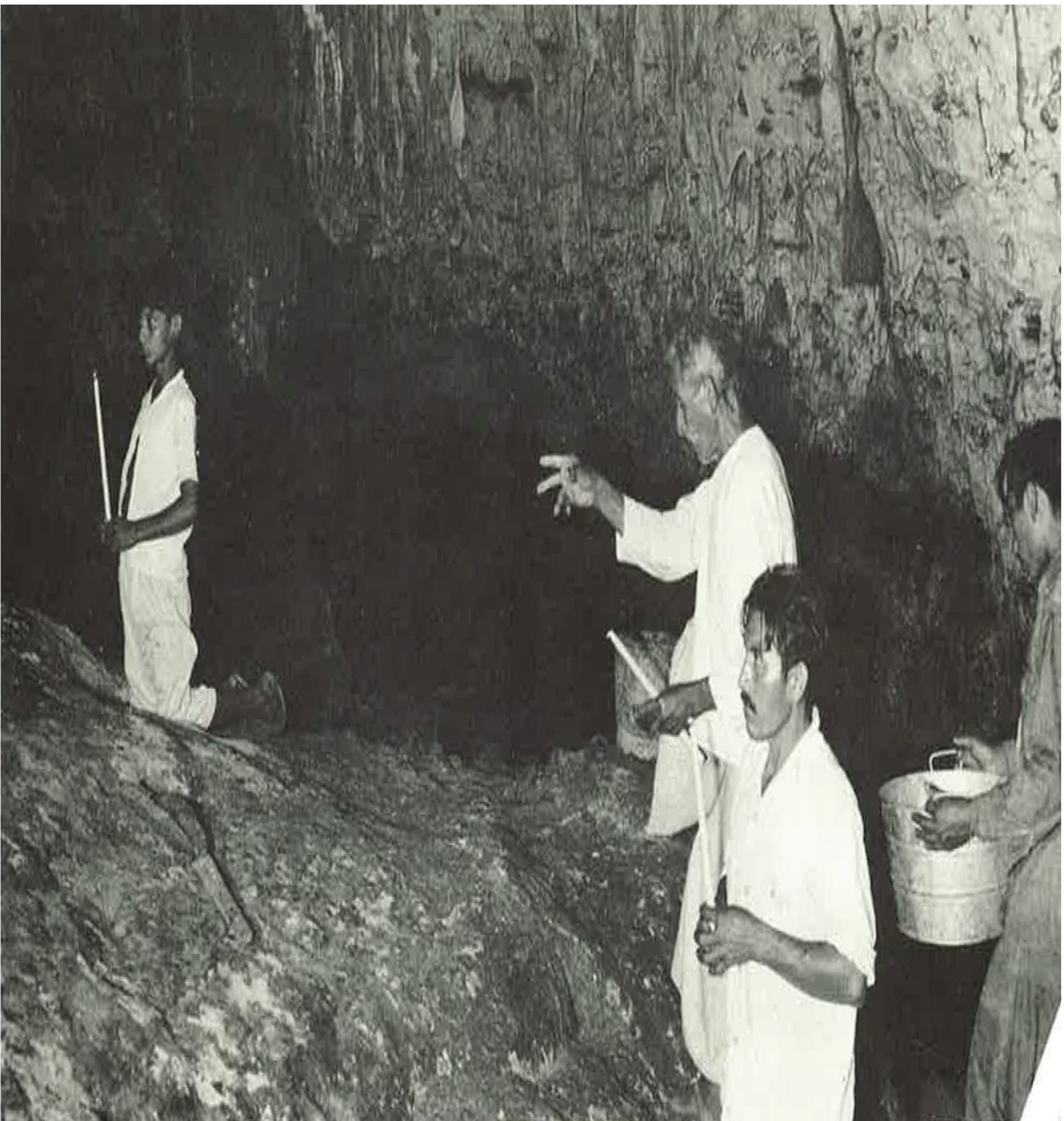
Group-I – the *Tsikul T'an Ti' Yuntsiloob* - “*Reverent Message to the Lords*” ceremony, is the only known *Ch'a'Cha'ak* ritual recorded in the cave; it was lead by *h'men* (priest-shaman) Romualdo *Ho'il* from *Xcalacoop*, and his 12 *It'saks* (assistants). The raised center of the chamber, made of a thick mass of joined stalagmites and stalactites, while on the ceiling, as foliage, are thousands of small stalactites, recall the mythical *Ceiba* sacred tree

Photo Left: E. Wyllys Andrews IV in *Balankanche, Throne of the Tiger Priest* – Courtesy MARI Tulane University, 1970:180/Fig.60d



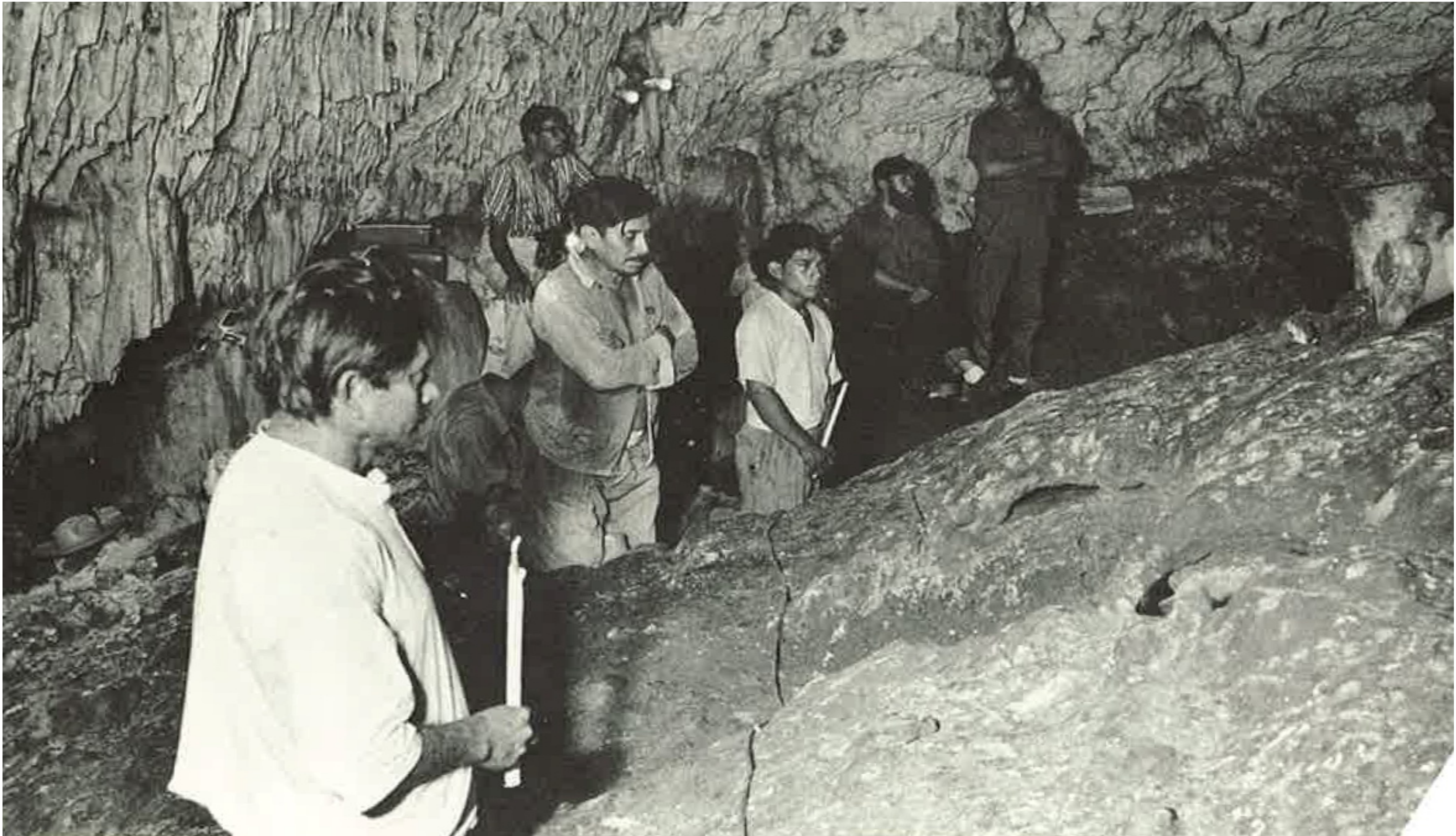
Group-I – Ceremony *Tsikul T'an Ti'Yuntsilooob* – “*Reverent Message to the Lords*”, on early hours of October 13th, 1959. Greetings and offerings to the *Yum Balames: Oxteskuntaba Yuntsil* “*Be They Blessed Three Times*” those *Oxlahun Yuntsilooob*, the 13 Lords, and *Mistun Balam* of the Green Tree of Abundance, offering them the *Sisol T'an* (sacred cakes), while the *Its'aks* sprayed *Ba'alche'*, a ceremonial drink fermented with honey.

E. Wyllys Andrews IV in *Balankanche, Throne of the Tiger Priest* – Courtesy MARI Tulane University, New Orleans, a-1970:180/60b and b-1970:177/Fig.57a



Tsikul T'an Ti' Yuntsilooob or ***"Reverent Message to the Lords"*** Ceremony was believed to be necessary for the safety of the visitors who violated the sacred cave, because the ***Yum Balames*** were displeased with the intrusion, after all, they are the Lords of ***Xibalba (Metnal*** in Yucatec), as described in the ***Popol Vuh***, and needed to be pacified. Gifts to the ***Yum Balames*** were: 1 turkey and 13 chickens, presented live to the Lords at the ***"Altar"***, then ritually sacrificed outside the cave, their cooked meat presented again to the Lords at the ***"Altar"***, together with ***Ba'alche*** and sacred cakes. The ceremony lasted two and half days, with prayers, incantations and gifts to the deities to spare ***"those who have penetrated these sacred places without permission of the gods"***, alternated frequently between Group-I and Group-III

E. Wyllys Andrews IV in *Balankanche, Throne of the Tiger Priest* – Courtesy MARI Tulane University, New Orleans, 1970:177/Fig.57b





Group III – *H'men* (priest-shaman) *Ho'il* and *Its'aks* (assistants), prayed in the chamber invoking the **Ah Kanan Sayahoob Balam** – guardian of the springs. Their prayers and incantations alternated for two days between Group I and Group III, since bodies of water, those underground in the Yucatan in particular, are believed to be vehicles of life and the embodiment of **Cha'ak** ©MWI



In agrarian communities of Mesoamerica, the ***milpero*** (farmer) and his family rely on the ***H'men*** prayers to bring rains and a bountiful harvest of maize, or the family will go hungry. Because maize (corn) represent the major daily energy intake of present-day **Mayas**. Rain, wind and fire however, are fundamentals to the culture of maize, and integral to the ***milpero*** spiritual core beliefs since ***Cha'ak***, the ancestors and the deities are believed to be guardians of the harvest, as written in the sacred book the ***Popol Vuh***, (Annex.3), where, at the beginning of times, gods made humans from corn dough. Life formula for the ***milpero*** very existence is therefore simple: **no rain>no corn>no soul** ©MWI



Tzolkin Ceremonies – Momostenango, Totonicapan – Guatemala, 2001

Celebrated on the **Chuti Sabal** hill by **Rigoberto Itzep Chanchavac** highly respected day keeper and **Aj'quij**, priest-shaman in Guatemala and Chiapas Mexico. Lowland and highland Maya **milperos** rely on their **H'men**, and community leaders, to help them understand their world, reach out to their Ancestors and appease gods, deities and invisible forces through regular offerings, prayers and rituals, such as here during the **260 days Tzolkin sacred calendar** ceremonies; mastering the mystical construct of communities, their beliefs and pantheon of gods and deities from the sacred book, the **Popol Vuh**, is fundamental to answer individual, family and community anxieties and spiritual needs. ©MVI



Cenotes or sink holes, are mirrors of two worlds such as here at **Yaxuna, Yucatán**. To this day, **cenotes** are believed to be **Cha'ak**'s dwellings and holders of life, as they are, given the scarcity of surface water. An important ceremony, the **Cha' Cha'ak**, to conciliate the gods, the **chaakoo'b** for a bountiful corn harvest, take place whether it rains or not each year in the **Yucatán**. The mythical power of the gods of rain, and the **milpero** profoundly mystical relationship to maize, is a view of life totally foreign to outsiders. ©MWI



Hochob, Edo. Campeche – Structure II, South Façade

In Mesoamerica, as in other world cultures, cave myths and associated gods and deities are fashioned in stone, bone or wood. Depiction of the symbolic entrance of caves to the underworld, where gods of rain, clouds, wind, thunder and lighting live, is reproduced here architecturally as the cave entrance, the “*mouth of the earth monster*”. To this day, natural events are believed to be actually created in caves. ©MWI



OLMEC Altar-4 - 1100 > 400BC – La Venta Park – Villahermosa, Edo. Tabasco

Beliefs in caves as powerful mythological locations, are common and widespread. The zoomorphic **Witz** mask above the niche or entrance to the “cave”, is found in all **Olmec** tabletop altars, and is intimately associated with ancestors, deities and the duality of life. ©MWI



Chichen Itza – *Dzonot* the “*Sacred Cenote*” was used exclusively for ritualistic purposes. The front room of the structure held figurines of all known gods of the time. *Dzonot* is the gateway to **Cha’ak**, the Lords’ domain, where adults and children, often their hearts torn out, were thrown in as sacrifice, in particular during severe drought. The small structure back room was used as a steam bath for purification rites before sacrificial ceremonies. ©MWI



K'uk'ulkan pyramid aka *El Castillo*, **Chichen Itza** / *Uuc'Yab'nal* – Its reflection illustrate the mental make up of the **Maya** and other cultures, past and present, as an **Inverse View**, or **Counter-Image of the Universe**. Life and death occur at the liminal zone, at the base of the pyramid perceived to be the point of contact between this world and the “**Other**” world, the **Field of Opposites**. ©MWI



Actun Usil Cave – Oxkintok, Edo. Campeche – **The World Below** the '***Olon Balamil***' of the **Tzotzil Maya** in Zinacantán. Caves are places where ancestors, gods and deities of the underworld live, and interact with the world above. No less than the sacred earth, caves are believed to be the meeting grounds between humans and the divine, between the profane and the sacred. ©MWI



The Pyramid: **The World Above** – the '***Osil Balamil*** of the **Tzotzil-Chenalho** of the Valley of San Lorenzo, Zinacantán; surrogate mountain and counter image of the cave in the endless cycle of life. Each morning the rays of the Sun light the top of the pyramid first, the blessing of **Culture** by **Nature** repeated daily, re-affirms the powers vested in the Lords and the Priests, by the Gods. ©MWI



Balam Ka' Anchè, “*Throne of the Tiger Priest*”

Annex & Bibliography



george@mayaworldimages.com

A n n e x - 1

Cha' ak, **Maya** god of rain, lightning, storms and thunder; associated with life's sustaining water and crops, specifically corn, the mythological and actual sustenance of mankind.

Like all gods and deities, **Cha' ak**'s dual nature is both benevolent and malevolent. It is the most venerated god of yesteryears, and today in **Maya** land. He is **One** as **Yaxal Cha' ak** in the center of the cosmos, and the four corners of the universe.

He is related to god **G.1** in the tablet of the **Temple of the Cross** at **Palenque**, where he is shown as the first born in the divine triad.

There are more than one **Cha' ak**. Each manifestation of the deity dedicated to the task of controlling nature and overseeing mankind compliance with the god's commands. The best known is the red **Cha' ak** of the east, **Chak Xib Cha' ak**.

It is represented in stone, on ceramics and the Codices, and ancient texts from the post-Classic that depict scenes of gods, deities and their powers over man and nature; from the world above and the world below.

Shown on Page.6 of the **Madrid Codex** are depictions of **Cha' ak** in its role of supplying water to mankind, who is aware that the liquid sustaining life may be withheld, or hail destroying crops sent, at the god's will.

Cha' ak – The Nunnery, Chichen Itza V ©MWI

Madrid Codex P.6:a+b >



A n n e x - 2

Tlaloc “second tenant” deity in **Balankanchè** is the **Toltec** god of rain, storm, lighting and thunder. The deity originates from **Tula** on the central plateau of Mexico and is associated with caves, springs and mountain tops.

<<< **Tlaloc** (MNA, Mexico City) and **Xipe Totec** are central Mexico deities well known and documented, while relatively little is known about **Yucatán** deities and fertility gods, which points to the fact that the cave may have been the focus of agrarian folk cults (Kurjack:2006, personal communication).

The first tenant was probably **Cha’ak** a Maya deity with mythological attributes similar to **Tlaloc**. In **Toltec** and **Aztec** mythology, the deity was the **Lord of the Third Sun**, whose roots go back to **Teotihuacan** and, farther in time, to **Olmec** cosmology.

This would explain **Toltec** ceramics and **Xipe Totec** carved stone censers, the only archaeological artifacts recorded in the cave, to the exclusion of **Cha’ak**, or other **Maya** deity. The new comers settled in power centers and towns, while traditional **Maya-Yucatec** deities and gods remained unchanged in the countryside, as they are to this day.

Tula Grande “Place of Reeds” – Pyramid B, 980-1170AD, Edo. Hidalgo ©MWI



A n n e x - 3

The **Ceiba** (*Ceiba pentandra*), the **Wakah-Chan** tree, the **Tree of Life** or **yax che'**, **First** or **Green Tree**, the world tree central to **Maya** mythology; the *axis mundi* or world axis. Its roots are believed to sink deep into the underworld, while its branches are ladders that reach to the heavens.

There are five **Ceiba** trees, the **Pillars of the Sky**. Planted at the four corners of the village, are trees of the **Cha'aks** held by the four pillars of the sky, the **Bacabs**, as memorials of the successive cycles of destruction of the world:

- . **Zac Xib Cha'ak** the **White Cha'ak Imex Che** of the **North**
- . **Ek Xib Cha'ak** the **Black Ek Imex Che** of the **West**
- . **Kan Xib Cha'ak** the **Yellow Kan Imex Che** of the **South**
- . **Cha'k Xib Cha'ak** the **Red Zac Imex Che** of the **East**
- . **Ya'ax Imix Che** is the **Green Ceiba** mother tree of abundance, planted in the **middle** of the village, to record the second destruction of the world, is also the **mixik' balamil**, the "**navel of the world**" of the **Maya** Zinacantecos (Freidel, et al. 1993:254).

The **Ceiba** flowers bloom in January-1st week February; they are the replicas of the earflares worn by **Classic Maya** kings, as the embodiment of the **Wakah-Chan**, the very human manifestation of the Central Axis of the world. (Schele, 1993:394).





A n n e x - 4

Xibalba , the **World Below**, is described in the **Maya K'iche'** sacred book, the **Popol Vuh** as a court below the surface of the Earth associated with death and a cohort of deities of the underworld. There are twelve gods or powerful lords known as the **Lords of Xibalba**. The hero twins **Hunapuh** and **Xbalanque** are portrayed here battling the **Lords of the Underworld** at the ballgame and...win! (artist unknown), defying death for the survival of humanity.

B i b l i o g r a p h y

1. *Maya History and Religion* - J. Eric S. Thompson – University of Oklahoma Press, 1970
2. *Popol Vuh* – Traduccion Quiche-Castellano, R.P. Fray Francisco Ximenez – Editorial J. Pineda Ibarra, 1973
3. Edward B. Kurjack – personal correspondence, photos and 1998 Luis Pantoja's Balankanche surface site map.
4. *Relación de las Cosas de Yucatan* – Fray Diego de Landa – Biblioteca Porrúa, 1959
5. *Ritual of the Bacabs* – Ralph L. Roys – University of Oklahoma Press, 1965
6. *The Major Gods of Ancient Yucatan* – Karl A. Taube – Dunbarton Oaks Library – Washington, DC 1992
7. *Maya Shamanism Today* – Bruce Love - Labyrinthos – Lancaster, CA 2004
8. *Les Formes Élémentaires de la Vie Religieuse* – Émile Durkheim, CNRS Éditions, Paris, 2007
9. *Maya Cosmos: 3000 Years on the Shaman Path* – D. Freidel, L. Schele & J. Parker – W. Morrow & Co., 1993
10. *Balankanche: Throne of the Tiger Priest* - E. Willis Andrews IV – MARI @ Tulane University, 1970.
11. *Chichen Itza . La Ciudad de los Brujos del Agua* – Roman Piña Chán – Fondo de Cultura Economica, 1980
12. *The Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel* – Ralph L. Roys – University of Oklahoma Press, 1967
13. *At the Edge of the World – Cave and Late Classic Maya World View* – K. Bassie-Sweet – UofOK Press, 1952
14. *Shamanism, Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* – Mircea Eliade, Princeton University Press, 1972
15. *Explorations in the Gruta de Chac, Yucatan, Mexico* - E. Willys Andrews IV – Tulane University / National Geographic Society – The Ford Foundation, 1965.
16. *Images from the Underworld* - Andrea J. Stone – University of Texas Press, 1995
17. *From the Mouth of the Dark Cave* – Karen Bassie-Sweet – University of Oklahoma Press, 1952
18. Reiko Ishihara, U.C. Riverside, Karl Taube's student, PhD dissertation; correspondence on spindle whorls
19. *La Grotte Chauvet* – J.-M. Chauvet, E. Deschamps, Ch. Hillaire, Editions du Seuil, Paris, 2001
20. *The Olmec Riddle* – James C. Gruener, Vengreen Publications, 1987
21. *La Grotte Cosquer* – Jean Clottes & Jean Courtin, Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1994
22. *Twin Tollans: Chichen Itza, Tula and the Epi-Classic* - Kowalski and Kristan-Graham, Dumbarton Oaks, 2011
23. *Diccionario Maya Cordemex* – Alfredo Barrera Vásquez, Ediciones Cordemex, Mérida, Yucatán, 1980
24. *Historia Mayab' . Cosmocimientos y Practicas Mayas Antiguas* – Asociacion Maya Uk'Ux'B'e – Guatemala, 2008
25. *Ch'umilal Wuj - El Libro del Destino* – Cholsamaj, Guatemala City, 1999

Photos and Graphics - Credits

Slide #	C r e d i t s a n d T h a n k s t o:
1	Cha'ak glyph (<i>reformat</i>) – Michael D. Coe & Mark Van Stone, Thames & Hudson, London, 2001:111
3	Map (<i>reformat</i>) – Courtesy, Monclem Ediciones, SA de CV, Mexico, DF
7	Balankanchè surface map (<i>reformat</i>), Luis Pentora, INAH, Mexico, DF. Courtesy Edward B. Kurjack, PhD., 1998
12,20,31,34,38	Cave maps – redrawn from McKenzie, Reddell & Willey, 1974
14	Schematic section drawn by George E. Stuart – Courtesy MARI-Tulane University, New Orleans, 1970:3/F.3
16	Ceremony - Courtesy MARI-Tulane University, New Orleans, 1970:180/F.60a
18a	Positive Hand Print – Courtesy MARI-Tulane University, New Orleans, 1970:169/F.49a
18b	La Grotte Chauvet, Positive Hand Print – Courtesy Editions du Seuil, Paris, 2001:82/F.74
19a	The Cave Beneath the Sea – Courtesy Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1994:70/F.39
19b	Ca'actun Cave – Andrea J. Stone, Courtesy University of Texas Press, Austin, 1995:72/F.4-58
22,27	Edward B. Kurjack, PhD – Personnal Communications.
23	Offertory – Courtesy MARI-Tulane University, New Orleans, 1970:166/F.46a
26b	Group.I – Schematic by George E. Stewart, Courtesy MARI @ Tulane University, New Orleans, 1970:10/F.4
28	Xipe Totec – Courtesy Courtesy MARI-Tulane University, New Orleans, 1970:172/F.52e
30	Ceiba – Courtesy Cyark.org
33	Group.II, Storeroom – Courtesy MARI-Tulane University, New Orleans, 1970:165/F.45a
37	Group.II, Miniatures – Courtesy MARI-Tulane University, New Orleans, 1970:165/F.45b
39a	Group.IV, Waterway.1 – Schematic by George E. Stewart (<i>reformat</i>), Courtesy MARI @ Tulane University, New Orleans, 1970:14/F.7
39b	Group.IV, Waterway.2 – Courtesy MARI-Tulane University, New Orleans, 1970:167/F.47b
42	Group.I, Ceremony.1 – Courtesy MARI-Tulane University, New Orleans, 1970:180/F.60d
43a	Group.I, Ceremony.2 – Courtesy MARI-Tulane University, New Orleans, 1970:180/F.60b
43b	Group.I, Ceremony.3 – Courtesy MARI-Tulane University, New Orleans, 1970:177/57a
44	Group.I, Ceremony.4 – Courtesy MARI-Tulane University, New Orleans, 1970:177/57b
56	Courtesy, Arqueologia Mexicana, Mexico, DF
57	Annex.1 – Madrid Codex, P.6 a+b
60	Annex.4 – Xibalba Ball Game – Color Drawing, <i>Author Unknown</i>
00	Photos referenced @MWI are from Maya World Images own Library.

Our special thanks to the Middle American Research Institute (MARI), at Tulane University, New Orleans, LA – www.mari.tulane.edu fir the use of photos from E. Wyllys Andrews IV, early 1960s archaeological investigations at **Balankanchè**., and in particular for the photos taken during the one and only recorded ceremony that took place in the cave on October 17, 1959. (“Balankanche,Throne of the Tiger Priest”, E. Wyllys Andrews IV, MARI Publication 32, 1970)

Maya World Images (MWI) “**Lectures**” are offered to the public and students’ interest in the **Maya** world, as well as other historical and traditional cultures of North, Central and South America, and the Caribbean basin.

Lectures aim at education and information; they could not be possible without the cooperation and support of institutions, archaeologists and scholars from the United States, Mexico and other countries, who contributed data and research papers on archaeological sites’ history and architecture. Ethnological research of people traditions and ancient belief structures, together with contemporary community ceremonies, bring a deeper understanding of past and present cultures of the Americas, still very much alive today.

Visitors to **MWI** may add facts, figures, maps, latest discoveries, photos or any relevant topic regarding the archaeological scene or location in reference. Please let us know, we will review the data, update our lecture page and recognize the person or organization contribution.

Archaeology and related sciences, regularly uncover new relevant aspects in perspectives and discoveries, in the field or in the lab. It is then to be expected, that the “**Lectures**” series be amended for time-to-time.

For any question regarding this lecture, please contact george@mayaworldimages.com

Photos, drawings and maps in the “**Lectures**” series are not for sale to the public. Accredited institutions or scholars may request the release of documents or photos, in writing. Only photos identified as ©**MWI** in the “**Portfolio**” page of the site, are available for purchase.

