

**P a l e n q u e**



**IV**



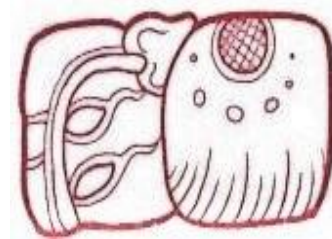
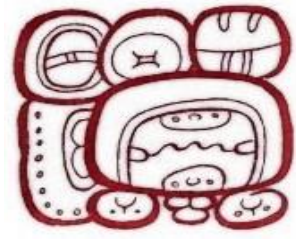
***L a k a m-h a'***



**IV**



# Palenque



# Lakam-ha'

Introduction to this great **Maya** city of the Classic (250-950), needed to be organized into seven parts for better understanding, thanks to the site historical importance and complexity. **I-The Ancient City – II-Temple of the Inscriptions – III-Temple of the Skull and Temple of the Red Queen – IV- Of Gods and Ancestors – V-Palenque Divine Triad – VI-Temple of the Count, the Ball Court, the North and Murcielago Group – VII-Water Management.** The narrative interface text and photography serves as scholarly and visual understanding of the subject matter.

References in annex and bibliography will help to further learn the history of this remarkable ancient city.

Each part address the historic and economic structure, architecture, kingship and kinship, beliefs, burials and other relevant topics.

The name **Palenque** is prominently used throughout over its ancient **Maya** name **Lakam-ha'** as more suitable to the narrative.

Maya World Images thanks for their contribution noted American, Mexican and European archaeologists, scholars and institutions of higher learning, as well as outstanding national and foreign publications, without which this presentation would not be possible.

**Temple XXI platform face (below): K'inich Janahb' Pakal.II (center), Kinich Akal Mo' Nahb' his grand-son (left), and U'Pakal K'inich Janahb' Pakal (right).**

*Museo de Sitio INAH Dr. Alberto Ruz Lhuillier, Palenque, Chiapas*

– Glyphs: Michael Coe & Mark Van Stone, 2001:68/1b & 72





## OF GODS

Mesoamerican terminology of the word “god” is a reference to the Spanish chronicles of the 16<sup>th</sup> century that describe figures of deities as “*dioses*”; a grossly simplified European terminology. Long before the first stone was set at **Palenque**, how did people conceive of the world around them? Let us very briefly, follow the trail of the appearance of gods among cultures of the Americas, as a preamble to rituals and ceremonies today rooted in a long lost past.

Religion, in its modern definition did not exist. Studies of ancient beliefs can appear infinitely complex to the modern student. As David Stuart (2008:190) points out for the Maya, *“there were scores of gods, deities and mythical characters, many of whom we can visually recognize, and story elements that we see repeated in occasional vase paintings or on temple walls. However, often we have little idea of who the gods really are or what significance was given to the myths in which they participated”*.

The massive number and functions of deities in the Maya pantheon, is literally boundless. It is the case among others of **Chaak’**, god of rain, thunder and lightning (God.B), identified in remains from the Proto-Classic to the late Post-Classic, a span of time of over 3000 years. The “god” was called by tens of names, identified in many guise, and shown acting in numerous and diverse circumstances. He is the longest continuously worshipped “god” of the ancient cultures of Mesoamerica.

People of the New World had an animist understanding of natural forces, their cause and effect in nature, the animal world and on humans. Deities were portrayed in wood, bone, stone and ceramic. They were represented in their dual influences, benevolent and malevolent fundamentally in opposition, referred to as the *field of opposites*, a reflection of nature’s binary nature. But gods in our modern understanding, they were not.

## AND,

What is the *field of opposites*? It is nature’s perpetual dual influence. Example of opposites are : male-female, night-day, up-down, black-white, self-other, etc... The transition aspect of the *field* is at the liminal plane, or transition between opposites, such as life-death perceived as one aspect, not two. There is no more separation between one and the other, than male and female biologically made up of both attributes. The threshold where tangible and intangible meet is in constant flux. One may contend that the intangible belong to the human emotional domain, cradle of beliefs and deities.

This binary world, between predictable and unpredictable cyclical events, applies to both the visible and invisible worlds of cause and effect, hence the birth of gods and deities inherently acting within the field of opposites, but nevertheless complementary. It is contradictory in logical terms, but nature is not built on logic.

## ANCESTORS

Ancestors were, and still are in traditional communities today, keys to the socio-economic well being of descendants. Their trusted mediation with deities made them the moderators with the other side of life, to ascertain the descendants’ claims to resources in this world. Ancestors are believed to interface between deities and the living, at the threshold of the field of opposites, assimilated to spirits in the mind of descendants. On the brink of another perception of life, they are perceived as necessary intermediaries with the sacred.

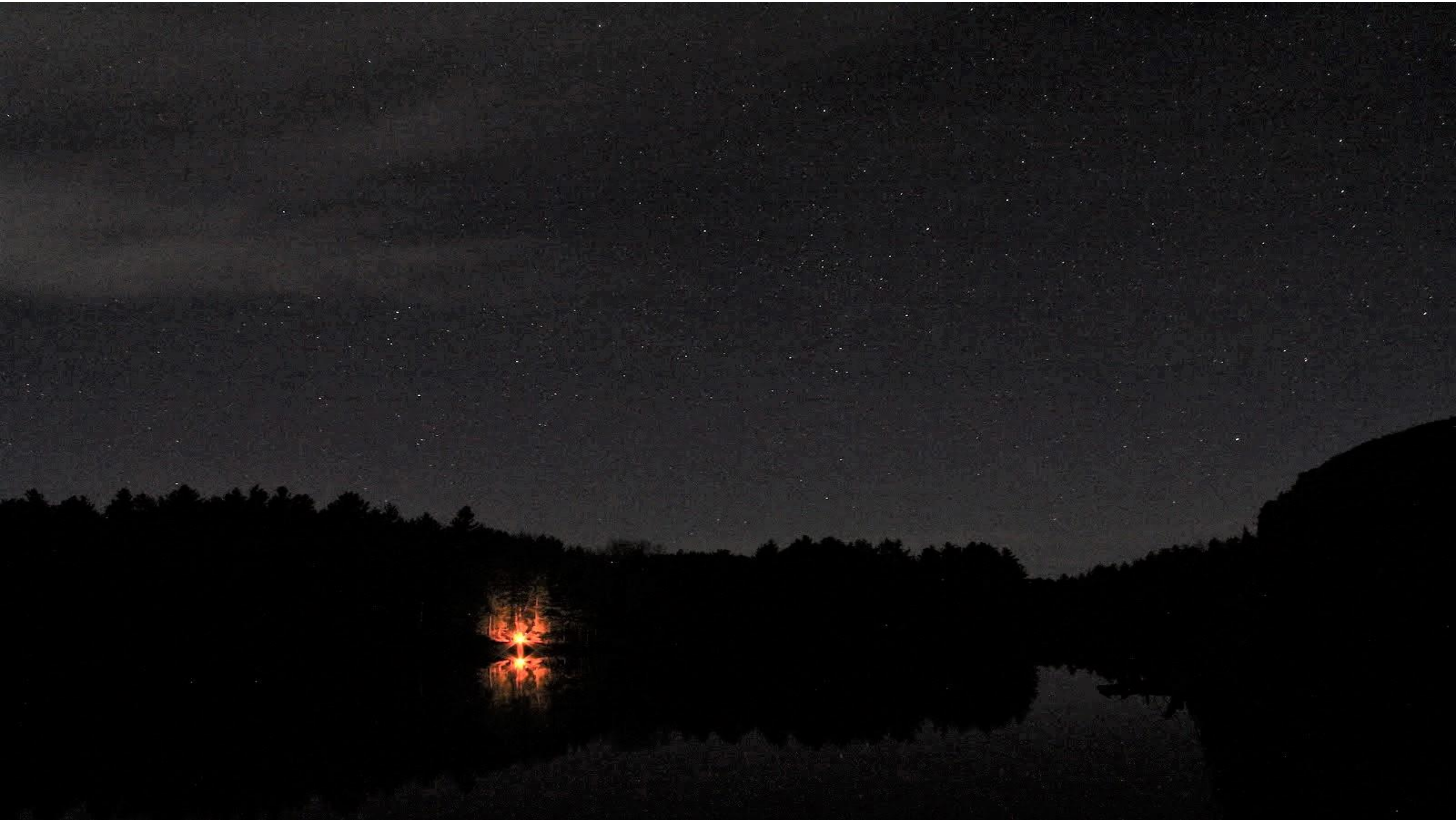
The logic of appealing to ancestors as intercessors lay in the fact that it was perceived that where the Sun runs at night was a tangible place, not a void. The visible world of ancient cultures was flat. Reason then concluded that if there was a world where the Sun and Moon run their course in their day-night alternance, there had to be a world below, the tangible place where ancestors dwell. A reality as absolute as the unfailing rise of the Sun.



The history of the Maya and other societies is a testimony to the long evolution and history of humans, over millions of generations.

From kin group to complex societies, the universal slow and timeless process has virtually been the same everywhere in the world. The birth of collective consciousness is intimately linked to the first use of fire in the mind of hominids; their first line of defense against the unknown forces of nature beyond the circle of light in the dark of night. To survive another day and overcome the fear of an unknown and dangerous nature, they had to quell the defiance of the “other” and bind their collective needs for survival. This primordial realization was integral to group cohesion that with time, evolved to that of culture and the rise of the nature-culture dichotomy, the roots of all beliefs.

Culture then found its boundary with nature, and the dawn of a different world.





The predictable unchangeable cyclical repetition of the course of the Sun, Moon and stars, were integral to the early awakening of conscience, as the abode of ancestors and deities of countless cultures. Awakening to the repetition of natural events and their environment, from heavenly bodies to the lives of plants and animals, was the corner stone of human organization for its survival.

The primordial gods of the Americas and other lands, were those of rain and the soil. Food cannot be obtained without the blessing of both. All other gods and deities to come in the pantheon were mere sub-titles to them. Except for the originators, the Sun and the Moon, pendulums of time; Venus will come on the scene later. Early in time, gods and deities were associated with natural phenomena; their number and behavior closely followed the development of a man made universe.





In Mesoamerica, **Chaak'** (God.B) – Annex.1, is the deity of rain, lightning and thunder, ever changing purveyors and destructors of life. The “god” commanded both life sustenance and destruction, not unlike other gods and deities. The damnation-redemption binary opposition is central in all beliefs, and foremost in human pleas for salvation.

Up to historic times, human food was dependent on the vagaries of nature. Science to some degree help understand, control and mitigate natural events, unlike ancient times when human capabilities, to comprehend and control nature, were limited. Human resources then were dependent on the observation of nature, and faith in unseen powers.

Benevolent and malevolent gods and deities then arose from the anguish to eat and survive.







The social history of man started with his emerging from a state of oneness with the natural world as Fromm point out, “*to an awareness of himself as an entity separate from the surrounding nature and other men*” (1942:19). At the root of ancient myths, beliefs and religions, past and present, are the ancestors. Incipient secular and religious organization implies a demographic factor beyond that of a group of related family members. Beyond such a group, communities develop through segmentation and specialization through time. This universal process requires coercion born from clan stratification for communal organization, a corollary to secure the cohesion of the community. A growing paleontological record document beliefs of a life beyond life, as far back as the Lower Pleistocene. The great antiquity of the nature-culture dichotomy, is at the cornerstone of the profane and the sacred of later cultures, and at the root of the nature of religions.

Amurdak Rock Shelter, Kimberley, Australia – credit G. Chaloupka in *Le Musée des Roches*, 2000:34/F23



The corner stone of the nature culture dichotomy is the definition of the living space within a natural context. The Yanomami *shabono* (village) architecture below, in the Amazon tropical forest, is reminiscent of the primeval circle of fire. It is made of a wind breaker type structure of poles and thatch, a common dwelling open to a wide plaza, beyond which is a savage nature. Kin related families live beneath the hanging roof with no separation between them, each with their own hammocks and hearth.

The *shabono* is culture, beyond which is the untamed nature, cradle of beneficent and malevolent deities and gods.

It is likely that plant selection for food and medicinal use, their gathering and husbandry, was initiated by women, as observed in remote societies. Plant isolation in small plots led, through time and successive generations, to improved production and their resilience to their environment. Clearing the forest to prepare the garden was a task for men, as was hunting and the defense of the group, in an hostile nature such as the Amazon or similar remote location. Photo Inga Steinvoth de Goetz, 1968:23





**Palenque** developed essentially as an agrarian society, as were all communities at the time in the Americas. Beasts of burden did not exist, unlike on the Eurasian continent and the Near East; nor metal tools for that matter; they were all imported from the Old World. Work. Any undertaking in socio-economic development was literally “hand made”, from working the land to building temple-pyramids. Heavy field work demanded much manpower for a correspondingly limited return than if domestic animals and metal tools would have been available. Food, as for communities anywhere else in the world, was the common denominator in the structural development of cultures in the Americas, where communities were literally “made of maize” (corn), a central “figure” in their belief structure.

Ancestors, gods and deities were and still are, the corner stones of collective organization on which family and communal rituals developed. Foremost however, as tangible manifestation of nature’s cyclical events, all identified directly or indirectly with their daily sustenance: **Maize**





The concept of ***milpa*** is a socio-cultural concept of Mesoamerican communities. The election of its location and design are grounded in ancestor worship . It involves complex interactions and relationships between members of patrilineages from a common ancestor, the *tlacaxinachtli* in *nahuatl*, or “human seed”. (Lopez Austin, 2016:EE70/64). The ***milpa*** is assigned to a lineage by village elders. In traditional communities today, as in the past, the *milpa* is not individually owned and must remain within the lineage, or revert to the community.

Clearing, planting, harvesting and storing were/are collective affairs based on reciprocity. The tools used by traditional communities for planting and harvesting are not much different today than those used in the past. For planting a long, thick wood pole is used with its tip either hardened with fire, or sheathed in metal, the ***tixj'ob***, made to “penetrate” the earth, not rip it. Today, as in the past, the ***milpero*** (farmer), together with family members or neighbors walk its field, and every few feet make a hole with the ***tixj'ob*** then fills it with 3 to 4 kernels of yellow, white, red and black corn from the last harvest. Photo Credit Kenneth Garrett in NatGeo, 1993:92 – Early 20<sup>th</sup> century photo of a Lacandón working his *milpa*.





**Tending and Harvesting the Milpa** As in the past maize “companions” are planted in the *milpa* between rows of corn; those are beans, chili, squash, melon, tomatoes, sweet potato and other products. The *milpa* polyculture, as Charles Mann (2005) point out, “*are nutritionally and environmentally complementary*”. Maize lacks the amino acids lysine and tryptophan which the body needs to make proteins and niacin.

The “companions” carry complementary acids and vitamins maize lacks.

Between 1960 and 1965, McNeish investigations (1967-1972) in 15 caves of the dry **Tehuacan** valley of Puebla, in central Mexico, found 9000+ **teosinte** cobs in the **Coxcatlan Cave**. Their development, 7500BP, were found to be halfway between **teosinte** and **maize**. Diet dependence on basic food crops varied through time, and was supplemented with hunting and fishing. By definition a *milpa* do not refer to a monocrop maize field but to polyculture, distant enough from the residence to require a field hut. Polyculture fields and orchards in tropical environment, “*provided a diversified culinary base and represented a strategy of risk reduction and wealth enhancement*”. (McAnany, 1995:73).

The Maya **Kekchi** from San Pedro Columbia call their *milpa* the “four sides of one’s being” (*caxcutil acue*), by priest-shamans, the root metaphor of the nature-culture Mesoamerican world view. The four directional symbols are given by the blood pulse felt at the wrists and ankles, set in opposites as the four corners of the *milpa* (James Boster, 1973).

Photo Credit Patricio Robles Gil – *Sierra Madre Occidental*, in *Arqueologia Mexicana*, 1997:25/24





# M a i z e

## Teosinte v

**Maize** (*maeess*), is the name the Spaniards gave the plant. The name comes from the **Taino** language, inhabitants of islands in the Caribbean, such as Hispaniola and Cuba. **Corn** is the plant common name in English. It is at the very core of the pre-Hispanic New World cultures. It was the currency, together with cacao and semi-precious stones, of the economies from the Pre-Classic up to the Late Post Classic. So much is maize central to societies of the past, as well as those today, that it literally is the backbone of religious beliefs, integral to the daily lives of families and communities.

Maize today evolved centuries ago from **Teosinte** (left), called the “*mother of maize*”, itself an evolution from the **olote** seed (*Zea mays L.*). The archaeological record identifies its use as early as 8700BP, in the dry **Guilá Naquitz Cave**, Balsas Valley, northwest Oaxaca, Mexico. The plant reached the cob size of 300 kernels we know today through domestication, around 600-1100AD (McClung de Tapia, 2013:38).

Over careful selection, maize was cultivated from the central plains of North America, to the verdant hills of Chiapas, to the Pacific coast and the gulf of Mexico. The plant has been no less successful in wide ranging topographies, from the lowlands of the Yucatán peninsula to 8000+ feet in the highlands of Guatemala (A.Montufar, 2013:92).

The mythical power of **Chaak’** god of rain and thunder (Annex.1), is central to the rituals and ceremonies of growing maize. Preparing the **milpa**, the maize plot, planting, tending, harvesting, storing and preparing maize are rituals, not tasks. **Maize** is central in the **Maya K’iche’** sacred book, the **Popol Vuh**, the **Book of Counsel**. It relates to the creation of the world by the gods, when after four tries, humans were successfully made from yellow and white maize dough.

The Maya **milpero** (farmer) profound relationship to maize, the mystical substance as well as the actual sustenance of mankind, is a way of life wholly alien to non-traditional indigenous communities.

Photo Credit Patricio Robles Gil, Raices in Arqueologia Mexicana 25:6 >>>







## *Hunal Ye', the Maize "God"*

The Classic **Mayas** called him **Hunal' Ye**, "*One Maize*"; the **Aztecs**, equivalent is **Cinteotl**, that literally means, *maize god*. The **Olmec** name for the deity is still obscure. The key role of maize in the belief structure and cosmogonic architecture of the Mesoamerican world, cannot be overstated.

Beside the "*language of the ceramics*" in the archaeological record, the **Popol Vuh** is the only written account relating the birth of gods and man. It was written by the **Maya K'ichè** in Guatemala, and translated to Spanish in early 18<sup>th</sup> century, by the Dominican Friar Francisco Ximenez.

Its 3<sup>rd</sup> *Naración* – Verses 544>553, Lines 2740>2790 (Ximenez, 1973), tells how the gods made humans from yellow and white corn dough. Preceding verses describe the discovery of maize and three prior attempts by the gods to create man from other earthly material, but failed.

Dennis Tedlock translation of the book (1985) in its opening summarize the importance of understanding **Maya** mythology; "*The Popol Vuh, the Quichè Mayan book of creation, is one of the extraordinary documents of the human imagination and the most important text in the native languages of the Americas*". Indeed, to understand **Maya** past and present beliefs and religion, one need to be attentive to archaeological and historical accounts' ancient texts, epigraphers reports and religious leaders of contemporary Maya communities.

The deity's headdress shows a young corn maize cob and its silk. The head is surrounded by foliage, underlining the young, green maize. He was called **Hun' Ixim** or "*One Maize*" on a glyph of the Late Classic Period

The deity's manograph (hand signs), shows the beginning (left) and the end (right), of maize life cycle, i.e. the eternal repetition of all life.

**Maya** nobility's blood offerings through auto-sacrifice, set the Lord as the maize progenitor, giving bounty to all, now and beyond death, when he raises from **Xibalba**, the underworld, to live again as **Hunal Ye'**; thus ensuring bountiful maize crops for the living. The cycle of life and maize is thus mythologically complete from planting to harvesting to life sustaining.

<< *Hunal Ye*, once tenoned in Structure.22 commissioned by **Waxak'lahu'un Ub'aah K'awiil**, aka 18-Rabbit, "*He of the 18-god Images*". Late Classic, 775AD. Copan Museum





Where did the gods come from and how do people interacted with them? The world view of cultures in the Americas revolve around similar and fundamental concepts, among which are what Lopez Austin calls the ***Ecùmeno*** and the ***Anecùmeno*** (2016:EE69/23-26), the complementary concepts in the field of opposites (Annex.11). The ***Ecùmeno*** belongs to the visible space-time, from humans to plants through animals and natural events, together with sensorial opposites. The ***Anecùmeno*** is the opposite and complementary, the intangible or “*subtle*” part as it is referred to, in the field of perception. It is complementary to the former since neither could exist without the other. Within this concept, is the world of gods and deities that belong to either, given their mythical ability to shift and multiply.

All Mesoamerican gods and deities are believed to “travel” between and within the two aspects. Ancestors, ***nantat*** in Maya ***K’iche’***, do not conform to gods and deities. They are independent of a communal belief system. ***Nantat*** are accessible through particular prayers, invocations, ceremonies, penance and offerings by living family members, at dedicated times.

It is believed then that the ***rajawal***, a Maya ***Tz’utujil*** term, or the sound properties of human supplications, prayers and invocations, can penetrate the ***Anecùmeno*** of temples, altars and consecrated places to reach the “*subtle*” part of space-time.

Daniel Montuy Ponce (1925-2005), Maya Mythology, 1979 – Mural (partial), Fiesta Inn Cencali, Villahermosa, Tabasco



# the *Popol Vuh*

Credit, Nathan Siemers @hiveminer.com

The name *Popol Vuh*, translates as the “**Book of Counsel**”; it is also referred to as the “*Book of the Community*” or literally the “*Book of the People*”. It relates mythological stories from the dawn of life; a verbal narrative of the Maya *K’iche’* before the arrival of the Europeans. In other Mayan languages, **Tzotzil**, **Tzutujil**, **Ch’ol**, **Yucatec** or **Kakchikel**, the title may be spelled differently, such as *Pop Wuj*, the narrative however, remains the same.

The rendering of the *Popol Vuh* to the Spanish language is credited to the Dominican Friar **Francisco Ximenez**, then in **Santo Tomas de Chichicastenango, Chuwila’** in **Kakchikel**, in 1701 or 1703. It may have been written in the original language, *K’iche’*, between 1554-1558, from an oral recitation (Adrian Recinos), shortly before the arrival of the Spanish conquistador Pedro de Alvarado in 1524.

Re-birth is a conception of death common to agrarian societies, where alternating seasons, and the sowing-harvesting cycles are central tenets in the belief and faith of ancestor veneration. It also saturate mythologies of the past and is still predominant in today’s traditional societies.

For the purpose of our narrative, we will focus on excerpts of Part.4 of the *Popol Vuh*, from Dennis Tedlock (1985:163-165), that relates to the creation of mankind by the gods.

*“Yellow and white maize was stored in the sacred mountain. Four animals: a fox, a coyote, a parrot and a crow, showed the way to the break in the sacred mountain, to the yellow and white maize, ingredients elected by the gods to make humans, with water used as blood. The yellow and white corn were ground nine times by the goddess **Xmucane**, along with the water she rinsed her hands with, for the creation of grease, that became human fat when it was worked by the **Sovereign Plumed Serpent**”.*

The archaeological record does not shed light on who the “gods” were, or what significance was given to the myths in which they participated. Even with the help of the *Popol Vuh* archaeologists and epigraphers have a difficult time interpreting ancient Maya iconography. There may only be occasional bits and fragments to connect the document with the cosmology and mythology recorded at places such as **Copán**, **Tikal** or **Palenque**.

As Stuart (2008:192) points out “*In fact, the only lengthy written narrative of Classic Maya mythology comes from the set of the three tablets in the temples of Palenque’s Cross Group* (Palenque.V).





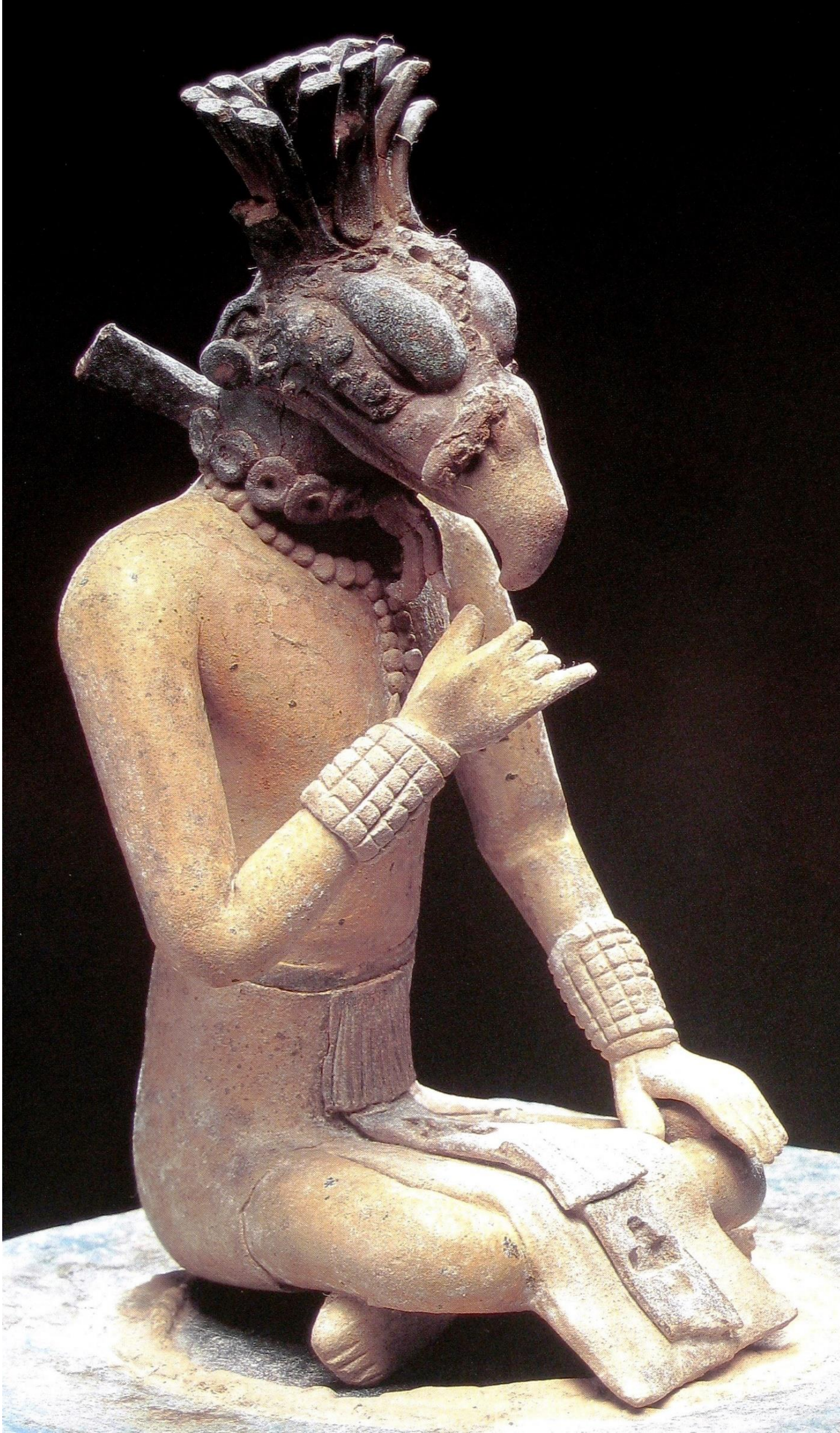


**Altar.4** is of **Olmec** origin (3200-2400BP); the monument is a recognition of the ongoing tradition of ancestor veneration through time. The perception of the cyclicity of life and time, may be traced back at least to 9500BP at the time of incipient horticulture and semi-sedentary kin related groups in Mesoamerica. **Olmecs** are viewed by scholars as the “mother culture” of the Mesoamerican world. The seated male figure above is shown slightly bent forward emerging from the mouth of a cave in the Sacred Mountain. The cave mouth is that of a jaguar depicted on the lid of the altar with the celestial sky **X** band between its fangs. This celestial cross band sign is common to those found on Maya glyphs, and is the representation of a view of multiple levels of the universe (Annex.5c).

The thick rope that encircle the base of the altar and runs from left to right, is held by the male figure’s right hand. He does not grip the rope with his left that holds his right ankle, for the rope comes out from the depth of the Sacred Mountain’s cave behind him. The rope represent life’s continuum, the unbreakable cycle of life and death from long gone ancestors. The **nahuatl** of central Mexico refer to a lineage as “*the tlacamacayotl*, the human rope,” (A.Lopez-Austin, EE70:74), the unbreakable link between ascendants and descendants.

Olmec, Altar.4, 1200-400BC – La Venta Park, Villahermosa, Tabasco, Mexico





## Divine Plurality and Ancestral Unity

Antropo-zoomorphic figurine seated on a throne with the removable head of an ocellated turkey or, *kutz* in Maya Yucatec. Late Classic, Tomb.1, Building.3, Group.B.  
*Museo de sitio INAH Dr. Alberto Ruz Lhuillier, Palenque, Chiapas.*

The number of gods, their names and functions in the Mesoamerican pantheon, underline a contradiction between divine unity and plurality. This observation by renowned Mexican anthropologist A. Lopez Austin (2016), is mytho-centric since it is an *a priori* comparison between monotheism and polytheism.

The study of the evolution of human societies essentially revolves around day-to-day needs for food. Gods and deities in the pantheon of all cultures through time, is coincidental with the development and stratification of societies, an unavoidable outcome of demographics from improved food production.

The anthropological record of the Americas and beyond, refer to a primordial god from whom all other gods were created. In Mesoamerican beliefs, this god then split himself into the original couple, the first father-mother, the **Tz'aqol B'itol** of old Maya **K'iche'**, and **Chuchqajaw** the “mother-father” in its recent form.

**Chuchqajaw** or priest-shaman is an integral term where the two genders blend as one. Each may act independently, but mainly do so in conjunction, given the fact that all life forms to some degree, consist of both male and female attributes. The title of **Chuchqajaw** means that their duality is essentially complementary, as is the **Anecùmeno**, the “subtle” aspect of all living organisms.

Unity and plurality of gods and deities are described in the **Popol Vuh** or **Book of Counsel** of the Maya **K'ichè**. Decipherment of 80+% of Maya glyphs of the Classic period also help understand the structure of beliefs and that of society. However, the full picture is subject to more decipherment and research, since only less than 10% of Pre-Classic glyphs have been deciphered.

All gods are jealous of their power, however they are portrayed. They demand praise for their uniqueness through periodic rituals and penance. Gods are without pity to the unbeliever, their benevolence is restricted to their believers alone, as are reward and punishment in the afterlife.

Common people cannot dialogue directly with gods, but those of higher segments of the nobility and the priesthood, through rituals. Other people require a go between close to the gods and deities of nature. Those are family members that crossed over to the other side of life, the **Ancestors**.



Important in **Maya** mythology is the description in the **Popol Vuh** Hero Twins, **Hunapuh** and **Xbalanque** (L), battling **Xibalba's** gods (R), at the Ball Game in the underworld, the *world of fright*, and won. The birth of the world, according to the **Popol Vuh**, state that there have been three prior creations. By winning at the game, the Hero Twins were the harbingers of the fourth creation, setting the stars spinning in the night sky.

This event in the narrative, leads to the rebirth of their father, **Hun Hunapu** from the underworld. The potent symbolic event however, is the description of the eternal return, the perpetual cycle of all life, from sprout to growth, to decay, death and life.

The Ball Game in the underworld explicitly describe life happening on two planes simultaneously (**Ecùmeno** and **Anecùmeno**), a keystone of the “*Myth of the Eternal Return*” (Eliade, 1954). In Mesoamerica, the link between worlds is the Ceiba tree (*Ceiba pentandra* – Annex.10). Rutlege captured the event in the underworld, a dream place where the field of opposites is shrouded in another reality.

Artwork, Terry W. Rutlege in NatGeo September 1987







This ceramic offering plate is believed to be ritually “killed” before burial (hole at center). A Classic period scene that depicts the resurrection of **Hun Hunapuh**, the **Popol Vuh Hero Twins’** father. Plates are frequently found in graves, placed upside down, covering the face of the deceased. The hole may then be the “door” through which the *chu’lel* or soul, is allowed to escape. In 1992, Nicolai Grube realized that the crack in the turtle carapace, representing the earth, shows **Hun Hunapu** emerging from the *kan* sign, the earth monster or dragon at the base of the *First-Tree-Precious* on the Tablet of the Foliated Cross (Palenque V), as the maize sprouts with renewed life. Through this crack the sons, **Hunapu** (L) and **Xbalanque** (R), help their father **Hun Hunapu**, identified as the sacred maize god **Hunal Ye’**, to sprout from the earth and live again.

“This engendering of the father by the sons is the great central mystery of **Maya** religion”. (Freidel-Schele-Parker 1993:281).

Museo Maya de Cancùn, Cancùn, Q.R.





## Censers as “Communication Devices” with the “Other” World

The function of elaborate flanged ceramic censers was to burn copal incense nodules, substitute for maize (corn) kernels, fragrant leaves or flowers. Together with bark papers, on which were drops of blood from an individual auto-sacrifice. The incense’s smoke carried the supplicant appeal and prayers to the invisible forces, deities and ancestors, for help in their daily struggle.

The relationship of the people with the “other” world is not of a religious nature, since as Stuart (2008) underline “*religion as we know it did not exist at the time*”. Belief in natural forces headed by beneficent or malevolent deities was the norm. Ancestors were the intermediaries between humans and deities, a key factor in the evolution and consolidation of beliefs.

The gods and deities were neither beneficent nor malevolent, those attributes were understood to be simultaneous, even though they may manifest independently.

They are at the core of the field of opposites, born generations ago when humanoids started their long evolutionary trek that lead to communal living. Its fundamentals rest in the dichotomy nature-culture, a break that was initiated by humans in their long lost past, from the animal world.

Gods and deities’ influence on individuals, communities and natural events was negotiated through the ancestors that were, as they still are today, believed to intercede with deities, to solve common daily problems. They also settled disputes with other ancestors of the community in the “other” world, for unfinished business in this life.

Pleading to these unseen forces therefore, were/are negotiated; demands paid with corresponding penance, incense, auto-sacrifice, as well as family and communal celebrations.

When answers are not forthcoming, the stinging smoke of plants, such as pepper or chili, are used to remind deities and ancestors alike, of the obligations of past promises, and threat of dereliction of prayers and ceremonies to honor and praise them. The reminder is bolstered during crucial ceremonies that take place at the end of the 260-days sacred year, the ***Tzol’kin***. The overriding context here is dialogue with the “other” world, not a one way monologue.

The smoke carries supplications and demands to the ***Anecùmeno***, the subtle part of nature, symbolically represented by the serpent, its twisting motion an aspect of the smoke of sacrifice; and a reminder of the fundamentals in the *Field of Opposites* (Annex.11).





**Censer # 49/92** from the Early Classic period (200-350AD), is the oldest found at **Palenque**, at the lowest level of the **Temple of the Cross**, where it was buried at the end of its ritual life. Over the years, 200 others were found buried on the slopes of the **Cross Group** complex (Palenque.V), and there may be more. The censers' "lives" were based on the 20 years **K'atun** cycle at the end of which ceremonies took place to honor the life of intercession of the censer with gods and deities. The "old" censer was then consigned as a "support" position to another that was ceremonially received as a "new" birth. The old censer however, would remain active together with the new for about ten years, or the half-life of its successor, before being ceremonially buried. At that time, public auto-sacrifice by the Lord of the realm and high members of the nobility took place, symbolically recreating the binary regeneration of nature, and the endless cycle of life and death.

*Museo de Sitio INAH Alberto Ruz Lhuillier, Palenque, Chiapas*



## Auto Sacrifice – The “Perforator “God” on Temple XXI Throne

The carving is a masterpiece of Maya expertise, probably made by the same artisans that carved the south face of **Temple XIX**. The scene depicts **K'inich Janahb' Pakal.II** (center) handing over the perforator to his grand-son **K'inich Akhal Mo' Nahb.II** (at left). On his right is the Lord's younger brother **U'Pakal K'inich**; both are shown with their grand-father, that died a century before, underlining the importance of ancestors within current, and future life events. The figures of richly dressed and rodent like creatures on each sides, are deities of the underworld. (see introductory photo for the full panel, and in Palenque.I).

Mesoamerican deities demand human blood sacrifice. The implement used in self-sacrifice is referred to as the “**Perforator God**”; the ancient name of the instrument is uncertain. It is a finely pointed awl or lancet made of obsidian, jade and animal bone (jaguar or deer), usually a stingray's spine, set into a jade handle and used only once in auto-sacrifice or public blood letting. Its important feature is the triple knot – symbol of bloodletting – mounted on top of the zoomorphic head, from whose “*mouth*” the awl emerge. Long feathers are set from the top and side of the knots.

For auto-sacrifice, under the influence of psychotropic substances, the **Maya** selected parts of their body that bleeds freely and held special meaning, without inflicting long lasting or crippling injury. Those were the penis and ear lobes for men, and the tongue and ear lobes for women. Any place on the body could be elected in compliance with rituals for a particular deity. The blood shed then dripped on fine bark paper that, mixed with small copal nodules and other ingredients, was burned, producing smoke from which was believed, ancestors or deities would emerge to answer the appeals of the petitioner at time of personal stress, power shift or climatic phenomena affecting the food supply.

Auto sacrifice, on a more private and limited scale, was practiced by various segments of the population from lesser social ranks to common people.

“Perforator” Drawing, Schele-Miller-Kerr, 1986:176/Fig.IV.1







## Temple 20, Lintel.15

Original Limestone Lintel at The British Museum, London, UK

Limestone **Lintel.25** from **Yaxchilan**, Chiapas, is dated Late Classic 725AD. The auto-sacrifice shows **Lady Xoc** consort of Lord **Shield Jaguar** during a ritual that took place the day of his accession to the throne.

For her auto-sacrifice, she has pulled a rope studded with small quartz through her tongue. The blood droplets from her sacrifice were shed on sheets of bark paper in the bowls. One is seen burning below the “tail” of the swirling shape, the other is in the basket cradled in her left arm, with stingray spines and quartz lancets.

The *Vision Serpent* “rears” through the smoke produced by the burning blood stained bark paper and copal incense, that produce copious smoke. It twists as it rears upward, alternately showing the patterns of its sides and belly plates. Jade disks dot its body. Feather and blood fans are attached to its nostrils and eyebrows, characteristics of a *Vision Serpent*.

What it is not, is a live serpent. The swirling smoke of the sacrifice and burning offerings, represent the analogy of a snake and its twisting motion as it moves on the ground. From the “serpent’s head”, a fully armed ancestor **Lady Xoc** brought forth through her sacrifice and supplications, emerge with lance and shield ready for battle. He wears ear flares and before his face, is the mask of the “god” **Tlaloc**, also associated by the Maya with war and sacrifice. A zoomorphic Tlaloc image emerges from the lower mouth of the “serpent” with blood scrolls.

Ancestors were believed to be indispensable mediators with the “other” world. They are summoned through blood rituals to receive the descendants’ pleas to negotiate with the “gods” on their behalf.



## Late Appearance of Maya Gods

*Waxaclahu'un Ub'ah K'awiil,*

13<sup>th</sup> Ruler of Copán, 695-738AD

Stelae.B in the Great Plaza, Copán, Honduras

The Maya deities of the Classic (250-950AD), was a religion without gods. Gods came on the scene during the late Post-Classic (1250-1521AD). Within a few hundred years, incipient polytheism with gods “identities”, displaced ancient belief structures.

For the Pre-Classic and Classic periods, there is no record devoted to gods or deities. No temple-pyramid or other structure were found dedicated to one or more “gods” for which incidentally, there are no representations.

The monumental architecture of the Classic, such as pyramids, temples and palaces served as dynastic or cosmological display. The earth monster depictions, as the entrances of temples in the Yucatán such as **Chicanná**, **Hochob** and **El Tabasqueño** among others, are in fact gateways to another side of a mythic life.

For the making of what we refer to as art of the Classic period, be it architecture, sculpture or other graphic depiction, the Maya lord and high priests had absolute control regarding content, including colors and glyphic text, not the craftsman. The cosmic or earth monster, supernatural creatures and others from the mythic world, are shown as the servants of the lord's domain, not independent powers.

The central dictates for any graphic representation, was to show the lord as the center of the world or explain his links and tasks with the deities of the “*other*” world. As the solar metaphor, the Maya lord was the unique and most powerful figure in the universe.

Ancestor worship predate the Pre-Classic, and never waned. Alongside the new pantheon of gods and goddesses of the Post-Classic, ancestor veneration sustained individuals and families in their daily life struggle, as they still do today.







Before gods and deities, **ancestors** were the recognized protectors of the living; they still are. The **K'iche'** Maya of **Chichicastenango / Chuwila'**, like the **Cakchiquels**, or the **Lancandón** in Chiapas, near **Bonampak**, believe that *"their land and home belong to their ancestors, and that themselves are but temporary lodgers in a protracted chain of inheritance"* (Bunzel, 1952).

A **winel** or shrine in the fields can still be seen today, generally located on top of hills in, or at the edge of *milpa* on lineage lands. They may be used by several lineage heads (**alaxik**) of the same hamlet. The three **winel** shrines of a patrilineal consist of a **uja'l**, "water" place, a **ujujyubal** or "high mountain" place, and an **uc'ux** or "center" place, the *sacramenta* in Spanish, where the **nantat**, the ancestors are the overseers. The communal altars are small stone square house like structures called *mesa mundo*, "earth table" (**mundo** or **tiox** here is understood as the "other" world). As Robert Carmack explains, *"communal altars are small stone-and-ceramic altars for individual lineages: the **warabal ja**, the "sleeping house" where it is believed the deceased lineage ancestors make contact with their descendants through elaborate rituals"* (1981:190).

Offerings are made to ensure that the animals and crops of the land multiply and the lineages remains prosperous.





An **Aj'qij** or **Day Keeper**, bless the crop together with the guardian of the family **milpa**. The ancestor is in its **warabal ja**, the “sleeping house”, the “*sacred spot on lineage lands where altars were built and ancestors “slept”*” (Carmack, 1981:161). Land rights with the **K'iche'** and other Maya groups, are inextricably linked with ancestors, since “*one does not own land, it is merely loaned to one as a lodging in the world, and for it one must continually make payment in the form of candles, incense and flower petals to the ancestors, the real owners*” (Bunzel, 1952:18, McAnany, 1995:100). It is important to understand that the tradition of ancestor veneration in the Americas or anywhere else, is grounded in that not all ancestors were venerated. Only lineage members that had a direct significant impact on resource acquisition or secure lineage alliances, were worthy of veneration. Photo Credit, Nathan Siemers @hiveminer.com



When a woman of the patrilineage realize she is pregnant, the **Aj'qij** or priest-shaman of the lineage visit the low foundation shrines, then the high ones to notify the ancestors of the event. As Barbara Tedlock observe, *to notify the ancestors of this event and metaphorically sow (**awex**) or plant (**ticon**) the child within the family*. Later when the child is born, the Aj'qij goes again in order to give thanks for this new member of the lineage. On the main days of the foundation of the people, the priest-shaman give thanks collectively for all the babies born into his lineage during the last **Tzol'kin** or 260 days. As a priest-shaman explained it, "These shrines are like a book where everything – all births, marriages, deaths, successes and failures – is written down (1982:80). The link between resources and lineage could not possibly more clearly established, and underline the fact that this practice is rooted in tens of thousands of generations in the past.







## Ancestor Veneration

**Ancestors**, from the remote past to this day, and in virtually all traditional cultures, are venerated before and beyond gods and deities. Need be kept in mind that ancestor veneration is entirely distinct from any creed or common belief structure because it is strictly personal, not communal. It represents the seal of inheritance of resources, and the power of the patrilineage.

Veneration of the **nantat** or ancestors in Maya **K'iche'** is exclusively a close or extended family affair. The living are praying to their grand-parents, great-grand parents or earlier **ascendants** in the genealogical line of ascent. They are also praying for assistance in the struggle for their daily lives and for their children and grand-children, those **descendants** in the long chain of life, from which they are aware to only be a **link**.

Patricia McNany accurately points out that "*divine kingship in the Maya lowlands emerged from the agrarian matrix of Formative society*", and that "*one of the most salient features of divine kingship, that of ancestor veneration, also emerged*" (1995:163-164).

Maya kingship did not invent the solar calendar or ancestor veneration; "*rather, they appropriated them from an ancient agrarian core of rituals and practices*" (McNany, 1995:165). Common lineage heads justified their rights to resources and inheritance through the presence of dead ancestors buried in their land.

The connotation between ancestor veneration and land rights is well documented in the Americas and beyond, from the Formative period to the Post-Classic. Land rights had their roots in the remote past and was known in common law as the "**right of blood**". When ancestors were buried on lineage land that, by this fact alone, became inalienable. It evolved in later times into the "**right of land**".

Appeal to forebears through auto-sacrifice rested on the living needs for the ancestors' help to intercede for them through ceremonies. Since the living do not speak directly to gods and deities, their rank or social status notwithstanding.

No less important ceremonies that remain deeply rooted in history, are still conducted through the years by various communities today, among which are those of the **Maya** 260 days **Tzol'kin** sacred calendar, the **Wajxaqib' B'aatz**, that will be seen further.





**Temple of the Inscriptions** (Palenque.II). **Ahkal Mo' Nahb'.I**, (465-524AD), engraved on the southeast side of the sarcophagus is shown, like other **Pakal** ancestors; they are shown sprouting from a cacao and other fruit trees. The link ancestor-fruit trees is closely associated with the cyclical nature of agrarian cultures. *"The trees of the orchard were planted by the ancestors, therefore the inheritance of an orchard is, in a very direct way, a gift from the ancestors"* (McAnany, 1995:101). It is understood within this context, regardless of the type of trees associated with an individual. The type of tree is secondary to the intimate association of their harvest marked by predictable seasons. On **Pakal** elaborately carved sarcophagus (Palenque.II), stelae and other works of art at **Palenque**, are documented the bloodline of successive kings. As observed by Schele and Miller, the engravings *"record parents and ancestors transferring power to their children"*. (1986:43,275 F.VII3).



**Palenque-Lakam-ha' - Temple XIV.** Kingship ancestor legacy is displayed on the wall tablet, at the back of the temple, the *pib'-naah* . The scene shows **K'han Bahlam** dancing toward his mother **Lady Tz'ak-b'u Ajaw**; they are represented at their death in 702 and 672 respectively. Her attire is that of the Moon Goddess, "*the first person to perform this action 932,174 years earlier*" (Freidel-Schele-Parker,1993:280). The text on each side of the figures indicate that *k'am K'awiil* or "*reception of the K'awiil*" is an act signifying the enthronement of Lords. Receiving the **K'awiil** or *maniqui* scepter (referred as God G.II of the Palenque Triad (Annex.2), from his long deceased mother is understood as the blessing of the "*Lady of the Moon*" herself. This dynamic scene illustrate the power of a kingship line of descent, with rights attached to the inheritance of both the throne and lineage resources.





**Conflicts** between **Kinship** or lineage heads and **Kingship** must have been significant because it was between factions, given the fact that both were vying for the same local resources through the same ethnic and linguistic lines. The record show that, from the Mid-Classic to the Post-Classic, the centralized authority of kingship, inexorably reduced the spread out power of kinship lineages, and that of their *ah kuch cabs*, the lineage head in **Yucatec**. The elite subversion of ancestral extended family control linked to lineage and landholding, legitimized the semi divinity of the royal lines and their systems of taxation and tribute. (Feeley-Harnick, 1985:282, 297; McAnany, 1995:125).

At several points in time, latent conflict must have erupted, since “*the centripetal forces of divine kingship vied against the centrifugal forces of kinship. As divine kings gained control of labor, land and exchange processes, so the power of traditional lineage leaders waned...*” (McAnany, 1995:163). The pervasive presence of the ancestors however, did not decline long with kinship lineages. In fact, kingship actions bolstered kinship authority, because the challenge to lineage heads was perceived as an intolerable defiance to their ancestors.

K'inich Yat Ahk.II (781-808AD), Throne.1 - Piedras Negras; MUNAE, Guatemala City





In the **East Court** at Copán (below), Andres and Fash (1992), documented the transition of elite residential housing into what they termed “public” or “ritual” structures. The 10L32 plaza structures were lived in, buried in, and built over through successive phases, all but the last functioning as residences. Though multiple burials, from children to richly adorned adults, were found in the earlier phases, the final structures contained none. In their conclusions, they support their study as evidence that elite residences with buried ancestors, evolve into ritual or public structures. Edwin L. Barnhart, paper “*Residential Burials and Ancestor Worship*” submitted to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Palenque Round Table, 1999:7-8





Ancestor burial and veneration was reserved to select individuals of the lineage because of land rights obligations inherited through them by the descendants. Through them therefore was assured the chain of continuity in resources transmitted through generations; a custom that pre-dates Classic times. Lavish burials of the nobility in cities grew in steps with demographics and, as Barnhart (1999:15) points out, *"In the same way that the centers became increasingly full of burial shrines to members of the royal lineages, the same process was likely going on in the periphery"*.

Edwin L. Barnhart, 3<sup>rd</sup> Palenque Round Table, June27-July4,1999 — Palenque.I/Annex.1







The building of common houses then was not much different than it is today. The apsidal structure was/is made of perishable material: wood poles of similar thickness and height for the walls, vines (*bejuco*) for ties, plastered with wattle and daub for the walls and a thatch roof of palm leaves and other grassy material. The slope of the thatched roof is 40+ degrees.

The structure is supported by 4 thick vertical, and 4 horizontal connecting lighter poles, that sat on the vertical ones, set as a square in the center of the house. Built on an elevated, 1 or 2 feet high earth and mud platform, it is surrounded with large stones to keep the packed up earth in place. The elevation helped clear the surrounding ground to avoid flooding during rainy seasons.

As the family grew, other similar structures were built around an expanding plaza. All inhabitants in such a compound were kin related, and had to work. Beyond farming, activities took place within the complex, such as weaving, wood carving or other labor economically beneficial to the clan.





To our days, **Ancestor veneration** is deeply-rooted in all traditional cultures' social segments in Mesoamerica. Most people then lived in two oval structures similar to the one shown above, still in use today, that were easily made with readily available material. Its oval shape is the evolution from the round dwelling. The reason for the absence of right angle corners, is that it was believed that malevolent forces can hide in right angle corners, but not in a circle. One area of the structure was/is where the day-to-day chores took place and hand tools stored, while the other was set aside for the hearth, for cooking over three stones set in a triangle; a reminder of the three stones of creation. One or more thick logs smolder permanently, ready to be rekindled for an early breakfast and the late afternoon major meal of the day.

The house may be lengthened as the family grows; but more often a similarly built structure was set close for family lodging-sleeping quarters, where hammocks hung, and personal items were kept.

The length of the main house is oriented, as a rule and land allowed, East-West. The Man area is on the East or sunrise side, with its hand tools, while that of the Woman is on the West or sunset side together with the family hearth. Both "suns" are in balance since they are interrelated and equally powerful. The doors open to the North and South respectively

Ancestors were buried beneath the floor of the lodging structure together with modest grave goods. The lodging then may have been vacated by the living and dedicated as a mausoleum to the family or clan. Even though "*a lineage may have abandoned a particular house, the structure remained the burial site of important family ancestors*", and "*for the Classic Maya a residence was both home and tomb. As a result, the houses filled from two directions. While the birth rate expanded the family inside, the death rate expanded the family underneath*" (E. Barnhart, Palenque Round Table, 1999:2,15). Is important to stress again however, that not all descendants were venerated, only those that left significant resources, or an important lineage position. The not so significant others may have been buried behind houses or at the periphery of orchards.





**Where did the “*not significant others*” go?** Even for second or third level people in higher segments of society, their “ancestralship” was not assured. Likewise for the *sahals* (military, religious and high ranking officials), and family members. Lower segments of society also venerated selected ancestors, but the majority did not or could not, and nor of course did the slaves. Moreover, **Palenque’s** topography, its large number of rivers and streams (Palenque.VII), and high population density, limited the space for commoners and slaves’ burials. Critical demographics, in particular at the end of the Late Classic period, with the stress of overpopulation and concomitant resource management of critical resources. “Others” may have had to be buried beyond the city’s footprint or away, close to temporary shelters near *milpa*. In this last case, they would then may have served as permanent watch over lineage resources, but not in an ancestral or mythical capacity.

Early accounts from the conquest relate various rituals accompanying death and burial. An interesting aspect is that of suicide that seemed to have been common. Fray Diego de Landa in his *Relaciones* (Book XXXIII), relate of individual suicide by hanging, for what may seem minor reasons such as sadness, sickness or overwork, that would drive people to leave this world and rest in peace near *Ixtab*, the “goddess of those that hung themselves”. A custom that, after European occupation, was in opposition to the Church teachings where suicide was strictly prohibited, because it was perceived as an escape from religion.

The central aspect of ancestor remains disposal rest on the fact that either a member was kept within the culture, as an ancestor with a social “function” beyond death , or the body was disposed of outside of the town, village or lineage compound.

Burial away from the socio-cultural area meant a return to nature, and a definite severance of devotional reliance and obligation by the living.





**Ancestors** are called *nantat* in Maya *K'ichè*. They are moderators between the living and tutelary powers. Ceramic, wood or other medium were used to fashion deities or spirit representations, as intercessors to bring deities and ancestors attention to the needs of the living. Spirit hand held figurines were personal, for the family or clan, and made as censers or idols.

In his “*Relaciòn de las Cosas de Yucatán*” written about 1566, Bishop **Fray Diego de Landa** relates his *auto da fe* of tens of Maya *anahates* or codex books, and thousands of idols collected during the Inquisition, that were burned in front of the church and convent of **San Miguel** at **Mani** (above), on **July 12, 1562**.

The burning of idols is of interest to our narrative since, if there were a number made of ceramic, most were made of *cedar tree* or *kulche* wood (*cedrela mexicana*), Landa called “*cult images*”. The human like idols were representations of ancestors, not of gods or deities. Landa explains that, behind the “*upper neck and base of the skull of the idols was carved a hole that was filled with the cremated remains of ancestors*”, and further says that the idols were “*the most important part of the inherited property*” (Book XXXIII).

More than the codex books, idols were what the Inquisition was after since the *Requerimientos* or Requirements legally validated the conquest of the lands and subjugation of their people (*Requirements* terms @georgefery.com). Household idols were seen as an outright rejection of the first Commandment, “*Though Shall Have No Other Gods Before Me*” and “*You shall not make yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything...you shall not bow to them or serve them*”.

The idols therefore had to be destroyed in an exemplary manner, because they were the items perceived by the Inquisition as a brazen resistance to the Church and the Spanish Crown.



The profound attachment to ancestors did not decline with the collapse of the Classic nor Post-Classic phases; it is still a driving force in traditional communities today. The roots of ancestor veneration plunge so deep in Maya and other communities in Mesoamerica's past, that neither time nor the turmoil of history could suppress them. The cause for its resilience may lie in its antiquity going back to the realization of man's uniqueness from nature, when gods and deities were yet to be born.

Representations in any shape or form, from stone to wood through ceramics or other medium, in and by themselves are but intermediate means to rituals and invocations. In the Americas and beyond, ritual ceremonies rest on a fundamental specific to the group: language. Because only language, spoken or sung, is the key vehicle that supersede any graphic or other depiction, since it is believed that malevolent deities can take the shape of any member of the community, but only language define members of a linguistic group. Language therefore, is the sole and unique medium with which rituals are believed to have any power to bridge the gap with the "other" side of life.

Right: Jaguar God of the Underworld; Jaguar Stairway, Late Classic, Copán, Honduras





In small towns such as **Pomuch** in Yucatán, the **Day of the Dead**, is called **Hanal Pixán** that in Maya *Yucatec* means “**Food for the Souls**”, **Hanal** stands for “to feed”, and **Pixán** for “immortal spirit”. This secondary burial follows an ancient ancestor ritual and worship tradition. The primary burial has the body naturally decay in a conventional grave for 3 to 4 year. The secondary burial calls for the bones of the select family member to be removed from the primary burial, and after cleaning, are housed in small and colorful concrete mausoleums (below-R). From this point on, the transition takes place from a deceased member of the family to that of an ancestor. In the structure are wooden crates about 2’x3’x2’ft where the bones of select ancestors are stored. A traditional rule calls for lining up the box up with a fine hand embroidered cloth, that may display the name of the deceased, together with floral decoration.

In the past, as we have seen in **Palenque** (Palenque.I, II & III), the bones of people from high segments of society were covered with hematite, a red iron oxide mineral pigment, a reminder of blood as the power of life, a practice often found in ancient graves of the Americas.

The tradition of preservation of physical remains of a powerful deceased person, rest on the fact that it is believed to still have significant potency long after death

In **Pomuch**, hematite or other pigment is not used and the bones not altered in any way. During the visit, they are removed one at a time from the wood box while praying or “*speaking*” to the ancestor. They are then gently dry cleaned with a light brush and stored back into the box, that is lined up with a fresh hand embroidered cloth, until next year’s **Hanal Pixán**. (full story in “*The Day of the Dead in Mexico*” @georgefery.com).





The **Wajxhaq'ib B'aatz** ceremonies also referred to as **8-B'aatz** in **Santiago Momostenango**, its ancient name in **K'iche'** is **Chuwa Tz'ak**, are attended by all communities, from cities and remote villages of the **Totonicapan** province of Guatemala, and beyond. Candles and *pom*, copal incense nuggets large and small, are packed and tied in corn husk; ball of pine sap, herbs and seeds, pine needles, flower petals, sugar, cocoa beans, home brewed rum and *puros* cigars, will be among offerings to the ancestors and deities, during the **Tzol'kin** 260 days sacred year celebratory observations.

Essentials include colored candles for the ceremonies, sold in the market place, tied up with strings that shall not be cut with metal blades. The color of the candles as a rule, represent life's particulars of individuals at the time of the ceremony. Other colors, beside the basic ones, may be used for other functions at worshipers' election.

Two sizes of large color coded candles, **white** of wax and **tan** of tallow, are for the four spatial directions. Small **white** and **yellow** candles are for human bones; **red** are for blood and the rising Sun; **tan** for human flesh; **green** for nature and food; royal **blue** for water and the sky; **purple** for the ancestors, and **black** for the setting Sun and the "other" world, also referred to as the **mundo**, or **tiox** in **K'iche'**.

Baby blue are for little boys and pink for little girls, both relatively recent additions to the rituals.







## Wajshak'ib B'aatz



**Wajxaq'ib B'aatz** or **8-B'aatz** for short, (*wajxak* is **8** in **K'iche'**), are ceremonies that take place in **Momostenango**. They are also held throughout the country by most Maya ethnic groups dedicated to the **Tzol'kin** that crowns the 260-days sacred calendar of 13 months of 20 days each. The Maya glyph for 8-B'aatz, is shown at top right.

**Momostenango** means "*town of altars*" a name given by the **Tlaxcalan** Indian allies of the Spanish in about 1524. They called the place in *nahuatl* or Mexica language, **mumuztly** meaning *altar* (or shrine) *of the idols*, and **tenango** for "*home*" or "*town*". Its ancient name in **K'iche'** is **Chuwa Tz'ak**.

Exceptionally large number of outdoor shrines, in and around town, are still in use. Rituals include the traditional *Baile de los Monos* still practiced today; its symbolism a close parent to the dance of the **Cora** people of **Nayarit** (Annex.5). **Momostenango** is one of the most traditional place in the country, with its Primary and Secondary ceremonial sites.

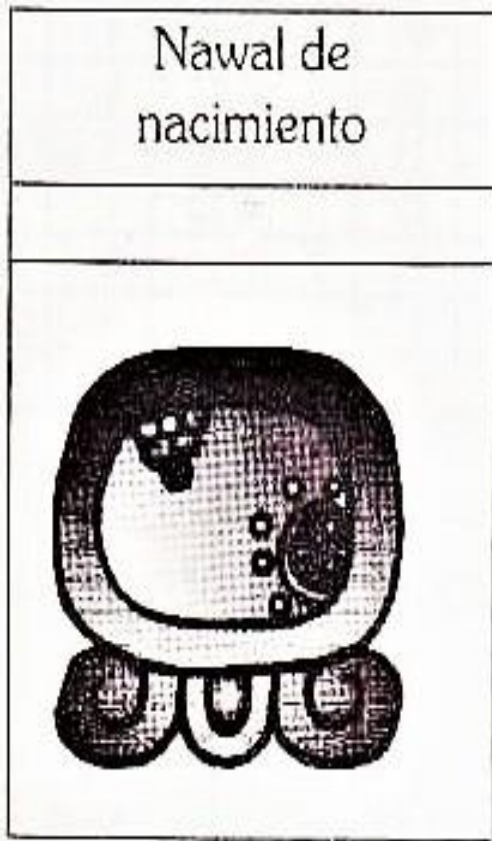
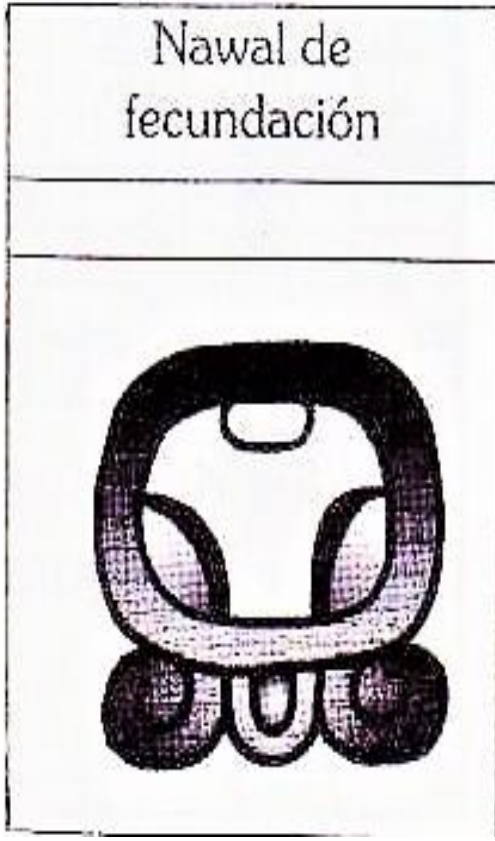
The sacred, or divinatory calendar, the **Tzolk'in** in **Yucatec** or **Chol'q'ij** in **K'iche'**, is not marked into months but a succession of day designations created by the combination of a number from 1 to 13 with one of 20 possible **nawal** signs (Annex.9a+b).

The oldest record of a calendar day sign with a numerical coefficient, probably part of a 260-day cycle, comes from **Monte Albán**, a Zapotec site dated Early Period.I, 2500-2300BP.

There can be no ceremonies without fire and no fire without building a **Hearth of Stone**, shown left at the ancient **Cakchikel** capital of **Iximche**. It is the base on which the ceremonial fire is built according to specific rituals and materials. The arrangement may be altered by individuals to meet particular prayers or supplications to ancestors and deities. The pine needles on which the **Hearth of Stone** rests, represent nature as sacred, to separate the fire and offerings from the low structure made by culture, or profane.

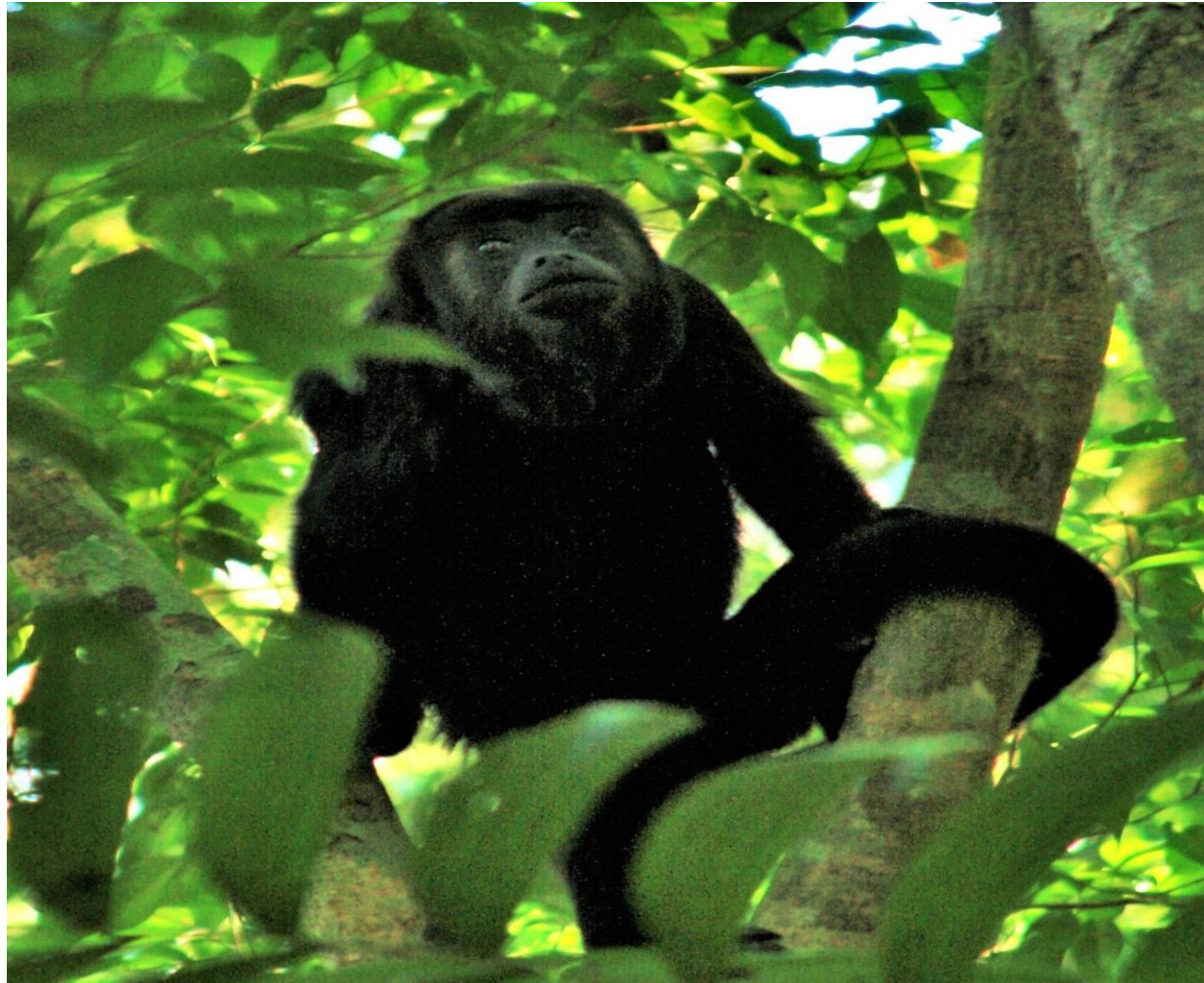
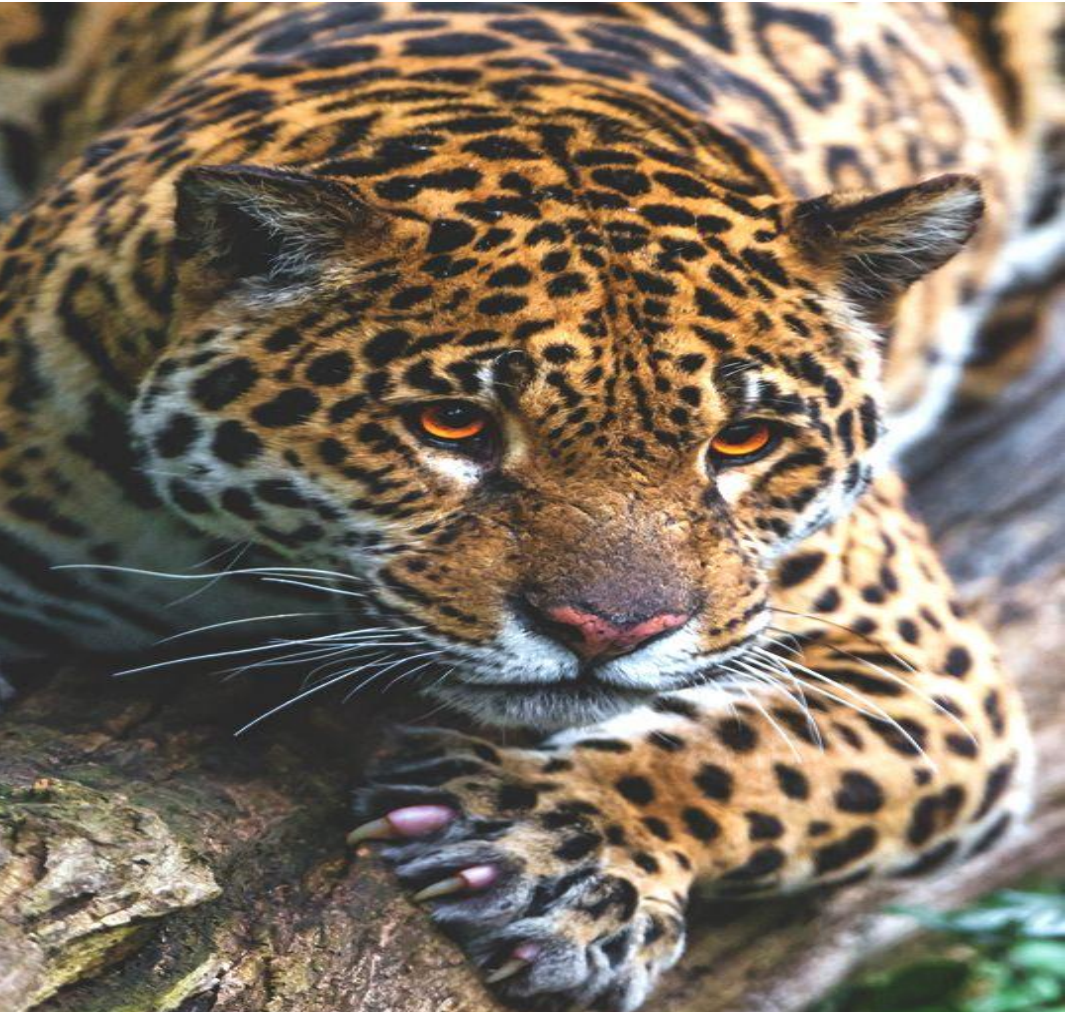
The altars and prayers are strictly individual even though several persons may pray close to one another. They will pray to their own ancestors, and for their own **nawal**, or that of their family members, not the community.





**What is a Nawal?** It is a companion spirit or co-essence, from the animal world. With the assistance of the **Chuchqajaw**, a **nawal** is ceremonially transferred to an individual at each major step of his/her life, from conception to death. It is perceived as an essential life force granted to the living, and still held by dead ancestors. A **nawal** identifies with the animal world, each one selected for its particular abilities and perceived by the **Chuchqajaw** to be attached to the individual. Such abilities may be: speed, vision, agility, stealth, intelligence, power, grace, fierceness or other attributes, and spans across species from mosquitos to jaguars in the Americas. **Nawal** also referred as a **way** attribute, are ethnically specific and may have different functions with other cultures; the **nawal** overriding function for an individual with which it is attached however, remain the same. A **nawal** or **way** is the spirit-companion, or alter ego of a human that must be cared for with prayers and ceremonies at dedicated times, since the life of the spirit companion is believed to coexist intimately with that of the holder. The “*Yucatec Maya of Quintana Roo called the nawal the supernatural guardian or protector that share **ch’ulel** (soul) with a person from birth*”. (Freidel-Schele-Parker, 1993:182).

Maya k’iche’ Signs, Graphics: Lic. Juan Zapil Xivir in *Ri Wajxaqib’ B’aatz’*, 1999:71 Photos Credit, L>R-top-down : Frog: wildlifea2z.blogspot.com – Squirrel: pinterest.com – Dragonfly: Pedro Lastra 2012 – Jaguar: beauty-animal.com — Macaws + Howler Monkey: georgefery.com





The **Wajxaqib' B'aatz** or **8-B'aatz'** for short in **K'iche'** and **Chwen** in Yucatec, is the time when the **Wajxaqib' Keej** trainee, complete his duties to be ordained **Ajq'ij** (**H-men** in Yucatec), or **Day Keeper**, a spiritual title held by both gender, each with specific spiritual obligations.

The highest lineage (**alaxik**) head and spiritual position, is that of **Chuchqajaw** the *mother-father* of the **Popol Vuh**; a religious and community leader. He/she is selected through calendrical divination, serve for life and remain one to two years after the election of his successor. The closest word in English for **Chuchqajaw** or **c'mal be** a "road guide", designate a religious leader or a diviner (Carmack 1981:161; Tedlock, 1982:35). The title has been translated as "priest-shaman" used here, but it does not properly translate the full meaning and broad functions attached to the title. The alumni **Ajq'ij** will have gone through 60 ceremonies of introduction to nature, the deities and ancestors on high and low hills, on river banks and springs, as well as with families and head of lineages of neighboring communities. By that time, the alumni will have mastered his/her **nawal** spiritual alter egos from the animal world.

Below is the highly respected **Chuchqajaw, Rigoberto Itzep Chanchavac** of Momostenango. Don Rigoberto is well known in Guatemala and southern Mexico as a spiritual teacher and priest, dedicated to the preservation of Mayan traditions and the knowledge of the sacred calendar, the **Chol'quij** in **K'iche'**.



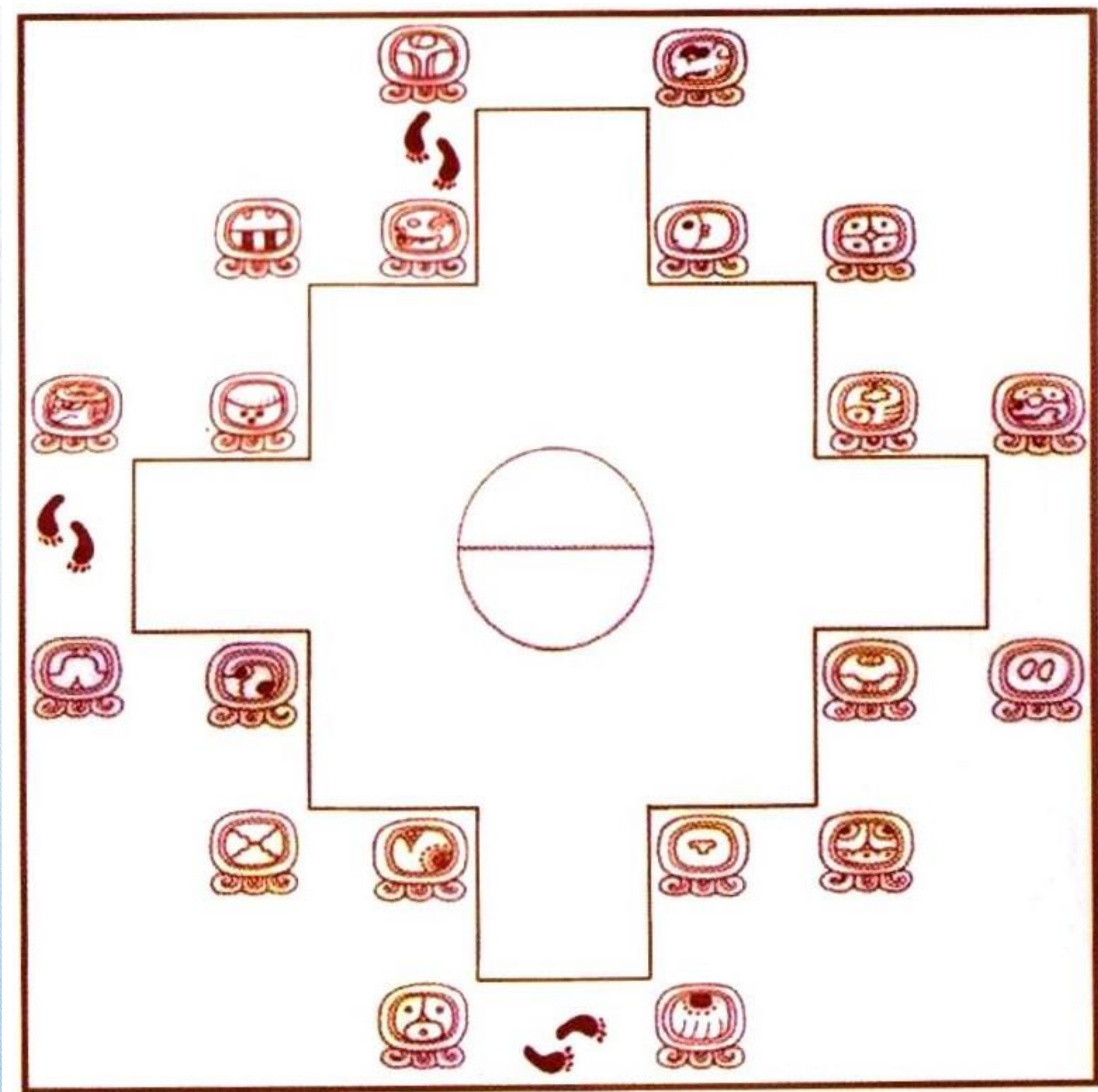
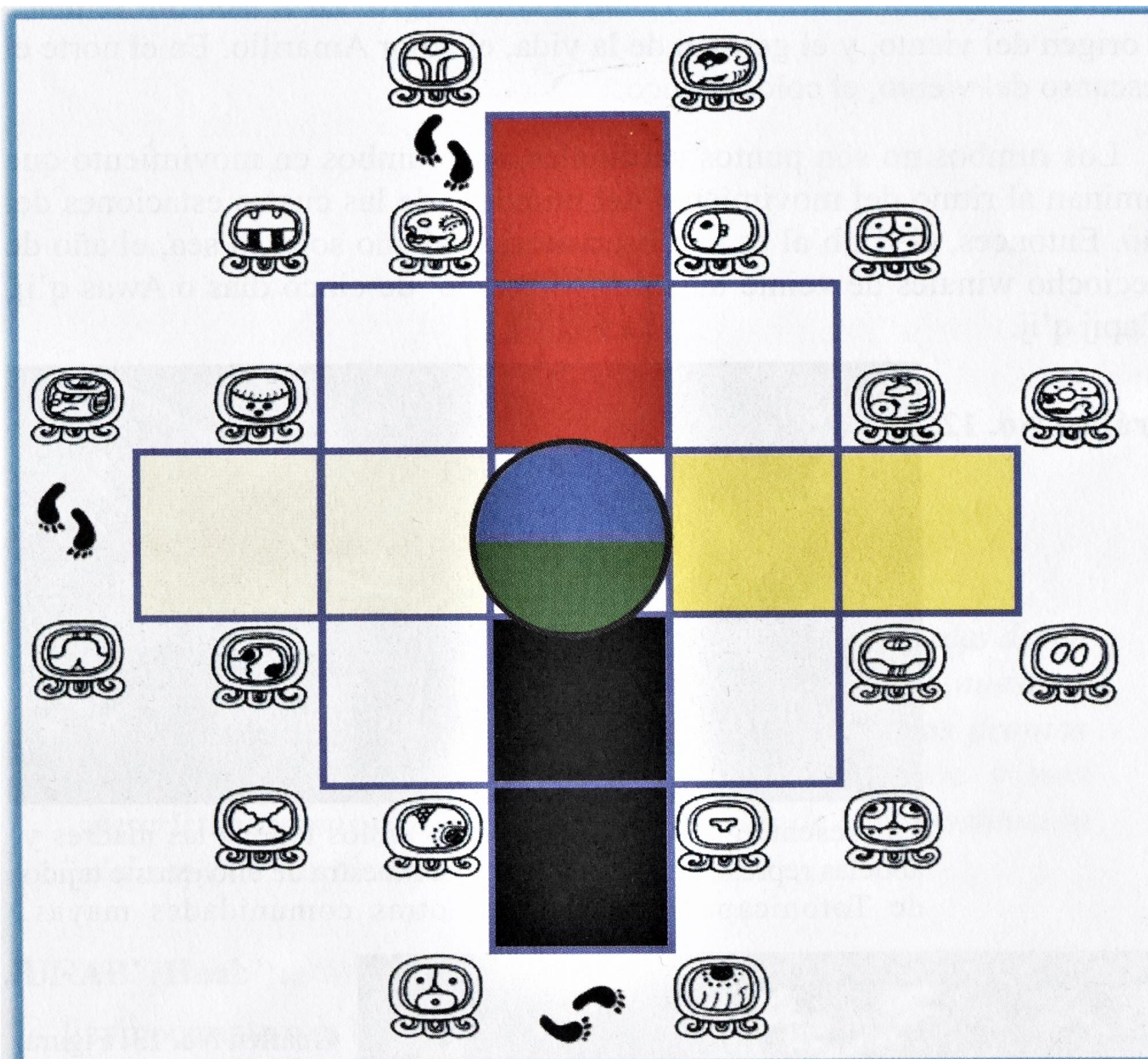


The **Tzolk'in** calendar is the count of time for the sacred year. It is the name in Maya **Yucatec** given by the Mayanist and linguist William E. Gates (1863-1940), now commonly used by scholars. The Maya **K'iche'** name is **Cholq'ij** and mean "**order of days**"; it took place in Classic times, and probably before; but the name of the calendar used in those times, has not been deciphered from the glyph corpus.

The Maya cross (below), shows the four master directions, associated to the four colors. It is the close association-representation of the **Popol Vuh** and the first four humans fashioned by the gods from maize dough: **B'alam Kitze'** > *East-Fire-Light-Life-Red*. **B'alam Aq'ab'** > *West-Earth Power-the Ocult-Night-Black*. **Mahukutaj** > *North-Wind-Breath Giver-White*. **Ik'i B'alam** > *South-Water-Vegetal world-Life Giver-Yellow*.

At each right angle of the cross are the 20 **nawal** or day signs (Annex.8 & 9a+b) of the calendar that are read counter clockwise. Each of the four quadrant of time and corresponding colors were ruled by a **K'awill** deity (God.K or G.II in the Palenque Triad (Palenque.V) – Annex.2). Similar coding applies to the *Tree of Life*, the Ceiba (*Ceiba pentandra* - Annex.11), planted at the corners of the village as reminders of the four successive cycles of destruction of the world. Linda Schele explains that the Maya conceived the "*succession of days falling within a structure divided in quadrants, each with its appropriate direction and color...they used this directional structure in their new year's ceremonies*".

(Schele & Freidel, 1990:78) - Graphics *Cosmovisión Mayab'*, 2009:41 and *Historia Mayab'*, 2008:115





The succession of days in the **Tzolk'in** is based on a vigesimal time count system, as opposed to the decimal system we commonly used. There is reason to believe that the Mayas had first a lunar-solar calendar of 12 months of 30 days each, making a 360 days year. They reduced the number of days in the sacred year to 20 and raised the number of months in the formal year from 12 to 18. These changes allowed for a close adjustment of the units of time with their vigesimal system of counting. We know that the lunar 30 days month preceded the formal month of twenty days since the word **winal** is connected with the moon **uh** and its glyph, and has the value of 20 in the codices.

The **Tzol'kin** sacred calendar start the 260 days cycle on the day **B'aatz** shown as 1-bar+3-dots=8 on the calendar below left, and complete the cycle on the day **T'zi**, 1-dot; then the 260-days **Tzolk'in** calendar starts again. The 20-days cycle shown in the **k'in** (day) column, represent a “month” or **winal**. Multiplied by the 20 power glyphs at the right angle of the squares of the cross (above), and 13 squares (center included), 20x13, total 260 or the average duration of a human pregnancy.

The mechanics of the calendar involve 13 numbers paired with 20 day names. Because 20 is not evenly divisible by 13, the two sequences are out of phase with each other. A day such as 3 Manik' will not recur until all the numbers and names have run through a complete 260-day cycle. There is therefore, a unique day name for each of the 260 days, rather than weeks or months (Edwin Barnhart, 2018).

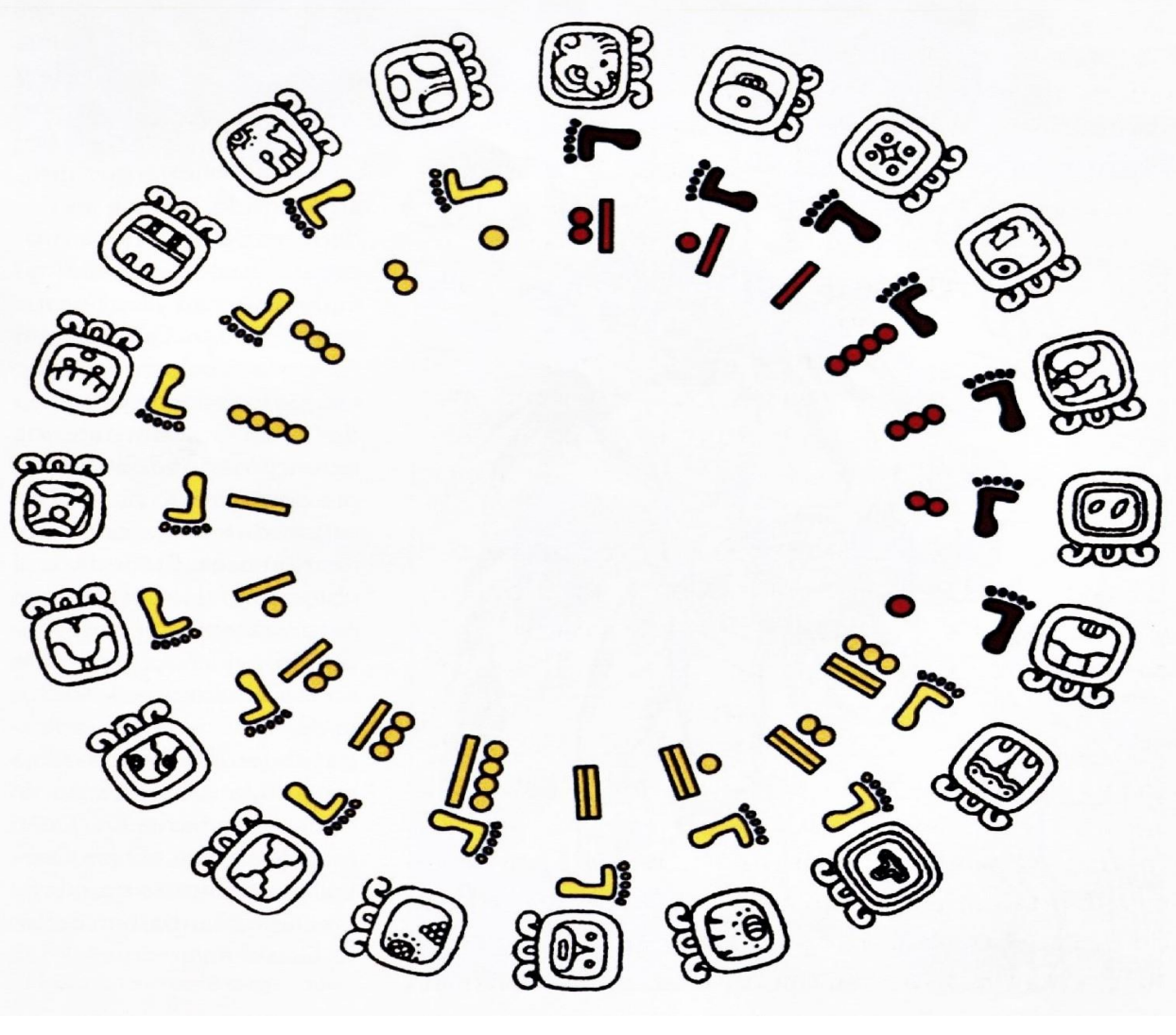
The solar year is the **Haab'** or “vague year” is based on solar observations and is made of 18 months of 20 **winal** (of 20-days each): 20x18=360 **k'in**/days, plus the **wayeb** “month” of 5-**k'in**/days, closing the 365 days agrarian or solar year. It is then repeated endlessly as are our years on January 1st. The 5-day **wayeb** or “month” was considered malevolent by the Maya, Aztec and other Mesoamerican cultures.

The mythological creation of the days of the sacred year, is found in the *Chilam Balam de Chumayel*. Then, the deity **Oxlahun Oc** with his 13 feet, stepped over 20 footprints left by another unnamed being. Once Oxlahun Oc had his 13 feet placed over the old foot prints (yellow), he stepped over the 7 remaining foot prints (red) to complete the 20 days total number of prints left by the unnamed being.

When one of Oxlahun Oc feet came in contact with an old foot print, it created a unit combination of number-symbol for each day in the creation of the calendar, identified as the repetition of time.

Graphics Credit: left *Historia Mayab' - Asociación Maya, Uk'Ux B'e*, 2008:114 – Right: ArqueoMex EE69:26

K'IN	AJL												
B'ATZ'	...	..	....	...	==	....	≡	—	≡	—	≡	..	.
B'E	....	...	==	....	≡	—	≡	—	≡	—	.	...	..
AJ	==	....	≡	—	≡	—	≡	..	.	...	..	....	...
I'X	≡	—	≡	—	≡	..	.	...	..	....	...	==	....
TZ'IKIN	≡	—	≡	..	.	...	..	....	...	==	....	≡	—
AJMAK	≡	..	.	...	..	....	...	==	....	≡	—	≡	—
NO'J	.	...	..	....	...	==	....	≡	—	≡	—	≡	..
TIJAX	..	....	...	==	....	≡	—	≡	—	≡	..	.	...
KAWOQ	...	==	....	≡	—	≡	—	≡	..	.	...	..	....
AJPU	....	≡	—	≡	—	≡	..	.	...	..	....	...	==
IMOX	—	≡	—	≡	..	.	...	..	....	...	==	....	≡
IQ'	—	≡	..	.	...	..	....	...	==	....	≡	—	≡
AQ'AB'AL	..	.	...	..	....	...	==	....	≡	—	≡	—	≡
K'AT	...	..	....	...	==	....	≡	—	≡	—	≡	..	.
KAN	....	...	==	....	≡	—	≡	—	≡	—	.	...	..
KEME	==	....	≡	—	≡	—	≡	..	.	...	..	....	...
KEJ	≡	—	≡	—	≡	..	.	...	..	....	...	==	....
Q'ANIL	≡	—	≡	..	.	...	..	....	...	==	....	≡	—
TOJ	≡	..	.	...	..	....	...	==	....	≡	—	≡	—
TZ'I'	.	...	..	....	...	==	....	≡	—	≡	—	≡	..





The importance of **Divination** in traditional belief structures, from yesteryears to date cannot be overstated. Divination rituals are integral to the 260 days **Tzolk'in** sacred calendar. For divination rituals, 260 **Tzi'te'** beans (*Palo de Pito* – *Erythrina berteroana*), are used in conjunction with corn kernels and 10 small rock crystals. Each of the ten crystals carry their own spiritual value in a divinatory hierarchy, and serve as “authorities” before whom the individual calendar days are summoned to “speak”. They also draw lightning from the four cardinal points. The following paragraph is quoted from Barbara Tedlock remarkable book “*Time and the Highland Mayas*”.

While the 10 crystals are being lined up, approximately along the center line of the table between the diviner and the client, the diviner will address them by their importance and positions. “*The diviner will then begin mixing the remaining crystals and seeds rapidly, saying ...dead Ancestors, let them come out to converse a moment for this instant, for this one question, for this one clear light*”. Thus the ancestors, particularly those who were priest-shamans, are the last of the beings summoned by the diviner and, at the same time, they are the most intimate, separated only by death from the diviner and his client (1982).

There is of course more, much more, to divination rituals that cannot fit into our narrative without straying from our main topic. Among divinatory rituals, is the pulsating of the blood from the diviner and/or patient “speaking” through muscle twitching of parts of the body; dream analysis in a patient-diviner conjunction; seeds and seed-crystals arrangement and pattern significance, etc... Beside others, the symbolism attached to specific parts of the body irrespective of gender, such as front (East, sunrise, male), back (West, sunset, female); individual and inter-related values of arms, legs, hands, phalanges and fingers, are among a number of other particulars in divinatory rituals.

Moreover at all time, divination for any purpose, must account with the participation and influence of ancestors.

For the **K'iche'**, the **Kekchi** and others, the conception of time prohibits the change, removal or bypassing of past beliefs and rituals because it is grounded in the notion that “*one cannot erase time*”. The net result of this mind set is that “*the burden of time does not so much change as accumulate*” (B.Tedlock, 1982:176). This “accumulation” referred here is at the core of human existence since no action our thought is ever truly forgotten, but merely stored, hidden in some cases deep in the human psyche ready to be retrieved for better or worse, at any time or circumstance.

Photos Credit: Diviner, Barbara Tedlock, 1982 Book Cover – 260 days Calendar, B. Tedlock, 1982:90.F23





The Maya capacity to adapt after the conquest by the Europeans, and the widespread destruction of their social, cultural and religious structures, make scholars wonder as to how a culture could have survived. Many of its aspects, divergent and convergent, may explain indigenous people resilience to subjugation. A significant perspective of the adaptation to the new religion, is the use of the cross. After all, the Christian cross was not graphically different from the Maya cross, as seen on the wall tablet in the sanctuary of the **Temple of the Cross** in Palenque (@right). As David Freidel explains, immediately after the conquest “*the Maya promptly appropriated and reinterpreted this most Christian symbol by merging it with the World Tree of the Center; the yax che’il kab, as the Yucatec Maya called it*” (1993:39). The Christian cross, placed on top of the Pyramid of the Cross at **Xcambó**, Yucatán (below), was adopted as the Maya traditional pillar of their cosmos. In other words, like for other European symbols, they “mayanized” and integrated them into their own.

Maya cultures evince continuity particularly in their core ideas about the essential order of the totality of the living world, such as when shamans heal the sick, bless a newly weds or a new home, or renew the nurturing bonds between the inhabitants of this world and those of the “*Otherworld*”.

*Piramide de la Cruz, Early Classic – Xcambó, Yucatán*







Ancestor rituals are ritually specific, as seen in the **Tzotzil** cemetery at **San Juan Chamula**, in Chiapas, where families gather around the grave, for the annual Day of the Dead, or the passing day anniversary of a parent. As a rule, the grave is made of a dirt mound with a cross at the head.

The purpose of the grave without a stone slab is to allow visiting family members to eat and drink while leaving morsels of foodstuff on the mound, sprinkling it with crumbs and beverages to percolate into the grave. Offerings of liquor such as *tequila* or *mezcal*, are to express gratitude to the ancestor for the lives of the living, with their favorite drinks. The “*spirit*” of food and drink is thus shared with the departed.

One shall not confuse the word “spirit” as that of the products offered on the grave, but that of the “spirit of communion” of the participants associated with the products.

Children’s toys or hand tools used by the departed may sometimes be seen on graves. In the background, the **Chamula** cross with flowers represent the “door” through which family members “talk” with their ascendants and early departed descendants. Need be understood here that the word “spirit” does not refer to material matter, but essentially to the spirit of the living in deep communion with those of the departed.



In **Momostenango – Chuwa Tz’ak** in *K’iche’*. 6 fire ceremonies take place on the day **Wajxaquib’ B’atz’ / 8-B’aatz**, at which time the new **Aj’quij**, priests and Day Keepers receive their final initiation. The **1<sup>st</sup>** ceremony take place very early in the morning on the **Nima Sab’al** hill. The **2<sup>nd</sup>** take place on the higher **Pa Chuti Sab’al**. The **3<sup>rd</sup>** takes place on the banks of the **Pa Ja’** stream. The **4<sup>th</sup>** is on the **Pa Wajchob’** (or **Ujuyub’al** peak, for *Silla Mesa* hill). The **5<sup>th</sup>** is the largest and takes place on the traditional ceremonial highest hill overlooking the town of Momostenango, the **Pa Kolom** also referred to as **Uk’Ux**, *Sacred Site of Truth and Rectitude* (below), about equidistant from the four primary ceremonial centers.

It is the heart of the ceremonies where all congregate; the true **wa’qibal**, the hallowed ground to pray and call ancestors.

The **6<sup>th</sup>** and last ceremonial fire is the **Ko’koch** located in the central market place, facing the town’s church.

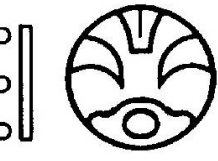
The double-arm Patriarchal Cross, is the **Cross of Caravaca** on the **Pa Kolom** (below), was erected in the late 1990s. It is inspired from the one in the **Santuario de la Vera Cruz** in Caravaca de la Cruz, a town near Murcia in southeast Spain.





**Tzolk'in** ceremonies are for the participants because, as Mircea Eliade puts it, "*at this location-at that time, the very living world of the ancestors is saturated with the sacred*" (1954). After prayers, pleas and demands to the ancestors, a number of candles of various sizes, colors and significance are thrown into the fire. Copal incense nuggets, sugar, flower petals and other symbolic products are offered to thank the ancestors for their help in overcoming life's hardships.

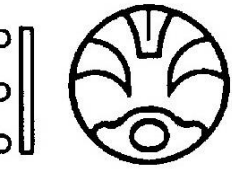
The archaeological and recent ethnological record document similar ceremonies that took place in ancient times, albeit within the context of social and family traditions of the period. Contemporary ceremonies reflect today's communities; ritual fundamentals however will have changed little, if any.





Ceremonies may be conducted alone or with close and extended family members. Gifts to the flames, are *pom* or copal nodules (*Protium copal*), and petal flowers, together with colored candles dedicated to particular pleas to the ancestors. Powdered sugar and liquors are also given to the flames. Unlike the smoke of ceramic censers from long lost times, it is the movement of the flames that “speak” to the believer. The means changed, but not the significance of the process. The ancestors will answer questions regarding family or personal matters, not community concerns; the latter are for the gods to answer.

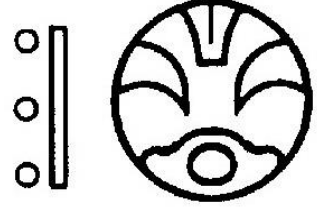
The antiquity of the 260 days ceremonies can be traced back to the Pre-Classic, 1500BC-250AD. Throughout Maya history, formal ceremonies and communal celebrations were numerous and common in people’s daily lives, including those of the 260 days calendar, or its equivalent at the time. The ancient name of the event today called **Tzolk’in** or **Chol’qij**, is not known.





The blessing of the daughter by the father with copal nodules wrapped in corn husks, that will be thrown into the fire as offerings to the ancestors to protect and counsel her, is for the prospect of wedding a man from another clan. This blessing follows the divination ceremony, to ascertain that the life she wants with the boy and his father, agree with her and her family well.

As Barbara Tedlock observes, *“the girl’s parental and grandparental relatives are mentioned in prayers, whether dead or alive, because their willingness is extremely important; it is their patrilineage that permanently loses her if the marriage is successful. If the marriage is unsuccessful, then it is to their home, land and shrines to which she will be drawn in times of trouble, especially if her relatives did not completely release her from her husband’s patrilineage”*.

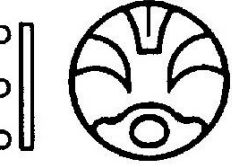


When a woman marries, *“she is removed from the home, land and shrines where she was “sown” and “planted” before her birth in the ritual called awex ticon. The removal is called kopinic cotz’ij, or “to cut the flower”, and it involves a symbolic cutting of two geraniums, one representing the boy and the other the girl...”* (1982:156). The logic of the process stands on the fact that removal from her family and patrilineage protection on both a filial and resource standpoints, is transferred through marriage, to the family and patrilineage of her husband.





Public ceremonies may seem chaotic on the **Pa Kolom**, with discarded paper and corn husk wrappings that held copal incense nuggets and others, but one realizes that the physical context of the event is unimportant; only the moment it recreates. Rituals and incantations, are strictly personal independent of a philosophy or creed. As Eliade stresses, repetition of the event, “*lends a non-human dimension created by the gods at the beginning of time*” (1954). The **Tzolk'in** ceremonies and rituals are first and foremost a personal dialogue with ancestors. When a family member through ritual and prayers, creates a direct link with the ascendants in the chain of life, their pleas are for help; or pray for a cherished descendant departed too early.





Ancestor veneration transcends all segments of society. As a rule, prayers and incantations are not to be directed toward third parties or outside persons of the family. They are strictly a direct family link with another side of life; to seek help for one's own needs, as well as those of descendants with the assistance from moderators, the ancestors.

Calls to ancestors must be forceful and truly heartfelt to call attention to the plight of the living who are aware that ancestors must also convince deities. They may demand to negotiate in patrilineage conflicts with others from the community, that may have arisen several generations before, but had not been resolved with the passing of the antagonists, and still burden the living.

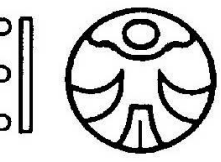


The importance of the words used to convey one's requests are not as important as the tonality used in the incantations, for the words, in and by themselves are unintelligible. The human voice with its natural tonality over several octaves, in litanies repeated over a period of time, is believed to carry the fervor, depth and urgency of the suppliant, as a powerful carrier of devotion.





Many related events to ancestors take place on the **Pa Kolom**, during **8-B'aatz** ceremonies. They are to address individuals' burden or family hardships. **Aj'quijab** (Aj'qij plural) are called to perform specific rituals, particularly in the case of perceived malevolent domination of an individual, through manifestations in his/her daily life. In the case below, the **Aj'quij** worked close to an hour in exorcism rituals. Five personal outer garments from the young woman standing close to him, were swung around her several times while he was praying for ancestors and the deities' help. Then each garment was thrown into the blessed fire with corresponding candles and offerings. No one, but the young woman and the **Aj'quij** had any knowledge about the need or reason for the ceremony; neither did the mother seated at right.







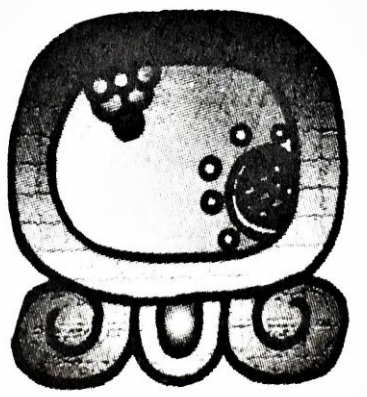
Nawal de  
fecundación



At the time of conception (*fecundación* - @L), when the mother is aware of being pregnant, incantations and prayers for the new life are offered to the **nantat**, the ancestors, asking for their help in the development and protection of the future member of the family. At birth (*nacimiento* - @R) the umbilical cord will be buried, on the advice of the family **lyom** (midwife) and **Chuchqajaw**; if it's a boy under the patio of the house, if it's a girl below the floor of a room within the house; or other selected place beyond the house. At that time the first **nawal** is given (*Annex.9a+b*). During the early years the soul of the newborn requires protection since “a small child is susceptible to the loss of **ch'ulel**, or soul, not yet accustomed to its new receptacle” (Vogt 1976:18). It is therefore the mother's **nawal** that will protect the soul of the child. The **ch'ulel** is believed not to settle in the child's chest before several weeks, which is the reason why the child must remain in close contact with the mother at all time.

Graphic: Lic. Juan Zapil Xivir in *Ri Wajxaqib' B'aatz'*, 1999:71

Nawal de  
nacimiento







From the land of **qawinaq' mayib'** of **K'alk'ini** (Campeche, Mexico), the "*Mayab' Hidden Name*" describe the basis of Maya cosmovision. It is part of the ***K'amil Muk'ul K'aba'e'*** the most ancient ritual for receiving the hidden name that will never be revealed to anyone, for it is the name given in secret to the soul. Everyone in each lineage have 3 names: the Christian or civil name; the common name in **K'iche'**, or that of other linguistic group; and the hidden or secret name. The **Aj'q'ij**, or **H-men** in Yucatán, will initiate a person that receive impulses from a dream. A ceremony known as the **aak'ab'ts'ib'**, the "nocturnal" or "occult" writing; this initiation, irrespective of gender, must take place at night.

The following incantation is one of 13 that stress the importance of the hidden or secret name.

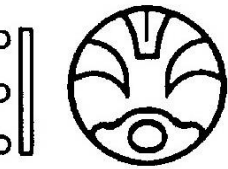
*"Do not forget your hidden name that is only for you and you alone to remember. It is a sacred name that can only be whispered by you to your soul; never write it down. The hidden name is the link with your soul, keep silent on its origin, it is for no one but you, a living part of your spirit".*

The hidden name must never be revealed, even to family members; the **aak'ab'ts'ib'** rituals are believed to be a cure for the human soul.



Ancestor veneration **rituals** and **ceremonies** are about the emotional attachment to the departed, but also as McAnany underlines “*about the living making use of the dead*” (1995:162). This pertinent remark applies to ancestors of all segment of society, from **kingship** to **kinship** or head of a lineage to the most humble in the community. Given the fact that it is exclusive to the family, ancestor veneration cannot be confused with religion, since the latter is by definition communal not personal, notwithstanding the fact that individuals may adhere to a creed.

The veneration of ancestors, as again McAnany pertinently stresses, “*is a type of active discourse with the past and the future, embodying what Carlsen and Prechtel (1991:35) have described as the centrality of Maya understanding of death and rebirth – called **jaloj-k'exoj** in the cosmology of the **Tzutujil Maya***”. Unlike most other societies, Mesoamerican cultures past and present do fear death as such, but equally fear the anguish and challenges of daily facing an unpredictable and dangerous life.





Modern creeds stress community first and individual second. In a not so distant past, the organization of societies under a common view of life, precluded tolerance of any other belief directly or indirectly foreign to the dominant creed of the time.

Traditional communities of the Americas had to adapt to the new religion; but could not sever their ancestral ties with their own kin.

They developed a syncretism that met both: the new religion and the ancestral as shown below at the communal altar on the **Pa Kolom**, Momostenango traditional sacred ground. The views of a different universe were not so foreign, given their common advocacy of life beyond life. Overall, they sharply differ on the particulars of that world. One led by enigmatic figures: a unique god with prophets and saints; the other a world of own kin that passed away, the ancestors.

Ancestor veneration as we have seen, is essentially ethno-linguistic and personal. Religions are by definition community binding compacts, not restricted to kin or linguistic groups, but address ideals larger than that of individuals and aim at community building.

As observed in contemporary communities, where ancestor worship is still integral to daily rituals, relationship with local religious denominations is at best mutually tolerated.

The Maya gods of the past, and that of other native cultures of the Americas, were independent from ancestor worship. Gods and deities were used by kingship and kinship lineage heads, for their benefit, justification and consolidation of power; a pragmatic approach to the use of gods and deities, not unlike that of historical creeds.

But neither could they, nor were they or today are, willing to breach rituals of ancestor veneration, rooted in a long lost past,





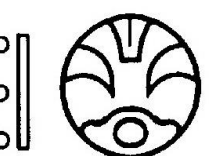
Ancestor veneration rests on personal communication with ascendants to safeguard the descendants cultural identities and rights to resources. Creeds on the other hand, are dedicated to communities. Even though they are not complementary, given their different structures and rituals, both are about resources, be it for souls or land. European conquest was about both, one validating the other, as plainly stated in the Spanish Crown *Requerimientos* or “Requirements” (full text at [www.georgefery.com](http://www.georgefery.com)).

At the time of appropriation of the New World six centuries ago, reason and science in Europe were powerless to override a commanding faith. Europeans were in the midst of profound challenges in society, technology, science and discovery; on the brink of the industrial revolution. Unavoidably, the collision of culture, language, customs, socio-economic practices, religious beliefs, were magnified by the overwhelming complexities of the discovery of an unknown New World.

These momentous events were similar to a continent size earthquake, its after shocks still rumbling through indigenous communities across the Americas today. Future generations will still have to come to grasp with this traumatic historical encounter.



The **sixth** fire pit, the **Ko'koch**, is the last altar of the six ceremonies. It is located in the central market place, facing the church, the *Paroquia Apostolica Santiago Momostenango*. The pre-conquest pit was believed to have been located in the area of the transept of the church, but moved to its present location when the parish was built in 1903.





Communities from near and far, pray to **K'inich Janahab' Pakal** and their own ancestors at the foot of the **Temple of the Inscriptions** (Palenque.II). The **Palenque-Lakam-ha'** Lord is still a power toward whom people turn for help, ever since the triangular stone door of his crypt was closed in 690AD. **Pakal** is a figure of the “*other*” world in the Maya sanctuary of gods and deities. He is still believed to command the laws of nature and those of man today. Fittingly, MacAnany summarize that “*the boundaries between the past and the present are rarely as absolute as the western positivist perspective would suggest*” (1995:21).

The web and flow of history notwithstanding, ancestor veneration persistence through time rest on the fact that, from a long lost past it is deeply rooted in the pantheon of the individual, as the everlasting bond with life itself.







EN QUE  
Accesibles  
a la SEP  
ya!  
mana  
és  
lamo, Asistente Bilingüe  
aración de Computadoras  
Tél: 916 34 5 40 46 y 916 34 5 40 14 | www.cnci.com.mx



# **A n n e x   &   B i b l i o g r a p h y**







## Annex - 1

### Chaak' – God.B

<< L. Madrid Codex, P.6

Censer from Mayapan, Yucatán – AD 1200-1400,  
Polychrome Terracotta – Photo Jorge Perez de Lara,  
RAICES in Arqueologia Mexicana, 2007:88/64 R>

**Chaak'** is the most powerful ancient deity in the **Maya** pantheon.

The so called “god” of rain, thunder and lightning, is identified in archaeological remains from the proto-Classic to the late post-Classic, a span of time of over 3000 years.

He is the longest continuously worshipped “god” of the ancient cultures of Mesoamerica, but only became a “god” during the late Post-Classic.

The deity was called by tens of names, identified in many guise, and shown acting in numerous and diverse circumstances. He is referred to as God.B in Paul Schellhas, Maya gods letter designation (1897-1904) Annex.6.

**Chaak's** unmistakable characteristic is his trunk like nose and the blue color associated with water.

Because the god presides over water, rain, thunder and lightning, he commonly appears in water falls and *cenotes*, or sink holes, and is the patron god of agriculture. The **Aztec** god equivalent is **Tlaloc** with the same attributes as **Chaak'**, and was the main tenant in the cave at **Balankanche** near Chichen Itzá, Yucatán.

(@georgefery.com).

**Maya** mythology credit the deity with breaking open a great rock containing the original life-giving maize (Miller & Taube, 1993:60).



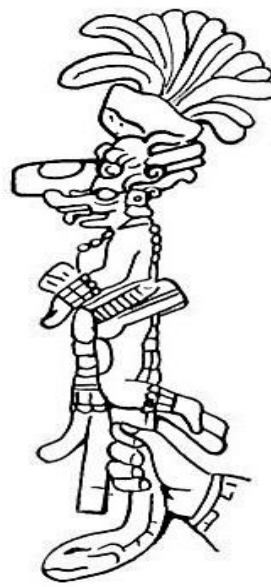


## A n n e x - 2

### God.II (God.K) – Unen-K'awiil

Lintel.58 – Yaxchilan, Chiapas – Late Classic 688-800AD  
*Chel'te Cha'an K'inich Balam* holds the *maniqui* scepter (arrow), while his *sahal* Great Skull (L), faces him, holds a battle axe in his right hand and a sun shield in his left, both elements associated with war.

Drawing Courtesy, Herbert J. Spinden, 1922:92/F32



**Unen-K'awiil** or *Infant K'awiil* is god **G.II** in the **Temple of the Foliated Cross**, the infantile aspect of **K'awiil**. The god is the *terrestrial* symbol of sprouting corn, fecundity of the land and lightning. The curved bottom of the “handle”, the left leg, end as he head of a snake. The name is an alternative to **Bolon D'zacab**, god of lineage and descent, and may be related to **Itzamna**.

God **G.II**, of the **Palenque Triad** (Palenque.V), is also referred to as **God.K**, shown above right. The **K'awiil maniquin** “scepter” held in a Lord's right hand (@R), is often displayed on stone lintels and stelae and painted on ceramics. It is prominent as a sign of transmission of power, following a lord's demise.

The two other Triad Gods of the **Cross Group** at Palenque are God **G.I** in the **Temple of the Cross**. Among other multiple attributes, it is related to a celestial deity with aquatic aspects, such as shark teeth and sting ray spines, in direct relationship with the Primordial Sea. The deity had a powerful association with Sunrise.

God **G.III** in the **Temple of the Sun**, symbolizes the *underworld*. It is related to war represented by the **Jaguar Sun** at Sunset; the **Black Sun** of the Underworld.

The three deities, but mostly **G.II**, were worshiped by all **Maya** communities independently. They were also worshipped in conjunction with each other, according to particular ceremonies, and unseen forces believed to participate in the life of the community. The deities were called by different names to fit local kingship and kinship lineages, within particular linguistic groups and their belief in an unseen world.







**Annex – 3**  
**God of Death – God.A**  
Mural of the Four Ages (partial)  
**Toniná** Archaeological Site, Ocosingo, Chiapas

In the *Popol Vuh* a number of gods of death live in **Xibalba**, the underworld. **Hun Camè** (one death), and **Vucub Camè** (seven deaths), are powerful judges. **Yum Kimil** is the god of death in Yucatec (*kimi*, death).

The concept of life sprouting from death is detailed in the *Popol Vuh*. There are many figures and animal figures related to death such as the *moan* bird (a mythological animal, probably an owl), the black jaguar, dogs, bats, spiders and other animals. Five of the 9 levels of the underworld are harrowing places through which souls must travel. In the *Popol Vuh* they are the *House of Darkness*, the *Shivering House*, the *Jaguar House*, the *Bat House* and the *Blade House*. As David Stuart explains “*I suspect that these five dangerous places were arranged in Xibalba in the familiar four-around-one format of the quincunx, or five-part diagram of the cosmos, found throughout ancient Mesoamerica*” (2011:213).

At **Tonina** the well preserved fragment of a very large frieze displays, among other mythic figures, a large skeletal death god, the very **way** of Palenque’s kings. The death god holds a severed head by the hair in his left hand. As David Freidel describes the scene “*this was not a conventional head but the detailed portrait of a lord, right down to a fine wispy mustache. The slack jaw and extruding tongue were as they must have been at the time of decapitation*” (1993:321). The glyphs above the head identifies it to be that of the lord of **Pia**, a subregion of **Pomoná**; a kingdom located between **Palenque-Lakam-ha’** and the Usumacinta River.

In Maya thought, life and death are always dialectically in harmony, as often shown on stone carvings and ceramics.



## Annex – 4

### Itzamna (God.D)

Censer from Mayapan, Yucatán – AD 1200-1400,  
◀◀ Polychrome Terracotta – Photo Jorge Perez de  
Lara, RAICES in Arqueologia Mexicana, 2007:88/37  
Dresden Codex, P.27c (partial) ▶▶

**Itzmna** aka **Itzamnaaj** is the first priest,  
venerated on a par with **Chaak'**. Also referred  
to as **K'inich Ahau** the sun deity.

**God D** (Schellhas 1904), is dressed as a high  
priest, hieroglyphically identified as the god of  
rulership. Classic iconography confirms  
God.D's identity as an upper deity governing,  
among others, the affairs of agriculture and  
the hunt. However, he was not the first in  
importance nor it seems in antiquity, that was  
**Chaak'**.

On **Palenque's** Temple XIX platform, a  
dignitary presenting the king with his royal  
headband wears the principal Birds Deity's  
headdress, while being referred to as  
**Itzamnaaj**. In his bird avatar, God.D appears as  
the creator god bestowing rulership on a king.

There are various names and functions  
attributed to God.D by archaeologists, as well  
as references by Fray Diego de Landa for the  
god's Yucatec name and functions, that do not  
square with glyphic interpretations from the  
Classic period. At the heart of the problem is  
that the name and functions are still subject to  
interpretations, and could be related to **Bolon  
Dz'acab** (Thompson, 1970:210).

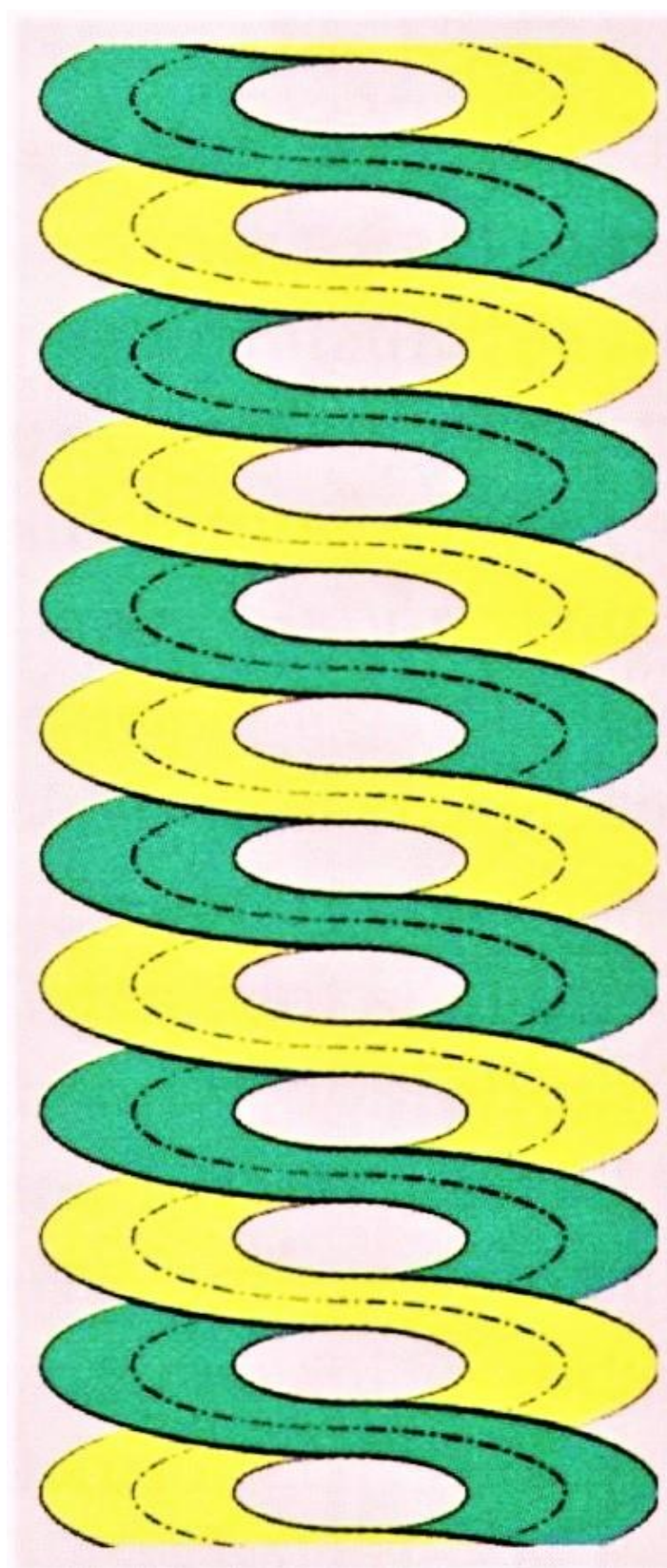
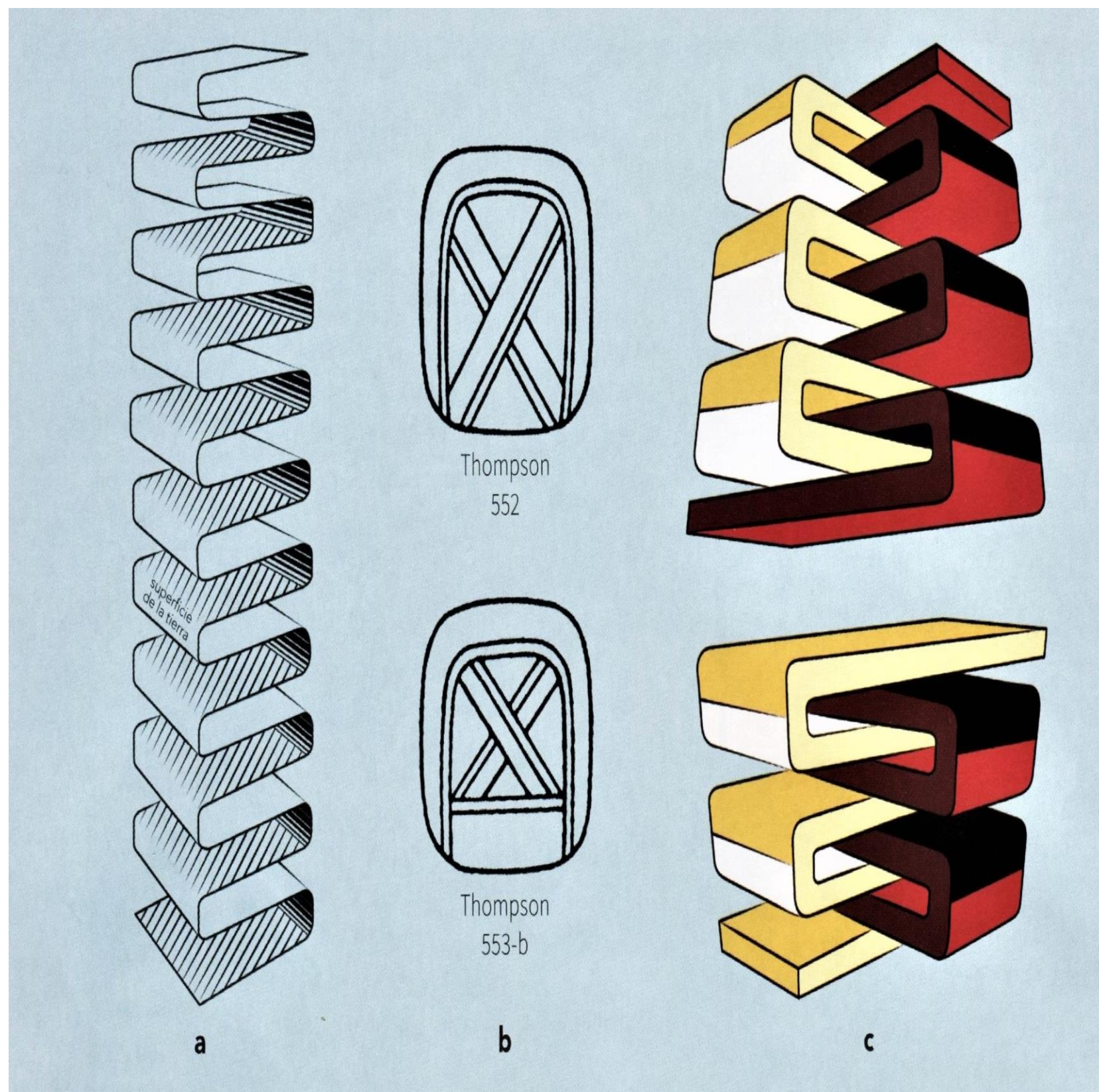
It is possible that the root of the name refers  
to a great crocodile, or may be of reptile  
origin, as mentioned in Post-Classic codices,  
that symbolizes the surface of the earth.





**Annex.5** – In his 17<sup>th</sup> century studies of belief and magic Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón was intrigued by the reason why shamans would establish a dialogue as if they were persons, with stars and animals. The answer lay in the birth of the Sun and its transit through the underworld where, like all living things, it dies at night to live again another day, repeating the unending cycle of life and death. In Nayarit, Ana Margarita Valdovinos registered this cycle in traditional dances (central yellow-green graphic), where together men and women dance, the men turning right in ascending order (green), while the women (yellow) dance turning left in descending order, as an endless repetition of the Sun in its daily life and death. The Sun is the major deity simply because without it there would be no crops, and no life.

*Los Cargos del Pueblo de Jesus Maria, Una Replicá de la Cosmovisión, Cora – P50, in Arqueologia Mexicana, EE69:49*



With references to Durán y Tovar of the folding of the levels to the upper and underworlds, Lopez Austin combined the above figures as follows. **a)** shows Cecilia and Henry Klein design of the uninterrupted serpentine levels from the bottom of the underworld to upper world; **b)** between various figures referenced as *nepanihtli*, seen in Aztec documents that named the heaven and underworld levels, are closely identified with Thompson glyphs 552 and 553b as the “celestial crossed bands”, or transversal view of the various levels; **c)** drawings top show the way to the upper world and bottom the underworld, including the alternances day/night, north/south, etc... From Alfredo Lòpez Austin, *Arqueologia Mexicana* EE69:38

Tall cylindrical ceramic vessel; well polished brown slip with intertwined bi-color spirals; with an emerging serpent open maw, exposed fangs and a long bifurcated tongue. Late Classic, from the Tiquasite Region, Guatemala. Museo *Popol Vuh*, Universidad Francisco Marroquin.  
Guatemala City – in *Maya*, 1998:638/475



## Annex.6 – Paul Shellhas Maya Gods List

Representations of Deities of the Maya Manuscripts from his reviews and commentaries of the Dresden Codex, Dresden, 1901 and the Madrid Codex, Danzig, 1903; Published in 1904.

A brief description of the gods functions below are from *The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya* by Mary Miller and Karl Taube, 1993:146-147.

**A** – Skeletal god of Death; equivalent to *Mitlantecuhtli* of Central Mexico

**A'** – Ancient god of the Early Classic; God.A' is a deity of violent sacrifice.

**B** – This god is a post-Classic representation of *Chaak'*, god of rain and thunder

**C** – Personification of the concept of sacredness; known as *ku* or *ch'u* in Yucatec

**D** – One of the great gods; *Itzamna*, the aged creator god of priestly knowledge.

**E** – The Foliated Maize God essentially represent the post-Classic maize god *Hunal Ye'*

**F** – Schellhas confused three gods: A', Q and R; E.J. Thompson labelled uncertain.

**G** – The Sun god; he appears in the glyph *kin*; he is *K'inich Ahaw*, the “sun-faced Lord”.

**H** – Classic god aka CH; representation of *Xbalanque*, Hero Twin of the *Popol Vuh*

**I** – Youthful goddess identified in codices with human fertility and love, could be *Ix Chel*

**K** – Identified as *K'awiil*, representation of the *manikin* scepter of dynastic descent.

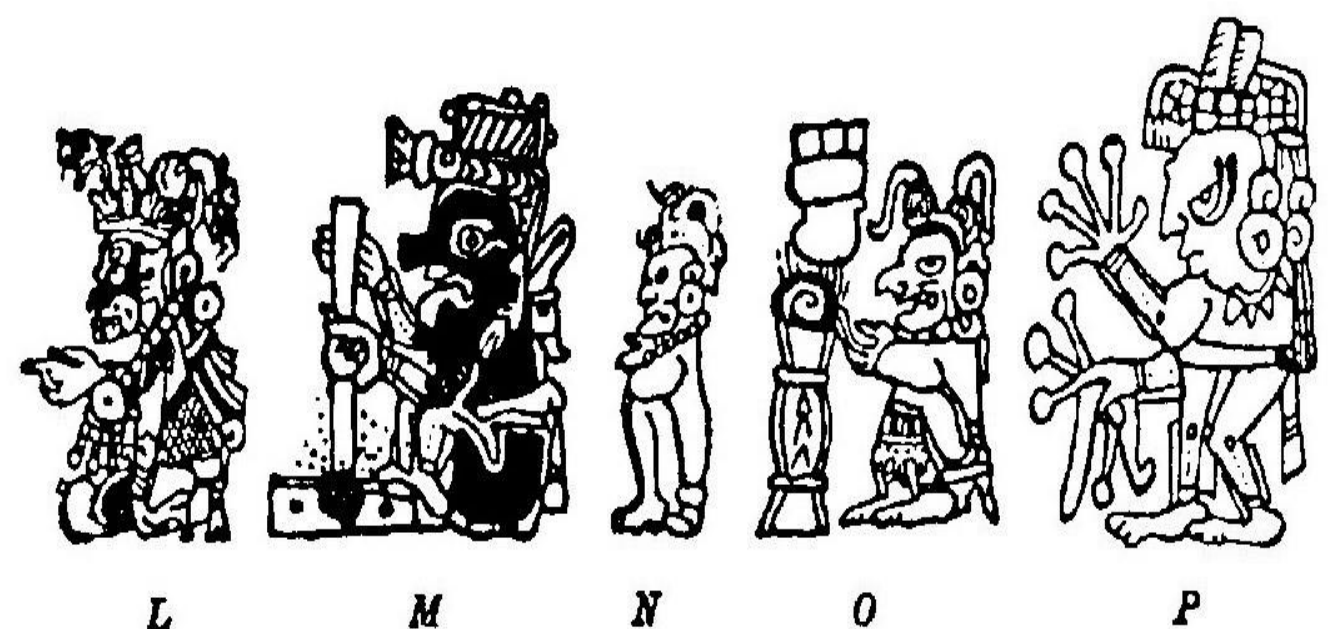
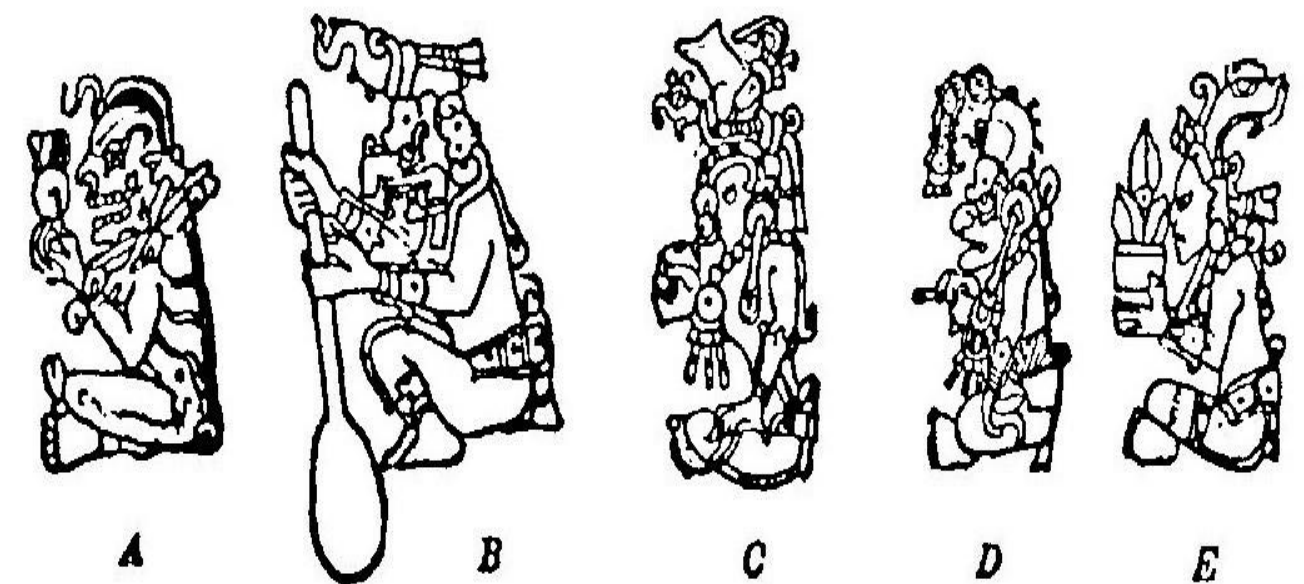
**L** – Aged black jaguar god of Late Classic, identified with the underworld and traders.

**M** – *Ek Chua*, the black deity of merchants of the post-Classic; eclipsed God.L.

**N** – The *Paauhtun* quadripartite deity; the gods believed to support the sky.

**O** – Aged and fearsome goddess with jaguar claws; she is called *Chac Chel* the old genetrix.

**P** – Appears in the Madrid Codex, but may be a version of God.N.





**B'olom Ajaw** – the nine Lords are the powers of the Sun; archaeologists refer to them as the Nine Lords of the Night

**Ixim Tun** – cycle of maize (corn); dedicated to agriculture; the Q'ij according to Rafael Girard

**Chol'q'ij** (K'iche') or **Tzolk'in** (Yucatec) – sacred calendar; human cycle of 260 days or 9 months in the Gregorian calendar for human gestation.

**Hab'tun** – cycle of 360 days cosmically constant; well known as a sidereal calendar

**Ixix** – lunar calendar; master ocean tides and woman menstruations; Wo lx in the Dresden Codex, Rafael Girard.

**Hab' (Jun Ab' = 1 year)** – is a 400 days year; memorial de los Xajil, Kaqchikel

**Matuytun** – 52 years cycle; is the Pleiades cycle in Mesoamerica

**Ajaw Katun** or **Chultun** – 260 years tunes or 93600 days

**Oxlajuj Majq'ij** – cycle of 13 B'aktuns

**Waqxaqib' Mayaq'ij** – cycle of 20 B'aktuns, the 800 years Pik'tun

**Maeqo'ij** – Venus cycle calendar

**Maymuluk** – Mars Cycle calendar

**Ayik kox** – Sirius cycle calendar

**Tiku'** – 9 cycles of 52 years is a prophetic cycle; **B'olom Tiku'** is 468 years, the 9 cycles of darkness; and **Oxlajuj Tz'ib'il** of 676 years, the 13 enlightenment cycles.

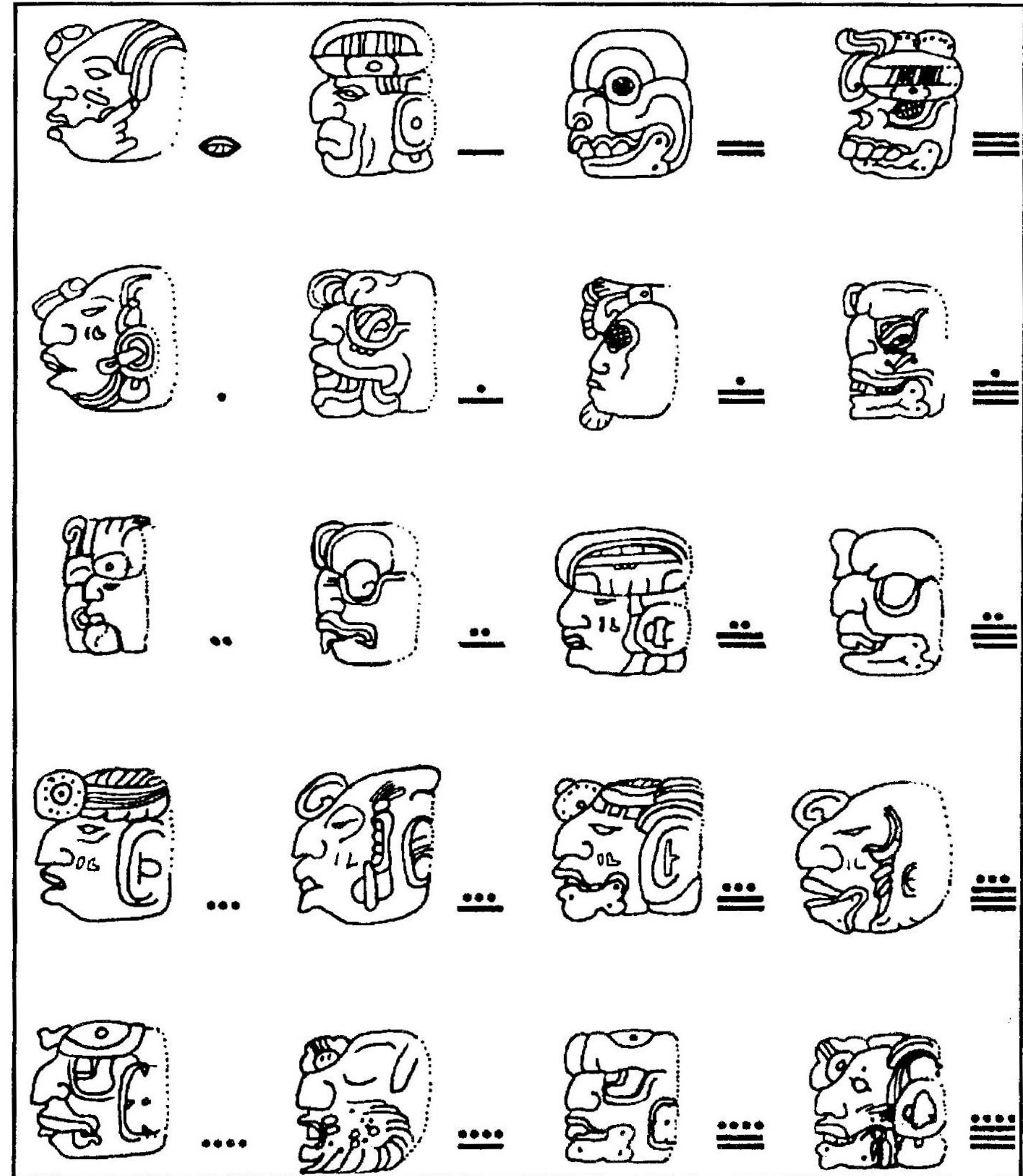
**Najxit Tun** – the divine calendar; function may not be revealed

**Eqomal May** – cycle of the year bearers, prophetic

**Ninamay Q'ij** – the Ahaw great circle; function may not be revealed.

**Annex.7 – Maya Numerals and Corresponding Glyphs**  
They are shown here merely to underline the extent and complexity of understanding and documenting the Maya belief and religious structure, to which need be added a forest of gods.

From zero top left, to nineteen bottom right





# Annex.8 – Glyphs and Corresponding Names of the Tzol'kin 260-days Sacred Calendar and Haab' 365-days Solar Calendar

From Linda Schele & David Freidel, 1990:79

The *Order of Days*, commonly Referred to in Yucatek as Tzolk'in; is called Cholq'ij in Maya K'iche'

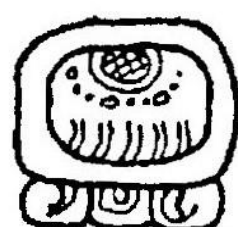
It is a period of time of 260 days (q'ij in K'iche' or k'in in Yucatec). The K'iche' name Cholq'ij is relatively recent; its name from remote time has not yet been identified in the glyph corpus. Scholars use the Yucatec name Tzolk'in that means "orden de los dias – order of days" (tzol, "order", and k'in, "day") – Stuart, 2011:137. Tzolk'in and k'in are the names most commonly used in studies and literature.

The solar year is the Haab' of 18 months of 20 winal (of 20-days each):  $20 \times 18 = 360$  k'in/days, plus the wayeb "month" of 5-k'in/days, closing the 365 days agrarian or solar year. It is then repeated endlessly as are our years on each January 1st.

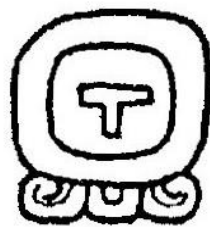
Each calendar would require extensive and in depth presentations for their understanding; planed to be presented on this site next year.

## Tzol'kin

## Haab



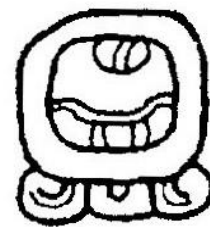
Imix



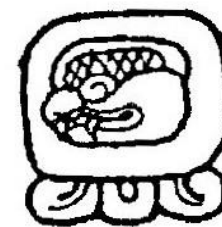
Ik



Akbal



Kan



Chicchan



Pop



Uo



Zip



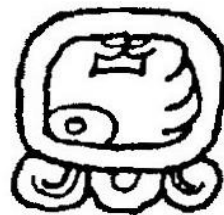
Zotz'



Zec



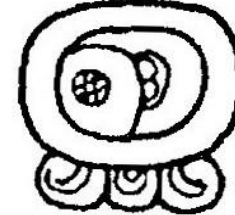
Cimi



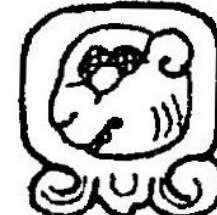
Manik



Lamat



Muluc



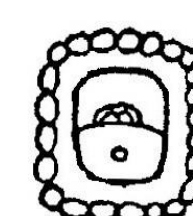
Oc



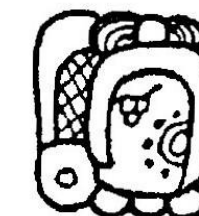
Xul



Yaxkin



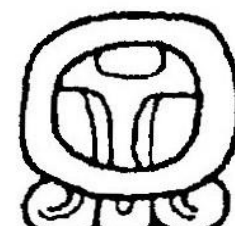
Mol



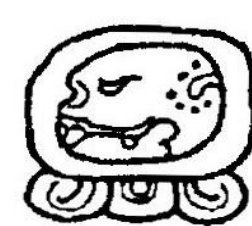
Ch'en



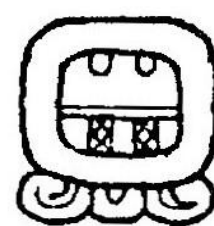
Yax



Chuen



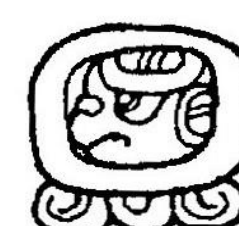
Eb



Ben



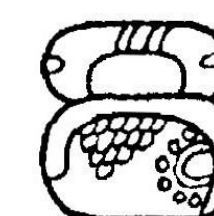
Ix



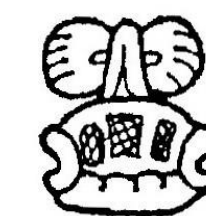
Men



Zac



Ceh



Mac



Kankin



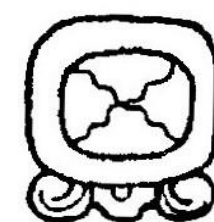
Muan



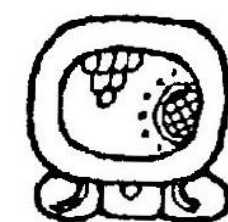
Cib



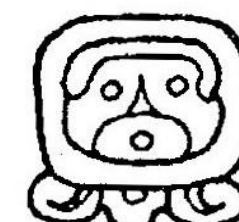
Caban



Etz'nab



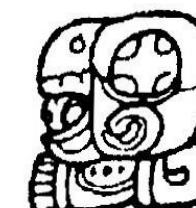
Cauac



Ahau



Pax



Kayab



Cumku

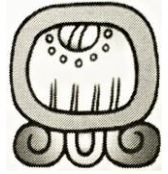
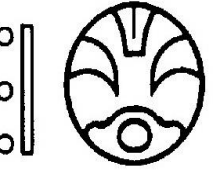


Uayeb

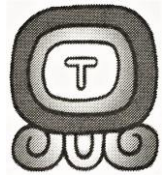


## A n n e x - 9a

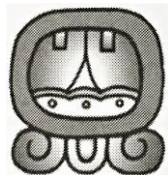
Comparative Excerpts of the **20 Nawals** that Rule Over Each of the 20 Days or **K'in**, in the **Tzolk'in**, the "**Order of Days**". Analysis of scholars and that of today **K'iche'** Day Keeper. Obvious discrepancies are that Day and Ruler sequences do not match, nor their interpretation. Glyphs are the same; different values. Day names are mostly similar in each case. Glyph interpretation is still speculative in some cases. **Days** numbered **1-20** (*black*), *italicized* in **Yukatek** with corresponding description by David Stuart, 2011:138-144. **K'iche' Day Ruler-number/Name** (*red*), description by Day Keepers of *Mayab' Uk'Ux' B'e*, 2009:31-37



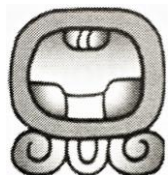
**Day-1** – *IMIX* > **WATER SERPENT**; rivers and springs; water lily blossom; *Cipactly* “alligator” in Aztec.  
**Ruler-11** – **JULAJUJ IMOX** – *IMIX* > **TRANSPARENCY**; waves of the seas, water snake, springs and rivers; transparency of life.



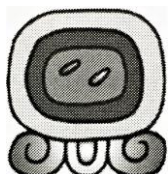
**Day-2** – *IK'* > **BREATH**, wind; Ehecatl in Nahuatl; origin of sound; associated to the Aztec “*Flower Prince*” Xochipilli.  
**Ruler-12** – **KAB'LAJUJ IQ'** – *IK'* > **BREATH**, origin of wind and sound that make all lives hear each other.



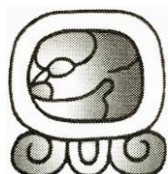
**Day-3** – *AK'BAL* > **NIGHT**; simultaneous opposites clarity-obscurity; nocturnal aspect of the Sun god.  
**Ruler-13** – **OXLAJUJ AQ'AB'AL** > *AK'BAL* - **DAWN**; simultaneous opposites clarity and obscurity; spirit of days, of caves and bats.



**Day-4** – *K'AN* > **MAIZE**; yellow as the ripe corn; Hunal Ye the young maize god; keeps evenness near and far.  
**Ruler-14** – **JUN K'AT K'AN** > *K'AN* - **CHAIN OF FIRE**; volcanos, heat of the Sun; keeps evenness near and far.



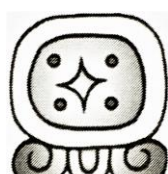
**Day-5** – **KAN** > **SNAKE**; K'iche' *nawal* of daily and remote authority; origin: from the beginning of time.  
**Ruler-15** – **KA'I'KAN** > **CHIKCHAN BALANCE** and stability; Nawal of daily and remote authority from the beginning of time.



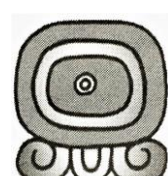
**Day-6** – *KIMI* > **DEATH**; found in most Mesoamerican scripts; spirit of the voice of silence.  
**Ruler-16** – **OXI' KAME** > **TRANSFORMATION**; from the material to spiritual; spirit of the voice of silence.



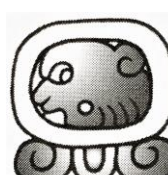
**Day-7** – *MANIK* > **DEER**; may originate from the Zapotec word *mani*, animal.  
**Ruler-17** – **KAJI' KEJ** > **POWER**; mother nature authority; K'iche' and Tzu'tujil ancient authority.



**Day-8** — *LAMAT* > **STAR**; is *Q'anil* in K'iche', and *k'anal* or *q'anal* in the languages of Chiapas.  
**Ruler-18** – **WO'O' Q'ANIL** – *LAMAT* > **GERM** of the seed of life; of all living life forms; spirit of stars; seed of thought.



**Day-9** – *MULUK* > **WATER JAR**; of obscure meaning, may have its origin in the Huastec language.  
**Ruler-19** – **WAQI'TOJ** > **RECIPROCITY**; fire and water; ruler of reciprocity at all levels and in all dimensions.

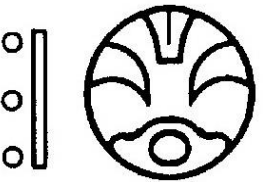


**Day-10** — *OK* > **DOG**; Tz'il' is of K'ishe' origin; it may have been Ok or Ook in the lowlands Classic period.  
**Ruler-20** – **WUQU' TZ'I'** > *OK* > **JUSTICE**; emotions and feeling of all life forms; spirit and balance; master of visions and perceptions



## A n n e x - 9b

Comparative Excerpts of the **20 Nawals** that Rule Over Each of the 20 Days or **K'in**, in the **Tzolk'in**, the “**Order of Days**”. Analysis of scholars and that of today **K'iche'** Day Keeper. Obvious discrepancies are that Day and Ruler sequences do not match, nor their interpretation. Glyphs are the same; different values. Day names are mostly similar in each case. Glyphs interpretations are still speculative in some cases. **Days** numbered **1-20** (*black*), *italicized*, in **Yukatek** with corresponding description – David Stuart, 2011:138-144. **K'iche' Day Ruler-number/Name** (*red*); descriptions by Day Keepers of the *Mayab' Uk'Ux' B'e*, 2009:31-37



**Day 11** – **CHUWEN** – **B'atz**, in all Mesoamerican languages monkey is the meaning of the 11<sup>th</sup> day; *Chuwen* also means “artist”.  
**Ruler-1** – **JUN B'ATZ** > **BEGINING** of creation; the thread of time, life and humanity; master of arts and weddings.



**Day 12** – **EB'** > **TOOTH**; the visual form of the glyph is that of a fleshless jawbone; it may be written, *e*, *eeh*.  
**Ruler-2** – **KA'I'E** – **EB'** > **ROADS**; the four quarters of the universe and life's ways; the glyph includes both water and death.



**Day 13** – **BEN** > **REED**; is the day name in Yucatec; in highland languages is *Aj'*; in any Maya languages it means Reed.  
**Ruler-3** – **OXI' AJ** > **AJ'** – **PHASES**; regeneration; spirit of the repetition of time and that of homes and the *waralb'al ja*, field altars.



**Day 14** – **IX** > **JAGUAR**; *I'x* or *Hiix* describes a large spotted cat; *Balam* is the common name for jaguar in Mesoamerica.  
**Ruler-4** – **KAJI' I'X** – **IX** > **VITALITY**; nature's vitality; *nawal* of all lives, from insects to humans; *milpa* overseer and care taker.



**Day 15** – **MEN** > **BIRD**; the Eagle identify the 15<sup>th</sup> day, called *Tz'ikin* by highland Maya groups; *Men* in Yucatec means create.  
**Ruler-5** – **WO'O' TZ'IKIN** – **MEN** > **VISION**; Heart of the Sky and master of the universe; perception of spiritual guides.



**Day 16** – **KIB** > **VULTURE**; reference to the bird is uncertain; in Yucatec *kib'* stands for *beeswax*; but is hard to relate to a glyph.  
**Ruler-6** – **WAQI' AJMAQ** – **KIB'** > **WILL**; conscience and actions of all living creatures; also referred as *Chabin*.



**Day 17** – **KAB'AN** > **EARTHQUAKE**; the glyph corresponds to the earth sign; similar to the *nahuatl* earthquake sign *Ollin*.  
**Ruler-7** – **WUQU' NO'J** – **KAB'AN** > **KNOWLEDGE**; wisdom; nature spirit and thoughts; related to the Maize deity and the Moon.



**Day 18** – **ETZ'NAB** > **KNIFE**; the sign represent a flint knife; in highland languages it is *Chinax* or *Tijax*; in Aztec it is *Tecpatl*.  
**Ruler-8** – **WAQXAQI' TIJAX** – **ETZ'NAB** > **CONSISTENCY**; structure of the world; living organisms; double edge obsidian blade.



**Day 19** – **KAWAK** > **STORM**; also lightning; Cha'ak's name is a direct link to the word “storm”; also referred to as *Chahuk*.  
**Ruler-9** – **B'ELEJE' KAWOK** – **KAWAK** > **SUN** rays; lightning, storms and thunder; link to medicine and communal principles.



**Day 20** – **AJAW** > **LORD**; or king, a most common adjective; the Ahaw glyph correspond to so called period endings.  
**Ruler-10** **LAJUJ AJPU'** – **AJAW** > **DUAL VISION**; of creation; of grand-father Sun; principle of clarity and of a clear voice.



## A n n e x - 10

In the Maya mythology the **Tree of Life**, the *wakah chan*, is the **Ceiba** (*Ceiba pentandra*).

It is believed that the tree's roots sink deep into the underworld, while its branches are ladders to the heavens.

Chaak' Glyph, M. Coe & M. Van Stone, 2001:111

There are five **Ceiba** trees, *Pillars of the Sky*, planted at the four corners of the village. They are trees of the **Cha'ak** held by the four **Bacab**, as memorials of the successive cycles of destruction of the world:

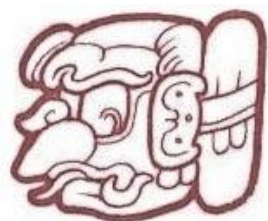
. *Zac Xib Chaak'* the **White** *Chaak' Imex Che* of the **North**

. *Ek Xib Chaak'* the **Black** *Ek Imex Che* of the **West**

. *Kan Xib Chaak'* the **Yellow** *Kan Imex Che* of the **South**

. *Cha'k Xib Chaak'* the **Red** *Zac Imex Che* of the **East**

. *Ya'ax Imix Che* is the **Green** **Ceiba** is the mother tree of abundance, planted in the **middle** of the village, to record the second destruction of the world.





**A n n e x.11** - The **K'uk'ulkan** pyramid, **Chichen Itza-Uuc'Yab'nal** — Its reflection illustrate the mental make up of the **Maya** and other traditional cultures, past and present, as an exact *Inverse View*, or *Counter-Image of the Universe*. Life and death are believed to interface at the liminal zone, at the base of the actual and reflected pyramids perceived to be the point of contact between this world and the “*other*” world; the ***Field of Opposites***.









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

1. *Palenque, Eternal City of the Maya* – David Stuart and George Stuart, Thames & Hudson Ltd., London, 2008
2. *Costumbres Funerarias de los Antiguos Mayas* – Alberto Ruz Lhuillier, UNAM, Seminario de Cultura Maya, Mexico, 1968
3. *The Life Within, Classic Maya and the Matter of Permanence* – Stephen Houston, Yale University Press, New London, 2014
4. *Living with the Ancestors, Kinship and Kingship in Ancient Maya Society* – Patricia A. McAnany, University of Texas Press, Austin, TX, 1995
5. *Los Antiguos Mayas* – Alberto Ruz Lhuillier, Fondo de Cultura Economica, Mexico DF 1989
6. *Maya Cosmos* – David Freidel, Linda Schele & Joy Parker, William Morrow & Co., New York, NY, 1993
7. *The Order of Days* – David Stuart, Harmony Books, New York, NY, 2011
8. *Ri Wajxaqib' B'atz'* – Lic. Virginia Ajxup Pelicó & Lic. Juan Zapil Xivir, Compañía Editorial Impresora y Distribuidora SA, Mexico, 2009
9. *Death and the Afterlife in Pre-Columbian America* – 1973 Conference at Dumbarton Oaks, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library, Washington DC, 1975
10. *Relacion de las Cosas de Yucatán* – Fray Diego de Landa, Editorial Porrúa SA, Mexico, 1966
11. *Popol Vuh . The Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life* – Dennis Tedlock, Touchstone-Simon & Schuster, New York, NY, 1985
12. *Time and the Highland Maya* – Barbara Tedlock, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, NM, 1982
13. *Historia Mayab' – Cosmocimientos y Prácticas Mayas Antiguas* – Asociación Maya Uk'Ux B'e, Ediciones Papiro SA, Guatemala City, 2008
14. *Shanidar the First Flower People* – Ralph S. Solecki, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY, 1971
15. *The Annals of the Cakchiquels, Title of the Lords of Totonicapán* – Adrián Recinos, Delia Goetz & José Chonay, University of OK Press, Norman, 1953
16. *La Agricultura en Mesoamerica, La Gran Invención* – Eduardo Matos Moctezuma & Aurora Montúfar, Arqueología Mexicana, 2013/120:28, 42,
17. *The Blood of Kings* – Linda Schele & Mary Ellen Miller, Kimbell Art Museum, Ft. Worth, TX, 1986
18. *Beyond Death* – Bernardo T. Arriaza, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC, 1995
19. *El Maiz, Nuestro Sustento* – Cristina Barros, Marco Buenrostro & Teresa Rojas Rabiela – Arqueología Mexicana, Mexico, 1997/25:6, 24,
20. *Diccionario de Mitología y Religión de Mesoamérica* – Yolotl Gonzalez Torres, Ediciones Larousse, Mexico, 1991
21. *The Quiché Mayas of Uatatlán* – Robert M. Carnack, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, OK, 1981
22. *La Douleur Rédemptrice, l'Autosacrifice Précolombien* – Claude-François Baudez, Éditions Riveneuve, Paris, 2012
23. *La Cosmovisión de la Tradición Mesoamericana* – Alfredo Lopez Austin, Arqueología Mexicana, Ediciones Especiales No. 68, 69, 70, Mexico, 2016
24. *The Major Gods of Ancient Yucatán* – Karl Andreas Taube – Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington, DC, 1992
25. *The Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel* – Ralph L. Roys, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, OK, 1967
26. *Ch'umilal Wuj - El Libro del Destino* – Carlos Barrios, Cholsamaj, Ciudad Guatemala, 2004
27. *Tortillas for the Gods, A Symbolic Analysis of Zinacanteco Rituals* – Evon Z. Vogt, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, OK, 1993
28. *New Perspectives on Human Sacrifice and Ritual Body Treatments in Ancient Maya Society* – Vera Tiesler & Andrea Cucina, Springer LLC, NY 2007
29. *The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya* – Mary Miller & Karl Taube – Thames & Hudson, New York, NY, 1993
30. *The Codex Pérez and the Book of Chilam Balam of Mani* – Eugene R. Craine & Reginald C. Reindorp, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, OK, 1979

• **Photos:** unless otherwise noted are [@georgefery.com](https://www.georgefery.com)



# Living with the Ancestors

*Kinship  
and Kingship  
in Ancient  
Maya Society*

PATRICIA A. MCANANY



**Copan, Altar.Q** - From K'inich' Yax Kuk'Mo to Yax Pac, First and Last in Copán  
16 Kingship Line (above). McAnany photo @unc.edu - glyphs, Coe & Vanstone, 1998:70, 82.

**Patricia A. McAnany**, Ph.D. is Kenan Eminent Professor and Chair of Anthropology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, NC. As a Maya archaeologist she has conducted field research and cultural heritage programs throughout the Maya region for over 20 years. Her professional interests include the intersection of ritual and economy, ancestor veneration, the creation and abandonment of place, and the cross threading of cultural heritage with indigenous identities.

Patricia is the Principal Investigator, with Prof. Ivan Batun-Apuche of PACOY-  
*Proyecto Arqueologico Colaborativo del Oriente de Yucatàn, Mexico.*

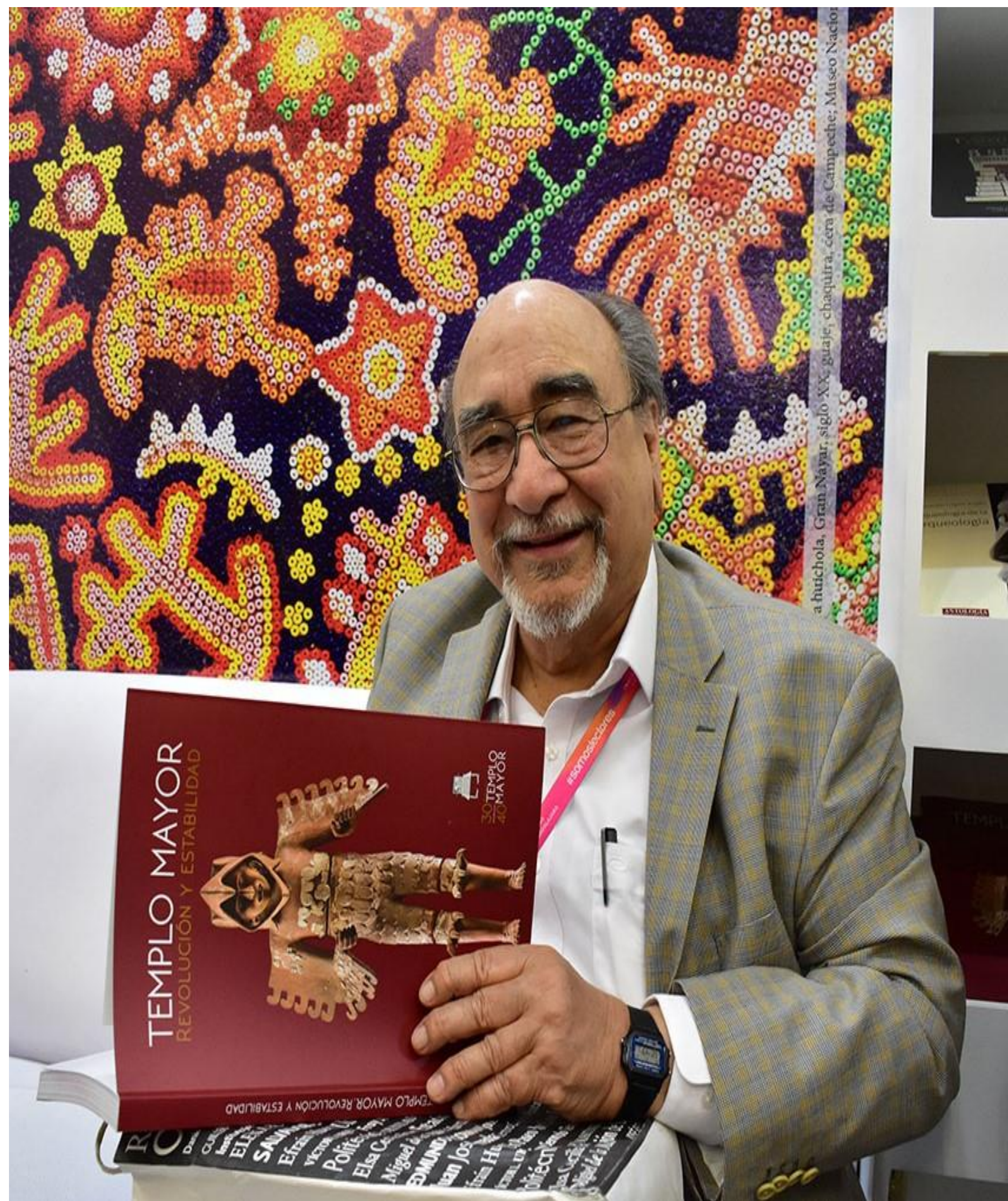


**Alfredo Lopez Austin**, Ph.D, UNAM, INAH

Alfredo is a Mexican historian who wrote extensively on Mesoamerican religions, and the Aztec worldview in particular.

His association with UNAM-Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico, where he studied, spans over 50 years, and he still holds a position as researcher emeritus.

He is the author of books and articles, among which is *Monte Sagrado – Templo Mayor*, with his son Leonardo Lopez Lujan (1999); *La Cosmovisión de la Tradición Mesoamericana* (2016); *Hombre-dios. Religión y Política en el Mundo Náhuatl* (1973), and many outstanding others. Lopez Austin lectures at UNAM's history department, and at FFyL-Facultad de Filosofía y Letras.





**Barbara Tedlock**, A cum laude graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, she earned an MA in anthropology, and a PhD in anthropology from SUNY Albany. She heads the University of Buffalo Anthropology Department in the UB College of Arts and Science – Buffalo, NY.

Tedlock is a nationally distinguished specialist in psychology, symbolic and cognitive anthropology, ethnomedicine in the American Southwest and Mesoamerica.

She was initiated a Day Keeper by the Maya K'iche' in Momostenango, Guatemala, where she worked from 1975 to 1979.



Barbara Tedlock received well deserved praises for her book, remarkably researched that shows her deep field involvement. It is indeed *"A landmark in the ethnographic study of the Maya...and a wealth of new material in this marvelous book which should be of deep interest to ethnologists, students of religion, and Maya epigraphers..."* Michael Coe in *Parabola*.

The book is rich in new information about native religious practices *...for any Mesoamerican specialist it is indispensable reading. Based on prolonged research and experience, it is a model of scholarship for its analysis of the theoretical valued of field experience..."* in *Revista Interamericana de Bibliografia*.

# TIME and the HIGHLAND MAYA



*Barbara Tedlock*





**Professor Edwin Barnhart** is Director of the Maya Exploration Center, an institution dedicated to the study of ancient Maya civilization. He received his Ph.D. in Anthropology from The University of Texas at Austin and has more than 20 years of experience as an archaeologist, explorer, and instructor in North, Central, and South America. Professor Barnhart has appeared multiple times on the History Channel and the Discovery Channel; is a Fellow of the Explorers Club; and teaches University of Texas travel courses for college professors on ancient Andean and Mesoamerican astronomy, mathematics, and culture.



Topic  
History

Subtopic  
Ancient History

# Maya to Aztec: Ancient Mesoamerica Revealed

Course Guidebook

Professor Edwin Barnhart  
Maya Exploration Center



Topic  
History

Subtopic  
Ancient History

# Lost Worlds of South America

Course Guidebook

Professor Edwin Barnhart  
Maya Exploration Center









**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.

The **Lectures** aim at education and information. They could not be done 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 popular 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 **georgefery.com** and **mayaworldimages.com** may send comments, suggestions, facts, figures, maps, latest discoveries, photos or any relevant topic regarding the archaeological scene or location in reference. 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 “**Long-Form Articles**” be amended and updated. Any question regarding this site, please contact **hello@georgefery.com** or **george@mayaworldimages.com**

Photos, drawings and maps in the “**Long-Form Articles**” are not for sale to the public.

Accredited institutions and scholars may request the release of documents or photos, in writing.

Only photos identified as ©MWI in the “**Portfolio**” page of **Maya World Images**, are available for purchase.

