2000 YEARS OF MAYAN LITERATURE

DENNIS TEDLOCK

WITH NEW TRANSLATIONS AND
INTERPRETATIONS BY THE AUTHOR

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Frontispiece: Late Classic figurine of woman with book, from Jaina, Campeche. Photograph courtesy of Jorge Pérez de Lara.

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It takes a long performance and account
to complete the lighting of all the sky-earth,
the fourfold siding, fourfold cornering,
measuring, fourfold staking,
halving the cord, stretching the cord
in the sky, on the earth,
the four sides, the four corners, as it is said
by the Maker, Modeler,
Mother, Father
of life, of humankind.

Popol Vuh

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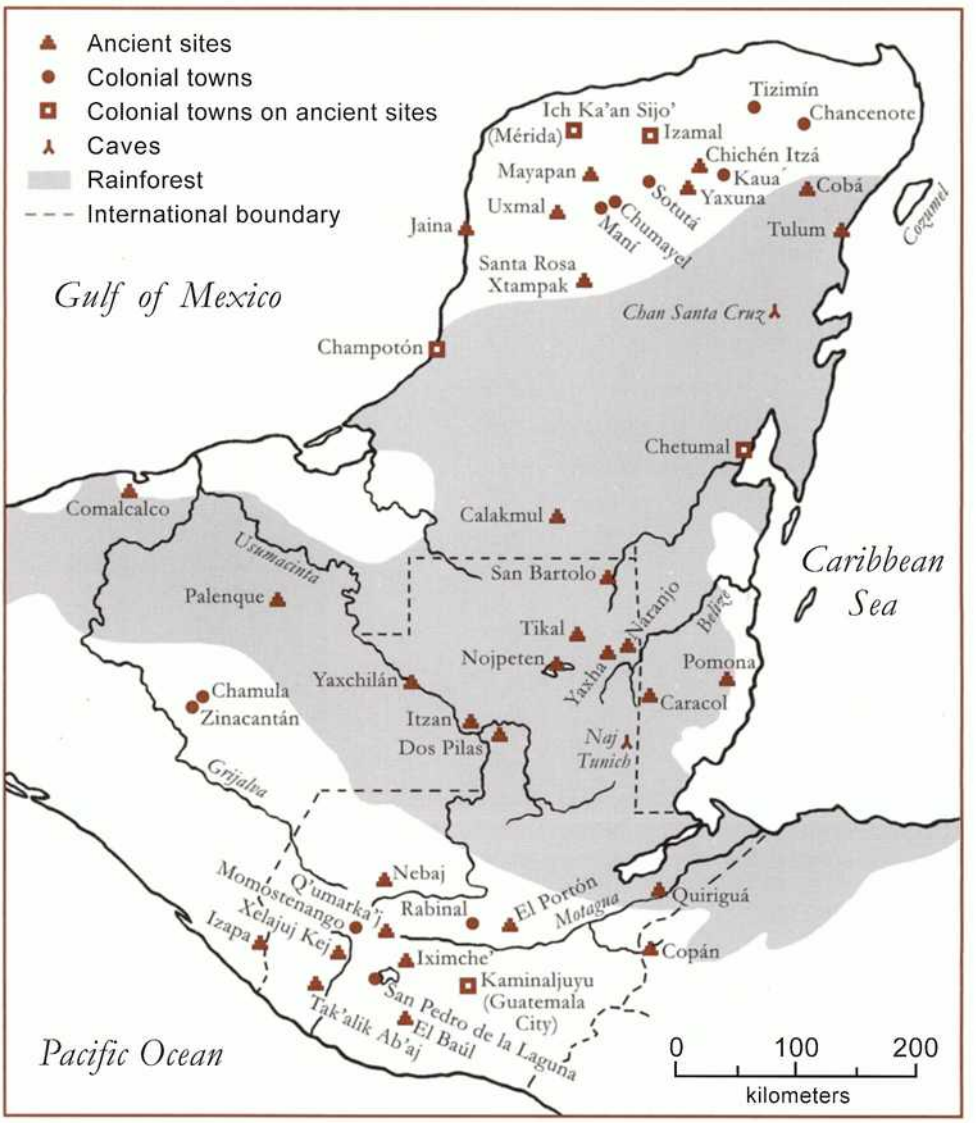

The Mayan Region

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NOTE ON THE PRONUNCIATION OF MAYAN WORDS

Consonants may be pronounced as in English, with these exceptions: *j* is like Spanish *j,* with the tongue farther back than for English *h; l* is like Welsh *ll,* with the tongue farther forward than for English *l; q* is like Hebrew qoph, with the tongue farther back than for English *k;* and *r* usually has a single flap as in Spanish. Two other Mayan sounds are found in English but are spelled differently: *tz* is like English *ts* in "sets," and *x* is like English *sh.* The glottal stop, indicated by ', is the middle sound in the English expression "m'm," meaning "no"; when it follows another consonant, it is pronounced simultaneously with that consonant. Vowels are approximately like those of Spanish, except that doubled vowels are held longer, like the long vowels in Classical Greek. In some transcriptions from texts in the Mayan script, a vowel shown as doubled may have originally been followed by *h* or ' rather than lengthened. Vowels are limited to five in the alphabetic documents of the colonial period, but most Mayan languages differentiate one or more of these five by means of lengthening or differences in tone. Stress is nearly always on the final syllable of a word.

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INTRODUCTION

The roots of writing go deep in the American continent. Even if we apply a narrow definition of writing, demanding that it record the sequence of sounds in a spoken language, we cannot get around the fact that writing existed in the Americas long before Europeans brought the roman alphabet here. Mayans started writing when English (even Old English) had yet to be born. By the seventh century, when English literature made its first tentative appearance, Mayans had a long tradition of inscribing ornaments, pottery vessels, monuments, and the walls of temples and palaces, and they had also begun to write books. The pages of these books were made of a kind of paper that is native to Mesoamerica, but another eight centuries would pass before the Old World version of the art of papermaking arrived in England.

And there is more. Now that we know how to read what ancient Mayans wrote, it has turned out that many of their inscriptions concern the births, deeds, deaths, and ghostly returns of named individuals who lived in named places. Scholars had known for some time that inscriptions included dates from Mayan calendars, but now we know that many of these dates concern events in the lives of individuals and the communities in which they lived. In other words, the writing of *history* began in the Americas before any European set foot here. For example, the lords who ruled the city whose ruins are known today as Palenque left behind continuous records that span four centuries (397–799 C.E.). They claimed roots for their royal powers that went much deeper, to a time when civilization was still relatively young in the Americas (996 B.C.E.).

The time has come to take a further step and proclaim that *literature* existed in the Americas before Europeans got here—not only oral literature but visible literature. So far, there is very little in print that would bring such a claim to life. Much *decipherment* has taken place but very little in the way of *translation.* Part of the problem is that decipherment is guided by linguistic rather than literary goals. After labeling the signs that compose a Mayan text and giving them a rough translation, specialists whose interests lie elsewhere than in literature extract fragments of information and reorganize them to fit forms of discourse that originated in Europe. When they mine Mayan texts for historical data, for example, they change the structure of the original narratives. Most of these texts tell a story with two overlapping strands, one of which follows events on the surface of the earth while the other follows events in the sky. Rather than unfolding in a strict chronological order, the sequence of events in these two strands may be interrupted by jump cuts that move the time frame backward or forward.

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There is yet one more step to be taken in opening a space for this most deeply American of literary traditions, and that is the step across the threshold of European colonization. Despite the best efforts of the invaders, Mayan authors went on writing even when their books were in danger of being burned and they themselves were in danger of falling into the hands of the Holy Inquisition. In secret, or in remote places, they went on using their own script for a century and a half after missionaries introduced the roman alphabet, though most of them switched to the alphabet during the second generation after the invasion. Using this new medium, they produced an enormous volume of literature in their own languages. In part, they sought to preserve knowledge that was endangered by the destruction of books in the Mayan script. But they also made an effort to record the words of songs, prayers, speeches, and dramas whose public performance had been banned. And they wrote accounts of their own era, seeking to understand the European invasion and occupation as an event in their own long history rather than as a fulfillment of European destiny.

There has been more progress in the appreciation of Mayan alphabetic literature than in the case of texts in the Mayan script, which remained largely unreadable until recently. But many of the alphabetic texts are still hidden in unpublished manuscripts. Others have been translated into Spanish or English, but only at a level that makes them usable data sources for anthropologists and historians. In these cases, the reader gets only glimpses of the art that went into their creation.

One of the features that unites texts in the Mayan script with those that Mayans wrote in the alphabet is that many passages take the form of parallel verse, in which recurrent patterns of sound reflect recurrent patterns of meaning rather than operating at a level below that of meaning, as they do in metrical verse. Anything can be said in more than one way or in ways that nuance or complement one another, as contrasted with a poetics that strives for closure, aiming to produce a finished work in which everything fits so well that nothing can be restated or expanded upon. To paraphrase the lines of a finished poem would be what modern Western critics have called a "heresy," but paraphrase is the method by which Mayans construct poems in the first place. If we think of paraphrase as a process of translation that takes place *inside* a language, then poetry is not what is lost in translation. Instead, as Octavio Paz once said, poetry *is* translation.

Contemporary Mayan orators are able to improvise long runs of parallel verse without the aid of writing, choosing phrases that are appropriate to a particular occasion. Verse also emerges in the course of conversations, including interviews conducted by fieldworkers seeking to learn appropriate ways of speaking a Mayan language. The following example is from a conversation I had with Andrés Xiloj Peruch, a K'iche' priest-shaman in the Guatemalan town of Momostenango. We were discussing dreams, and when I asked him whether the right word to describe a clear dream might be ***kajuljutik,*** meaning that "it shines," he replied, "Yes indeed. When a clear dream brings news, one can say,

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Kajuljutik,	It shines,
kachupchutik	it shimmers
pa ri q'ekum,	in the blackness,
pa ri aq'ab'.	in the night."

What is happening in this exchange is that a poet has been asked a question about a poetic matter in an unpoetic manner, and he responds by composing poetry. In so doing, he disperses the essentializing thrust of my question, resisting the search for just the right word to label the phenomenon under discussion. In Mayan poetics, there is no point of rest at which words become isomorphic with objects on a one-to-one basis. Not even proper names work in this way, because Mayans usually have more than one name for a person or place, and most names are composed of words that also have ordinary meanings. Muwan Mat is the name of a goddess in ancient Mayan texts, but she is also called Na' Jemnal, and the two names are often written one after the other. The first name, whose literal meaning is "hawk duck," is the term for the cormorant, and the other name means "the Lady of Split Place." The city whose ruins are known today as Calakmul also has two names, and again they are often written together. One of them is Uxte Tun, meaning "Three Stones," and the other is Chiik Naab', meaning "Waving Hand."

The Mayan past and the Mayan present occupy a position at the center of the Americas. The ruins of ancient Mayan cities and most of the seven million people who speak Mayan languages today share the same territory. It is cut into pieces by the boundaries of Guatemala, Honduras, Belize, and the Mexican states of Quintana Roo, Yucatán, Campeche, Tabasco, and Chiapas. To the south are the high volcanic mountains of the Pacific Rim, covered with forests of pine and oak. In the middle is a rainforest that slowly dries out and becomes a thorn forest as it reaches northward into the Yucatán peninsula. In recent times, a sizable number of Mayans have emigrated to the United States, most of them settling in Los Angeles, the San Francisco Bay Area, Houston, and Indiantown, Florida. Mayan merchants are now among the vendors who set up booths at the Pueblo Indian fiestas of New Mexico, where they offer Guatemalan textiles.

The first Europeans to learn Mayan languages were the early Spanish missionaries. Working with native speakers, they produced dictionaries, grammars, catechisms, sermons, and confessionals. Their medium for this work was the roman alphabet, which they adapted to Mayan sounds. Women had been among the writers and readers of the Mayan script, but the missionaries reserved alphabetic literacy for male students. The formats they taught were limited to paragraphed prose and item-by-item lists, because they heard no meter or rhyme in Mayan speech. Not until the second half of the twentieth century did scholars begin to recognize parallel verse as a feature of alphabetic texts in Mesoamerican languages, first in works written in Nahuatl (the language of the Aztecs) and later in Mayan writings.

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The early missionaries had no doubt that the rows and columns of signs they saw in Mayan books constituted a writing system, but they never progressed very far as readers of Mayan texts. One thing that stood in their way was a preconceived notion that Mayan signs were letters, standing for the consonants and vowels of an alphabet. Another and greater obstacle was their fear that Mayan writings were inspired by the devil, a fear that must have been driven, in part, by the numerous pictures of unfamiliar deities in Mayan books. As a result, many books suffered the same fate as persons who refused to confess to heresy: they were burned in public, having never revealed their dark secrets.

In fact, the Mayan writing system does include properly phonetic signs, which stand for sounds that are meaningless until they are combined with other signs to spell words. These signs are like letters of the alphabet in that the act of reading them requires a leap from the world of sight to that of sound, but they stand for syllables rather than smaller units of sound. Another difference is their use in combination with logographic signs, which stand for entire words. Logographs, like syllabic signs, occupy a place on the border between sight and sound, but they have a stronger foothold on both sides of it. On the side of vision, many of them take the form of images or diagrams that correspond to the meaning of a word. On the side of audition, they correspond to sounds that already have meaning before other signs are added.

One of the most important differences between the Mayan script and the alphabet is the abundance of Mayan signs. There are alternative signs for almost any syllable, and there are alternative logographs for some words. In theory, and in practice, almost any word can be spelled in more than one way, just as Mayan poetry phrases meanings in more than one way. Among the spelling possibilities are reader-friendly combinations of signs that offer more than one kind of clue to the intended word. Logographs are commonly affixed with signs for the first or last syllable of the word they stand for. This convention helps a reader who is more familiar with the logograph to remember the syllabic sign, and it helps a reader who is more familiar with the syllabic sign to remember the logograph. The writer, instead of worrying about correct spellings, can choose among alternative spellings and make different choices in different contexts.

Other writing systems also combine phonetic and logographic signs, including cuneiform (used for various languages in the ancient Middle East), Egyptian hieroglyphs, and Chinese. Western scholars who attempted to read cuneiform and Egyptian writing were dyslectic until the first half of the nineteenth century, and it was not until then that they recognized the composite nature of Chinese writing. The main cause of the long delay was a tendency to construct the cultures of non-Western others as the opposite of the culture of the self. If the alphabet was phonetic, making use of arbitrary signs to record the sound sequences of spoken language, then the ideal nonalphabetic script would have to be ideographic, composed of images and diagrams that express meanings directly, without a detour through sound. This kind of thinking made it difficult to imagine that a system possessing signs with a visible connection to their meaning might also possess signs that stood for sounds as such. Still more unthinkable was

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the possibility that the users of such a system might opt against writing texts with phonetic signs alone, even though they possessed the means to do so.

Once the composite nature of the cuneiform, Egyptian, and Chinese scripts was recognized, their relationship to the alphabet could no longer be conceived in terms of opposites. At this point, it would have been possible to describe the alphabet as a denuded or impoverished system, but the Victorian idea of evolutionary progress came to the rescue. According to the story of progress, which is always teleological, the problem was not that the alphabet had somehow become flat and one-dimensional but that other writing systems had failed to evolve to a high enough level to rid themselves of nonphonetic signs.

Mayan texts came to the attention of Western scholars during the first half of the nineteenth century, the same period that brought recognition of the phonetic dimension of other composite scripts. Scholars made periodic attempts to interpret the Mayan script in a similar way, but success did not come until the second half of the twentieth century. One reason for the delay was that accurate drawings and clear photographs of Mayan texts were few in number until the beginning of the twentieth century. A more important reason was domination of the field of Mayan studies by researchers who were unfamiliar with the nature of the composite scripts of the Old World. They were deeply committed to an ideographic view of the Mayan script, and they ridiculed anyone who attempted phonetic readings. The attacks continued as late as the 1970s, but by then the balance of opinion had swung in favor of sound.

Among those who guard the gates of Western civilization, there is still some resistance to the news that Mayan writing is capable of recording the sounds of spoken language. The possession of phonetic writing has long occupied a place near the top of the list of cultural properties that supposedly made the European domination of the New World not only possible but inevitable. This interpretation of history is so strongly entrenched that the European authors of several recent books comparing writing systems have seen no need to inquire into the status of research on the Mayan script. Instead, they have made out-of-date claims that it has yet to be deciphered or that its phonetic aspect is somehow rudimentary. A different sort of resistance is evident among theorists who seek to construct a decolonized vision of the Americas. Because they place a positive value on writing systems that are maximally different from the alphabet, the discovery that sound notation is a major feature of Mayan texts makes them less interesting than the pictorial histories written by Aztecs and Mixtecs.

An effort to describe the phonetic aspect of a composite writing system has its own distorting effects. A successful effort is traditionally hailed as a "decipherment," as if a "coded" or "encrypted" text had been converted into a "plain" text. When an encrypted alphabetic text is deciphered, one sequence of letters is converted into another sequence of letters. When a text in nonalphabetic writing is deciphered, a sequence of alien signs is converted into letters. The sole function of images or diagrams among the alien signs is to help with the identification of words, which can then be rewritten with the arbitrary signs of the alphabet. This is a reductive process that ultimately sets

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aside everything that makes the original script different from the alphabet. Once the reduction has been accomplished, a script can be elevated to the status of a "true" writing system, as opposed to protowriting or pictography. In effect, the alphabet remains the measure of all other scripts, even in the absence of an overt evolutionary hierarchy.

Most texts in the Mayan script are accompanied by illustrations, drawn by the same hands that did the writing. In the normal division of academic labor, illustrations belong neither to linguists nor to literary scholars but rather to art historians. At the same time, illustrations pose a problem for the literary status of the accompanying texts. For nearly two centuries now, the process of elimination that shapes the Western literary canon has been guided, in part, by a prejudice against pictures. The standard anthologies designed for the teaching of literature in high schools and colleges consist of nothing but typeset text, even when they include works that were illustrated in their original editions. The poetry of William Blake, for example, is set in the same type as everything else, and all traces of his work as a graphic artist are removed. In effect, it is this reduction that makes his work into literature. The same practice is evident in anthologies that include translations from illustrated cuneiform, Egyptian, and Chinese texts. These works take their place in "world literature" by means of a makeover that gives them the bare-bones appearance of Western literature.

The works of scholars who carry their interpretation of ancient Mayan works beyond the linguistic level have always been filled with illustrations of the original texts, and I continue that practice here. Translations of Western literature mirror the alphabetically written words of one language with those of another, using the same typeface for both, but works in the Mayan script require translations that are more like labels or captions, or like subtitles in a foreign film.

For some works by Mayan authors who used the alphabet, I have chosen to reproduce the original manuscripts. This approach preserves a sense of the antiquity of the works, and it also serves as a reminder that their authors worked outside the domain of print culture. In fact, no Mayan authors writing in their own languages gained direct access to print media until the middle of the twentieth century.

In the case of the sixteenth-century alphabetic book known as the Popol Vuh, written in K'iche' Maya, I have chosen to reproduce excerpts from the version published in Guatemala in 1999 by Sam Colop, a linguist and literary scholar who is a native speaker of K'iche'. In addition to correcting errors in the surviving manuscript, he recast its prose in lines that reveal a poetry of changes, with back-and-forth shifts between formality and the need to get on with the story. The lines of my translation follow his.

Another case of problematic prose is that of the script for Rabinal Achi, a K'iche' dance-drama whose dialogue is modeled on an ancient style of oratory. Happily, this play has much more to offer than its script. Because it continues to be produced in the present day, I was able to attend performances and make sound recordings. In the excerpt presented here, the lines of the text and translation are the result of close listening.

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As a first step toward understanding works written in the Mayan script, this book offers what I hope is a friendly introduction to the script itself (chapter 1). Next (in chapter 2) comes a brief look at the oldest known examples of Mayan inscriptions, which date from as early as 400 B.C.E. Many of these works are fragmentary and all of them are difficult to read, but they offer a foretaste of things to come. Most of them come from the Guatemalan highlands and Pacific piedmont, to the south of the rainforest region where the inscriptions of the Classic period of Mayan culture (250–925 C.E.) were centered.

An introduction to Classic texts is provided by ceramic drinking vessels that were painted by Ajmaxam, a writer and artist who worked in the city whose ruins are known as Naranjo (chapter 3). The most famous work of this artist, the Vase of the Seven Gods, is like many other works of the Classic period in bringing together two events, one of which took place in the remote era when the gods were the only inhabitants of the world and the other of which took place during the era of human life. The vessel was created as a gift for a royal child who would use it to drink chocolate, made from the first fruits of a cacao grove planted at the time of his birth.

Classic texts carved in stone are the subject of the next five chapters, beginning with the monuments of Copán and Quiriguá, at the southeast corner of the Mayan world (chapter 4). A stela at Quiriguá, dedicated by the lord Fiery Splendor in the Sky, has a mythic narrative inscribed on one side and a historical one on the other. Next comes a visit to Palenque, at the opposite corner of the Mayan world, where long texts are inscribed on stone tablets in a group of three temples commissioned by the lord Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar (chapters 5–7). The story of his dynasty is interwoven with that of the goddess Cormorant and her triplet sons, whose spirit familiars become visible in the night sky as the planets Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn.

When Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar dedicated his temples, he summoned the ghost of his paternal grandmother. A similar event is the subject of an illustrated text at Yaxchilán, to the east of Palenque (chapter 8). It is carved on the lintel of the main door of a palace constructed for Lady Shark Fin, the principal wife of a lord who ruled that town for sixty years, and it shows her summoning the patron deity of her husband's

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lineage by performing an act of sacrifice. From there we go farther east to Calakmul, near the center of the Classic world, and return to the intimate scale of a vessel for drinking chocolate (chapter 9). The painting on this vessel consists entirely of a text, recording the succession of lords who ruled Calakmul during its early history.

The painters and carvers of Classic vases sometimes created works that would be classified as "concrete poetry" in the terminology of modern literature (chapter 10). The signs of the Mayan script are present in these works, but their meanings derive from their placement in graphic designs rather than from their participation in sequences based on linguistic structure.

An exploration of the graffiti of the Classic period begins with plastered walls inside the rooms of Tikal, in the heart of the rainforest (chapter 11). Then come the bricks of Comalcalco, at the extreme western edge of the Mayan world, and the walls of the cave of Naj Tunich, in the mountains at the southeastern limit of the rainforest. Some of the authors of these works were ordinary people playing at literacy in an idle moment, but others were professional scribes, recording the fact of their presence at a point in time and space.

The Terminal Classic period (800–925 C.E.) takes us northward into the drier forests of the Yucatán peninsula, where a number of cities rose to prominence at the very time when the cities to the south went into a decline that ended with their abandonment. One of these northern cities is Cobá, where three different stelas bear a hypothetical date for the beginning of time that reaches billions of billions of years into the past (chapter 12). The most famous northern city is Chichén Itzá, which continued to play an important role in the history of that region during most of the Early Postclassic period (925–1200 C.E.). The main subject of the inscriptions there is the dedication of temples (chapter 13).

The surviving books in the Mayan script date from a period that runs from 1200 through the early colonial period, but the paintings on Classic vases offer clues to how earlier books were used and what they were like (chapter 14). Apparently, the formal communication of a message derived from a book required two specialists, one of whom was better at studying the text and the other of whom was better at speaking. Some books may have been pictorial histories similar to those of the Mexican highlands, the main difference being that the captions were written in the Mayan script. A rectangular vase whose four sides are painted like four pages from a book reveals that Classic works on paper included handbooks for midwives.

Among the surviving books, the most important is the Dresden Codex, which dates from the fifteenth century. It opens with almanacs that concern a primordial world in which the only measure of time was a 260-day calendar (chapter 15). Next come almanacs that introduce the celestial travels of Moon Woman (chapter 16) and the planet Venus, called the Great Star (chapter 17). Later sections track the actions of a peripatetic deity named Chaak, meaning "Thunderstorm" (chapter 18). A double-page spread from the Madrid Codex, a book that probably dates from the late six-

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teenth century, is devoted to a diagram that resembles a board game and maps the structure of several calendars that run concurrently (chapter 19).

Most of the Mayan books in Yucatán were destroyed in the sixteenth century, in the aftermath of the Spanish invasion. Ironically, the missionary who was proudest of his role as a book burner, Diego de Landa, was also the only Spaniard who wrote an account of the Mayan script (chapter 20). His description is flawed, but for modern scholars it has been the closest thing to a Rosetta stone.

With their own writing system under attack, Mayans in Yucatán began to use the roman alphabet to write in their own language. Their most notable works, the books of Chilam Balam, are compilations of writings on various subjects. The three passages presented here are from the book that was put together in the eighteenth century by Juan Josef Hoil, in the town of Chumayel. First comes a chronicle that goes by periods of 7,200 days and deals with the movements of the founders of Chichén Itzá (chapter 21). Next comes a set of seven riddles that served as a test of legitimacy for holders of high office (chapter 22), followed by the text of a song that accounts for the birth of the twenty day names of the Mayan divinatory calendar (chapter 23). Another work from the colonial period in Yucatán, the Ritual of the Bacabs, is a handbook of incantations for use in the treatment of various illnesses (chapter 24). The examples presented here concern two different forms of madness.

Less is known about the books that were destroyed during the invasion of highland Guatemala than in the case of Yucatán, but they certainly included divinatory almanacs. Indirect evidence indicates that they also included pictorial histories (chapter 25). Speakers of the K'iche' and Kaqchikel languages were quick to adapt the roman alphabet to their own purposes. Cristóbal Velasco, an orator from the first-ranking royal house of the K'iche' kingdom, collaborated with orators from two other houses to produce the book known as the Popol Vuh. In part, they sought to preserve the endangered knowledge recorded in what they described as the "original book" in the "ancient writing," but they were also responding to the threat posed by a ban on public performances of indigenous verbal art. Four passages from their work are presented here: an early episode in the creation of the world (chapter 26), the story of a female trickster named Blood Moon (chapter 27), the story of how Blood Moon's twin sons defeated the lords of Death (chapter 28), and the creation of "the human work, the human design" (chapter 29).

The most notable work by authors who wrote in Kaqchikel, a language closely related to K'iche', is a compilation known as the Annals of the Kaqchikels. The main section is a chronicle that goes by periods of four hundred days, beginning during the generation prior to the Spanish invasion and continuing into the seventeenth century. The excerpt reproduced and translated in chapter 30 offers a detailed account of the arrival of the Spanish invaders and the smallpox epidemic that preceded them. Its author, Francisco Hernández Arana, was the son of a Kaqchikel lord who survived the epidemic.

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Among all the alphabetic works by Mayan authors of the colonial period, the one that bears the closest resemblance to ancient Mayan books was written in K'iche' during the eighteenth century (chapter 31). It consists of divinatory almanacs whose contents and page layout have analogs among the almanacs of the Dresden and Madrid codices. An alphabetic work with ancient roots of a different sort is the script for Rabinal Achi or "Man of Rabinal," a dance-drama that was recently given World Cultural Heritage status by the United Nations. The idea of writing scripts for actors arrived in the company of the alphabet, but the subject of this play is the capture and sacrifice of a warrior that took place before the Spanish invasion, carried out according to military customs that go back to the Classic period. The excerpt presented in chapter 32 is the opening dialogue.

The manuscript of the Chilam Balam book of Chumayel includes material that was added as late as 1838, and the Rabinal Achi script was revised as recently as 1913. Otherwise, the texts of these and all the other works in the numbered chapters of this book reached their present forms before the end of the eighteenth century. Subsequent events in the history of writing in Mayan languages, including a cultural renaissance that began in the 1980s, are the subject of an epilogue.

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PART ONE

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1 Learning to Read

STANDING AT THE CORE of the Mayan writing system are the signs for dates from a divinatory calendar that was shared with the rest of Mesoamerica. Each date combines a day number, taken from a repeating series that runs from one through thirteen, with a day name, taken from a series of twenty names that run concurrently with the numbers. Because thirteen and twenty have no common factor, there are 260 possible combinations of number and name.

As a mathematical device and a measure of time, the divinatory calendar has more to do with the human body than with astronomy. A full moon is thirteen days old, as measured from the first appearance of a crescent on the western horizon at dusk, but thirteen is also the number of major points of articulation in the human body: ankles, knees, hips, wrists, elbows, and shoulders, all of which come in pairs, and the neck. The number of toes and fingers is twenty, and $13 \times 20 = 260$ days—which, by Mayan reckoning, is the ideal interval between the diagnosis of a pregnancy and the birth of a child.

The known history of the Mesoamerican divinatory calendar begins around 700–500 B.C.E., when it made its first appearance at a Zapotec site in the Mexican state of Oaxaca. The Mayan communities of highland Guatemala have never stopped using it, and their version has recently become available in printed appointment books. Ancient texts in the Mayan script nearly always include divinatory dates, and the signs for writing them remained unchanged over a very long period. A Mayan who could read a divinatory date written in 1511, the year in which Spaniards first came ashore in Yucatán, would have had no difficulty reading dates written twelve centuries earlier.

Judging from the evidence of graffiti, Mayans who were marginally literate were able to write divinatory dates, even if they were unable to write anything about the events connected to those dates. During the Classic period, graffiti were commonly incised on the plastered interiors of rooms. Most of these inscriptions are pictorial, but signs from the writing system appear here and there, sometimes rendered in such a sketchy fashion that they look like attempts to imitate writing. The legible inscriptions usually take the form of divinatory dates, often appearing in isolation rather than forming part of a larger text. Here is a date from a wall in the ruins of Tikal, next to a formal version of the same number and name. On the left side of both versions is the number 8, rendered with three dots (each with a value of one) and a bar (with a value of five). The day name is Ajaw, meaning "Lord." The person who scratched it on the wall left out the oval frame and trefoil device of the formal

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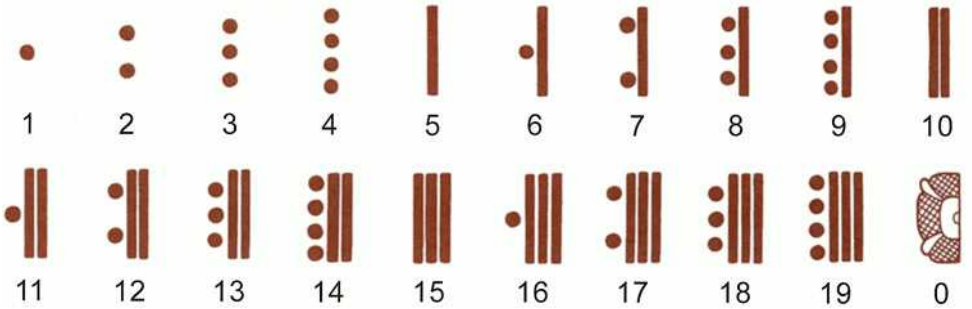
version, but this omission does not change the way the date would be read aloud. Instead, the frame and trefoil have a purely semantic function, reminding the reader that the reference is to the day named Ajaw rather than to a person who bears the title *ajaw.*

Numbers in Mayan texts nearly always concern the measurement of time, and like the number 8 in the date above, they are usually written using a bar-and-dot notation system rather than by using signs that correspond to the words of a specific language. I have chosen to translate bar-and-dot numerals with their arabic equivalents, which can also be read in more than one language. The numerals constructed with bars and dots range from 1 to 19, and they are used in combination with signs for zero such as the one included here:



When numbers modify nouns, they are usually prefixed in a vertical position, like the ones shown above, but they can be written horizontally, in which case the dots go above the bars. In the dates inscribed on monuments, a sign in the form of the profiled head of the number's patron deity may take the place of bar-and-dot notation. Here, for example, are the patrons of the numbers eight, nine, and ten. The patron of the number eight is Nal, who is named for an ear of corn. The name of the patron of nine, Yax B'alam or "First Jaguar," includes a play on the sound of the word for the number, which takes the form *b'olon* in the principal languages of the inscriptions. The patron of ten is Kimi, or "Death," perhaps because *lajun,* the word for the number, suggests *laj,* which means "the end." We do not know whether a person reciting from an inscription with such signs would have named the deities or the corresponding numbers, or both.

Numbers higher than 19 are written using place numeration. Bar-and-dot numbers and zeros (if needed) are arranged in a vertical column, with the values assigned to the places increasing upward. In general, the successive values increase by a multiple of 20 (as contrasted with 10 in a decimal system), but the value assigned to the third place is 360 (an approximation of the solar year) rather than 400. In the fourth and fifth places, the progression returns to multiples of 20, with $20 \times 360 = 7{,}200$ in the fourth place and $20 \times 7{,}200 = 144{,}000$ in the fifth. Numbers with as many as five places are usually dates from a calendar known as the long count, which measures the number of days that have elapsed since a hypothetical zero point equivalent to August 11, 3114 B.C.E. in retrospective Gregorian reckoning. In the long-count date at the top of the next page,

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taken from an almanac in a book, the lowest of the five places is occupied by a sign for zero that represents an empty shell. Expressed in decimal terms, the value of the highest place in this number is 1,296,000, followed by 64,800 in the fourth place, 3,240 in the third, 320 in the second, and zero in the first and lowest place. The grand total is 1,364,360 days, and the equivalent Gregorian date is February 7, 623 C.E.

9 x 144,000

9 x 7,200

9 x 360

16 x 20

0 x 1

In dates from the 260-day calendar, the day names that follow the numbers are written by drawing upon a set of twenty signs that are logographic, which is to say that each of them stands for an entire word. The signs are different from the ones used in other Mesoamerican writing systems, and in that sense they call upon the reader to interpret them as words in a language of the Mayan family. Even so, the signs transcend linguistic differences to the extent that they allow speakers of different Mayan dialects and languages to pronounce some of the names differently, or to use different names in some cases. What holds the set of twenty signs together from one Mayan language to another is their organization in a fixed sequence, which would have made it easy to treat differences in the spoken names as oral variations within a system whose visible expression was uniform. For Mayans learning to write, these signs would have been the closest thing to an alphabet, in that they have a fixed number and a fixed sequence.

In the account of the twenty day names that follows, two versions of each sign are illustrated. The first one shows the sign as it might appear in a text written with a brush or pen, whereas the second shows the same sign as it might appear when carved. In *italics* after each pair of signs is a translation based on one or more of the Mayan names that we know were assigned to the corresponding day. I give preference to names that could have been used by writers and readers of the Classic period, most of whom used a language belonging to the Ch'olan branch of the Mayan language family. This branch happens to be the one with the least linguistic documentation, so some of the name choices are based on indirect evidence from other Mayan languages.

In the reckoning of long-count dates, periods lasting 360, 7,200, and 144,000 days always begin on a divinatory day with the name that comes first in the following list (but with a variable day number), and they reach completion on a day with the name that comes last.

Ceiba. Imix, the name for this day in Yukatekan languages, is an esoteric term for the ceiba or silk-cotton tree, which is the model for the Mayan version of the world tree. In the K'ichean languages of the central Guatemalan highlands, the day name is Imox, meaning "left-handed."

Wind. In all Mayan languages, the name for this day is Ik' or a cognate thereof. The meaning, which extends to "breath," is the same in all cases as well.

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Night. In most Mayan languages, the name of this day is Ak'b'al or a cognate thereof, with meanings that extend to "darkness" or "nightfall." In the languages of Chiapas and western Guatemala, this day was named instead for a god of the slit drum known as Watan or Woton.

Net. In nearly every Mayan language, the name of this day is K'an or a cognate thereof, with meanings that include "yellow corn," and the sign itself may represent a corn kernel. The meanings of the Yukatekan and K'ichean names, respectively K'an and K'at, include a net bag for carrying ears of corn.

Snake. Embedded in the Yukatekan name for this day, Chikchan, is the Ch'olan term for "snake," which is *chan.* The term for "snake" is *kaan* in Yukatekan and *kan* in K'ichean, and the K'ichean name of the day is Kan. The sign (at least in the carved version) represents the profiled head of a rattlesnake.

Death. The name is Kimi in Yukatekan and Kame in K'ichean, meaning "death." Similar names prevail in other Mayan languages, but in Chiapas and western Guatemala, this day takes its name from Tox, a lord of the underworld.

Deer. In most Mayan languages, the name of this day means "deer," but the meaning of the Yukatekan name, Manik', is unknown. The sign is an image of the right hand with the thumb and forefinger drawn together. It can be used as a sign for a syllable, in which case it has the value *chi,* the first syllable in *chij,* the Ch'olan term for "deer." In both Yukatekan and K'ichean, the term for "deer" is *kej,* and the K'ichean name for the day is Kej.

Sunk. The Yukatekan name is Lamat, and the verb stem *lam* refers to the sinking of objects in water or below the horizon. In K'ichean, the name is Q'anil, meaning "yellow" or "ripe." In other contexts, this sign stands for words meaning "star" or "planet."

Tribute. The Yukatekan name is Muluk, and *mulb'il* means "tribute" in the sense of tribute payments. The K'ichean name is Toj, and the verb stem *toj* means "to pay." In the K'iche' kingdom, tribute payments were due on days named Toj.

Dog. The image in the carved sign is that of a dog, and the K'ichean name for this day is Tz'i', meaning "dog." The word for "dog" is *tz'i'* in most Mayan languages, including Ch'olan but excluding Yukatekan. Ok, meaning "foot," is the Yukatekan name for the day.

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Monkey. In nearly every Mayan language, the name for this day is B'atz', which is the term for the howler monkey. The Yukatekan name is Chuwen, a term for "artisan." Throughout the Mayan region, the patron deities of artisans, including writers, were divine monkeys who were twin brothers.

Tooth. The image in this sign is that of a skull and jawbone with at least one tooth showing, and early versions depict a toothed jawbone without the skull. Nearly all Mayan names for this day refer to the mouth or teeth, as in the case of Elab' in Tzotzil and Chuj, or they simply mean "tooth," as in the case of K'ichean E'. The Yukatekan name is Eb', meaning "stairway."

Lack. The Yukatekan name is B'en, and *b'enel* describes a state of incompleteness. The sign can also be used for a syllable, in which case it has the value *aj.* In K'ichean languages, the name for this day is Aj, meaning "cane stalk."

Jaguar. In all Mayan languages, the name for this day is Ix or Hix, meaning "jaguar." The image is that of a jaguar's face, with jaguar spots serving to mark the eyes and mouth.

Bird. In all Mayan languages other than Yukatekan, the name for this day is Tz'ikin, meaning "bird." The image may be the profiled head of the avian avatar of the god Itzamnaaj, whose name means something like "Far Seer" or "True Magician." The Yukatekan name for the day is Men, and *ajmen* means "worker" or "shaman."

Honey. Among the Mayan languages of Chiapas and western Guatemala, the name for this day is Chab'in, which probably derives from Ch'olan *chab',* meaning "bee," "beehive," or "honey." The Yukatekan name is Kib', meaning "wax," probably referring to beeswax. In K'ichean languages, the name is Ajmak or Ajmaq, meaning "sinner."

Earth. The Yukatekan name is Kab'an, meaning "earth," but the K'ichean name is No'j, meaning "thought."

Blade. The image is that of the flaked surface of a flint projectile point or knife blade. The Yukatekan name for this day is Etz'nab', which combines *etz',* meaning "sharpened," with *nab',* referring to the blade of a weapon. The K'ichean name is Tijax, an esoteric term for a flint knife.

Thunder. The names include Chak in Ch'ol, Chawak in Chontal, and Chawuk in Tzotzil, all of which mean "thunder" or "thunderstorm." Yukatekan Kawak and K'ichean Kawuq appear to be

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cognate with the Chontal and Tzotzil names, with a predictable consonant change from *ch* to *k,* but their apparent meanings are different. *Kawal* means "pride" in Yukatekan, and *kawuj* means "to dress up" in K'ichean.

Lord. The name is Ajaw in Yukatekan, Ajwal in Ch'olan, and Ajpu or Junajpu in K'ichean. Among the Mayan gods are twin brothers who hunt with blowguns, one of whom is named for this day. In Yukatekan and Ch'olan, he is Jun Ajaw or Jun Ajwal, meaning "One Lord," whereas in K'ichean, he is known by the name Junajpu, which combines *jun* or "one" with *ajpu,* the term for "blowgunner."

In addition to the twenty day signs, there are other logographs that number in the hundreds. Some of them, like the day signs, could have been organized into sets. For example, there are signs for the five colors that are associated with the five directions, and they could have been learned in the same order that was followed in a ritual circuit of the directions. Here are the five color signs in their directional order, corresponding (from left to right) to white (north), black (west), yellow (south), red (east), and a range that includes green and blue (center):

These signs are logographs in that they stand for complete words, but instead of standing alone, they are usually prefixed to larger characters that name the objects whose colors are being described.

The logographs for color terms seem arbitrary, though teachers of the writing system may have imparted explanations for their forms. Many logographs offer direct visual clues to their meaning, including some of the day signs. Here are further examples:

The sign for *chok,* meaning "to scatter" or "to sprinkle," takes the form of a partly opened right hand with objects falling from it. The sign for *k'in,* meaning "sun" or "day," represents the sun as a flower, with petals that suggest rays while at the same time forming a diagram of the four points at which the sun rises and sets at the solstices. The sign for *way,* referring to a dream or to a person's spirit companion, is a simplified frontal view of a human face with the left side peeled away to reveal the spotted hide of a jaguar, the most powerful of spirit companions. In the sign for *ch'een,* mean-

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ing "cave," a disembodied eye, in side view, hovers on the boundary between the inside and outside of a cave, with darkness behind the eye and light in front of it.

In addition to logographic signs, there are signs that stand for individual syllables. Here are some signs for syllables that consist of a vowel alone, without an accompanying consonant:

The smaller signs for *a, o,* and *u* in the bottom row are attached to the outer edges of larger characters. They appear here in the orientation they would have on the top edge, but they may be rotated as needed for placement on the left, right, or bottom edge.

The remainder of the syllabic signs stand for the combination of a consonant with one of five vowels. Here, for example, are some signs in which the consonant is *l:*

The signs for *la* and *li* in the second row are attached to the edges of larger characters, and the *le* sign can be attached in this way as well.

Some logographs can serve as signs for syllables. The sound of the word is shortened to its initial consonant and vowel, as in the following examples:

The two signs for the word *nuk,* meaning "large" or "thick," can also serve as signs for the syllable *nu.* Next come two signs for the word *te',* "tree," which can also serve as signs for the syllable *te.* Finally, the sign for *tzih,* meaning "raw" or "new," can serve as a sign for *tzi.*

Logographs are often complemented with syllabic signs that help the reader by indicating the first and/or last sound of the word in question, as in these characters:

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In the first example, the main sign is a logograph for *winik,* meaning "person" or "human being." The first syllable of *winik* is given by the sign attached to the left edge of the logograph, and the final consonant is indicated by the sign underneath it, which normally stands for the syllable *ki* but is pronounced without its vowel when it comes last in the spelling of a word. In the second example, the main sign is the profiled head of a jaguar, which by itself can serve as a logograph for *b'alam,* meaning "jaguar." Beneath the head is a sign that normally stands for the syllable *ma* but is here pronounced without its vowel, thus giving the final consonant of *b'alam.*

In the above examples, the vowel that precedes the final consonant is the same as the unpronounced vowel in the syllabic sign that confirms that consonant: *winik* is followed by a sign for *ki,* and *b'alam* is followed by a sign for *ma.* This arrangement is in accordance with a spelling rule that applies whenever the vowel that precedes the final consonant is a plain one. But if that vowel is lengthened or modified in some other way, a sign with a contrasting vowel may be chosen to indicate the final consonant:

The main sign in the first character is a logograph for Chaak, the name of a deity who brings thunderstorms, and the choice of a syllabic sign for *ki* (rather than *ka*) to represent the final consonant confirms that the preceding vowel is a long one (indicated here by a double *a*). The second character begins with a syllabic sign for *cha,* which would ordinarily have a short *a,* but the choice of *ki* to indicate the final consonant calls for lengthening. The resultant word is again Chaak.

As in the second version of Chaak, a writer may choose to spell a word for which a logograph is available with syllabic signs alone. Here is another example:

At left is the logograph for *pakal,* the term for "shield," followed by a syllabic spelling of the same word that combines three signs (with the vowel of the last one silenced). The twenty day names are never spelled out in this way, nor are their logographs complemented with signs for their first or last syllables.

In the spelling of a word that has a repeated sound, the affected syllable may be marked with two dots rather than being written twice:

In the first example, the repetition is indicated by the two dots at the upper right of the second syllabic sign, and the resulting word (with the final vowel dropped) is *tz'unun,*

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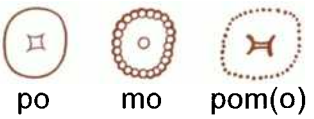
the term for "hummingbird." In the second example, the two dots are at the lower left of the first syllabic sign, and the result is *kakaw,* a term for "cacao" that has come into English by way of Spanish.

Two syllabic signs may be conflated, creating a single sign with features from each of the original signs:



In this example, *po* and *mo* are combined to produce *pom,* the term for copal incense.

When a word is modified by grammatical affixes, the syllabic sign corresponding to a prefix is placed on the top or left side of a character, and a suffix is placed on the bottom or right side. In the following examples, the noun or verb stems to which the affixes are attached are spelled with syllabic signs as well:

The first character combines *u-,* a third-person singular possessive pronoun, with *lak,* "plate," to produce *ulak,* "his or her plate." The second character combines *y-,* a third-person singular subject pronoun used before vowels; *ak',* a verb stem meaning "to give"; and *-aw,* a marker of ongoing action. The result is *yak'aw,* "he or she gives it."

Combinations of signs sometimes reflect poetic structure rather than linguistic structure as such. Many passages in Mayan texts take the form of parallel verse, in which words or phrases are organized in pairs or larger groups whose meanings clarify or complement one another. Most pairs require two or more characters, but if they consist of short noun phrases, they may be written with a single character. In this example, the spelling of a pair is accomplished by combining three signs, the first two of which are conflated:

K'ahk is "fire," and the combination of *b'u* and *tz'i* produces the lengthened *u* of *b'uutz',* "smoke." The meaning is similar to that of the English phrase "smoke and fire," but no conjunction is needed when pairing complementary terms in Mayan languages. In these next examples, a pair of nouns is preceded by a modifier that is meant to apply to each of them in turn:

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Extending clear across the top of the first character is the third-person singular possessive pronoun *u-,* which applies to both of the nouns below it. Thus, the full reading is *utook', upakal,* "his weapon, his shield." In the second character, the adjective *k'a* applies to both of the nouns written beneath it, so that the full reading is *k'a ha', k'a wah,* "plentiful drink, plentiful food."

Poetics and timekeeping come together in one of the commonest pairings, which sets the time of an event by combining dates from two calendars to form what Mayanists call a calendar-round date. The first member of the pair comes from the 260-day calendar, and the second comes from a calendar that tracks a 365-day year. The year is divided into eighteen named periods lasting 20 days each, followed by a final period lasting 5 days. In a date from this calendar, the number of days that have elapsed since the beginning of a period is prefixed to the name of the period. The opening day is the *chum,* or "seating," of the period, and the remaining days are numbered from one through nineteen. Here is an example of a complete calendar-round date, written from left to right:

In the second part, the prefixed number means that 8 days have passed since the beginning of the 20-day period whose Yukatekan name is Kumk'u, meaning "Kiln." This is the last of the 20-day periods, leaving only 5 days to complete the year. The 4 Ajaw 8 Kumk'u combination happens to coincide with the zero point of the long count. Any given combination recurs once each fifty-two years.

This next pair of phrases, again written with two characters, is from an inscription painted on a vase, composed entirely in parallel verse (see chapter 3 for a fuller account):

The first character combines *u-,* the third-person singular possessive pronoun, with *tz'ib',* a term for "writing" and other graphic arts. The second character begins with the word *yaal,* in which *y-* is the form the same pronoun takes before a vowel and *aal* means "speech." Thus, the poet combines the ideas of writing and speaking, both of which belong to the *way* of the remaining sign, which refers to a dream or to a person's spirit companion. The full reading is *utz'ib',/yaal way,* "the writing,/the speaking of the dream (or spirit)," referring to the poet's source of inspiration.

Parallel phrases can occur in groups of three or more, as in this passage from an inscription painted around the rim of a bowl. Together, the four characters identify the mother of the man for whom the bowl was made:

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She is first of all K'in Ixik, "Sun Woman," and the second character elaborates on this idea by calling her Ix Tz'ib' Chan, "Woman Who Inscribes (or Paints) the Sky." The next character gives her title as Ix Ajaw B'alam, literally "Woman Lord Jaguar." Ajt'zib'al, in the final position, halts the repetition of *ix* but picks up *tz'ib'* from the second character. *Aj-* is agentive, and *tz'ib'a-* is a verb stem meaning "to inscribe" or "to paint," converted by the suffix *-l* into a noun for something that has been inscribed or painted, in this case the bowl on which these words are written. Putting the four characters together and remembering that the verb "to be" is usually implicit in Mayan languages, we have something like this:

Sun Woman,
Woman Who Inscribes the Sky,
Lady Jaguar,
she is the one who inscribed this.

When texts consisting of multiple characters occur elsewhere than around the perimeters of ceramic vessels, they are usually divided into rows and columns by an underlying grid that creates spaces of approximately equal size. The columns are in pairs, and the two characters on each row read from left to right. When the bottom row in a pair of columns is completed, the reading continues with the top row in the next pair to the right. Figure 1 shows a passage from a lunar almanac in the Dresden Codex, with eight characters arranged in two double columns. The first character abbreviates a name whose full version is 13 Kan Kuy, "13 Sky Owl," referring to a constellation and the deity who resides there. On the present occasion, according to the next two characters, the owl is *umuut Uh Ixik,* "the herald of Moon Woman," which is to say the corresponding stars are rising above the horizon just ahead of the moon. What this event portends is given by the character that comes in fourth

Fig. 1. Passage from a lunar almanac in the Dresden Codex, with eight characters in two double columns. Within a pair of columns, the reading order goes from left to right and top to bottom.

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place: *umuuka,* "Something (or someone) is hidden," or, more ominously, "Someone is buried."

Next come the characters in the second pair of columns, of which the first three describe an event of the same kind but with a different constellation and a change of wording: *K'uk' umuuk Uh Ixik,* "Quetzal brings news of Moon Woman." The fourth and final character describes the portent: *ox okwa,* in which *ox* is literally "three" but serves as a figure of speech for "several," and *okwa* is a term for wedding feasts. The portent *(umuuka)* in the first half of this text and the event *(umuuk)* in the second half are spelled in the same way, but the context demands that they be read differently, keeping the final vowel in the first instance and dropping it in the second.

The spelling choices in this passage give birds a visual presence in addition to their verbal presence. The writer could have spelled the word for owl *(kuy)* with syllabic signs but instead rendered it with a logograph in the form of the head of a horned owl. The sign chosen for the syllable *mu* in the spelling of *umuuka* and *umuuk* is the profiled head of a *muut,* a partridge that plays no direct role in this text but is one of the principal birds of omen, warning of unexpected events by suddenly taking flight from its hiding place.

Most texts are accompanied by pictures, and in many cases there are links between the two that call attention to the pictorial aspects of the text and the textual aspects of the picture. Figure 2 shows the almanac passage about Moon Woman and the owl again but this time includes the picture that occupies the space beneath the text. We can see an obvious resemblance between the head of the horned owl in the text and the one in the picture. Both versions show the owl's beak in profile, but its eye is turned to the front and both horns are visible. The owl in the text is *said* to be Moon Woman's herald, whereas the one in the picture is *shown* to be taking flight above her. Moon Woman, like the owl, has the same eye in both places. In her name the sign for *uh,* meaning "moon," is a kinky strand of hair, and the ends of her longest hairs in the picture are kinky as well. The biggest difference between text and picture is that the text follows the temporal sequence of speech, whereas the picture is organized in space. Even so, the text has a spatial dimension in its placement of the name of the owl above the name of Moon Woman, and the picture has a temporal dimension that reads from top to bottom, with the owl, wings outspread, coming into view ahead of Moon Woman.

Fig. 2. The first part of the text from figure 1, complete with the picture that accompanies it. The red highlighting shows the links between text and picture.

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2 Early Mayan Writing

THE STORY OF the Mayan script begins with scattered fragments, and necessarily so. Much of the evidence lies deeply buried beneath layers of the more recent past, and even when it does come to light, it is more likely to be damaged than is later evidence. Pottery vessels whose surfaces are painted or carved sometimes survive intact, but early writers did not favor pottery as a medium for their work. They did paint texts on plastered surfaces, but plaster is easily damaged. They also carved texts in stone, but stone can erode, break, and even shatter. As for writing on hide, cloth, or paper, those materials have long since disintegrated.

The ongoing story of the discovery of fragments of early Mayan writing is itself composed of disconnected fragments, of chance encounters with texts that were not necessarily what an archaeologist was looking for. And even when an early text does come to light, the attempt to read it produces only fragmentary results. Some of the signs in such texts are recognizable as ancestral versions of signs that appear in the more readable texts of later times, but many others resist interpretation. Early texts are much less likely than later ones to recombine signs, creating composite characters or affixing small signs to larger ones. What this means for a would-be reader is that there is a scarcity of syllabic signs. The fewer the clues to the sound of a text and the component parts of its words, the harder it is to determine the language in which it was written, and not knowing the language makes it difficult to experiment with possible word sequences.

The place and time where writing originated in Mesoamerica are unknown and may be unknowable. As things stand, the earliest evidence is provided by Monument 3 at the Zapotec site of San José Mogote in Oaxaca, dating from around 700–500 B.C.E. Carved on this monument are a day number and name from the 260-day divinatory calendar, which may have been in use all over Mesoamerica by that time. Within the Mayan world, the earliest evidence for writing dates from the Late Preclassic period, running from 400 B.C.E. to 250 C.E. The oldest-known texts, both of which have been dated to around 400 B.C.E., were discovered at the Guatemalan sites of El Portón, in the valley of the Río Salamá in the northern highlands, and San Bartolo, in the rainforest of the far northern lowlands. In both cases, the characters appear in single columns rather than in the paired columns that predominate later.

The inscription at El Portón (figure 3) is from the lower end of what was once a longer text on Monument 1, a stela that has been badly eroded. Four full characters survive, separated by horizontal bars. The rectilinear quality of the carving, together

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Fig. 3. Inscription carved on Monument 1 at El Portón, Guatemala. Preclassic.

with the bars and the border along the edge, suggest that the prototype for this text was a textile, created on a backstrap loom configured for weaving belts. Such looms are depicted in ancient Mayan art and continue in use among Mayan weavers today.

The first of the surviving characters in the El Portón inscription features a profiled head that faces left, as do the profiled heads in later inscriptions. The character that comes closest to being as readable as those in later texts is the one in the third position, shown above with what may be its Classic counterpart. The Classic sign stands for the number twenty and can be combined with bars and dots to produce larger numbers that usually refer to the age of the current moon or the length of the current synodic month. The crescent shape of the sign alerts the reader to the lunar nature of the number. In Classic inscriptions, lunar information is preceded by dates from the 260-day and 365-day calendars. If the present inscription was organized in a similar way, the missing upper portion may have included such dates.

The early inscription at San Bartolo (figure 4) is painted on a fragment of plaster that was found where it fell on the floor of a room. Despite the use of a brush, the lines have a rectilinear tendency that contrasts with the roundness of later calligraphy and could reflect an aesthetic preference derived from loom weaving. In the last three positions are profiled heads that follow the pattern of later Mayan writing in facing left. The second character from the top may be ancestral to the Classic signs shown at the top of the next page. In either case, a hand holds a pen or brush, and both of the Classic signs are logographs that read *tz'ib'*, "writing."

In the central Guatemalan highlands, on the west side of

Fig. 4. Inscription from a fragment of painted plaster found in the Las Pinturas pyramid at San Bartolo, Guatemala. Preclassic.

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what is now Guatemala City, is the massive site of Kaminaljuyu. Engraved on Stela 10 is the longest of all early inscriptions within the Mayan region (figure 5). It is also one of the earliest ones to arrange the characters in double rather than single columns. The grid that underlies the columns and rows once again suggests a sensibility derived from loom weaving. The outlines of some of the characters have the pebblelike shapes that would predominate in later Mayan writing.

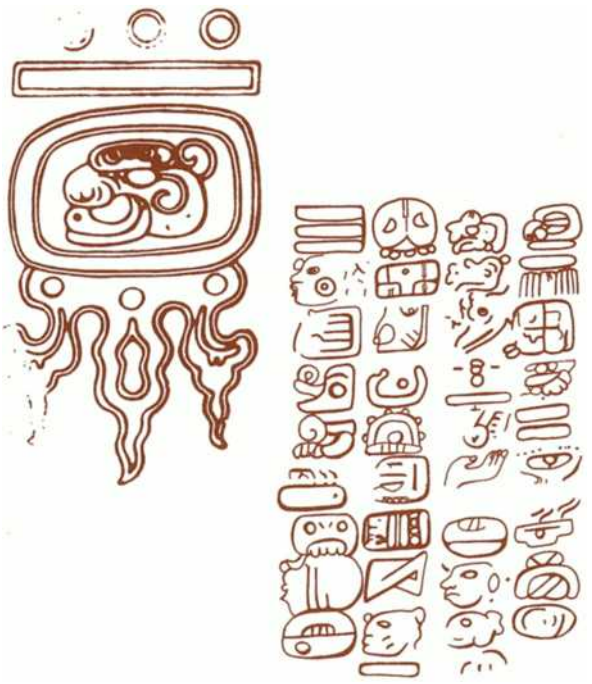

Fig. 5. Inscription carved on Stela 10 at Kaminaljuyu, Guatemala. Late Preclassic.

The enormous initial character in this inscription gives a divinatory date whose number is 8, written with three dots (valued at one each) and a bar (with a value of five). Written below the number is the day name, given by the left-facing jaguar head of the main sign. The equivalent character in later Mayan texts reads Ix, meaning "Jaguar," but this early version, which is more naturalistic, could have been read as the word for "jaguar" (and for the day of that name) in any of the Mesoamerican languages whose speakers were familiar with the divinatory calendar. The same is not true of later Mayan renditions of this day name, in which the head faces forward and three jaguar spots do double duty as facial features, as in the example below. The trefoil device beneath both versions of the name is a specifically Mayan way of marking a day name.

Following the initial 8 Jaguar date in the Kaminaljuyu text is a date from the 365-day calendar. This date is in the first row of the first pair of columns in the main text. It consists of the three bars of the number 15 and (to the right of the number) an ancestral version of the name of the fifth of the twenty-day periods in the 365-day year, whose later reading is Tzeek, meaning something like "Penance." This may be the earliest occurrence of the pairing of dates from these two calendars. The alignment between the two calendars that produced this particular combination is different from

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the one that produced most of the combinations in Classic inscriptions. The stela on which it appears belongs to an archaeological period that begins around 300 B.C.E. and continues for three hundred years. A coherent reading of the rest of the text remains to be worked out, and even the question of the language in which it is written remains unresolved.

A COSMIC DIAGRAM

Some of the early Mayan texts that have come to light are inscribed on implements and ornaments. Figure 6 shows a jade ear ornament that was made during the last 250 years of the Preclassic period. It comes from Pomona, a small site in Belize. The characters are arranged in four equally spaced groups around a circle. Again, the profiled heads face left. Just beneath the top and bottom heads are oblong signs marked with human footprints. In Classic texts, such footprints stand for *b'i,* meaning "road." The top one is headed toward the right, and the bottom one toward the left, indicating that the reader should proceed clockwise from one part of the text to the next.

Fig. 6. Incised jade ear ornament from Pomona, Belize. Late Preclassic.

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The head above the top footprint is that of the god of the sun or day, who is also the god of the number written beneath the footprint, which is 4. On the opposite side of the circle is the god of corn, with his number, 8, written below the footprint beneath his head. The left and right heads seem to form a "day" and "night" pair. The one on the left, which seems to be an alternative version of the top head, is marked with a *k'in* sign (highlighted in red in the illustration below), meaning "sun" or "day," whereas the one on the right is marked with an *ak'b'al,* or "night," sign (also in red):

The signs above these two heads are in the right position to represent verbs. If they have the same values as their Classic equivalents, then the one on the left states that the sun god is coming into a position of power, and the one on the right states that his nocturnal counterpart is receiving offerings.

The Pomona ear ornament provides an early example of a work of art in which characters serve two purposes at the same time (see chapter 10 for later examples). At one level, the characters can be read simply as a text; at another level, they occupy places in a larger graphic composition that illustrates or extends their meaning. The characters on the ear ornament form a cosmic diagram, one whose meaning would be clearer if we could read all the signs that compose it.

EARLY LONG-COUNT DATES

Long-count dates record the total number of days that have elapsed since the hypothetical end of an era that preceded the present one (see the previous chapter). The earliest-known long-count dates that correspond to historical events are five-place numbers with 7 in the highest position. In the Mayan region, a date of this description is carved on Stela 1 at the site of El Baúl, on the Pacific piedmont of Guatemala. The text on this monument, like the one on Stela 10 at Kaminaljuyu, begins with a large-scale divinatory date (at upper left in figure 7) in which the day number is written above the name. In this case, the number is 12 (written with two dots and two bars), and the day sign is the one whose Classic version means "Tooth." Then come four characters (in two columns) that cannot be read, but if this passage is like the ones that often follow divinatory dates in Classic inscriptions, it may concern the current status of the moon. Next come the numbers of the long-count date. Some of them are hard to make out, but the only reading that is compatible with the date 12 Tooth is the one indicated by the red labels in figure 7. In the notation system used by Mayanists, it is 7.19.15.7.12, and the Gregorian equivalent is March 2, 37 C.E.

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The text continues in a pair of columns to the right of the dates. The outlines of the characters are clear, but no traces of carving are evident on their surfaces, so they may have been painted. Judging from later inscriptions, the subject of this part of the text was probably the deeds of the person depicted next to it. The billowing clouds above him, the flame-shaped flint at the tip of his staff, and the mask that leaves his eyes and mouth exposed all suggest that he is impersonating Chaak, the god of thunderstorms.

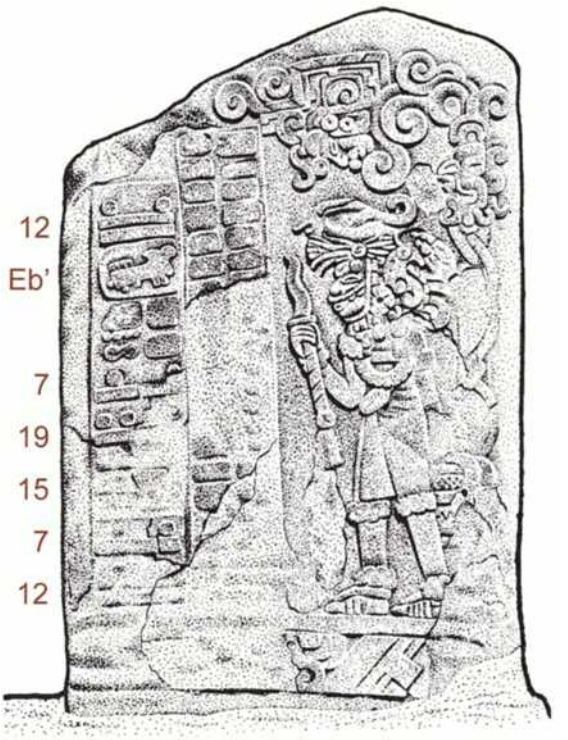

Fig. 7. Stela 1 at El Baúl, Guatemala, with divinatory and long-count dates labeled in red. Late Preclassic.

West of El Baúl is the Pacific piedmont site of Tak'alik Ab'aj, where Stela 5 bears the second-oldest of the known long-count dates within the Mayan region. It is 8.4.5.17.11, equivalent to June 4, 126 C.E. So far, no long-count dates from the Late Preclassic period have turned up in the Mayan lowlands of the north, on the Atlantic side of the highlands. By the time such dates do start turning up in that region, in the Early Classic period, they have ceased to be inscribed anywhere else. The earliest-known northern date, carved on Stela 29 at Tikal, is 8.12.14.8.15, falling on July 6, 292. Early Classic inscriptions continue to have a high proportion of logographic signs, and they tend to be brief, devoting as much or more space to the dating of events as to the events themselves.

Long-count dates are relatively rare until 9.3.0.0.0, which came in 495, but then they begin to appear on monuments at multiple sites in the northern lowlands. After 9.8.0.0.0, which came in 593, they appear at more frequent intervals and in many more places, and their ubiquity is one of the features archaeologists use to define the Late Classic period, which they reckon as beginning in 550 or 600. Inscriptions become longer than before, with more details and more episodes in the stories they tell, and they also become more readable, with a higher proportion of syllabic signs.

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3 The Skilled Observer from Maxam

IN THE EASTERN reach of the Mayan rainforest was a city whose ruins received the name Naranjo in 1905, when an Austrian explorer first reported their existence to the outside world. Thanks to the inscriptions left behind by Mayan writers, we now know the names by which that city was known in its own time: Wak Kab'nal, "Sixth Earth Place," and, more commonly, Maxam, whose meaning is uncertain. The site lies inside present-day Guatemala, a short distance west of the country's border with Belize. Not far north and south of it are the Holmul and Mopán rivers, whose waters reach the Caribbean through northern Belize.

The recorded history of the ruling dynasty of Maxam, so far as it is presently known, runs from 475 to 820 C.E. The official account of the succession of rulers makes a claim to a much deeper past, naming an ancestor who preceded the historical lords of Maxam by many thousands of years. The main theme in the story of the human lords is their struggle to maintain Maxam's position among three more powerful cities. Two of these cities were in the riverless basin of the central lowlands—Calakmul to the north of Maxam and Tikal to the west; the third, Caracol, was in the foothills of the pine-forested Maya Mountains, to the south.

Through most of their history, the lords of Maxam allied themselves with those of Calakmul, but in the early seventh century, they were the objects of coordinated military attacks by Calakmul and Caracol. For a time they were vassals of the lords of Caracol, but in 680, they asserted their independence by attacking and sacking Caracol. In the late seventh century, they lost ground when they found themselves on the losing side of a war in which Tikal defeated Calakmul. They reestablished control of their local domain during the early eighth century, but in 744, Maxam itself was attacked and sacked by Tikal.

The lords who ruled Maxam during the latter half of the eighth century were able to reconstruct their domain once again. The lord who concerns us here is K'ak' Ukalaw Chan Chaak, "Fiery Crack in the Sky Thunderbolt," who ruled from 755 until a few years after 780. He was married to Ix Jub' Ek', or "Lady Shell Star," from a town not far to the west that was under his rule. They had at least two sons, one of whom succeeded his father for a short time and the other of whom ruled from 784 until 814. A third child, whose gender is unknown, has become famous in our time as a writer and painter whose work appears on ceramic vessels for drinking chocolate. In the case of the vessel in figure 8, this artist chose to use a space that would ordinarily be devoted to pictures for diagonal blocks of text (one on each side) and a repeated floral motif. The

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Fig. 8. Vessel for drinking chocolate, painted by the skilled observer from Maxam (the site now known as Naranjo). Late Classic.

diagonal texts, along with the horizontal text at the top, have yet to be fully deciphered, but the text at the bottom yields a reasonably clear reading. It runs in a complete circle, but its beginning point is revealed by the view in the photograph. When the vessel is turned toward the viewer with one of the diagonal texts in the center of the field of vision, the bottom text begins with the first character that is fully legible at lower left. Here are the first four characters, together with an alphabetic transcription:

The first three signs spell *utz'ib',* in which *u-* is "his or hers" and *tz'ib'* is a term that covers writing, painting, and graphic design in general. The second character spells *yaal way,* in which *y-* is "his or hers," *aal* is "speech," and *way* means "dream" and sometimes refers to a person's guardian spirit. As is often the case in Mayan sentences, the verb "to be" is implicit here, so that the first two characters can be translated as follows: "This is the writing, the speaking of the dream." What this means is that the message contained in the diagonal texts on this vessel was given to the writer in a dream, perhaps by his or her guardian spirit. The third character, which refers to the dreamer, combines *leek',* referring to a fierce or penetrating gaze, with *itz'at,* meaning "clever, skilled, artistic, wise," yielding something like "skilled observer." The fourth and final character reads *Ajmaxam,* "person of Maxam." Here, then, is a translation that accounts for the opening passage: "This is the writing, the speaking of the dream of a skilled observer, a person from Maxam."

The passage that introduces the writer is followed by one that identifies his or her mother as a person of royal rank:

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The first character spells *yal,* "her child," referring to a woman's child of either sex. The second one describes the mother as a *ch'uh k'an ixik,* a lady *(ixik)* who makes offerings by sprinkling *(ch'uh)* gems and other objects of value *(k'an)* on an altar while praying for her subjects, asking for an abundance of children, crops, and wealth. In the third character, she is named as Ix Jub' Ek', "Lady Shell Star." The fourth and fifth characters together give her the title Ix Yax Ha' Ajaw, in which Ix makes Ajaw into a female lord and Yax Ha' is a town called "Green Water." This town once stood on the shore of a lake of the same name, and the ruins and the lake are still known as Yaxha today. Last, in the sixth and seventh positions, come characters that assign this town to the *och k'in ajtzuk*, "sun-entering quarter," meaning that it occupies the western position in a four-directional group of places centered on Maxam. We now know that the "skilled observer" who inscribed this vessel is "the child of a lady who offers gems, Lady Shell Star, Lady of Green Lake, in the quarter where the sun sets."

The inscription around the base of the vessel ends with a passage that identifies the writer's father:

The first character spells *yune,* "his child," referring to a man's child of either sex. The next three describe the child's father as *ox k'atun ch'ajom, ajtok'a',* an observer of penitential fasts *(ch'ajom)* and a practitioner of sacrificial bloodletting *(ajtok'a')* during three *(ox)* consecutive periods of the kind called a "score of stones" *(k'atun),* each consisting of $20 \times 360 = 7{,}200$ days. In the fifth character, the main sign is surrounded by affixes that describe this man as a *ch'uh k'an ajaw* (for which the final *aw* is a phonetic complement), a lord *(ajaw)* who makes offerings in the same manner as his wife. The main sign is *sa,* or *sa',* which is the name (or perhaps the first syllable of the name) of his dynasty. Possible meanings for *sa'* include "atole," a drink made from corn flour, and "crossroads." The last character further describes him as a *sak chuwen,* "lucid artisan." So this pious man is the "lord who offers gems for the Crossroads, a lucid artisan."

The text that circles the base of this vase is exceptional in the fullness of its poetic structure. Mayan inscriptions are often highly laconic, as if the writers had left it up to their readers to create parallel verse by supplying missing phrases, but in this case, the structure is already there in the written words. Here is a full translation, broken into lines that display the parallel phrasing:

This is the writing,
the speaking of the dream

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of a skilled observer,
a person from Maxam,
born of a lady who offers gems,
Lady Shell Star,
Lady of Green Lake,
in the quarter where the sun sets,
begotten by a penitent man
who let his blood for three score stones,
the lord who offers gems for the Crossroads,
a lucid artisan.

These words would have been more than enough to reveal the writer's identity to his or her contemporaries, and even now they serve to locate him or her in space and (by way of dynastic records) in time. But they do not include any proper names for the writer, who was content to be known as the skilled observer from Maxam whose parents were the Lady of Green Lake and the lord who offers gems for the Crossroads.

READING THE VASE OF THE SEVEN GODS

One of the most famous Mayan drinking vessels, the Vase of the Seven Gods, has been identified as the work of the Maxam observer (figure 9). The text that circles the vessel just below the rim is a dedication, and the text that runs downward toward the base serves as a caption for the picture. The vessel commemorates two events, one human and the other divine. The human event, recorded in the rim text, occurred early in the life of a child of royal descent. The divine event, recorded in the picture and its caption, was a meeting of the gods on the eve of the creation of the present world. The previous world had fallen into darkness, which is why the artist chose to write and paint in solid black alone.

The rim text begins above the headdress of the god who sits at the front of the top row of three gods. The opening passage follows a sequence that also appears (with differences in calligraphy and spelling) on cylindrical vessels painted by other artists:

The first pair of characters refers to a formal occasion on which the vessel was handed over to the person for whom it was made. *Aliiy* means "it is or was said" or "spoken

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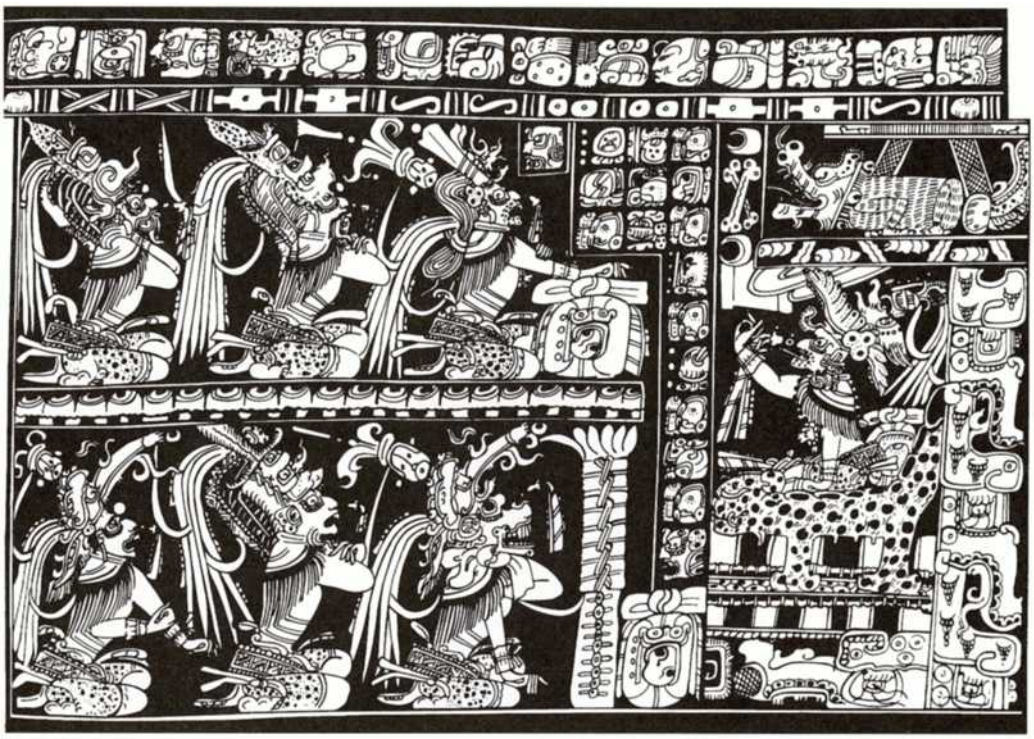
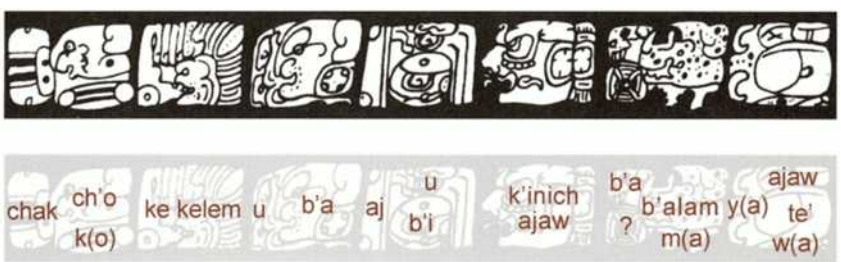


Fig. 9. Rollout view of the painting on the Vase of the Seven Gods, by the skilled observer from Maxam. This vessel is of the same shape as the one in figure 8.

over," perhaps referring to a blessing, and *t'ab'iy* means "it is or was raised" or "presented." The subject of these verbs is specified by the *yuch'ib'* of the third character, in which *y-* is "his or her" and *uch'ib',* literally "drinking instrument," is the term for the type of vessel on which this inscription appears. The rest of the passage states that the present vessel is *ta yuta,* "for the seeds or fruit," from a *tzi te'el,* "new grove or orchard," of *kakaw,* "cacao." In the last character, the upper sign is a picture of a fish *(kay),* but here it is meant to evoke the syllable *ka,* whose twofold repetition in *kakaw* is indicated by the doubling of the # mark on the fish's body. So far, then, we have something like "It was blessed, it was presented: his or her drinking vessel for the fruit of a new grove of cacao trees."

The rest of the rim text reveals that the recipient of the vessel and the owner of the cacao trees is a small boy:



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The primary meaning of the *chak* prefix of the first of these characters is "red," but in this context, it carries a sense of "bare" or "smooth skinned" or "not hairy." It modifies *ch'ok,* literally "sprout or shoot," a metaphor for a young child who has recently grown from a royal tree. In the second character, *ke* is a phonetic complement for *kelem,* meaning that this child is "strong," "robust," or "young." Next he is described as *ub'a ajub'i,* "the one who is the listener," presumably listening to the person who presented the vessel to him. The fifth character gives him a royal name reserved for males, K'inich Ajaw, or "Sun-Eyed Lord." A further name is given by the sixth character, whose main sign reads *b'alam* or "jaguar" and is preceded and followed by appropriate phonetic complements. It carries an additional affix (at lower left) whose value is unknown. The final character identifies Sun-Eyed Lord Jaguar as *yajaw te',* "the lord (or owner) of the trees," with the *w(a)* suffix complementing *ajaw.*

Here is a translation of the complete rim text, adjusted to clarify its sense and organized in lines that display its poetic structure:

It was blessed,
  it was presented,
this drinking vessel for the fruit
  of a new grove of cacao trees.
It belongs to the smooth-skinned sprout,
  the young boy who listened,
Sun-Eyed Lord Jaguar,
  the owner of the trees.

Several other drinking vessels have inscriptions that combine the mention of cacao from a new grove with the naming of a "sprout" as the vessel's owner. This fact suggests that the birth of a royal child was marked by the planting of a cacao orchard and that the first fruiting of the trees provided an occasion to celebrate the growth of the child. New cacao trees produce pods as early as the third year and no later than the fifth, which is consistent with the youth of the individuals named on the vessels.

The painter of the present vessel may have considered the newness of the child and the cacao trees when choosing the subject matter for the picture. The seven gods, though they are meeting in the dark, will soon release light into the sky of a renewed world. The three levels on which they sit represent three levels of the cosmos. On the upper border of the highest level, running just below the rim text, is a band decorated with repeated motifs that identify it as the vault of the sky, and suspended from this band is a crocodilian dragon (see above) that inhabits a river that is

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visible in the night sky as part of the Milky Way. The three gods sitting in the upper row and facing the dragon are in the sky. At the head of the row is the god B'alam Ak'ab', or "Jaguar Night," who is sometimes shown sitting in the bow of a celestial canoe with a paddle in his hand.

Resting on the baseline of the painting and facing left are the head and upper jaw of another monster (at right), the subterranean counterpart of the celestial dragon. The three gods seated in the lower row and facing in his direction are in the underworld.

All six of the gods who face right have their arms folded or have one hand resting on the opposite forearm. In this way, they express their submission to the elderly deity who sits before them on the throne (at left), with the celestial and terrestrial monsters above and below him. His position is on the surface of the earth. The main attributes that identify him are the cigar in his mouth and his broad hat, decorated with owl feathers. He has other guises, but in the present one he is the patron deity of merchants, who travel over the earth.

The caption for the picture opens with a double column of six characters, read from left to right and top to bottom. The first line gives a so-called calendar-round date for the event in the picture, combining the day 4 Ajaw or "4 Lord" from the 260-day divinatory calendar with 8 Kumk'u or "8 Kiln" from the calendar of the 365-day year. All texts in the Mayan script, from Classic times right up to the fifteenth-century Dresden Codex, agree in reckoning the final day of the previous world, or the eve of the present world, as 4 Lord 8 Kiln. In the alphabetic work known as the Ritual of the Bacabs, written in Yucatán during the colonial period, the mention of 4 Lord by itself was enough to evoke this distant moment in time.

The second line begins to tell us what is happening in the picture. First comes a verb, *tz'akiyaj,* meaning that something "was put in order" or "arranged," followed by a statement of what is put in order, namely *ek' utan.* The terms for "star" and for "black" or "dark" are both *ek',* so that *ek' utan* could mean both "the stars of the center" and "the darkness of the center." That the artist intended such a play of meaning seems likely, given that he or she clothed all seven gods in kilts made from jaguar pelts and

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covered the throne with a complete jaguar pelt. Mayans likened the black-spotted hides of jaguars to the white-spotted night sky, partly because of the sound play provided by *ek'*.

The account of the ordering of the present world continues with a series of clauses that repeat the verb *ch'uhb'a,* whose various objects are given their places in the order of things by a subject who will not be named until the end of the caption. In the first clause, he puts *chanal,* "the sky," in place. The next clause, located at the top of the single column of characters that completes the caption, is *ch'uhb'a kab'al.* Now we have a couplet: "He puts the sky in place, / he puts the earth in place." But the artist-poet chose not to write these lines in a way that would reflect their parallel structure, instead writing the sky half of the couplet horizontally and the earth half vertically.

Next comes a couplet whose parallel clauses share not only the verb *ch'uhb'a* but the use of numbers as well. In the first clause, *9 och te'* can be interpreted as "the 9 who enter the tree," but the bar-and-dot number prefix, though it is literally *b'olon,* or "nine," can also be read (by way of sound play) as *b'o'lay,* meaning "spotted" or (by way of metonymy) "jaguar." In chapter 5, we will learn that the tree corresponds to a part of the Milky Way that sometimes stands straight up on the horizon, meaning that the spots of this jaguar could be stars. In the second clause, *3 luut* means "the 3 who were born together," referring to triplets. These would be the three hearthstones of the earthly Mayan fireplace and the three stars that mark a celestial hearth, as will become clear later.

The next pair of characters combines *ch'uhb'a* with *jawtechi,* referring to a space like the one inside a house, in this case the space between sky and earth. The final repetition of *ch'uhb'a* is followed by B'alam Ak'ab', "Jaguar Night," the name of the deity who sits at the front of the row of the three figures in the sky. The last character in the caption identifies the subject by the repeated verb *ch'uhb'a,* who turns out to be the merchant god seated on the throne, presiding over the scene. His name is Ek'ich Ajaw, "Black-Faced Lord" or "Star-Faced Lord." He is sometimes depicted with a black face, but here he has black jaguar spots (or stars) around his mouth.

The merchant god's name has been inserted on the left side of the top row of the caption, as if the poet-artist had run out of space at the bottom and had to look for another place to put it. But there are several reasons for thinking

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the name's location was planned. One reason is purely formal: just as the text on the rim of this vase has its last character immediately to the left of the first one, so does the text of the caption. Another reason is the relationship between the caption and the picture: the movement from B'alam Ak'ab' (at bottom right in the caption) to Ek'ich Ajaw (at top left) leads the reader's eye up to the place where Jaguar Night is sitting in the sky, with Black-Faced Lord looking toward him from the level of the earth. Moreover, their names are immediately preceded by a mention of the space that separates earth from sky. A final reason is the temporal relationship between the caption and the rim text: the end of the caption leads the reader out of the mythic dawn of the present world and into the early years of the flesh-and-blood child for whom the vase was made.

Here is a translation of the caption that takes into consideration the double meanings of *ek'*:

On 4 Lord
  8 Kiln,
the darkness of the center was put in order,
  the stars of the center were put in order.
The one who gave the sky its place,
  who gave the earth its place,
who gave the 9 jaguars who entered the tree their places,
  who gave the 3 who were born together their places,
who gave the open space its place,
  who gave Jaguar Night his place
was the Black-Faced Lord,
  the Star-Faced Lord.

THE SECRET OF THE THREE BUNDLES

The task remains to translate three characters located within the picture, each of them labeling an object. The objects are cloth bundles, tied shut with bowknots. One of them is in front of Jaguar Night, who rests his right hand on top of it. Another, labeled in exactly the same way, sits on the baseline of the painting, in front of the earth monster's snout. The third bundle is partially hidden behind the cigar-smoking merchant god, resting on his throne. Here are the bundles of Jaguar Night and the god on the throne, with transcriptions of the signs written on them. The label on the bundle at left is prefixed with the bar-and-dot sign for the number 9, *b'olon*, which (as we already know) can also be read as *b'o'lay*, "spotted" (like a jaguar). Next comes a sign for *ek'* that normally

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Fig. 10. Detail from the painting in figure 9, with three bundles of starlight highlighted in white.

means "star" in an astronomical context but could also mean "black." When this sign is placed over the logographic sign for *kab'*, or "earth," as it is here, the two signs together are generally interpreted as diagramming the rising of a star or stars over the earth. In the case of the bundle on the right, the artist has omitted the signs for *b'olon* and *ek'* and spelled *kab'* with syllabic signs. The general effect of these differences is to make this bundle harder to spot than the others. A viewer who knew that the gods were dealing with three bundles on this occasion would see the two that are identical and fully visible right away but would then have to look more carefully to spot the third one.

A straightforward astronomical reading of either of the fully visible labels would be "9 stars over the earth." At the same time, the presence of so many jaguar pelts in the picture keeps alive the possibility of reading black-spotted jaguars into the signs for *b'olon* and *ek'*. But going down that path only brings the reader back to the stars hidden in the bundles, which will speckle the night sky when the knots are untied.

Further information about the three bundles and what the gods did with them on

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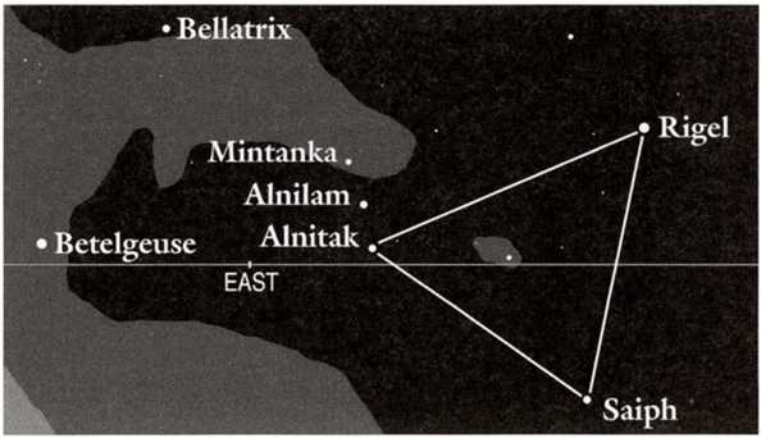
the day 4 Lord 8 Kiln is given by an inscription carved on a stela at Quiriguá (to be discussed more fully in the next chapter). That version of the story is puzzling at first, because it describes the bundles as containing stones and does not mention stars. The beginning of the solution to this puzzle lies in the fact that the gods who arrange the three stones are said to be measuring a hearth. Their cosmic hearth, like a hearth in an ordinary Mayan household, would have been bounded by three stones laid out in an equilateral triangle. Returning to the bundles painted on the drinking vessel, we must now take note of the fact that the poet-artist arranged them in just such a triangle (figure 10). The gods of the inscription on the stela place their three bundles in the sky (like the upper one in the figure), in the earth (like the lower one), and in an intermediate position on the surface of the earth (like the bundle on the throne).

We still have the problem of matching the stars of the painting to the stones of the stela. The beginning of a solution is in the Popol Vuh, a sixteenth-century alphabetic work written in K'iche' Maya. In describing the end of the world that immediately preceded the present one, the authors state that the people of that time saw hearthstones "shooting out, coming right out of the fire." They do not go on to say that the stones became stars, but Andrés Xiloj Peruch, a contemporary K'iche' priest-shaman, had no difficulty imagining such a transformation. When he was given this passage to read, he immediately took it to be an account of the origin of a constellation named Oxib' Xk'ub', "Three Hearthstones," marked out by Rigel, Alnitak, and Saiph in Orion. Map 1 shows the principal stars of Orion as they appeared while rising in Mayan latitudes during the Classic period. The triangle formed by the hearthstones encloses the M-42 nebula (the small gray area on the map), which is interpreted as the smoke from a fire. Rigel, the brightest star in Orion and one of the brightest stars in the entire sky, is already high enough above the horizon (the line running across the map) to be



Map 1. The principal stars of Orion as they appeared while rising in Mayan latitudes during the Classic period. The horizontal line is the horizon, the triangle is that of the hearthstone stars, and the gray areas mark the Milky Way (to the left) and the M-42 nebula (inside the triangle).

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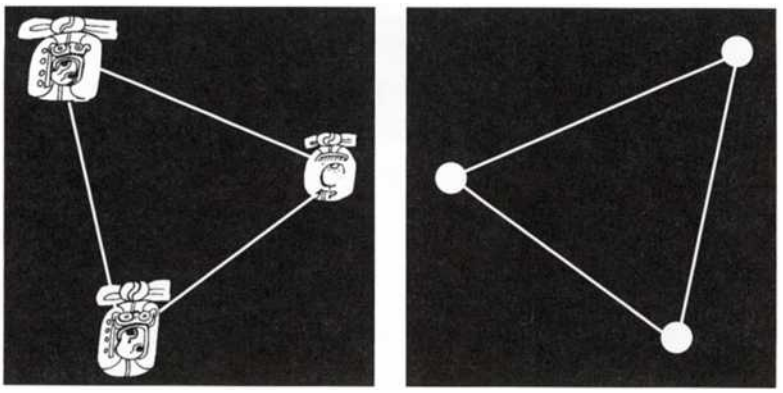

Map 2. The positions of the rising hearthstone stars as they appear on the Vase of the Seven Gods (left) and in the sky (right).

clearly visible. It is the first of the hearthstones to rise, and it probably corresponds to the bundle located at the celestial level in the painting. Beneath it, still well below the horizon, is Saiph, corresponding to the underworld bundle in the painting. Just clearing the horizon is Alnitak, corresponding to the bundle on the throne.

The triangle made by the star bundles in the painting is the mirror image of the triangle made by the actual stars in their rising positions (map 2). With this realization, we can see the entire scene as a reflection in an obsidian mirror, the kind of mirror used by Mayan diviners. In effect, the skilled observer from Maxam places the viewer in the role of a seer, scrying an event in another time.

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4 From the Time of Gods to the Time of Lords

THE RÍO MOTAGUA rises near the ruins of the capital of the K'iche' kingdom and flows eastward through a canyon that runs between two mountain ranges. As the river nears the Caribbean, it emerges from the canyon and slows down, meandering through a rich floodplain. On this plain and on a tributary of the Motagua that comes down from the south, the Mayans of the Classic period built two towns whose ruins are known today as Quiriguá and Copán. The recorded history of both sites begins in 426 C.E., running until 810 at Quiriguá and 822 at Copán. These were frontier towns, standing at what is still the extreme southeastern reach of the Mayan world. Their main contact with the Mayan lowlands, to the north and northwest, would have been by water, down the Motagua and along the coast of what is now Belize. As for the Mayan highlands to the west, the east-west trend of the major ridges and valleys provided them with easy land routes while impeding access from the north. Not surprisingly, the inscriptions of these two towns provide the clearest points of contact between the recorded history of the lowlands and that of the highlands.

The rulers of Quiriguá and Copán, like their counterparts at other sites, are identified in texts by a character that serves as a heraldic emblem. The main sign in such a character names the local dynasty (or gives the first syllable of the name), but it is affixed with other signs that are similar from one lineage to another, proclaiming the local ruler's status as a peer of other Mayan rulers. Here is an example of the Quiriguá emblem, showing a standard gloss (at center) and an alternative reading of some of the affixes:

The main sign depicts the surface of a ribbed gourd (sometimes more clearly than in this example) and has the phonetic value *tzu*. No such word as *tzu* has been reported for gourd terminology in Ch'olan, the primary language group for Classic texts, but *tzu* and *tzuy* are abundantly documented as terms for gourds in two K'ichean languages of the highlands, K'iche' and Kaqchikel. This fact raises the possibility of a K'ichean origin for the *tzu* sign. Moreover, the authors of the alphabetic Annals of the Kaqchikels state that while their remote ancestors were on a journey to the east, they encountered a nation whose sign *(retal)* was a white gourd *(saq tzuy)*. The people of the sign were

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neighbors of the Poqomam nation, speakers of a K'ichean language who once controlled the territory separating the Kaqchikel from the lower Motagua valley. Thus, the people of the gourd sign in the Annals and the rulers of Quiriguá could well have belonged to the same nation. And though the language of the inscriptions at Quiriguá is Ch'olan (except for *tzu* and possibly other words yet to be recognized), there could have been speakers of a K'ichean language among the city's rulers or their subjects.

The two signs prefixed to the left side of the emblem read *ch'uh lah,* meaning that when the reigning head of the Gourd dynasty makes offerings, he "sprinkles everything"—gems, shells, and other small objects. Above the main sign are two elements that are normally treated as a single sign for the word *ajaw,* or "lord." When a sign for the syllable *wa* is suffixed to the main sign, as here, it is interpreted as *w(a),* a phonetic complement that confirms the *ajaw* reading of the upper elements rather than adding a syllable that was not already there.

An alternative reading for the upper elements (shown in the second gloss) is suggested by the fact that they appear separately in other contexts, functioning as signs with two different meanings. In Classic inscriptions, the left-hand element is identical with a sign that stands for the syllable *po* and sometimes for the word *pop,* the term for a mat of plaited cattail leaves, and Mayan lords sat on such a mat when they met in council. The right-hand element is identical with the sign for a day whose Ch'olan name is unknown but whose past and present name in K'ichean languages is Aj. Writers who kept dated records in Kaqchikel ended periods on days named Aj rather than on the day used in Ch'olan inscriptions, which was Ajaw (equivalent to Kaqchikel Junajpu). Putting *pop* and *aj* together and reading the final affix as *aw* yields *pop ajaw,* literally "mat lord," a title that has been reported for at least one Ch'olan language (Chontal). The K'ichean equivalent is *ajpop,* "master of the mat (or council)," shortened to *ajpo* in Kaqchikel. In the inscriptions of Quiriguá and Copán, as well as those of such sites as Tikal and Yaxchilán, the *pop* and *aj* elements are sometimes written in reverse order and without the *aw* suffix, leaving open the possibility of an *ajpop* or *ajpo* reading.

It is possible that by the time the Classic period was well under way, the intended reading of these two elements, in either order and with or without the *aw* suffix, was always *ajaw* and that the *pop ajaw* and *ajpop* readings belong to an earlier time in which more than one title was current or more than one Mayan language played a role in the development of the writing system. Or perhaps the signs were meant to be interpreted in more than one way, whether by a reader who was skilled in courtly speech, or a reader who was bilingual, or separate readers speaking different languages. Such readings would be consistent with one of the ways in which contemporary speakers of Mayan languages compose verse, sometimes using words from two different languages to fill out parallel phrases. An orator looking for verse in the Quiriguá emblem might have said something like "The lord who offers everything for the Gourds, / master of the council of Gourds."

The emblem of Copán, shown here in its most elaborate form, features the profiled head of a leaf-nosed bat:

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This time the prefix reads *ch'uh ul,* meaning that the lord of Copán "sprinkles shells" when he makes offerings. The two elements above the main sign could be read as *ajaw* (as indicated in the first gloss), but there is no additional sign to make the final *aw* explicit. These elements have been written in a way that makes them unmistakably identical with the signs for *po* (or *pop*) and for the day whose K'ichean name is Aj (as indicated in the second gloss), suggesting *pop ajaw, ajpop,* or *ajpo.* The titles of the lord of Copán might well have included such a form, as is indicated by the existence, near the main plaza, of a building named Popol Na, "House of the Mat" or "Council House." The outside of the building is decorated with representations of a mat *(pop)* and with characters identifying the lineages of the council members who met there. Apparently the Copán government, for at least part of its history, was similar to the government of the later K'iche' kingdom in the highlands, as described in the Popol Vuh and other alphabetic sources. The K'iche' council, composed of the heads of twenty-four lineages, met in the Popol Ja, "House of the Mat." First in rank was an *ajaw,* or "lord," who held the title *ajpop,* "master of the council."

The bat profile that serves as the insignia in the Copán emblem suggests two alternative interpretations. If we read it as a syllabic sign, it has the value *xu.* Next, below the bat's ear, comes a sign for *ku* (or *uk*), and below it is a long composite sign for *pik.* These three signs together spell *xwukpik,* the Ch'olan term for the brown-backed solitaire, a bird of the thrush family. The solitaire is plain in appearance but sings one of the most remarkable songs of all the birds in the world. Both the bird and its song are mentioned in the Annals of the Kaqchikels, in a passage about a pilgrimage by the founders of the Kaqchikel royal houses. Their destination was a city, and when their visit was over and they were on their way out, they heard the song of a bird called *chajal siwan,* "guardian of the canyon," the Kaqchikel term for the brown-backed solitaire.

If we interpret the main sign of the Copán emblem as standing for an entire word (as in the second gloss above), it yields *sutz',* the Ch'olan term for "bat." And the bat, like the mat title, the council house, and the brown-backed solitaire, provides a link to the highlands. According to the Annals, the royal insignia of the city visited by the pilgrims was a bat *(sotz').* This points to the heraldic importance of the bat image in the emblem, which is further indicated by the fact that no alternative sign for the syllable *xu* was ever substituted for it.

Accepting the bat does not require us to abandon the bird, once we take poetics into consideration. A skilled Mayan reader of the Copán emblem might have said something like "Lord who offers shells for the Solitaires,/Lord of the Bats," and might have brought *ajpop* into play as well.

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A further link to the Annals is provided by the inscription on Stela A at Copán, which was dedicated in 731. It lists the Bat (or Solitaire) rulers of Copán as members of a group of four royal houses, each of them in a city that held a position in a four-directional scheme. The emblems corresponding to the four positions are displayed here in the order in which they are written on the stela:

The first and last emblems in the sequence (at the far left and right) are those of the rulers of the eastern and western cities, with the Bats of Copán in the east (appropriately enough) and the B'akha', or "Egrets," of Palenque in the west, on the opposite frontier of the Mayan world. The directional roles assigned to the other two cities, when understood in astronomical terms, are nadir and zenith (named in that order), but when Mayans mapped this axis onto the surface of the earth, they assigned nadir to the south and zenith to the north. In the present scheme, the nadir role is assigned to the Muutals, or "Hair Knots," of Tikal (named by the second emblem above), and the zenith belongs to the Kaans, or "Snakes," of Calakmul (named by the third emblem), directly north of Tikal.

Beginning in the second half of the eighth century, the Bats of Copán further asserted the importance of their city by rewriting their emblem. Here are the versions that appear on the platform of Temple 11, dedicated in 769, and on Stela 11, dedicated in 820:

The new element is the sign to the right of the bat's cheek, written in somewhat different ways. It reads *pu* or *puh,* which is a Ch'olan term for cattails. What this tells us is that Copán had become the kind of Mesoamerican city that was known (in various languages) as a Place of Cattails, a city where pilgrims could seek elevation to the rank of lords or confirmation of their status as lords. Cattails were an effective symbol for such cities because they grow in dense, interconnected groups and because lords sat on mats or thrones made from plaited cattail leaves, not only among Mayans but all over Mesoamerica.

During the Early Classic period, the ultimate Place of Cattails had been the cosmopolitan city of Teotihuacan, far to the west in the central Mexican highlands. During the fourth and fifth centuries, the highland city whose ruins are known as Kaminaljuyu, located within the limits of present-day Guatemala City, had undergone an extensive renovation that transformed it into an eastern counterpart of Teotihuacan.

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If a four-directional group of cattail places existed at that time, the eastern and western positions would have belonged to Kaminaljuyu and Teotihuacan. But by the time the Bats of Copán asserted their city's eastern position in a group of four and proclaimed it a Place of Cattails, Teotihuacan had been abandoned and Kaminaljuyu was no longer a major center. In effect, the rulers of Copán were claiming their share of an ideological inheritance.

The Annals of the Kaqchikels also mentions a group of four cities, describing their locations as eastern, western, in the underworld (corresponding to south), and in the sky (corresponding to north). It gives all four of them the title Tulan, meaning "Place of Cattails" in Nahuatl, the principal language of central Mexico. One of the four is the city of the solitaire song and the bat emblem, which is to say Copán.

The stela that describes Copán's position in a four-directional scheme was commissioned by the Lord of Bats who came thirteenth in the line of succession, ruling from 695 to 738. Here is his name:

It reads Waxaklajuun Ub'ah K'awiil, or "Scepter of Eighteen Bodies." Except for the substitution of K'awiil, or "Scepter," for Chan, or "Serpent," this is the Ch'olan name of a celestial dragon whose body, like that of a centipede, is divided into eighteen segments. The number of segments is the same as that of the 20-day divisions of the 365-day year. When the image of this dragon took the form of a scepter, it was not depicted in an upright position, held in one hand, but was shown cradled across both forearms.

The dragon named Serpent of Eighteen Bodies was a source of power for warriors, but the lord named Scepter of Eighteen Bodies brought glory to Copán by sponsoring works of art and architecture more than by waging war. Nevertheless, he was destined for a violent end. The story of his demise, so far as it is known, begins in 724, when he traveled to Quiriguá to conduct a ceremony to install a new Lord of the Gourds in office. Here is the name of the new lord:

He is K'ahk Tiliw, "Fiery Splendor." The presence of the Copán lord at his installation has been interpreted as meaning that lords of the Gourd lineage were vassals of lords of the Bat lineage, when in fact it may simply mean that the only legitimate way to become a reigning lord was to be installed by someone who was already a reigning lord. Such a rule governs succession among the heads of present-day K'iche' patrilineages.

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When a lineage head dies, the installation of his successor requires the services of the living head of another lineage. The ceremony is similar to a marriage in that it establishes an alliance between two lineages rather than subordinating one to the other.

The alliance between the Bat and Gourd lineages came to a dramatic end in 738. In that year, according to several inscriptions at Quiriguá, Fiery Splendor presided over the beheading of the man who had installed him in office. In the normal course of events, this act would mean that Scepter of Eighteen Bodies had been brought to Fiery Splendor's court as a prisoner of war, there to be put on trial and then executed. But the Quiriguá texts in which his name appears make no mention of a war, suggesting that something other than a battlefield struggle might have taken place when Fiery Splendor took the Copán lord prisoner. A Copán account written years later states that Scepter of Eighteen Bodies was killed in battle, but this version of events may have been intended to write his decapitation out of history and thus improve the image of the Bat lineage.

The legitimate successor to Scepter of Eighteen Bodies took office at Copán shortly after his death, becoming the fourteenth Lord of the Bats. Strangely, Fiery Splendor meanwhile added the epithet "fourteenth in line" to his own name and titles. Though he may in fact have been the fourteenth Lord of the Gourds, he may instead have sought to style himself as successor to the man he had decapitated, even though he was not a member of the Bat lineage.

The Bats were slow to recover from the loss of Scepter of Eighteen Bodies. The reigns of his first two successors were short, and though he had been a prolific builder, they let seventeen years go by without adding a new monument to Copán. Meanwhile, Fiery Splendor undertook a major redevelopment of Quiriguá, seeking to surpass the sculptural and architectural glories of Copán. He renovated public spaces and buildings and erected a series of enormous stelas, one of them carved from the largest stone ever quarried by Mayans.

READING THE EAST SIDE OF A STONE

The inscriptions on some of the monuments Fiery Splendor erected at Quiriguá treat his accomplishments as a builder as part of a long story that begins when the gods set the present world in order. On Stela C, he is depicted on the broad north and south faces, while the text of the narrative runs down the sides in two parts. The first part, on the east side, relates the mythic deeds of gods, whereas the second half, on the west, relates the historical deeds of lords of the Gourd lineage. The same two-part structure appears in other Classic inscriptions, such as the ones in the temples of the so-called Cross Group at Palenque, and it is also present in sixteenth-century alphabetic works written in K'ichean languages, notably the Popol Vuh. In effect, Mayan rulers of all periods not only traced their lineages back to remote human ancestors but also claimed that they and their predecessors were continuing the work of gods whose existence

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preceded and transcended human history. There had been a time when the gods, like the ancestors, were fully present as actors in the physical world, but once they had finished the task of preparing the stage for human actors, they withdrew into a spiritual world of their own. Instead of conversing with humans face-to-face, they sent coded messages through omens, dreams, visions, divination, and the movements of the sun, moon, and planets among the stars. By decoding these messages, Mayan rulers hoped to align their thoughts and actions with those of the gods.

The narrative on the mythic side of Stela C, like hundreds of other Classic inscriptions, begins with a group of characters that Mayanists term the Initial Series (IS). Most of these characters are devoted to the dating of an event that is described later, but they are preceded by an Initial Series Introductory Glyph (ISIG) that often occupies four times as much space as the characters that follow. The visual effect is similar to that of the large capital letter that sometimes begins a new chapter in an alphabetic book. At the top of the text on the east side of Stela C is this version of the ISIG:

Running across the top is the sign for *tzik,* a Ch'olan transitive verb with a third-person singular subject who is counting or quantifying something. The sign below this one is composed of a pair of elements that mirror one another, standing for *winik,* a term for "twenty" that sometimes serves as a metonym, by way of the number of human digits, for "person." The present version of this sign is rather abstract, but sometimes the elements bear a clearer resemblance to a pair of hands.

At the third level down is a sign that diagrams a slit drum (or slit gong), a horizontal hollowed log with slits that divide its upper surface into areas that produce different tones when struck. The small oval in the lower half of the sign represents the hole drilled in the center of the bottom of a slit drum. The Yukatek term for this drum is *tunk'ul,* and the Ch'olan term must have been similar. The diagram simply reads *tun,* which means "stone" and is also the term for a period of 360 days. At a few Classic sites, notably Dos Pilas, a syllabic sign with the value *b'i* is sometimes suffixed to the *tun* sign, indicating that it was locally read as *haab',* a term that normally refers to a period of 365 days. In the alphabetic Chilam Balam books, written in Yukatek during the colonial period, the term for the 360-day period was *tun,* and the term *haab'* was reserved for the 365-day year.

Now we know that the object of *tzik,* the verb of counting, is a unit of time called *winik tun,* lasting $20 \times 360 = 7{,}200$ days. The Yukatek term for this period is *k'atun,* in which *k'a-* is an alternative way of expressing "twenty." Either term can mean "twenty stones," but because Mayan numeration is vigesimal (going by twenties) rather than

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decimal, and because a vestige of vigesimal counting survives in English, "a score of stones" seems a more appropriate translation.

Interpreting *tun* as a period of 360 days called a "stone" does not require us to leave the drum aside. There is an alternative sign for *tun* that bears no resemblance to a drum, and writers sometimes used it when mentioning "a score of stones" in other contexts, but they always used the drum sign when rendering the ISIG itself. Clearly, they meant to keep the drum in the picture alongside the notion of "stones." At the same time, the word *tun* probably evoked the sound of drumbeats, as is suggested by the fact that the sound of a drum is rendered in contemporary Chontal (a Ch'olan language) as *tumtumne*.

Also within the compass of the *tun* sign, along with the drum and 360-day units of time, are literal stones. The ISIG is carved on monuments and sometimes on ornaments that are stones, and most of these stones commemorate the completion of periods that are multiples of 360 days. Drums remain in this picture as well, given that the dedication ceremonies for the monuments were likely accompanied by drumming. In some highland Guatemalan towns today, periods as short as the 20-day divisions of the 365-day year are marked off by drumming. In sixteenth-century Yucatán, drumming marked the completion of scores of stones. For a literate Mayan of the Classic period, reading the ISIG on a monument that had already been in place for a long time could have evoked the occasion of its dedication, beginning with the fact that the opening verb is in the present tense.

Below the *tun* sign, at the base of the ISIG, is a trefoil sign that runs the full width. When it appears in this character, or when it is added to the bottom of a sign for a day name, it has no sound value but rather serves as a semantic determinative, alerting the reader to the fact that the ISIG refers to time. In other contexts, it can stand for the syllable *ma,* which may explain how it came to serve a semantic role. In Yukatek, the suffix *-mal* is a numeral classifier, specifying that what is being quantified is the number of times something has happened.

We still have the question of the third-person singular subject of *tzik,* the opening verb. In a normal sentence, the name of this subject, if given, would follow the object of the verb, which is *winik tun.* The only sign available for this role is the profiled head between the two halves of the *winik* sign. Here, as in other examples of the ISIG, it is the name of the patron deity of one of the first eighteen divisions of the 365-day year, which last 20 days each. The name of the division always appears in the passage that follows the ISIG, but a reader who recognizes its patron can deduce the division without reading that far. The question of a patron for the nineteenth division never comes up, because dates falling in that period, which lasts only five days, were never chosen for the events commemorated by monuments. In the present case, the name of the patron is Chan, or "Snake," and his division of the year is the eighteenth one, Kumk'u, or "Kiln."

Now we have a complete sentence: *Tzik winik tun Chan,* literally "Snake counts the scores of stones." But to translate this statement in a way that reflects what a skilled

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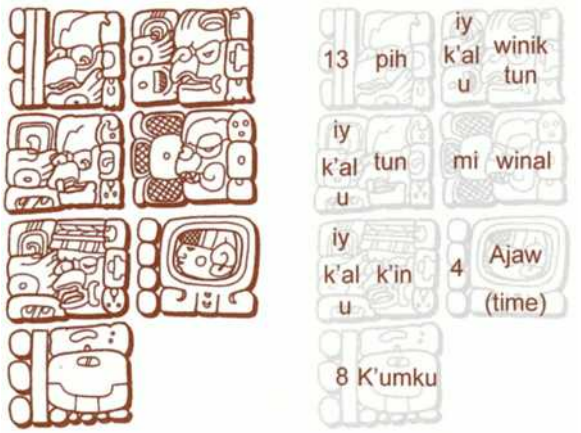
orator might have said or brought to mind on the occasion of a dedication, we should include both the drum and the stones, constructing a pair of phrases like this one: "Snake counts the scores of drumbeats,/the scores of stones." The orator, perhaps chanting to the accompaniment of a drum, could have elaborated the phrasing further, invoking alternative words for the subject matter of the ISIG before moving on.

After the announcement that a counting of scores of stones is taking place comes the rest of the Initial Series, which specifies the time of an event in terms of three or more calendars that run concurrently. The temporal statement that follows the ISIG on the east side of Stela C runs as follows:



Reading from left to right and top to bottom, the first five characters express the date in terms of the long count, which measures the number of days that have elapsed since a hypothetical zero point in the remote past. Each character is prefaced with a number, and the main sign gives the name of the period corresponding to each place, which is omitted in the early long counts discussed in chapter 2. In this case, all five names are indicated by the profiled heads of the corresponding deities, though some other inscriptions spell them out. The name of the highest (and longest) period is *pih,* "bundle," consisting of four hundred periods lasting 360 days each, so that the total number of days in a bundle is 144,000. The name of the shorter period that comes next, as we have already seen, is *winik tun,* "score of stones," and its length is 20 × 360 = 7,200 days. The next period is simply *tun,* "stone," and is 360 days long. Next to last is the *winal,* or "score," lasting 20 days, and finally the *k'in,* "sun" or "day," in the place reserved for periods shorter than a score of days.

In this inscription, the sign for the highest period, the bundle, is prefixed with the three dots and two bars of the number 13. So far, then, the count of days stands at 13 × 144,000 = 1,872,000. The next four signs for periods all carry prefixes that have the effect of "zero," but they express this concept in two ways. The second, third, and fifth prefixes read *uk'aliy,* which means that something "was grasped," or "closed," or "completed." In the context of counting, they indicate that the number 20 has been completed in the place where this prefix appears and has passed its value to the next-higher place, just as the sign for zero in a decimal number means that the number 10 has

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been completed. Appropriately, the three signs that spell *u-k'al-iy* read upward, in the direction of the next higher place. The fourth prefix, referring to scores of days, is different from the others, because the count of this period tops out at 18 (to make a total of 360 days). Accordingly, the writer chose not to use a term that implies the number 20, instead using *mi,* meaning "no" or "nothing."

The full five-place number in this inscription is 13.0.0.0.0. By a backward reckoning of the Gregorian calendar, the zero date from which this count of thirteen bundles started was April 2, 8239 B.C.E., and the date of its completion was August 11, 3114 B.C.E. The two characters that follow the long-count number give the corresponding calendar-round date, which is the same one we saw on the Vase of the Seven Gods in chapter 3: 4 Ajaw 8 Kumk'u, "4 Lord 8 Kiln." The date on the stela is followed by an account of the same event that is painted on the vase, with differences in the details. The stela version has the gods using three stones to construct a triangular hearth whose name is given by the character to the right. The left-hand prefix reads *yax,* "new" or "first." Next comes a triangular arrangement of three similar signs that collectively stand for *ox,* "three," and individually for *tun,* the word for "stone." The sign on top of the stones, coming last in the reading order, is the suffix *-nal,* meaning "place," and the character as a whole yields Yax Ox Tunal, "First Three Stone Place." Elsewhere in the inscription, each stone is described as being "wrapped," which is how they are pictured in the painting. Each one is then "planted" in a particular location and given a name.

The first stone is planted by two gods who are sometimes shown paddling at the prow and stern of a canoe, known as the Jaguar paddler (equivalent to Jaguar Night in the vase painting) and the Stingray paddler (because he wears a stingray spine as a nose ornament). They plant their stone, named the Jaguar Platform Stone, in the *naj chan,* or "far sky." The corresponding bundle in the vase painting would be the one at the level of the sky, and the corresponding star would be Rigel, the highest of the hearthstone stars in Orion.

A god named Ik'an Chak Chan, "Dawn Red Snake," plants the second stone in the *ch'akem kab',* "parted earth," and its name is Snake Platform Stone. The equivalent bundle in the painting would be the one at the subterranean level, and the star would be Saiph, the lowest of the hearthstone stars.

Last comes the Water Platform Stone, which is planted *ch'a chan,* or "where the sky lies down," perhaps meaning the horizon. The corresponding bundle in the painting would be the one in the intermediate zone, where the merchant god is enthroned, and the star would be Alnitak, lower than Rigel but higher than Saiph when the three of them rise. The god who plants this stone possesses an obsidian mirror for scrying, and his name, Itzamnaaj, means something like "Far Seer." Like the merchant god of the painting, he is elderly, and the two of them may represent two aspects of the same god.

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Alternatively, the carver of the stela and the painter of the vase may have had different views as to which god had control of the third bundle.

Considered on a larger scale than that of Rigel, Saiph, and Alnitak, the stars of Orion were seen as sea turtle. An image in the Madrid Codex, a book in the Mayan script that dates from the early colonial period, shows the turtle with the hearthstones, represented by three *tun* signs, on its back (figure 11). The band at the top represents the vault of the sky, and the two sun signs just below it show the course of the ecliptic. The stone-bearing turtle's placement below the sun signs reflects the fact that the stars of Orion are lower in the sky than the ecliptic. Orion lies outside the narrow confines of the Western zodiac, but the Mayan zodiac had a wider reach in areas with no bright stars close to the ecliptic. It consisted of thirteen (rather than twelve) signs, and the thirteenth position in the sequence was occupied by the turtle in Orion.

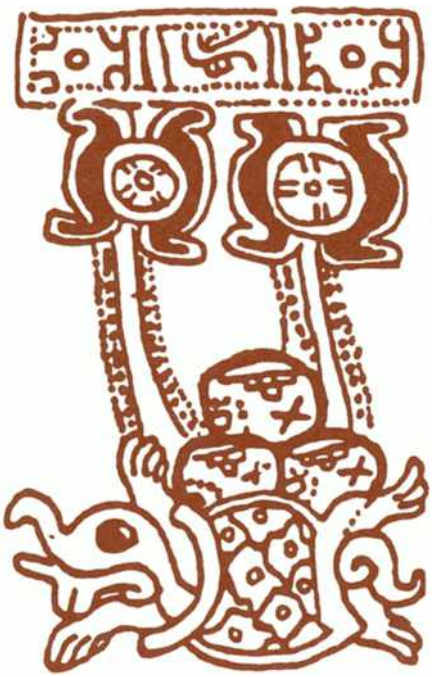

Fig. 11. A sky band (at the top), two sun signs (just below the band), and a sea turtle with three stones on its back (suspended below the sun). From the Madrid Codex.

At the end of the Quiriguá account of the First Three Stone Place comes a mention of another event that took place on the same occasion as the arrangement of the hearthstones. The actor in this event was a god named Wak Chan Ajaw, "Lord of the Sixth Sky," who ruled the sixth place in the Mayan zodiac. His domain included the stars of Scorpius, which were envisioned as a centipede in some places and a scorpion in others. As we will see in the next chapter, he was also associated with a portion of the Milky Way that was interpreted as an enormous tree when it stood straight up on the southwest horizon, with the centipede or scorpion at its base. According to the present inscription, *uch'oy,* "it arose" (in the sense of getting up from a horizontal position), which may mean that the tree stood up. When the tree is seen standing in the early evening, the hearthstones appear in the east in the middle of the night and reach the meridian in the early morning. According to the Chilam Balam book from Tizimín, the stars that reach this position in the early morning after the last day of a score of stones forecast the character of the next score. This position may have been the one envisioned for the hearthstones in the dawn that followed the completion of thirteen bundles of stones on 4 Lord 8 Kiln.

The inscription from the east side of Stela C at Quiriguá is presented and translated in its entirety on the next page.

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Snake counts the drumbeats,
counts the scores of stones:

after 13 bundles of stones, completed scores of stones,

completed single stones, no scores of days,

and completed single days, on the day 4 Lord

8 Kiln, the hearth is measured,

the three stones are wrapped. The planting

of a stone by the Jaguar and Stingray canoe paddlers

took place in the far sky: the Jaguar Platform Stone.

The planting of a stone by Dawn Red Snake

took place in the parted earth: the Snake Platform Stone.

And then the wrapping of a stone by the Far Seer,

the Water Platform Stone, took place where the sky lies down:

the First Three Stone Place. When 13 bundles of stones
were completed,

the Lord of the Sixth Sky arose.

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The day after the mythic events described on the east side of the Quiriguá stela, the count of bundles of stones started all over again. In other words, the number at the top end of the five places went no higher than thirteen. Mayan inscriptions that ascribe long-count dates to events in the lives of gods place most of them in the bundles that came just before and just after the placement of the hearthstones. In the Cross Group temples at Palenque, for example, the birth (or rebirth) of a goddess named Cormorant is dated 12.19.13.4.0, not long before the count of bundles reached completion on 13.0.0.0.0, and the births (or rebirths) of the gods named Sun-Eyed Lord of the Shield and Mirror Scepter are dated 1.18.5.3.6 and 1.18.5.4.0, when the new count of bundles had reached no higher than one.

In Mayan chronologies, a long gap separates the most recent mythic events from the earliest events of human history. The Palenque chronology assigns just one character to a middle position. Snake Spine, the founder of the Egret dynasty, enters the narrative long after the gods have completed their work and long before humans have begun to create a continuous record of events in their own times. He lived his life on a human time scale, becoming Lord of the Egrets at the age of twenty-nine. The date ascribed to his birth, 5.7.11.8.4, or March 9, 996 B.C.E. (in Gregorian terms), puts him at a considerable distance from the gods, but it also puts him almost fourteen centuries before the generation-by-generation account of Egret lords, which begins on 8.18.0.13.6, or March 29, 397 C.E.

In these long narrative gaps, we see the Mayan solution to the problem of how to find a place for myth in the same continuous chronology with history while at the same time avoiding confusion between gods and humans. The classical Greeks, in contrast, blurred the boundary between myth and history with stories about characters who belonged to both worlds. Erechtheus, for example, was said to have been born of the earth and raised by Athena, and he was sometimes identified with Poseidon. But he was also an early king of Athens. He ruled from a palace on the Acropolis, and that is where he died. There are no such composite characters in long-count chronologies.

The earliest long-count dates of a clearly historical nature put the count of bundles at seven, as in the case of 7.16.6.16.18, the date on the stela at El Baúl (see chapter 2). Indirect evidence suggests that when the long count was invented, the historical point of reckoning was set at 7.6.0.0.0 11 Lord 8 Kiln, corresponding to September 12, 236 B.C.E. On that day, the tree of the Lord of the Sixth Sky stood upright on the horizon in the early evening, around the same time the sky was dark enough to see it, and the three hearthstones became fully visible around midnight and reached the meridian in the early dawn, just before the sky became too bright to see them.

For astronomical purposes, the historical scenario of 7.6.0.0.0 11 Lord 8 Kiln evidently served as the model for the mythic scenario of 13.0.0.0.0 4 Lord 8 Kiln. The historical date falls about a month later in the actual solar year, but the interval that

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separates it from the mythic date has properties that are consistent with the method by which Mayans extended their calculations into the remote past, using multiples of idealized lengths for astronomical periods. The 1,051,200 days of the interval in question are equivalent to 2,880 years of 365 days each, 1,800 Venus periods of 584 days each, and 360 complete runs of the 2,920-day table that was used for matching five Venus periods of 584 days each to eight 365-day years. When Mayan astronomers predicted the events of their own times, they proceeded differently, modifying ideal intervals by applying corrective formulas. They seem to have theorized that the ongoing periods they were able to observe had fallen out of phase with the periods originally intended by the gods.

In the case of the Quiriguá stela, the gap that separates the divine events on the east side from the human events on the west side brings the long count to 9.1.0.0.0, equivalent to August 26, 455 C.E. On that day, a "stone was planted"—an earlier stela was dedicated—along with a *tutum,* or "cover," which would have been the stone altar customarily placed on the ground in front of a stela. The planter was a lord of the Gourd lineage named Yol K'inich, "Center of the Sun's Eye." The beginning and ending dates of his reign are not known, but he seems to have been the second ruler of the Gourd dynasty, whose written record begins in 426. The inscription gives a name for the location of his stela that is incompletely understood but includes the words *chak* and *tz'unun,* meaning "red" and "hummingbird." The name may be that of the town of Quiriguá or a locale within its precincts, but in any case the stela he planted there has yet to be found.

The planting of a stone by Center of the Sun's Eye has its precedent in the gods' placement of the hearthstones, which took place more than three thousand years earlier. At the same time, his action served as a precedent for Fiery Splendor's planting of Stela C, which took place more than three centuries later. Because all three events marked the ends of periods whose lengths were multiples of 360 days (and therefore divisible by 20), they all share the same day name on the divinatory calendar, namely Lord (Ajaw). The number coefficients of period-ending Lord days are variable, but in the present case, the two events involving human actors share the number six. One reason the authors of the inscription on Stela C chose the dedication by Center of the Sun's Eye as a precedent for the dedication by Fiery Splendor may have been the fact that both events took place on 6 Lord. They may also have been considering the numerical coefficients of the respective dates on the solar calendar, which are 13 New Sun (Yaxk'in) for the former event and 13 Song (K'ayab') for the latter.

Fiery Splendor dedicated Stela C on 9.17.5.0.0, whose Gregorian equivalent is December 27, 775. Beginning on 9.15.15.0.0, or June 2, 746, he had been erecting what the present inscription calls a five stone *(ho' tunil)* at intervals of five 360-day periods. Stela C was the seventh in the series. As on the other occasions, he made offerings that included his own blood. The present event occurred during his fifth score of stones, meaning that he was born at some time during the score of stones that ended on

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Sun counts the drumbeats,
counts the scores of stones:

9 bundles of stones, 1 score of stones,

no single stones, no scores of days,

and no single days passed, and then,

on 6 Lord 13 New Sun,

a stone was planted, a cover,

by Center of the Sun's Eye, Lord who offers everything for the Gourds.

It took place at Red . . .

Hummingbird. After zero and zero score days,

plus 5 stones, plus 16 score stones, it happened on 6 Lord

13 Song: at his new five-stone,

Fiery Splendor in the Sky made an offering,

he let blood in his fifth score of stones.

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9.14.0.0.0, running from March 16, 692, to December 3, 711. He then lived through the next three scores, which ended on 9.17.0.0.0, or January 22, 771, and found himself still alive during a fifth score, the one that would end on 9.18.0.0.0. His actual birth date is not known, but he would have been between sixty-three and eighty-three years old (by Western reckoning) when he dedicated Stela C. He died without seeing a sixth score, on 9.17.14.13.2, or July 9, 785. He would have been between seventy-three and ninety-three years old at the time.

The complete inscription from the west side of Stela C is presented and translated on page 57. The ellipsis in the translation corresponds to an undeciphered sign in the text.

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5 Cormorant and Her Three Sons

In the far west, on the opposite side of their world from Copán and Quiriguá, Mayans built a city on the banks of clear streams that rush down from the mountains of Chiapas, headed for Tabasco and the Gulf of Mexico. The ruins of temples, houses, and a ball court are on slopes and in hollows, enfolded in a rainforest, but the savannas of the coastal plain are visible from the high palace at the center. Since the early nineteenth century, when its ruins first came to world attention, this city has been known by the Spanish name Palenque. But now that the inscriptions in its temples and palaces can be read, its original name has come to light, spelled out in characters like this one.

The curled shapes across the top, which are intended to resemble billowing clouds, stand for the syllable *to,* and in combination with the *ko* prefix on the left side, they spell *toko,* "cloud." The main sign, which stands for *tan,* "center," rests on a phonetic complement whose syllabic value is *na* (with the final syllable not pronounced). The result is Tokotan, "Cloudy Center." This name is an apt description of Palenque, whose slopes are often enshrouded by clouds that sometimes hang low enough to obscure the buildings.

The rulers of Palenque identified themselves with an emblem that is written in these two ways, among others. In both versions, the prefix combines the verb *ch'uh,* referring to the sprinkling or casting of offerings, with signs whose exact reading is uncertain. We do know that when similar signs are used in pictures, they represent shells. The person offering these shells is an *ajaw,* or "lord," and possibly a *pop ajaw,* "master of the council." In the upper version of the emblem, the main sign is a logograph in the form of the profiled head of a snowy egret, with the upper part of its long bill bent upward to fit the space, and it reads *b'akha',* "egret." The lower emblem replaces the egret with two signs, one above the other. The main sign represents the cross-section of a bone and reads *b'ak,* "bone." The lower sign stands for the syllable *ha',* so that the two signs together spell *b'akha'.*

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Whichever way the name of the Palenque dynasty is spelled, the emblem as a whole can be translated as "lord who offers shells for the Egrets."

Running through the center of Palenque is the Río Otolúm, with the palace of the Egrets on the west bank. On the opposite bank is a small plaza with temples on three sides, each one at the top of a pyramidal platform. They have become known as the Temple of the Cross, the Temple of the Sun, and the Temple of the Foliated Cross (figure 12). The inscriptions they house state that they were built by a king named K'inich Chan B'alam, "Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar," and that they are located between *lakam ha' cha'an ch'een,* "the river channeled by the cave," and *yemal K'uk' Lakam Witz,* "the landslide of Quetzal Ridge." The cave is an aqueduct that once took the Río Otolúm underground where it passes between the temples and the palace, and the landslide is a steep slope, overgrown with thick vegetation today, that rises immediately behind the Temple of the Foliated Cross. On top of the ridge is another building named K'inich K'uk' B'alam Na, or "Sun-Eyed Quetzal Jaguar Temple."

Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar dedicated the three temples below the ridge in a three-day ceremony that began when the long count reached 9.12.18.5.16, or July 21, 690 in Gregorian terms. Among the Egret lords who had ruled Cloudy Center since 431, he was the twelfth. Born in 635, he ruled from 684 to 702, at a time when Spain was under the control of Visigoths and was about to be invaded by Muslims. England, meanwhile, was divided among several Anglo-Saxon kingdoms that were still in the process of Christian conversion, and the earliest English literature was being written.

The stories told in the inscriptions of the three temples are partly devoted to events that took place in the night sky during their dedication. The highest of the temples faces south-southwest, toward the open side of the plaza, and in that direction, shortly before midnight, observers could see the part of the Milky Way that passes through Scorpius and Sagittarius standing straight up on the horizon, like an enormous tree

Fig. 12. The Late Classic temples of the Cross (left), Sun (right), and Foliated Cross (between the other two in the distance) at Palenque, in Chiapas. Behind them is the slope of Quetzal Ridge. The partially excavated building in the foreground is a later addition.

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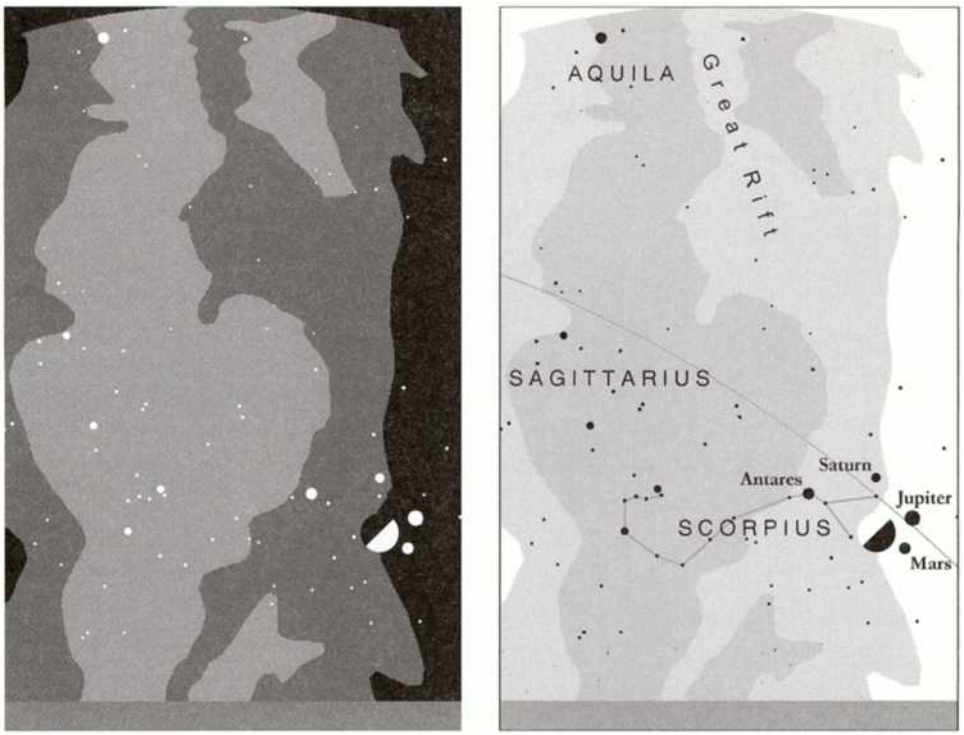

Map 3. The southwestern sky at Palenque, shortly before midnight on July 22, 690. The bar at the bottom marks the horizon, and the gray areas above it show the position of the Milky Way. The path of the sun is marked by the arching line in the right-hand version of the map; east is to the left, and west is to the right. Ringed by three planets and the star Antares is the moon, in its first quarter.

(map 3). At the top of the tree was Aquila, perhaps corresponding to a goddess whose name is Muwan Mat, literally "Hawk Duck," here translated as "Cormorant." She is also called Na' Jemnal, "Lady of Split Place," perhaps because of her proximity to the Great Rift, which divides this part of the Milky Way into two strands. At the foot of the tree, the constellation corresponding to Scorpius looked like a monstrous centipede and was described as *b'akel,* "bony" or "segmented." An area of the sky that included the centipede and the corresponding part of the tree trunk was called Wakaj Chan Na, or "Sixth Sky House," because it came sixth in the sequence of thirteen signs in the Mayan zodiac.

The sun, moon, and planets all cross the Milky Way between Scorpius and the Great Rift. On the nights of the dedication of the temples, a short distance west of the bright star Antares, the guardian spirits of brothers who are described as triplets were visible as planets: Mars, the guardian of Corn Silk at the Tip of a Single Ear; Jupiter, the guardian of Sun-Eyed Lord of the Shield; and Saturn, the guardian of Young Mirror Scepter (map 3). Mars was in forward (or eastward) motion relative to the fixed stars, having reached a point as far east as it had been four months before, when it appeared to stop moving for a time and then went into retrograde (or westward) motion for a while before resuming its forward motion. Both Jupiter and Saturn had recently completed

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intervals of retrograde motion and currently appeared motionless, waiting to join Mars in moving eastward. The fact that the three guardian spirits had come together at the centipede constellation was particularly meaningful for Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar, because his personal spirit familiar was a centipede.

On the middle of the three nights (the one shown in map 3), the guardians of the three brothers were joined by the moon, which may have been conceived as the wandering guardian spirit of the goddess Cormorant. By the next night, the moon had moved east of Antares and halfway across the Milky Way, at which point Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar performed a rite in which he sacrificed his own blood and conjured the ghost of a blood relative. The ghost was a woman, delicately referred to in the temples as "the namesake of the lady of the sky." Other inscriptions confirm that Cormorant was one of her names, another being Sak K'uk', or "White Quetzal."

The human Lady Cormorant was Snake Jaguar's paternal grandmother, who had ruled Palenque from 612 to 615. She was the second of two women who had inherited the Egret lordship from their fathers and passed it on to their sons, thus transferring it from one patrilineage to another. What one Egret ruler inherited from another was not a bloodline in the ordinary biological sense but rather something called "the white paper." The writing on this paper was blotted blood, sacrificed by previous rulers when they conjured the ghosts of their predecessors. Very likely, omens were read in the patterns of the bloodstains.

In spirit, if not in substance, the oldest stain on the paper inherited by Snake Jaguar was nothing less than that of the goddess Cormorant, who had let blood from her tongue. The three brothers whose guardian spirits he saw in the sky had not been born from a womb, except in the sense that they had emerged from the earth and entered the sky after periods of invisibility. If they shared an umbilical cord, it was the cord Cormorant had run through her tongue to ensure their rebirth in the sky. Like Lady Shark Fin at Yaxchilán (see chapter 8), she would have used the bloodied cord to stain a strip of paper. The paper that traced the bloodline of the Egrets is long gone, but the version of their story that was carved in stone remains.

TEMPLE OF THE SIXTH SKY

The Temple of the Sixth Sky is the highest in the group of three temples dedicated by Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar on July 21–23, 690. It has long been known as the Temple of the Cross, but was actually named Wakaj Chan, "Sixth Sky," after the Milky Way tree that could be seen through its front door in the middle of the night during the dedication ceremonies.

Each of the temples has an entrance hall that opens into a chapel, and inside the chapel is a sanctuary in the form of a miniature one-room house. The façade of the Temple of the Sixth Sky has fallen away, exposing the front room (figure 13). In the center of the back wall of that room is a high door that opens into a second room, and visible be-

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Fig. 13. The Temple of the Sixth Sky (or Cross) at Palenque. The façade has fallen away, exposing the back wall of the entrance hall. Beyond the middle door, which leads to the chapel, the smaller door of the sanctuary is visible.

yond it is a low door that opens into the sanctuary, which takes the form of a very small temple within the larger one. Covering the back wall of the sanctuary is a large limestone tablet, carved in low relief.

At the center of the tablet is a picture in which two human figures stand on either side of an icon of a cosmic tree (see page 64). Both figures represent Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar, who is a boy of seven years on the left and a man of forty-nine on the right. According to the captions (shown in red), the boy is being designated the heir to the Egret lordship, and the man is in the act of inheriting the lordship. The previous lord was Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar's father, K'inich Janaab' Pakal, or "Sun-Eyed Corn Tassel Shield," who ruled from 615 to 683. The caption at extreme right refers to the occasion on which the son dedicated the three temples, receiving confirmation of his right to rule from the ghost of his paternal grandmother.

Both figures stand on a row of symbols that represent the path of the sun, moon, and planets, thus placing them in the sky. Depicted between them, in the form of a cross, is an icon of the cosmic tree that stands on the horizon when Sixth Sky is in the southwest. The flowers at the ends of the right and left branches identify it as a ceiba. Perched on top is a bird, presumably a manifestation of the goddess Cormorant. The actual icon would have been wooden, festooned with flowers, feathers, and jewelry.

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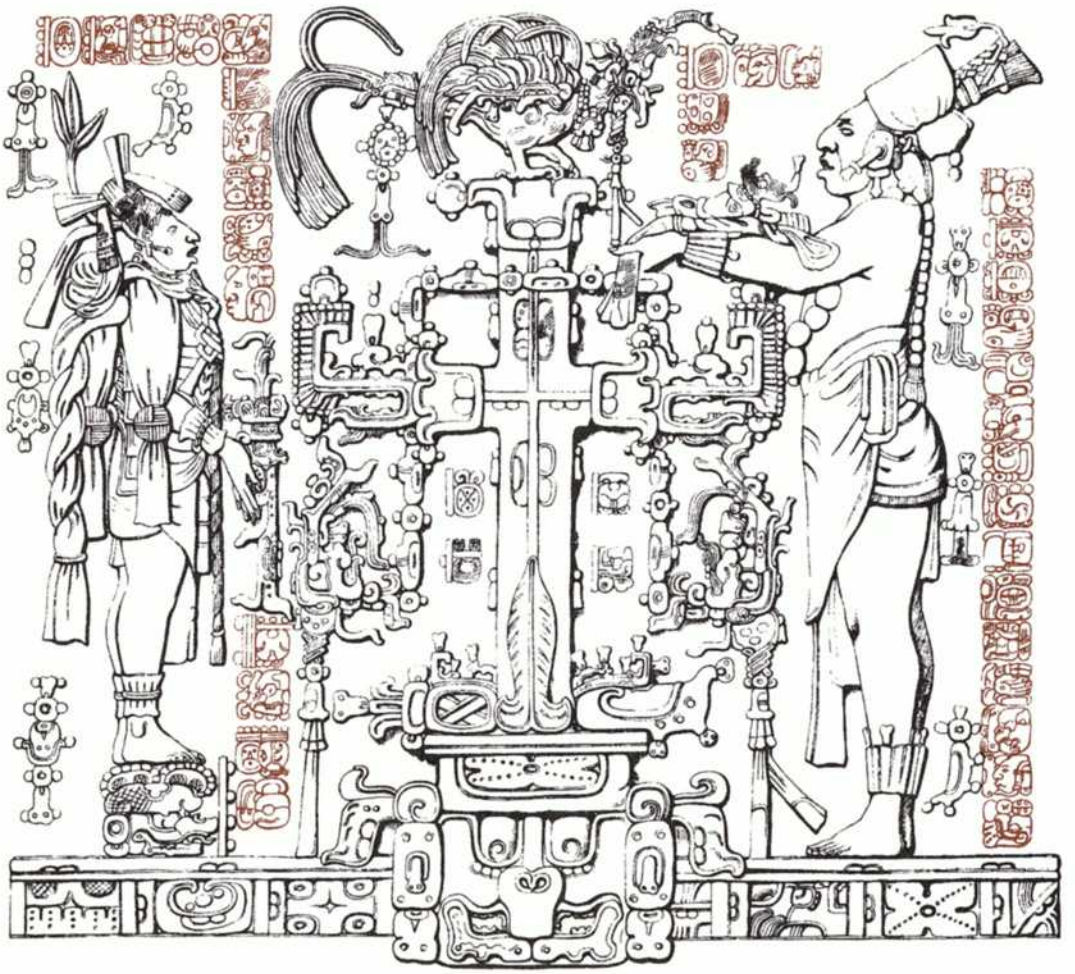

On 9 Night 6 Point, he was taken up inside the temple, he was given his burden, his duty, this sprout from the tree—

this ballplayer with the segmented guardian spirit, this flower of Sun-Eyed Corn Tassel Shield, this child of a lady who gives offerings, Lady Medicine.

After 17 and 8 score days plus 1 stone, on 13 Lord 18 Yellow Sun, he came down.

On 8 Dog 3 Song, the white paper was handed to him, to Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar—

this ballplayer with the segmented guardian spirit. 6 and 11 score days plus 6 stones after the white paper was handed to him, there was a delay in the movement of the divine triplets. On the 3rd day, he summoned the ghost of the namesake of the lady of the sky, a wise woman, and she handed the white paper to Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar with the segmented guardian spirit, lord who offers shells for the Egrets.

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The picture at the center of the tablet is flanked by a text in two parts, with three double columns of text on the left (see pages 70–72) and three on the right (pages 73–75). The story told by this text begins with the mythic deeds of gods, on the left, and then changes to a historical account of Egret rulers, on the right. Here and in the other two temples, an astronomical thread runs through both sides of the narrative, making the era of humans into an allegory of the era of gods. Just as heavenly bodies rise again after disappearing below the horizon, so royal persons hoped to rise after death and rejoin (in spirit) their living successors.

The inscription on the tablet represents the numbers in the opening long-count date with the profiled heads of their patron deities rather than with bars and dots, but the names of the periods are spelled out rather than represented by the heads of their own patrons. The writer thus reversed the choices that were made by the person who inscribed Stela C at Quiriguá. The present date is 12.19.13.4.0, near the end of the era that ended with the planting of the hearthstones on 13.0.0.0.0 4 Lord 8 Kiln. The Gregorian equivalent is December 5, 3121 B.C.E.

After the long-count number, with profiled heads still giving the names of the numbers, comes the calendar-round date, which in this case is Waxak Ajaw Waxaklajun Tzeek, "Eight Lord Eighteen Penance." Then comes additional information of a kind that was omitted on the Quiriguá stela, starting with the name of the current lord of the night. His name has not been deciphered, but we know that he came eighth in a repeating sequence of nine lords. Each of them wore the headband of lordship for one night, after which he passed it on to his successor.

Following the name of the lord of the night is information about Lady Moon, who in this case had reappeared as a slim but waxing crescent five days ago. The current month, reckoned as the kind that lasts 29 rather than 30 days, was the second in a series of six months. By the decimal reckoning of Western astronomy, the synodic month (which takes the moon through a complete series of phases) averages 29.53 days, but Mayan astronomers expressed calculations only in whole numbers, creating the need for months of two different lengths.

Next comes an event that took place 20 days before the opening long-count date: the ritual placement of a *nehn k'awiil,* or "mirror scepter," in one of the four directions. The scepter was moved from one direction to another at 819-day intervals, following a clockwise circuit. On the present occasion, it was stood in place *nojol, cha'an ch'een,* "on the right side, in the cave"—that is, to the right of a person facing the rising sun and therefore in the south—which took the role of the subterranean realm or nadir. The meaning of the 819-day interval is not fully understood, but the simplest explanation is that it comes within half a day of equaling 30 sidereal months of 27.32 days each. The sidereal month is the time the moon takes to make a complete circuit of the zodiac, so the position of the moon among the fixed stars would be similar from one rite to the next. But by the time the rites for all four directions were completed, the moon would have shifted by one position in the thirteen-sign Mayan zodiac.

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The date reached by the opening long count, 8 Lord 18 Penance, is marked by the birth of the goddess Cormorant, or Lady of Split Place. The writer drew the character that gives her the name Cormorant (at left in the illustration) in such a way that its main sign resembles the sign for the egret in the Palenque emblem at right. The effect of this visual move is to further one of the rhetorical purposes of the verbal message in the three temples, which is to secure the positions of the goddess Cormorant and her human namesake, Snake Jaguar's grandmother, in the spiritual and political history of the Egret lords of Palenque.

After the birth of Cormorant come two statements of intervals that move the story forward into the early days of the present era, a short distance beyond the placement of the hearthstones on 4 Lord 8 Kiln. First comes an interval of 2,980 days, reaching a date that could be expressed as 1.9.0 in long-count notation. The second interval is counted from the hearthstone event itself and reaches 1.9.2. The later date comes within half a day of marking one hundred one synodic months after the birth of Cormorant. On the 260-day calendar, it was 13 Ik', or "13 Wind." In terms of the 20-day divisions of the 365-day calendar, it was the first day, the seating *(chum),* of Mol, or "Cluster." All such divisions begin with an unnumbered "seating" day and then run through days numbered one through nineteen before arriving at the seating day of the next period.

On 13 Wind at the seating of Cluster, a god whose guardian spirit was in the sky at that time, Jun Ye Nal Tzuk, or "Corn Silk at the Tip of a Single Ear," turned around at Sixth Sky House. As we will see, the planet Mars was reckoned as being at its first stationary point on this date, about to go into retrograde motion. In other words, it had ceased its usual eastward movement against the background of the fixed stars when it reached Sixth Sky, or the base of the great Milky Way tree, and was turning around in order to move westward for a time.

Although Corn Silk had a guardian spirit in the form of the planet Mars, traveling among the thirteen signs of the Mayan zodiac, he himself had a place among the fixed stars of the zodiac. The name of this place, which follows the first mention of Sixth Sky House, is 8 Tzuk Na, "8th House of Corn Silk." The sequence of zodiacal signs ran eastward, so this one would be two places east of Sixth Sky House and the centipede corresponding to Scorpius. Thus, it would be in the area of eastern Sagittarius or the neighboring part of Capricornus, which is where the moon almanacs and Venus table in the Dresden Codex locate one of two corn deities, the other of whom has his home on the opposite side of the sky, in Gemini. Corn Silk would be the one called the "Tonsured Maize God" in the literature, who is depicted with corn silk coming out of the top of his head (figure 14).

The writer moves the story beyond the moment when Corn Silk turned around by describing an interval of 274,920 days that reaches the long-count date 1.18.5.3.2, which fell on 9 Ik' 15 Keh, or "9 Wind 15 Deer." This interval is equivalent to 352 idealized

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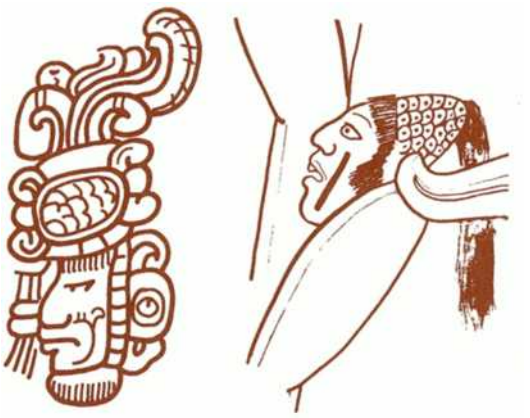

Fig. 14. Two images of the Tonsured Maize God, showing corn silk coming out of the top of his head. The one at left is a detail from an Early Classic vase from Tikal, Guatemala; the other is a detail from a Late Classic mural painted by Mayan artists at Cacaxla, in central Mexico.

Mars periods of 780 days each plus 360 more days. The added days take Mars from its first to its second stationary point (thus completing retrograde motion) and then to the end of its visibility in the night sky, when it is last seen setting in the west shortly after sunset. The writer expresses the disappearance of Mars in two ways, saying that Corn Silk (or his guardian) arrived at *matawil,* or "invisibility," and that "he touched the earth" when he was invisible.

Cormorant responds to the disappearance of Corn Silk by doing penance, fasting and letting blood so that he can eventually rise again (or be reborn) in the sky. In the other temples, we will learn that she does the same thing for his brothers, Sun-Eyed Lord of the Shield (in chapter 6) and Young Mirror Scepter (in chapter 7). In the present passage the writer describes her as "3 times a mother," but the mothering in question is a matter of bringing about spiritual rebirth through sacrifice rather than giving birth from a womb.

The time interval that reaches the next event starts from the emergence of Cormorant on the long-count date 12.19.13.4.0, near the end of the previous era, and arrives at a calendar-round date written as 9 Ik' chum Sak, "9 Wind at the seating of White." This date is correct as stated, but there are two errors in the interval number. Judging from several other inscriptions, the number should have been written as "2 and 6 score days [not 11 score days], 7 stones, 0 scores of stones [not 1 score of stones], and 2 bundles of stones." The total length of the corrected interval, 290,642 days, comes within an hour and a half of equaling 9,842 synodic months. Thus, the moon for Cormorant's new event, like the moon that attended her emergence, was reckoned as being in its fifth day of visibility.

Expressed in long-count terms, the event of 9 Wind at the seating of White took place on 2.0.0.10.2 in the present era, equivalent to September 5, 2325 B.C.E. On that day, a *sak huun,* or "white paper," was handed over to Cormorant. The question of who gave it to her is left unanswered. Whatever the source might have been, the white paper positions her as a divine predecessor of the Egret lords of Palenque, who will later pass on a white paper inscribed with sacrificial blood from generation to generation.

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Now the story adds another enormous interval of time, running forward through the better part of thirteen centuries and crossing into the realm of early human history. In the long count, the resultant date would be expressed as 5.7.11.8.4, equivalent to March 9, 996 B.C.E. On this day comes the birth of the first human being in the story. His name is Uk'ix Kan, "Snake Spine," and his father's name is Toyemat. On 5.8.17.15.17, or March 26, 967 B.C.E., the white paper is handed over to Snake Spine, and he becomes the first person to be described as a lord who makes offerings for the Egret dynasty. The sentence that describes this event is divided between the end of the text to the left of the picture (see page 72) and the beginning of the text to the right (page 73). The movement from one half of the text to the other suspends Snake Spine in the realm of legend, between the mythic times when the only actors are gods (on the left) and later times that move with the slower pace of human history (on the right).

Except for some final words about Snake Spine, the right-hand text is devoted to the generation-by-generation succession of Egret lords. First comes K'uk' B'alam, or "Quetzal Jaguar," who was born on 8.18.0.13.6, or March 29, 397 C.E. After this event comes a short interval that reaches a date in 419, and though we are not told what happened then, it was probably Quetzal Jaguar's designation as the future lord. Next comes the date at which the white paper was handed over to him, which fell in 431. His successors are described as lords who make offerings for the Egret dynasty, but he is described as a lord who makes offerings at Cloudy Center, meaning Palenque, the place where he ruled. The reason for treating him differently may be that he was the first Egret lord to reside at Cloudy Center.

The second ruler at Cloudy Center, Ch'amay, or "Harvester of Mist," was born in 422, before Quetzal Jaguar took office, and became the Egret lord in 435, at the age of thirteen. The long-count date of his accession was 8.19.19.11.17, but instead of giving this number directly, the writer reports "3 and 6 score days remaining" before the completion of "9 bundles of stones." Expressed as a full five-place number, this date would be 9.0.0.0.0, falling on December 9, 435. It seems likely that Harvester of Mist commissioned a monument to commemorate this event, but if so, it remains to be discovered.

Third in the generation-by-generation account of succession is B'utz'aj Sak Chiik, "Smoking White Coati," who was born in 459 and became lord in 487. In fourth place is Ahkal Mo' Naab', "Turtle Macaw Sea," whose birth and accession dates fell in 465 and 501. We know from other sources that he died in 524. His successor, K'an Joy Chitam, or "Yellow Bound Peccary," was born in 490 and took office in 529.

After a long reign as the fifth lord, Yellow Bound Peccary was succeeded in 565 by a man who had been born in 523 and thus did not become lord until he was forty-two. One of his names is the same as that of his grandfather, Turtle Macaw Sea, but it is preceded by other names that are his alone. They are difficult to read, but one of them starts with Sak Ch'um, "White Gourd," and the other starts with Chak, "Red."

Seventh in succession is Chan B'alam, "Snake Jaguar," who was born in 524, just one year after his predecessor. In the course of arriving at the date on which Snake

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Jaguar received the white paper, the writer inserts a parenthetical reference to an event that occurred before the accession. It took place "2 and 8 score days and 17 stones after the birth of Snake Jaguar," falling on 9.5.7.9.7, or November 30, 541. On that date, the moon, Venus, and Saturn were in conjunction in the Sixth Sky, near Antares in Scorpius. This conjunction partially prefigured the one in the night skies of July 21–23, 690, which is described on the tablets in the other two temples. Moreover, Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar, the lord who witnessed the later spectacle and commissioned the three temples, is a partial namesake of the Snake Jaguar who witnessed the earlier one.

The story told by the tablet in the Temple of the Sixth Sky ends with the presentation of the white paper to the earlier Snake Jaguar, which took place on 9.6.18.5.12, or April 6, 572. From other sources, we know that he ruled until 583. Four other reigns separated his from that of Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar, which began in 684.

The double columns of text from the tablets are presented and translated on the next six pages.

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Earth counts the drumbeats,
counts the scores of stones:

after twelve bundles of stones,

nineteen score stones,

thirteen single stones,

four score days,

and completed single days,

the date was Eight Lord

Eighteen Penance,

the headband was worn by the eighth lord of the night,
and 5 days ago

Lady Moon had arrived for the 2nd time in a series.

. . . is the birth name

of her score and 9 days. No single days and a score of days ago,

the mirror scepter had been stood in place

on the right side, in the cave,

on 1 Lord 18 Bat

and then the Lady of Split Place was born,

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Cormorant. No single days, 5 score days,

and 8 stones passed after she was born,

and meanwhile the era was closed on 4 Lord

8 Kiln, completing

13 bundles of stones. 2 and 9 score days

and 1 stone after the hearth was measured at the edge of the sky—

the First Three Stone Place—there in the sky

was Corn Silk at the Tip of a Single Ear.

On 13 Wind at the seating of Cluster,

he turned around at 6th Sky

House. 8th House of Corn Silk

is the sacred name of his home

at the zenith. No single days, 12 score days,

3 stones, 18 score stones,

and one bundle of stones passed after the turnaround at Sixth Sky

by Corn Silk at the Tip of a Single Ear,

and then he arrived at invisibility.

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On 9 Wind 15 Deer,

he touched the earth, he was invisible.

Cormorant fasted, she let blood,

3 times a mother.

2 and 11 score days, 7 stones,

1 score of stones, and 2 bundles of stones

after she was born, the white paper was handed over

to her, to Cormorant,

on 9 Wind at the seating of White.

2 and 12 score days, 10 stones,

6 score stones, and 3 bundles of stones

after what happened on 9 Wind,

Snake Spine was born,

the child of Toyemat,

lord who offers everything for the Egrets. 13 and 7 score days,

6 stones, and 1 score of stones

after Snake Spine was born,

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the white paper was handed over to him,

to Snake Spine, on 11 Earth

at the seating of Mat, as the lord who offers shells for the Egrets.

On 5 Death 14 Song,

Quetzal Jaguar was born.

14 and 5 score days, 2 stones, and 1 score of stones passed

after he was born, and then the white paper

was handed over to him on 1 Net

2 Song, as the lord who offers everything at Cloudy Center.

On 11 Sunk 6 Point,

Harvester of Mist was born.

9 and 3 score days and 13 stones

after Harvester of Mist was born,

on 2 Earth 10 Point,

with 3 and 6 score days remaining, the white paper

was handed over to Harvester of Mist,

and it happened when the count to 8 Lord

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13 Deer would complete

9 bundles of stones at Cloudy Center.

18 and 1 score days, 8 stones,

and 1 score of stones after the birth

of Smoking White Coati,

the white paper was handed over to him

on 3 Blade 11 Point.

17 and 7 score days, 16 stones,

and one score of stones after the birth

on 5 Lord 3 Penance

of Turtle Macaw Sea, the white paper was handed over

to him on 5 Earth

at the seating of Bat. 16 and 6 score days,

19 stones, and 1 score of stones

after Yellow Bound Peccary was born,

the white paper was handed over to him

on 5 Earth 12 Song.

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17 and 4 score days, 2 stones,

and 2 score stones after he was born,

the white paper was handed over to him,

to White Gourd . . .

Turtle Macaw Sea, on 1 Ceiba

4 Hunter. 1 and 1 score days

and 1 stone after the birth

of Red . . .

Turtle Macaw Sea came the birth

of Snake Jaguar, after 7 Net

17 Cluster. 7 and 4 score days,

8 stones, and 2 score stones

after Snake Jaguar was born,

on 11 Snake 13 Well

(and when 2 and 8 score days and 17 stones

after the birth of Snake Jaguar had also been marked),

the white paper was handed over to him.

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6 Temple of the Sun-Eyed Shield

THE TEMPLE OF the Sixth Sky at Palenque shares its plaza with two other temples built by Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar. These two face each other, with the Temple of the Sun-Eyed Shield to the west and the Temple of the Tree of Yellow Corn (the subject of the next chapter) to the east. The façade of the Temple of the Sun-Eyed Shield, with three entrance doors, is still intact (figure 15). Beyond the central door is an inside door that opens into the chapel, and inside the chapel is a further door that opens into the sanctuary. Like the sanctuaries in the other two temples, this one is a miniature house with a carved stone tablet on its back wall.

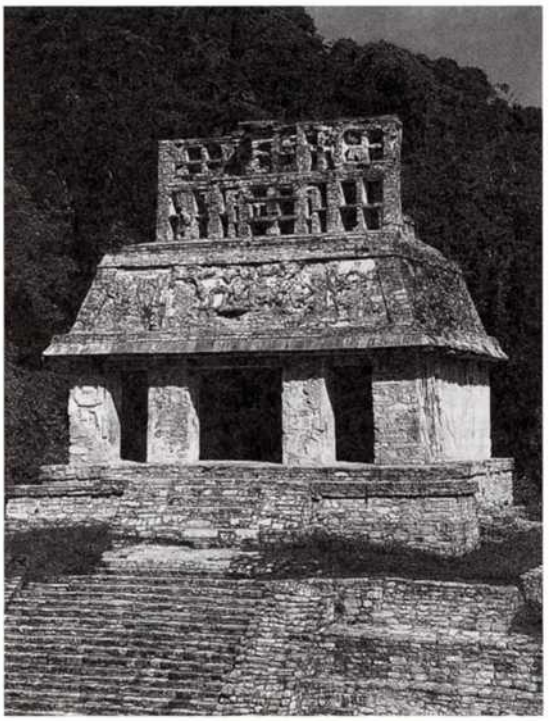

Fig. 15. The Temple of the Sun-Eyed Shield at Palenque. The three doors open into an entrance hall, beyond which are a chapel and sanctuary.

In the picture at the center of the tablet (see the facing page), the standing figures are again Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar at the ages of seven (left) and forty-nine (right), and again the captions (shown in red) refer to his designation as his father's successor and his actual accession to the Egret lordship. Both figures bear emblems of lordship in their outstretched hands. The boy holds a bundle of folded paper (the "white paper" mentioned in the caption) and, resting on top of it, the Flint Icon (named in the captions of the picture on the tablet in the Temple of the Tree of Yellow Corn). The man holds a figurine of Young Mirror Scepter.

Between the two figures, supported by crossed spears, is the Sun-Eyed Shield that gives this temple its name. The face on the shield belongs to K'inich Ajaw Pakal, or "Sun-Eyed Lord of the Shield," whose guardian spirit is visible not as the sun but as the planet Jupiter. The shield rises over a four-cornered royal dais that stands for the

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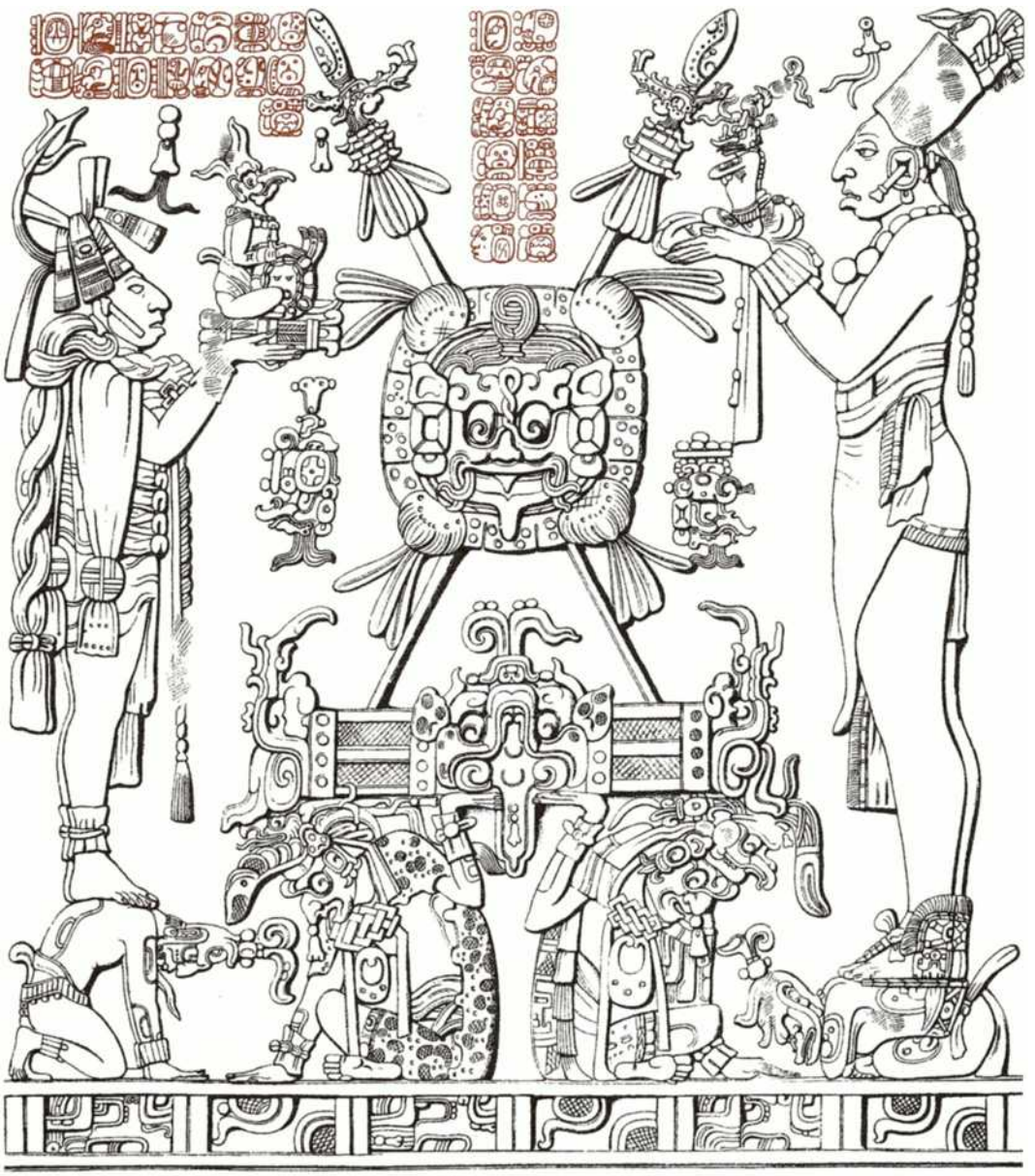

On 9 Night 6 Point, he was taken up
inside the temple, he entered the tree,
this ballplayer with the segmented
guardian spirit. On 13 Lord 18 Yellow
Sun, he came down, this tender sprout,
this small creature . . . with the segmented
guardian spirit, this flower of the
lord who offers everything for the Egrets.

On 8 Dog 3 Song, the white paper was
handed to him, to Sun-Eyed Snake
Jaguar with the segmented guardian
spirit, this flower of the lord who saw
5 score stones, Sun-Eyed Shield, this
child whose mother is Lady Medicine,
this lord who makes offerings for
the Egrets.

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four-cornered surface of the earth. And just as the royal persons on each side stand on the backs of captives taken in war, so the platform of the earth rests on the backs of two lords of the underworld who were defeated by the divine predecessors of earthly kings. All four supporting figures rest in turn on a row of symbols that show them to be in a sacred place in the earth, namely a cave. Snake Jaguar (at both ages) stands with his feet in this lower world, but like the Sun-Eyed Shield, he rises above it.

The right-hand caption identifies Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar's parents. His father was K'inich Pakal, or "Sun-Eyed Shield," a namesake of Sun-Eyed Lord of the Shield, and his mother was Ix Ajaw Tz'ak, "Lady Medicine." His father was a "lord who saw 5 score stones," meaning that his life, like that of Fiery Splendor at Quiriguá, began within one of the formal twenty-stone segments of the long count, lasted through three more, and ended during a fifth.

As in the other temples, the picture is flanked by a text in two equal halves (see pages 82–85). And like the texts in the other temples, this one tells a story that begins with mythic events and ends with history. Both parts of the story include sacrificial rites in which a spirit is summoned from the underworld. Cormorant calls up her second son, Sun-Eyed Lord of the Shield, and Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar raises the ghost of her human namesake, his grandmother. Of the three planets that were in conjunction during the dedication, the one that receives attention here is Jupiter.

As in the Temple of the Sixth Sky, the text begins with a lengthy statement of the timing of the first event in the story it tells. The long-count date, 1.18.5.3.6, is reckoned from the completion of 13 bundles of previous stones on August 11, 3114 B.C.E., and falls on October 23, 2360 B.C.E. In this case, both the numbers and names of the periods are represented by the profiled heads of the corresponding deities. The number heads continue for the date on the 260-day calendar, which is Uxlajun Kimi, or "Thirteen Death." A statement of the current lord of the night separates this date from the one on the 365-day calendar, which is 19 Keh, or "19 Deer," with a bar-and-dot number. Next comes the current moon, which has been visible for the first 6 days of a month that will last 30 days. Its name has not been deciphered.

The event that took place on 1.18.5.3.6 was the "birth" of the guardian spirit *(way)* of the deity Sun-Eyed Lord of the Shield, to whom the temple is dedicated. In astronomical terms, this event was a hypothetical eastern rise of Jupiter after a period of invisibility. Normally, the passage that follows the lunar statement and precedes the description of the long-count event would be devoted to the most recent of the preceding scepter rites, but this passage has been modified so as to take Jupiter into account. It begins with an interval number that takes us back not to 1.18.4.7.1, the date of the most recent rite, but to 1.18.4.0.15, which does not fit the schedule of rites. An explanation of the latter date was probably included in a paper draft of the inscription, but if so, it was omitted from the carved version. Next comes a calendar-round date that does fit the schedule of rites, 1 Ik' 10 Tzeek, or "1 Wind 10 Penance," but it takes us all the way back to 1.6.14.11.2. The interval between that date and the unexplained

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1.18.4.0.15 is 82,593 days, which is equal to 207 idealized Jupiter periods of 399 days each.

There remains the question as to why 1 Wind 10 Penance, among other possible dates for a scepter rite, was chosen to anchor one end of an interval that spans multiple Jupiter periods. The answer is that the mythic rite of 1 Wind 10 Penance set a precedent for a historical rite that fell on the same calendar-round date. The historical rite took place on 9.12.16.2.2, and it was the last such rite before Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar dedicated his temples on 9.12.18.5.16, or July 21, 690. Here we have one of the more remarkable examples of the ways in which Mayans used threads of different lengths and compositions to weave their tapestries of time.

Now we are ready to come back to 1.18.5.3.6, the long-count date that opens the inscription and brings the birth or rise of Sun-Eyed Lord of the Shield, or his planetary guardian spirit. The writer gives him various names and epithets before moving on with the story, calling him, among other things, "the sun-eyed torch at the center of the sun." The connection between Jupiter and the sun, which also occurs in Old World traditions, is based partly on the planet's brightness, but it may also derive from the fact that the average duration of its visibility, 367 days, is close to the length of a solar year.

The character for one of the epithets features the headless body of a jaguar, translated here as "the jaguar who lost his head," and the text puts this jaguar in a place called Sak B'ak Na, "White Bone House." The epithet may be a reference to the divine hero called Yax B'alam, or "First Jaguar," in the Dresden Codex and Xb'alanq'e, or "Little Jaguar Sun," in the Popol Vuh. He has a twin brother, called Jun Ajaw, or "One Lord," in Dresden and Junajpu, or "One Blowgunner," in the Popol Vuh. The two of them undergo trials in the underworld, including a stay in a house full of bones and incidents in which one of them loses his head (and gets it back again).

Next comes an interval of 275,466 days that takes the story all the way back to the date of the hearthstone event from which the opening long-count date was reckoned. On that same date, Sun-Eyed Lord of the Shield "turned around at the heart of Sixth Sky." The stated interval is equal to 690 Jupiter periods of 399 days each plus 156 more days. The extra days are exactly right for tracking Jupiter backward from its eastern rise to its second stationary point, where it "turned around" after a period of retrograde motion and resumed forward motion. In making its turn at Sixth Sky (in Scorpius), it foreshadowed the dedication of the temples in 690, when it turned around in the same part of the sky.

At an unspecified date after the guardian of Sun-Eyed Lord of the Shield turned around, he arrived at invisibility, which is to say that Jupiter disappeared from the sky. Cormorant responded by letting blood and fasting, making it possible for the guardian to reappear. She had done the same thing to bring the return of the guardian of Corn Silk at the Tip of a Single Ear, which is to say a reappearance of Mars.

The sentence that begins at the end of the left half of the text (at the bottom of page 83) and ends at the beginning of the right half (at the top of page 84) reaches all the

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way from the hearthstone event of mythic times to the historical event of 9.12.18.5.16. On the latter occasion, equivalent to July 21, 690, there was "a delay in the movement" of Sun-Eyed Lord of the Shield, meaning that Jupiter currently appeared to be motionless among the fixed stars, having ended a period of retrograde motion.

On the following night, Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar "turned around," just as Jupiter was about to turn around and resume its forward motion, only he did so in Quetzal Jaguar Temple, named for the first Egret lord to reside at Palenque. This temple is described as being to the west of the temples on the river channeled by the cave, which would put it on Quetzal Ridge. The southern tip of the ridge is crowned by the ruins of a temple that overlooks a large part of Palenque.

The writer chooses the moment of the turning in the temple to introduce Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar's personal guardian spirit, describing it as segmented *(b'akel)* rather than naming it as a centipede *(chapat)*. This mention of the guardian reminds the reader that Jupiter, along with Mars and Saturn, was currently in Sixth Sky (in Scorpius), the location of the centipede constellation.

On the same night that Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar turned around, the three planets were joined by the moon, the outward manifestation of the spirit familiar of Cormorant, Lady of Split Place. Her fasts and sacrifices had made it possible for the three planets to be reborn after going through periods of invisibility. But Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar waited until the third night, when the moon had moved into the middle of the tree of the Milky Way, to summon the ghost of Cormorant's human namesake, his grandmother. On this night, the moon was directly below Split Place, the Great Rift in the Milky Way.

The narrator, instead of describing the celestial place of the apparition at this point, describes the earthly one, saying that the ghost "was raised where the river is channeled by the cave, by the landslide of Quetzal Ridge." The cave, as we saw in the previous chapter, is the underground aqueduct that runs past the three temples.

Next the narrator moves back in time, stating the length of the interval between 9 Ak'b'al 6 Xul, or "9 Night 6 Point," and an earlier date, 12 Ajaw 8 Keh, or "12 Lord 8 Deer." On these dates, two different Egret lords underwent "entry into the tree of succession," which is to say they were formally designated as heirs to the throne. The earlier of the two was Yellow Bound Peccary, who entered the tree on 9.3.1.15.0, or November 18, 496, and the one who came later was Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar, who entered on 9.10.8.9.3, or June 15, 641. The writer adds that Snake Jaguar's "great day" came five days later than his entry, or on June 20, close to the summer solstice. By that time, the god named Corn Silk had joined Snake Jaguar's segmented guardian spirit, which is to say that Mars had arrived at the location of the centipede stars that correspond to Scorpius. At the same time, Mars came into conjunction with Jupiter, the guardian of Sun-Eyed Lord of the Shield.

Here the story moves back again to pick up the birth date for Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar, which was 2 Kimi 19 Sotz', or "2 Death 19 Bat." The interval number that connects this date to his entry into the tree puts the latter event on June 16, 641, making it

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a day later than was stated earlier. Apparently his entry was a long process, because the text states that "he came down" after an interval of 532 days. That number is equal to one 365-day year plus six synodic months.

The story ends with the statement that Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar came down from the tree "with the count at 10 stones," a reference to the fact that the long count had reached the number 10 in the third place. The full date was 9.10.10.0.0, equivalent to December 4, 642.

The four double columns of the inscription in the Temple of the Sun-Eyed Shield are presented and translated on the next four pages.

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Dawn counts the drumbeats,
counts the scores of stones:

after one bundle of stones,

eighteen score stones,

five single stones,

three score days,

and six single days,

the date was Thirteen Death

(the headband was worn by the third lord of the night) 19 Deer,

a score and 6 days after the arrival

of the 4th in a series of moons. . . .

is the birth name of the new month of a score and 10 days.

11 and 2 score days and 1 stone had passed,

and the mirror scepter had been stood in place

in the north on 1 Wind

10 Penance, and then the child

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was born, the guardian spirit of the sun-eyed torch

at the center of the sun, the jaguar who lost his head

in the house of . . . , the White Bone House,

Snake Bath,

Smoke . . . Crocodile,

Sun-Eyed Lord of the Shield.

6 and 3 score days, 5 single stones,

18 score stones, and 1 bundle of stones ago,

he had turned around at the heart of Sixth Sky,

and then he arrived at invisibility.

The one who fasted

was the Lady of the Split Place,

Cormorant, lady who offers shells for the Egrets.

16 and 5 score days,

18 stones, 12 score stones,

and 9 bundles of stones after the hearth was measured

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at the edge of the sky,

the New Three Stone Place, on 4 Lord

8 Kiln, what happened

on 2 Honey 14 Cluster

was a delay in the movement of the guardian spirit

of one of the divine triplets, Sun-Eyed Lord of the Shield.

With the change to 3 Earth

15 Cluster, the one who turned around

into the west, in Quetzal Jaguar Temple,

inside the home of the burners of incense,

was the one with the segmented guardian spirit,

Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar, lord who offers everything for the Egrets.

On the 3rd day, he summoned a ghost,

it was raised where the river is channeled

by the cave, by the landslide

of Quetzal Ridge. 3 and 12 score days,

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6 single stones, and 7 score stones

after 12 Lord 8 Deer,

with the entry into the tree of succession

of Yellow Bound Peccary, which happened

at Cloudy Center, what occurred

on 9 Night 6 Point

was another entry, and 5 days after

his entry into the tree of succession came the great day

of Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar, when his segmented guardian spirit

was joined by Corn Silk.

18 and 2 score days and 6 stones

after 2 Death 19 Bat,

when he was born, he entered the tree of succession.

After 12 and 8 score days and 1 stone, on 13 Lord

18 Yellow Sun, with the count at 10 stones,

he came down after entering the tree.

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7 Temple of the Tree of Yellow Corn

THE LAST OF the three temples built by Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar at Palenque is directly across the plaza from the Temple of the Sun-Eyed Shield, whose main door frames a view of it (figure 16). The façade has fallen away, exposing the tall door to the chapel. Once again, the sanctuary takes the form of a miniature house, with a sculpted tablet filling its back wall.

Fig. 16. The Temple of the Tree of Yellow Corn (or Foliated Cross) at Palenque, seen through the center door of the Temple of the Sun-Eyed Shield.

This time the seven-year-old Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar stands on the right side of the picture at the center of the tablet, and his forty-nine-year-old self stands on the left (see the facing page). In the middle is a representation of the K'anal Te', or "Tree of Yellow Corn," the icon that gives this temple its name. Its branches bear ears of corn with silk hanging out, and the corn inside the husks takes the form of the heads of the twin gods of corn. The actual icon would have been made of wood and festooned with ears and leaves of corn, together with jewelry.

In the first of the temples, that of the Sixth Sky (in chapter 5), the two figures of Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar stand on the path of the sun, moon, and planets. In the Temple of the Sun-Eyed Shield (in chapter 6), their feet rest on the floor of a cave. Now we see them on the surface of the earth, but not in ordinary places. The boy stands on a conch shell, named by the characters on its side (shown in red) as K'anal Jub' Matawil, "Yellow Corn in the Conch of Invisibility." This is the name of an exit from the underworld where celestial lights emerge after a period of disappearance. Just as the emergence, disappearance, and reappearance of celestial lights were seen as an allegory of human birth, burial, and spiritual return, so were the sprouting, planting, and return of corn.

As a man, Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar stands on the split skull of a monster named by the characters in its eyes as Yax Jan Witz, "First Corn Tassel Mountain." It was from a cleft in the top of this mountain that corn and other food plants were retrieved after being hidden underground at the end of the world previous to the present one.

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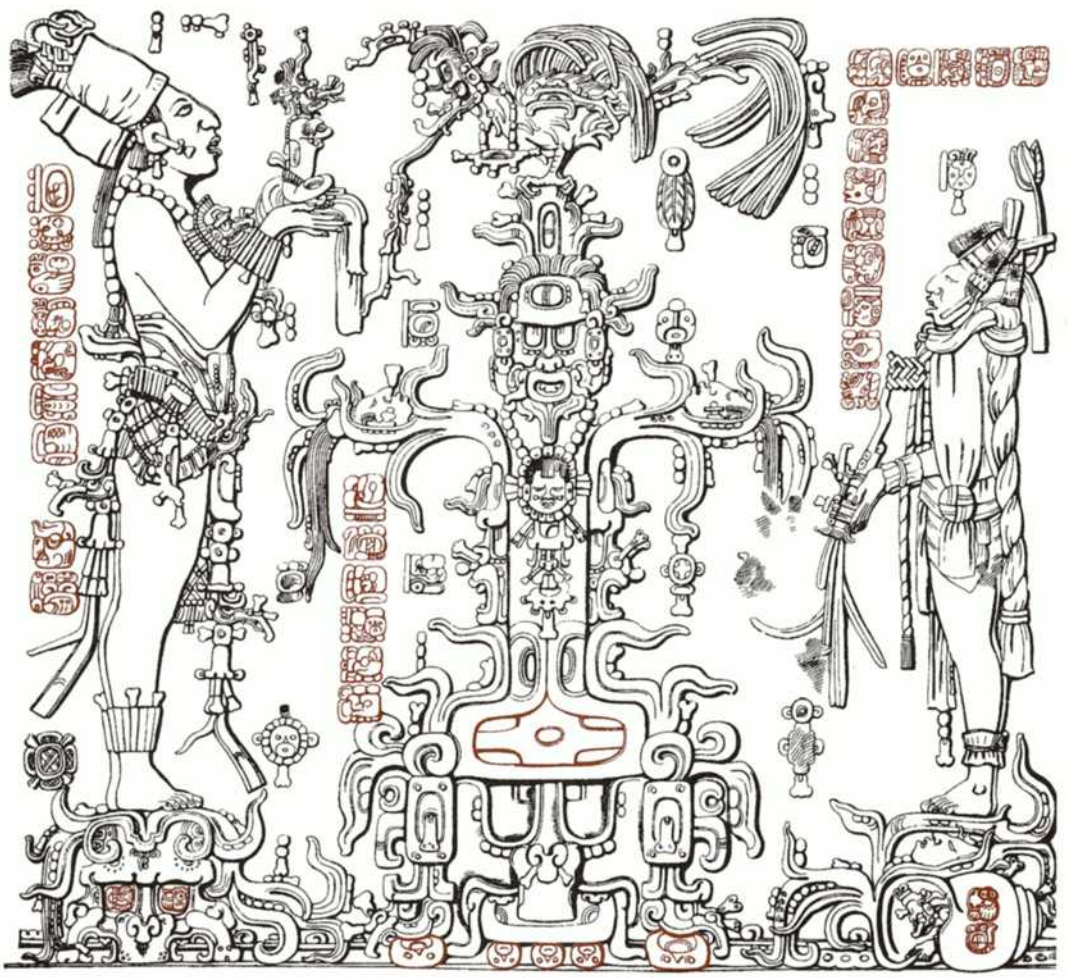

On 8 Foot 3 Song, the white paper was presented to him, to Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar. He renovated the temple of Quetzal Jaguar, Lord at Cloudy Center.

When he entered the tree, he joined the first among all sprouts, One Lord. The Red Snake was lying face down together with Akan, unseen, when he received the mirror scepter—

Here in the sanctuary of the home of spirits is the ballplayer with the segmented guardian spirit, Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar, lord who makes offerings for the Egrets.

this flower of the lord who saw 5 score stones, Sun-Eyed Corn Tassel Shield, lord who offers shells for the Egrets.

YELLOW

First Corn
Tassel Mountain

CORN

Yellow Corn in the
Conch of Invisibility

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The Tree of Yellow Corn stands on the head of an earth monster with a cruciform sign (in red) on its forehead. This sign reads *k'an,* and it has a suffix consisting of the five small, upside-down faces that run along beneath the head. In this position, the faces serve as a visual pun on corn kernels planted in the earth, but their phonetic value, which is *al,* completes the word *k'anal,* meaning "yellow corn."

Among the gods mentioned in the right-hand caption, Jun Ajaw, or "One Lord," has a strong association with the planet Venus. Chak Chan, or "Red Snake," appears in the Quiriguá account of the New Three Stone Place, which describes him as planting his stone in the earth, but little else is known about him. Akan, a god of alcoholic beverages, resides among the fixed stars. He and One Lord also show up in the text to the right of the picture.

The same caption informs us that Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar received the mirror scepter, marking him as a future lord, when he was young. A forty-two-year wait lay ahead of him. His father, who is named here as K'inich Janab' Pakal, or "Sun-Eyed Corn Tassel Shield," served as the Egret lord from the age of twelve to the age of eighty, from 615 to 683. The Temple of the Inscriptions, on the opposite side of the aqueduct from the three temples under discussion here, was built to serve as his tomb. Construction probably began during his reign, but his son was the one who finished the job.

Again, the columns of text on either side of the picture assign dates to the events in the story they tell, whether the actors are gods (see pages 93–94) or humans (pages 95–96). The story of the conjunction of three planets at Sixth Sky is completed with the introduction of Young Mirror Scepter, whose guardian spirit is Saturn. In a sense, he is present in all three temple texts, each of which mentions a directional ritual involving the object called the mirror scepter. But in the present temple, care is taken to distinguish the deity from the object. Among the characters illustrated below, the first one gives the object its usual name, *nehn k'awiil,* or "mirror scepter":

The first reference to the deity is made by the second character, which reads *k'awinal winik,* "scepter person" or "scepter personified." His name is then given by the pair of characters at right, the first of which reads *ch'ok,* or "sprout," meaning that he is young. In the second member of the pair, his status as a young person becomes visible in the full figure of an infant. The *k'a* sign from the scepter character now emanates from his brow, and though the *nehn* sign is still present, mounted on his forehead, an alternative sign for *nehn* appears in front of the *k'a.* If we follow current practice and read the fig-

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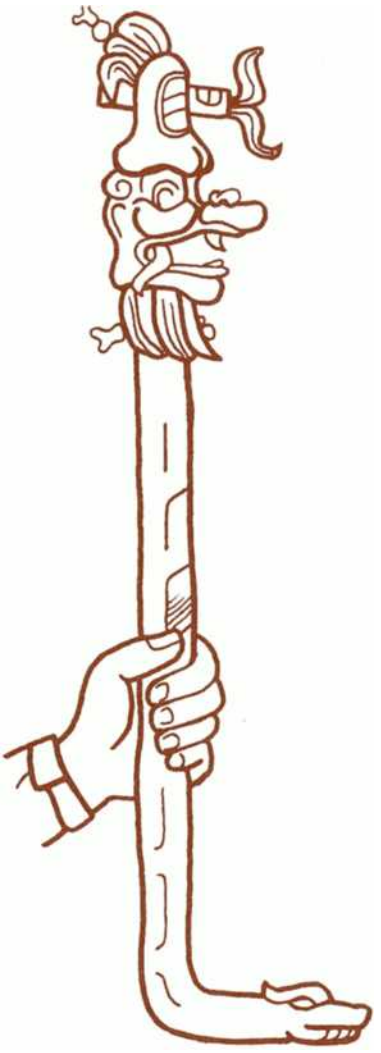

Fig. 17. An image of Young Mirror Scepter, held in the hand of a ruler. A flaming torch runs through his head, and the mark on his forehead represents a mirror. The handle takes the form of a snake with its head at the lower end. Detail from a stucco relief in the tomb of Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar's father, beneath the Temple of the Inscriptions at Palenque.

ure itself as a logograph for *k'awiil,* the complete name comes out as Ch'ok Nehn K'awiil, "Young Mirror Scepter."

The sign for *k'a* in the first and last characters represents a two-tongued flame, and in other contexts it can serve as a logograph for *k'ahk,* meaning "fire." This choice among signs for *k'a* keeps the reader mindful of the fact that Young Mirror Scepter is a source of power in the form of fire. He is represented with a flaming torch or an ax blade stuck through his head, emerging from a mirror mounted on his forehead. In sculpted images, he often takes the form of a scepter held in the hand of a ruler (figure 17). When scepters incorporate his whole body, one of his legs takes the form of a serpent that serves as a handle, but in the example shown here, the serpent handle takes the place of his body. Similar scepters were used by K'iche' lords up to the time of the Spanish invasion, and they survive today in the axes carried by the characters in the Rabinal Achi dance-drama, performed in the K'iche' town of Rabinal.

The opening of the text that deals with Young Mirror Scepter follows a pattern that is familiar from the other temples. First comes a long-count date, 1.18.5.4.0, corresponding to November 6, 2360 B.C.E. Both the numbers and the names of the periods are represented by the profiled heads of the corresponding deities, and a head also serves as the first number in the calendar-round date, Jun Ajaw 13 Mak, or "One Lord 13 Turtle." Next comes the lord of the night, followed by the current moon and, finally, by the most recent scepter rite. The interval number for the rite is correct, but the calendar-round date should have been written as 1 Imix 19 Pax, or "1 Ceiba 19 Drum." The stated date, 1 Kawak 7 Yax, or "1 Portal 7 Green," resulted from adding the interval to the long-count number rather than subtracting it. If the person who made the calculations was someone other than the author of the text, the author simply repeated the error.

After the account of the scepter rite comes an announcement of the event that took place on 1.18.5.4.0, which was the birth (or rise) of the guardian spirit of Young Mirror

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Scepter. This date puts Saturn in the sky fourteen days after the birth of Jupiter on 1.18.5.3.6, an interval that is similar to the one that separated their respective rises before the conjunction of 690. Give or take a few days, Jupiter should have become visible around November 5, 689, with Saturn following around November 16. This circumstance may have influenced the calculation of the dates assigned to their rises in mythic times.

After the birth of Young Mirror Scepter comes an interval of 12,520 days, completing 2 bundles of stones and thus bringing the long-count number to 2.0.0.0.0. Something was deleted when this part of the text was transferred to stone, creating the impression that he reached invisibility on this date, but the correct date came later. We can calculate it by using the interval that comes next in the text, which lasts 1,060,996 days and reaches 9.12.18.5.16, the historical date on which Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn were in conjunction. The starting date for this interval is not given, but it would have been 2.5.11.2.0, coming 52,520 days after the birth of Young Mirror Scepter (or the eastern rise of Saturn), on 1.18.5.4.0. This is enough time to take Saturn through 138 idealized periods of 378 days each and to run it 356 days into another period, leaving 22 days for the period of invisibility preceding another eastern rise. This figure is very close to the 25 days Western astronomers assign to Saturn's average period of invisibility.

When Young Mirror Scepter became invisible, "his spirit was summoned" by Cormorant. In order to accomplish this, she would have done penance by letting blood, just as she did for his brothers, Corn Silk and Sun-Eyed Lord of the Shield. On the present occasion, she let blood on First Corn Tassel Mountain, which is "near the Temple of the Tree of Yellow Corn," the very temple whose tablet records what she did on that mountain. Moreover, the tablet's picture includes the image of the mountain, as we have seen. It is in the lower left-hand corner, not far from the passage in which it is mentioned, and standing on it is the adult Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar. Like Cormorant, he will summon a spirit, and like the spirit she summoned, his will be of the opposite sex.

The inscription gives 1 Ajaw 13 Mak, or "1 Lord 13 Turtle," as the calendar-round date for Cormorant's penance, but this is actually the date of Young Mirror Scepter's birth (or a rise of Saturn), as stated earlier. The event that occasioned her penance would have been his disappearance (or that of Saturn) on 2.5.11.2.0, when the corresponding calendar-round date was 1 Ajaw 13 Sak, or "1 Lord 13 White."

As in the other temples, the transition between the events of the mythic past and those of human history runs from the end of the text to the left of the picture (see page 94) to the beginning of the text on the right (page 95). In the present case, the right-hand text opens with 2 Honey 14 Cluster, the calendar-round date for the dedication of the temples on 9.12.18.5.16, or July 21, 690. On that day, the guardian spirits of the triplets, visible as the planets Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, were in conjunction. Young Mirror Scepter was "delayed," which is to say that Saturn appeared motionless among the fixed stars. He is also described as having been "caught," which is consistent with the nature of the constellation where the delay is taking place, the centipede corresponding to Scorpius. Assuming that this centipede was like its scorpion counterpart in the Madrid Codex, it caught passersby with a lasso.

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The text describes Young Mirror Scepter (or his guardian spirit) as *unehn,* or "the mirror of" Sun-Eyed Lord of the Shield, who is named as K'in Ix, "Sun Jaguar." We can come up with at least three possible reasons for using the figure of a mirror to compare the two of them, all of which may be valid. One is that Saturn is dimmer than Jupiter, like the reflection in an obsidian mirror. Another is that the average lengths of their periods, 378 days for Saturn and 399 days for Jupiter, are similar, especially as contrasted with the Martian period of 780 days. The third is that both planets appeared stationary on 2 Honey 14 Cluster, whereas Mars had been in forward motion for some time.

The moon, which must have been conceived as the guardian spirit of Cormorant, moved into a position among the three planets a day later, on 3 Kab'an 15 Mol, or "3 Earth 15 Cluster." As was also mentioned in the Temple of the Sun-Eyed Shield, Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar meanwhile turned around, as if to allow Jupiter and Saturn to turn eastward and resume their travels after having been delayed by their encounter with his guardian spirit. He performed this maneuver inside the K'inich K'uk' B'alam Na, or "Sun-Eyed Quetzal Jaguar Temple."

On the third day, July 23, 690, the moon moved to a position east of the planets, in the middle of the Milky Way tree. This movement placed it just below the Great Rift, which was probably interpreted as a portal between the worlds of the living and the dead. On that night, Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar let his own blood and summoned the ghost of White Quetzal, his paternal grandmother. She is identified here only as "the namesake of the lady of the sky," which is to say the goddess Cormorant. When she was summoned, "she handed over the white paper of her spirit" to her grandson. He had already received the physical white paper, blotted with blood, that was passed down from one Egret lord to another, but now he received its spiritual counterpart. This new paper would be the same one that was handed to the goddess Cormorant in mythic times, as told in the Temple of the Sixth Sky.

Again, as in the Temple of the Sun-Eyed Shield, we are told that the séance took place "where the river is channeled by the cave," referring to the aqueduct that runs past the temples. But this time the earthly cave is paired with "the cave of 6th Sky," probably meaning the Great Rift. Near the mouth of the celestial cave were the three planets, here referred to as Chaak, or "Thunderbolts." With them was the "lady who offers gems for the Four Hundred," referring to Cormorant, whose spirit familiar was visible as the moon. Calling her subjects the "Four Hundred" is akin to saying "thousands" in English. The reference is to the visible fixed stars, whose number is indefinite.

Now the narrative moves back to earlier events in the life of Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar, using an interval number to link his birth on May 21, 635, to his receipt of the white paper on January 8, 684. The text mentions his "segmented" guardian spirit here, meaning a centipede and its celestial counterpart in Scorpius. Then comes another interval, returning the story to July 21, 690, and the conjunction of the three planets. At this point, the astronomical gaze abruptly turns away from that spectacle, shifting from the southwest horizon in the late evening to the eastern horizon in the morning,

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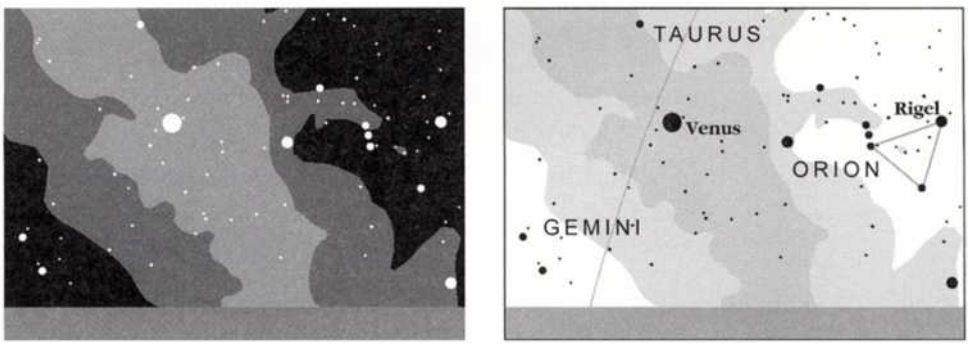

Map 4. The eastern sky at Palenque, shortly before dawn on July 23, 690. Venus, between Taurus and Gemini in the middle of the Milky Way, is the morning star. The arching line in the right-hand version of the map marks the path of the sun.

and from the place where the sun, moon, and planets cross the Milky Way near the centipede to the place where they cross the opposite side of the Milky Way, not far from the hearthstones in Orion (map 4).

The description of what was happening in the eastern morning sky is highly condensed, something like the information in the astronomical tables of the Dresden Codex. First comes the mention of an *ek' way,* or "star guardian," who is like the three planets on the other side of the sky in being a Chaak, or "Thunderbolt." Next, the current location of this planet is identified as the home of Akan, a god of alcoholic beverages whose stars are at the crossroads between Taurus and Gemini. His name is followed by the epithet Nichaj, "Destroyer," perhaps referring to his habit of chopping off his own head. After that comes the name of the god who had the planet as his guardian spirit: Jun Ajaw, or "One Lord," one of the hero twins. At the crossroads on July 21–23, 690, was Venus (see map 4), the brightest of all the planets and stars. Venus serves as a guardian or a source of power for different gods on different occasions, but it must have been assigned to One Lord at this time because it had begun its current term as the morning star on a day named Ajaw, or "Lord." It was 10 Lord, to be exact, corresponding to April 16, 690.

Near the end comes an interval that moves the story into the future, reaching the completion of the current score of stones and the long-count date 9.13.0.0.0, corresponding to March 16, 692. But the final words take the reader back to July 21–23, 690, "when he went into seclusion, when Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar, lord who makes offerings for the Egrets, was alone."

The four double columns from the tablet in the Temple of the Tree of Yellow Corn are presented and translated on the next four pages.

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Wind counts the drumbeats,
counts the scores of stones:

after one bundle of stones,

eighteen score stones,

five single stones,

four score days,

and no single days,

the date was One Lord

13 Turtle, the headband was worn by the eighth lord of the night,

and 10 days ago the 5th in a series of moons had arrived.

White Foot is the birth name of the new

month of a score and ten days. 19

and 14 score days ago, on 1 Portal

7 Green, had come the standing

of the mirror scepter where the sun goes in,

and then the 3rd one was born

in the new sky, the scepter personified,

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the third giver of blessings to arise,

Young Mirror Scepter.

After 1 score of stones, 14 single stones,

and 14 score and no single days

came the arrival of Young

Mirror Scepter at invisibility.

And then, after 2 bundles of stones had been completed

on 2 Lord 3 Spirit,

his spirit was summoned

by the Lady of Split Place, Cormorant,

lady who makes offerings for the invisible.

It happened on First Corn Tassel

Mountain, White Flower, near

the Temple of the Tree of Yellow Corn, on 1 Lord

13 Turtle. After 7 bundles of stones,

7 score stones, 7 single stones,

and 3 score and 16 days,

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on 2 Honey 14 Cluster,

came the delay, the capture

of one of the divine triplets: the mirror

of Sun Jaguar, Mirror Scepter.

On the day 3 Earth

15 Cluster, the one who turned around

in the Sun-Eyed Quetzal Jaguar Temple,

inside the home of those who fast

was Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar, lord who offers everything for
the Egrets.

On the 3rd day, he summoned the ghost

of the namesake of the lady of the sky, a wise woman,

by letting his blood. She handed over the white paper

of her spirit to Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar,

lord who makes offerings for the Egrets. It happened where the river

is channeled by the cave. At the cave

of 6th Sky were 3 fierce Thunderbolts

and the lady who offers gems for the Four Hundred.
4 and 6 score days,

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9 single stones, and 2 score stones

after he was born, the white paper was handed over

to the one with the segmented guardian spirit,

Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar, lord who makes offerings for the Egrets,

on 8 Foot 3 Song.

6 and 11 score days and 6 stones

after he was seated in kingship

came the delay, the capture

of the divine triplets, Corn Silk,

Mirror Scepter, and Sun-Eyed Lord of the Shield.

The Thunderbolt star guardian with Akan the Destroyer

was One Lord. This was experienced

by Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar. In 4 and 12 score days

and 1 stone will come

8 Lord 8 Sign, marking the 13th score of stones,

coming after the event of 2 Honey, when he went into seclusion,

when Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar, lord who makes offerings for
the Egrets, was alone.

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8 Lady Shark Fin and the Evening Star

THE RÍO USUMACINTA makes a great horseshoe bend in the rainforest, halfway between its headwaters in the Guatemalan highlands and its end in the Gulf of Mexico. Inside the bend, on a terrace and hillside overlooking the river, are the ruins of the city known today as Yaxchilán, meaning "First Spokesman." This name was given to the ruins by Lacandón Mayans, who were making pilgrimages there at the time of the first visit by an archaeologist in 1882.

The recorded history of the rulers of Yaxchilán begins in 359 and ends in 808. The city's greatest period, as measured by the production of its artists, was in the eighth century. The local writers whose work found its way into stone carvings were less laconic than many of their counterparts in other places. In dealing with the limited spaces on slabs of stone designed to fit into buildings, they gave less attention to narrative and more to the poetic dimension of discourse. Their writings sound more like passages from the oral performances of court poets and less like an abstract of the information imparted in such performances.

Instead of using a single emblem to identify the rulers of their city, the writers of Yaxchilán often used a pair of emblems. In the example above, the writer made the part of the royal title that includes the logograph *ch'uh* into a couplet, following it first with *yax* and then with *k'an*. The holder of the title is thus a person who sprinkles *(ch'uh)* offerings of small objects that are green or fresh *(yax)* and yellow or ripe or valuable *(k'an),* the understanding being that the gods will provide an abundance of children, crops, and valuables in return. In depictions of this rite in the art of Yaxchilán, the falling offering becomes an enlarged *ch'uh* sign, interspersed with *yax* and *k'an* signs (figure 18).

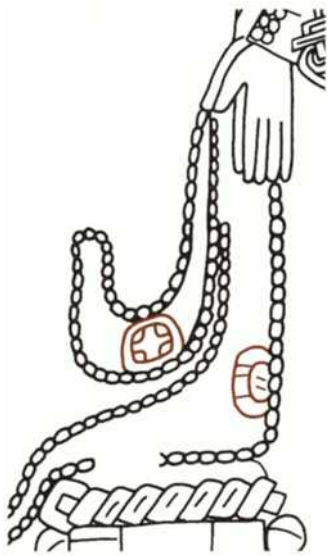

Fig. 18. An offering, outlined with the beads of the *ch'uh* sign, falling from the hands of a lord onto an altar. Enclosed within the beads are the signs for *k'an* (left) and *yax* (right), highlighted in red. From Stela 6 at Yaxchilán. Late Classic.

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Yaxchilán writers nearly always rendered the pair of elements that follows the couplet with *aj* first and *po* second, the opposite of the usual order at Palenque, and they nearly always omitted the *-aw* suffix that indicates an *ajaw* reading for these elements. This practice suggests that the primary reading was *ajpo* or *ajpop,* "master of the council," with *ajaw* or "lord" as an optional addition.

The main sign in the emblem on the left, which first appeared in the eighth century, reads *yej,* which is a term for "mouth" or "teeth" and for the cutting edge of a tool or weapon. The main sign in the other emblem, which was used throughout the history of the city, is composed of parts of two other signs. As we can see, the top part is from the top of the sign for *pax,* and the bottom part is from the bottom of a sign for *chan:*

Pax is the term for an upright, hide-covered drum (as contrasted with a horizontal slit drum) or the sound of such a drum. The branching floral element that spouts from its top represents the sound that emerges from a drum and radiates in all directions. *Chan* could mean "four," "snake," or "sky," but the sign used here is the one for "sky." Paxchan, then, means something like "Drum Sky" or "Drumming in the Sky." The notion of filling the sky with the sound of drumming occurs in the dialogue of the K'iche' Maya dance-drama Rabinal Achi, performed to this day in the highland town of Rabinal. One of the characters, in the course of telling the story of his approach to a town where the sacrifice of prisoners of war was in progress, describes the sound of a drum:

> It seemed as if the very sky were beating like a heart
> the very earth were beating like a heart.

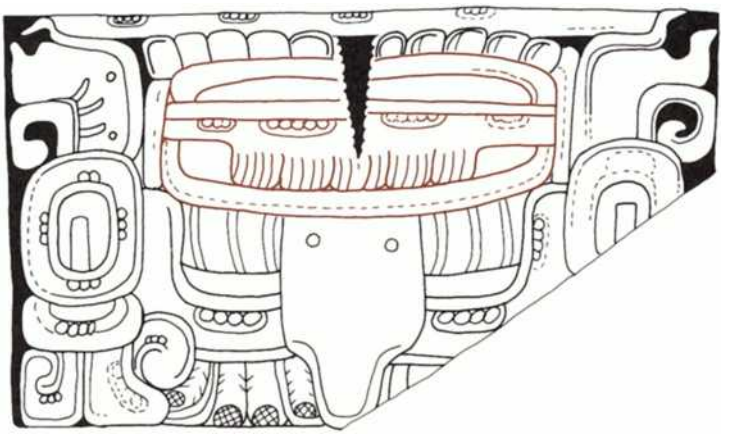

Fig. 19. The face of an earth monster, carved on the base of Stela 4 at Yaxchilán, Chiapas. Paxchan, an ancient name for Yaxchilán and its dynasty, is spelled out on the monster's forehead, which has a *pa'x,* or "crack" in the middle and is otherwise covered by the sign for *chan,* or "sky" (marked in red). Late Classic.

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The earthly reverberations of a drum find expression in the carving on the stelas of Yaxchilán, which show rulers standing on the head of an earth monster that wears an altered version of the Paxchan sign on its forehead. The carving on Stela 4, for example, replaces the floral element that represents the sound of a drum with a crack in the earth, realistically drawn with jagged edges (figure 19). The term for a crack is *pa'x,* making for a sound play on *pax,* the term for an upright drum. The combined visual and verbal effect is to suggest that the sound of the drum not only radiates through the air but penetrates the earth.

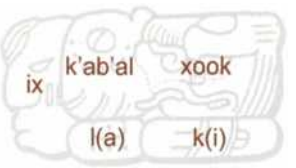
Whatever the original connotations of the name Paxchan, it could easily have suggested ceremonies of sacrifice to eighth-century writers and their readers. Many of the inscriptions at Yaxchilán testify to the numerous prisoners of war taken by the local lords of that era. Yej, the name contained in the more recent of the two emblems, could have been understood as a reference to the cutting edge of an instrument of sacrifice. Taken together, the Yej and Paxchan emblems may be interpreted as follows:

lord who makes green offerings for the Council of the Cutting Edge,
lord who makes yellow offerings for the Council of Drum Sky.

When the local writers used Paxchan as a place-name, apart from a royal title, they sometimes preceded it with a descriptive phrase (at right). *Tan ha'* means "on the water" or "river," referring to the Usumacinta. Here we have a glimpse of the ways in which Mayan poets must have sung the praises of their cities. In this case, the words they said or chanted included "the place on the river, / Drum Sky."

The glory days of Drum Sky began during the reign of a king who was the second in his line to take the name shown at left. The prefix refers to a god whose name is Itzamnaaj, meaning something like "Far Seer" or "True Magician," and carrying connotations of dignity and the ability to succeed. He was a fatherly god who gave wise counsel and caused flowers to bloom. Following the name is a logograph for *b'alam,* "jaguar." The man named True Magician Jaguar ascended to the throne on October 21, 681. He was destined to rule until he was more than ninety years old, meeting his end on June 17, 742.

True Magician Jaguar had three wives. The woman in the senior position was known mainly by the name shown at right. She is Ix K'ab'al Xook, "Lady Shark Fin," *xook* being the term for "shark." Yaxchilán is far from the sea, but the bull shark *(Carcharhinus leucas)* tolerates freshwater and is known to inhabit the Usumacinta. The Shark Fin lineage was that of the lady's mother.



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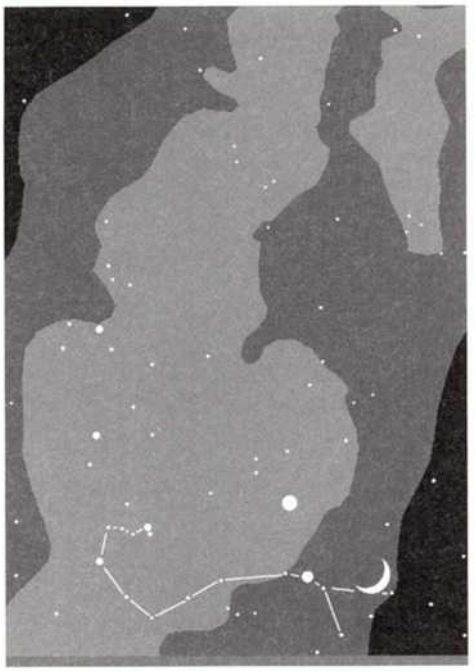

Map 5. The southwest sky at Yaxchilán, shortly after sunset on October 21, 681. The tree in the Milky Way stands on the horizon, with the stars of Scorpius, seen as a centipede, at its base. Just above Antares, the brightest of those stars, is the planet Venus in its role as the evening star, and to the right is the crescent of the new moon.

Early in the evening on the day of her husband's inauguration as king, Lady Shark Fin performed a rite in which she invoked a divine patron of kingship whose outer form was a draconic centipede. The centipede was visible as the stars of Scorpius, located at the foot of the standing Milky Way tree (map 5). Above Antares, the brightest star in Scorpius, was the planet Venus, then appearing as the evening star. To the right of Antares was the thin crescent of the new moon on its first day of visibility, at the edge of the Milky Way and moving into it. The presence of the moon in this location probably gave Lady Shark Fin the authority to address her husband's divine source of power.

Among the many monuments and buildings commissioned by True Magician Jaguar was a palace for Lady Shark Fin, dedicated in 723. It sits at the center of the city's long main plaza, facing toward the river. Over the three front doors and a side door were limestone lintels, each one carved on its front edge and underside. Figure 20 shows the underside of the lintel that spanned the middle front door before it was removed to the British Museum. To view the image right side up, as it appears here, a person entering the palace would have had to turn toward the left-hand doorjamb and then look straight up.

At lower right is Lady Shark Fin, looking up at the deity she invoked on the evening of her husband's inauguration. He emerges from the upper throat of a centipede with mouths at both ends. The centipede's body is divided into eighteen segments, and its name, as given in other sources, is "Snake of Eighteen Bodies." The body of an actual centipede has eighteen segments, which move independently when they are cut apart.

Across from the lady and intertwined with the centipede is a crescent-shaped object, marked on its far side with a logograph that reads *mim,* which means "paternal grandmother" and is the kin term that was applied to the moon. The inscriptions on

Fig. 20. The underside of Lintel 25 at Yaxchilán, from the palace built for Lady Shark Fin. She is portrayed at lower right, looking up at a vision of a deity who wields the power of the planet Venus. He emerges from the jaws of a draconic centipede corresponding to the stars of Scorpius.

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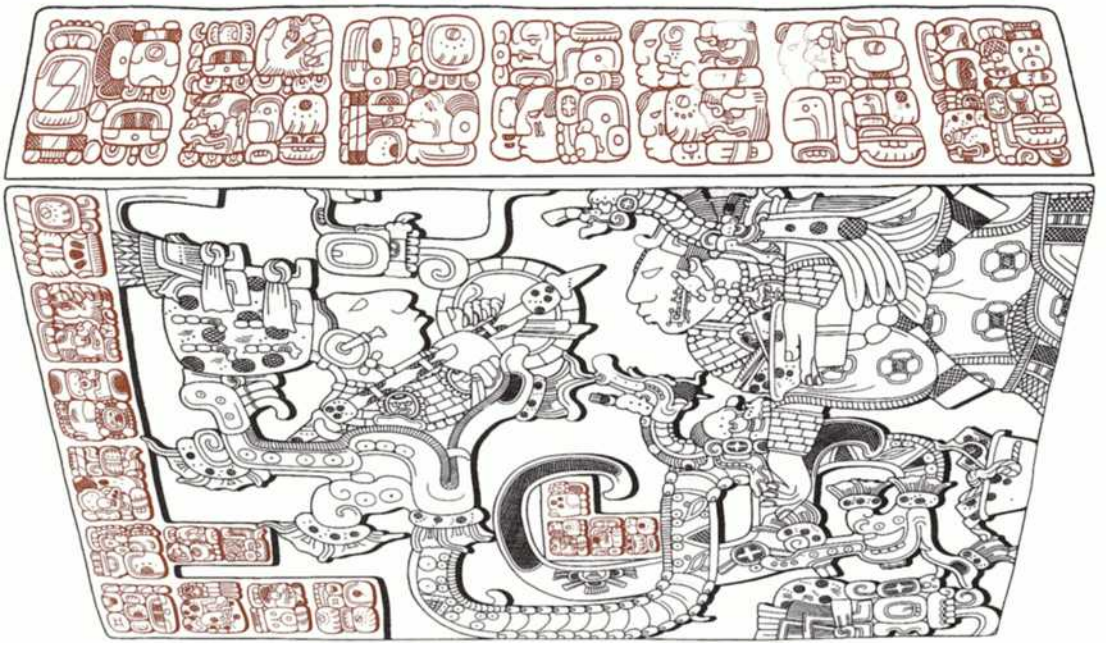
After 0 and 7 score days, 2 single stones, and 2 score stones had passed since she summoned the spirit of the scepter on the long river, at Drum Sky, it was on 3 Ceiba 14 Well that she consecrated her sculpted palace, lady who offers gems, Lady Jaguar Shark, Lady Shark Fin, Lady of the Red Tree, in the plaza on the long river, at Drum Sky, on the lands, in the hollows of the keeper of the kingdom, True Magician Jaguar, lord who offers gems for Drum Sky.



the other lintels of the palace reveal that Lady Shark Fin timed all her séances for occasions when the moon was new, full, or about to cross the Milky Way.

The drawing above shows the same lintel as in figure 20, but from the perspective of a person climbing the stairs toward the doorway that opened beneath it. The inscription on the front edge records the dedication of Lady Shark Fin's palace, which took place on August 3, 723, almost forty-two years after the event in the picture. The moon was in its third quarter at the time of the dedication, about to cross the opposite side of the Milky Way from the one Lady Shark Fin faced on the earlier occasion. Venus was the evening star, currently located near Spica in Virgo. Spica is the principal star in a Mayan constellation occupied by the goddess named in the Dresden Codex as Ix Ajaw Nah, or "Lady of the House." The presence of Venus among her stars would have given her great power and may help explain the timing of the dedication.

The captions for the picture on the underside of the lintel are written from right to left, as if to draw the eye of the reader toward the interior of the palace. The translation that accompanies the drawing on the facing page is written in reverse to match the text. The Thunderbolt (Chaak) mentioned in the upper caption is the planet Venus,

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On 5 Ceiba 4 Turtle she summoned the scepter, the weapon
and shield of the flaming, smoking Thunderbolt, with
the blessed lancet of the lord who has seen 4 score stones,

True Magician
Jaguar, keeper
of the kingdom,
the lord who
makes offerings
for the Cutting
Edge, Pillar of
the World.

The guardian spirit of
the root, the sprout
of the tree, the house.

Lady Shark Fin
makes an offering
at the foot of the
tree in the plaza
of Drum Sky.

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Fig. 21. Lady Shark Fin running a cord studded with thorns through her tongue. The blood on the cord stains the open pages of the book in the basket at her knees, creating a record of her act. Detail from Lintel 24, from a palace door that opens to the left of the door spanned by Lintel 25.

which is the source of the power of the "weapon and shield" in the hands of the deity emerging from the centipede. His armaments are the spiritual counterparts of the material weapon and shield that True Magician Jaguar would have inherited from his predecessors. The "offering" mentioned in the caption in front of Lady Shark Fin is contained in two bowls, one in her hand and the other at her feet. The upper bowl holds an open book with jaguar-skin covers, its pages spattered with blood her hus-

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band drew from his foreskin. To do this he used the instrument whose hooked handle is visible on top of the book, the lancet mentioned in the upper caption. In the lower bowl is a second book, its pages stained with the blood Lady Shark Fin drew from her tongue. Also in the bowl are the lancet she used to pierce her tongue and the cord she drew through the wound. Resting on her extended arm is an effigy of the centipede that rises before her.

At Palenque, Sun-Eyed Sky Jaguar was the one who conducted a séance while the moon was entering this part of the Milky Way. Like Lady Shark Fin, he sought communication with a spiritual being of the opposite sex. He contacted the ghost of his father's mother, whose divine counterpart was Cormorant, manifesting as the moon. Lady Shark Fin, for her part, contacted the patron deity of her husband's royal lineage, armed on this occasion with the power of the planet Venus.

The lintel over another door to Lady Shark Fin's palace, the one to the left of the center door, depicts a bloodletting ritual she and her husband conducted in 709, after the séance but before the dedication of her palace. In the detail shown in figure 21, she kneels before a basket containing an open book with jaguar-skin covers. She runs a cord (shown in red) through her tongue, and the blood spreads onto her chin and cheek. The cord, studded with thorns, is draped over the open book, creating a direct physical link between the organs of speech and a surface prepared for writing. The bloodstains made by the cord are left to chance, suggesting that Lady Shark Fin is creating a text whose reading will require an art of divination.

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9 The Rattlesnakes of the City of Three Stones

IN THE RAINFOREST of northern Guatemala and southern Yucatán, separated by about seventy miles, are the ruins of the two greatest Mayan cities of the Classic period. The Guatemalan site, known today as Tikal, has become world famous, and its history is well documented in the inscriptions on its monuments. To the north and just across the Mexican border is the less accessible of the two ruins, Calakmul.

The city of Calakmul had two names in its own times, often written side by side as they are here:

The first name reads Uxte Tun, "Three Stones," suggesting that Calakmul may have claimed a role in the story of the three hearthstones put in place by the gods who created the present world. The second name reads Chiik Naab', in which *chiik* means "to wave" and *naab'* is the term for "palm of the hand." The term for "sea" also takes the form *naab',* but the use of a hand sign in the spelling of *chiik* diverts the reader from that interpretation. The two names together can be translated as "Three Stones, Waving Hand."

Though the monuments of Three Stones or Waving Hand are more numerous by far than those of any other Classic Mayan city, they are badly eroded and therefore difficult to read. Even so, the influence of the lords of this place was such that their names and deeds were inscribed at numerous other sites, from one end of the Mayan world to the other, where the writing is more legible. The lords' rise to glory began in 546, and in 562, they defeated the Hair Knot lords of Tikal in battle and took control of that city for a time. But when they attacked the newly independent Tikal in 695, they suffered a defeat that permanently diminished their power. Even so, they may have outlasted the Tikal lords: among the known monuments, the last one at Calakmul was erected in 909, whereas the last one at Tikal dates from 869.

Passages from the early dynastic history of Calakmul survive on a dozen vases whose outer surfaces are painted with texts in double columns. Figure 22 displays the longest of these texts. On this vessel, as on the others, the characters are painted in black and red on a cream-colored slip, bordered above and below by wide red bands edged in black. The overall treatment resembles that of the pages in the surviving

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Fig. 22. Late Classic chocolate-drinking vessel from Calakmul. The inscription names some of the city's early ruling lords, in the order of their succession.

Mayan books, and for that reason vessels of this kind are said to be painted in the "codex style." No books have survived from the Classic period, but the dynastic texts on vases were probably excerpted from longer accounts originally recorded in books. Some events are recounted on more than one vase, but no two vases cover exactly the same series of events. The painters may have made their own editorial choices when they used material from books, or the books themselves may have varied, or both.

The ruling lords of Calakmul identified themselves with emblems like the one shown below. The main sign is the head of a fanged snake, and the *ka* phonetic complement in front of it calls for the Yukatekan term for "snake," which is *kaan,* rather than Ch'olan *chan.* The emblem as a whole can be translated as "lord who makes offerings for the Snakes." *Ajaw kaan,* or "lord snake," is the term for "rattlesnake" in Yukatek, suggesting that the *ajaw* in the emblem has a double meaning, alluding to a particular kind of snake while at the same time designating a royal title. For this reason, and because of the prominence given to the snake's fangs, the name of the dynasty is hereafter translated as "Rattlesnakes."

The primary subject of the texts on dynastic vases is the succession of Rattlesnake lords. The dates for accession to office appear only in calendar-round form, and only a few of the names have been located in historical time. Some names were used in more than one generation, as in the case of the one at right, from the fifth section of the text on the vase. From other sources we know that a lord identified by this character as Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk, or "Shaker Fire Claw," was born in 649 and took office in 686. The calendar-round date of his accession was 6 Manik' 5 Sip, or "6 Deer 5 Hunter," but the Shaker Fire Claw of the vase text, who was probably a predecessor of his, took office on 8 Kab'an 5 Xul, or "8 Earth 5 Point." If such a date called up the same meanings in Classic times that it did in Late

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Postclassic and early colonial Yucatán, then Kab'an would have associated this lord with woodpeckers and honey, and Xul would have brought his accession close to a time of year when households were visited by comedians. As for the Shaker Fire Claw who appears in the historical record, inscriptions at Tikal name him as the Rattlesnake lord who was defeated by the lord of Tikal in 695, and they note that his successor was chosen by the victorious ruler of Tikal.

The vase text uses characters like the one at right to refer to occasions of royal accession. The hand and the suffix below it read *ch'amaw,* "it is taken." The object taken is designated by the ovoid sign held between the thumb and forefinger and the pair of curling flames that emanate from it and fill the left side of the character. This object is the *k'awiil,* or "scepter," we encountered at Palenque, but with two differences: the *-n(i)* affix that calls attention to the ovoid sign as a *nehn,* or "mirror," is missing, and much greater prominence is given to the flames. For these reasons, the translation I have chosen for the vase text is "fire scepter" rather than "mirror scepter."

The meaning of the passage that occupies the final five rows of the text is enigmatic. First comes a series of numbers that specify the temporal distance between a prior event, which would normally be one of the events already described, and a later event, which is about to be described. The interval between these events is 37,531 days, falling a little short of 103 years, and it ends on the calendar-round date 2 Ak'b'al 11 Wo, or "2 Night 11 Sign." However, the prior calendar-round date from which this one was measured would have to be 2 Eb' 15 Tzeek, or "2 Tooth 15 Penance," which is not among the dates in the preceding text. On the later date, someone "enters the river," which is to say that someone dies. This person could be one of the lords already mentioned, or it could be the individual for whom the vase was made, whose names appear at the end of the inscription as "Iguana Earth" and something to do with "Blue Water."

The meaning of the final passage would be somewhat less enigmatic if the vase had been excavated by archaeologists, in which case we would know exactly where and in what context it was found. In any case, the fourth character from the end describes the vase as *yuch'ib,* "his or her drinking vessel," referring to Iguana Earth. If the person of that name was the one who died, the vessel would have been filled with a chocolate beverage and then placed in the grave.

In the translation that begins on the next page, the words in italics have been supplied to clarify the original text.

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On 9 Monkey 19 Mat,

the fire scepter is taken by Raises-the-Sky,

lord who makes offerings for the Rattlesnakes.
On 10 Ceiba 10 New Sun,

the fire scepter is taken by Sun-Eyed Torchbearer, lord who makes offerings for the Rattlesnakes, Uprooter of Trees.

On One Ceiba 7 Green,

the fire scepter is taken by White Sky Centipede,

lord who makes offerings for the Rattlesnakes. On 4 Blade

1 Hawk, the fire scepter is taken

by Red Death, lord who makes offerings for the Rattlesnakes.

On 13 Lord 8 Bat,

the fire scepter is taken by Red Skull in Hand,

lord who makes offerings for the Rattlesnakes. On 1 Ceiba

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12 Cluster, the fire scepter is taken

by Cut Skull, lord who makes offerings for the Rattlesnakes.

On 13 Honey 19 Well,

the fire scepter is taken by . . . in the Middle,

lord who makes offerings for the Rattlesnakes. On 8 Sunk

12 New Sun, the fire scepter is taken

by Red Fish Woman, lord who makes
offerings for the Rattlesnakes.

On 1 Tribute 2 Yellow Sun, the fire scepter is taken

by . . . Jaguar, lord who makes offerings for the Rattlesnakes.

On 12 Monkey 8 Hunter,

the fire scepter is taken by Shaker Owl.

On 12 Earth 10 Green, the fire scepter is taken

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by Hand Sky Snake. On 1 Monkey 19 Point,

the fire scepter is taken by Shaker Fire Wing. On 8 Earth 5 Point,

the fire scepter is taken by Shaker Fire Claw, lord who makes offerings for the Rattlesnakes.

On 12 Earth 10 Mat, *it is taken by* Shaker Star in the Sky.

On 3 Night Two Penance, the fire scepter is taken by Torchbearer

Fire Hand. On 7 Sunk 6 Sign,

the fire scepter is taken by Burning Nest. On 10 Earth 10 Mat,

the fire scepter is taken by Sky Watcher, lord who makes offerings for the Rattlesnakes.

On 9 Tooth 10 Deer, the fire scepter is taken by

Shaker Standing Sky, lord who makes offerings for the Rattlesnakes.

On 9 Ceiba 9 New Sun,

the fire scepter is taken by Talking Serpent,

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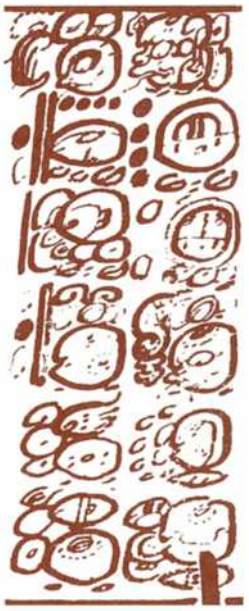

lord who makes offerings for the Rattlesnakes, Uprooter of Trees.

When 12 and 4 score days, 4 stones,

and 5 *score stones* had passed, on 2 Night

11 Sign, he entered the river.

This is the drinking vessel of Iguana Earth,

. . . Blue Water. . . .

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10 Drawing and Designing with Words

WHEN THE SIGNS of the Mayan script are locked into a relationship with the sounds of language, the reader converts clusters, rows, and columns of marks back into words, phrases, and sentences, reversing the sequence followed by the writer. At times, the process of decoding a text is slowed down by beautiful calligraphy or an unusual spelling, but the directionality of language is still there, drawing the reader onward. In this chapter, we look at cases in which Mayan writers created graphic art that liberates signs from linguistic directionality, causing them to linger on the threshold between sight and sound. The meanings conveyed by this art are still dependent, in part, on the spatial arrangement of the signs, but considerations other than sentence structure come into play. In the contemporary literary world, such works have analogs in the concrete poetry of Europe, the Americas, and Japan. However, most concrete poets overcome the abstractness of writing by organizing its signs into images and diagrams, whereas many of the signs used by Mayan poets are iconic to begin with. Their work bears some resemblance to that of Japanese concrete poets, whose inventory of signs includes iconic characters of Chinese origin.

Our first example of Mayan concrete poetry is the painting on the outer surface of a Late Classic vase from Alta Verapaz, on the northern edge of the Guatemalan highlands. The cylindrical design field is occupied by just two characters, repeated in rows that run clear around the vase. In a single row just below the rim, the name of the god Nehn K'awiil, or "Mirror Scepter," is repeated seventeen times. In a deliberate play on his name, it is written in mirror image, so that it draws the eye of the reader from right to left. At the same time, it has been redrawn to better fit the rectilinear scheme of the overall design. The character on the left in the illustration below shows a more ordinary way of writing Nehn K'awiil, but it has been reproduced in mirror image so as to facilitate comparison with the character on the vase. The rest of the design field is organized by a textual grid with three rows and sixteen columns, and each cell contains a character that depicts the left-facing head of a leaf-nosed bat and reads *sutz'*, "bat." Again, the writer has redesigned the usual character (in red at left) to fit the rectilinear context. A Mayan viewer who was reasonably familiar with iconography but not good at reading texts would have found it easy

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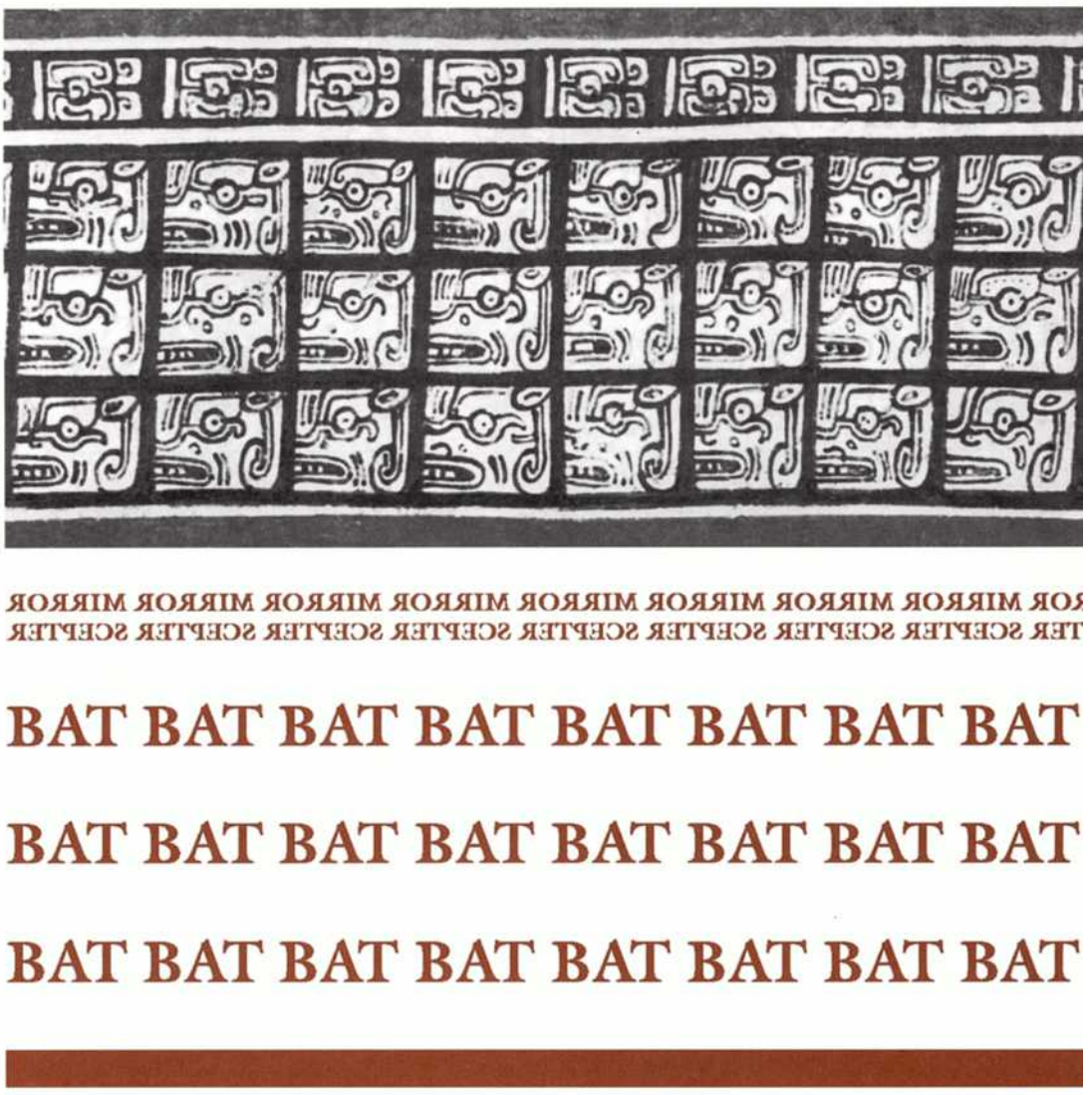

to recognize the bat and might have identified Mirror Scepter from the double-tongued flame issuing from the front of his profile. Further, such a viewer might have noticed that the bat and Mirror Scepter face in opposite directions but would not have been concerned about which one was facing in the usual direction and which one was reversed. A literate viewer who approached the design field as a text would have been more likely to recognize the Mirror Scepter character and would have realized, at the moment of recognition, that it was written in mirror image. A rollout image of the entire vase painting and a matching translation run across the top of these two pages.

Whether a Mayan viewer of this vase was a reader of iconography or a reader of texts or both, the text on the vase might have evoked the memory of occasions on which lords gathered together to dance at night, wielding scepters that were images of the god named Mirror Scepter, or the memory of flights of bats emerging from caves

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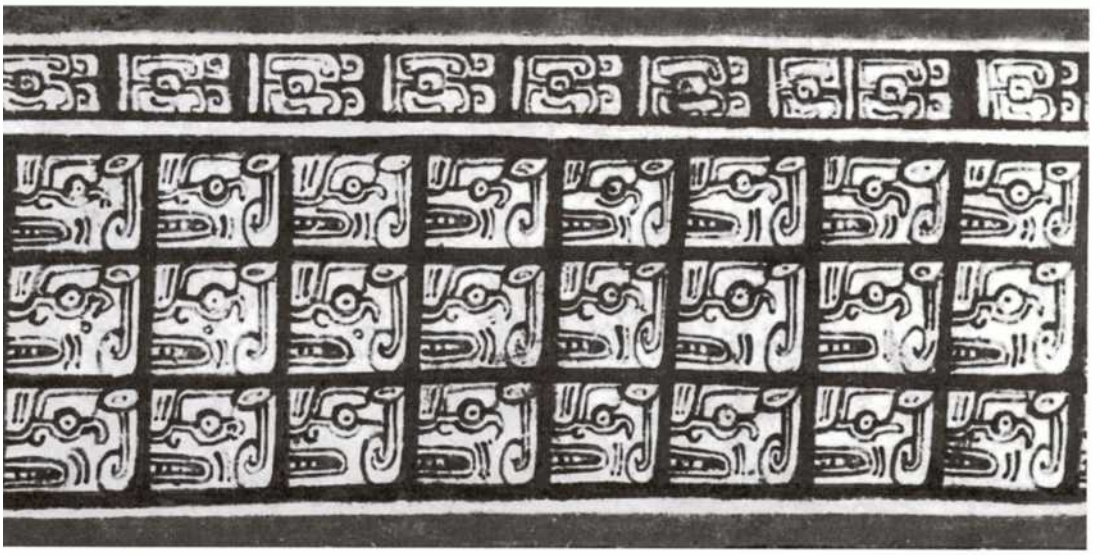

MIRROR MIRROR MIRROR MIRROR MIRROR MIRROR MIRROR MIRROR MIR
SCEPTER SCEPTER SCEPTER SCEPTER SCEPTER SCEPTER SCEPTER SCEPTER SCEI

BAT BAT BAT BAT BAT BAT BAT BAT

BAT BAT BAT BAT BAT BAT BAT BAT

BAT BAT BAT BAT BAT BAT BAT BAT

at dusk. The characters on the vase can be counted, but because the text has no beginning or ending points, and because one can rotate the vase any number of times, the imagination is not limited by numbers.

Another example of concrete poetry is a Late Classic drinking vessel from northwest Yucatán, carved rather than painted (see page 117). Like the Vase of the Seven Gods, this vessel is for drinking chocolate and carries a dedicatory inscription. But whereas the painter of the Vase of the Seven Gods filled all the available space with figures and texts, the carver of the present vessel was a minimalist, leaving more than half the available space empty. Further, instead of inserting small characters into a large picture to serve as an explanatory caption, the carver inserted a small picture into a large character, thus reversing the relationship between writing and the world. The character in question, which stands for the divinatory day Ajaw, or "Lord," could have been

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rendered in the manner of the example shown here in red. Its identifying feature, enclosed in a cartouche, is the profiled head of the divine patron of Lord days, wearing a simple head scarf. The carver treated the cartouche as if it were a window (at right), giving a view of a human lord that shows his upraised right hand, his chest and shoulders, and his necklace, hair knot, and headdress. What was remote and divine has become close and human, and the closed code of writing has been opened to the world.

The logograph for the day named Lord, prefaced with a bar-and-dot number that makes it into the date 11 Lord, stands alone on one side of the vase. This is more than just a divinatory date. In terms of a timekeeping practice that made its first obvious appearance in Late Classic Yucatán, it serves to identify a *k'atun,* or "score of stones," by specifying the date on which its 7,200 days were completed. The final day name is always Lord, but the number prefix varies. The highest unit of five-place long-count numbers, the bundle of stones lasting 144,000 days, is omitted in this kind of dating. Further, the count of scores of stones tops out at thirteen rather than twenty, because the number coefficients of divinatory days run only as high as thirteen. A complete series of thirteen scores of stones lasts 96,600 days, running about three months longer than 256 solar years. With the completion of such a period, the sequence of day numbers that identifies each of the thirteen scores of stones is repeated. Thus, the task of locating the inscription on the vase in historical time requires a choice among the various scores of stones that ended on 11 Lord.

One way of narrowing the choices is to consider the archaeological dating of Mayan pottery styles. A score of stones ending on 11 Lord began in 514 and ended in 534, but that period is too early for this vessel. The next such score began in 771 and ended in 790, falling within the period when such vessels were made. The next score after that ran too late, beginning in 1027 and ending in 1047. The vessel provides a further clue that permits full historical precision. On the opposite side from the date that identifies the score of stones is a text that begins with the calendar-round date 6 Kawak 2 Sotz', or "6 Thunder 2 Bat." Such dates recur at fifty-two-year intervals, whereas a score of stones lasts a little less than twenty years. The date 6 Thunder 2 Bat did not occur during the score that ran from 514 to 534, but it did come around during the score that ran from 771 to 790. It fell on the long-count date 9.17.2.3.19 and the Gregorian date March 31, 773. On that day, someone was presented with this drinking vessel.

The five characters that include the calendar-round date form a **T** shape. Following normal reading order, 6 Thunder comes first (on the left arm) and counts as the only character in the first of a pair of columns. Next comes 2 Bat, at the top of a second column consisting of three characters. Next in this column is a verb of presentation that occurs on many drinking vessels, but its precise reading has yet to be worked out. Below it is a clearly written example of *yuch'ib'*, "his or her drinking vessel." The last char-

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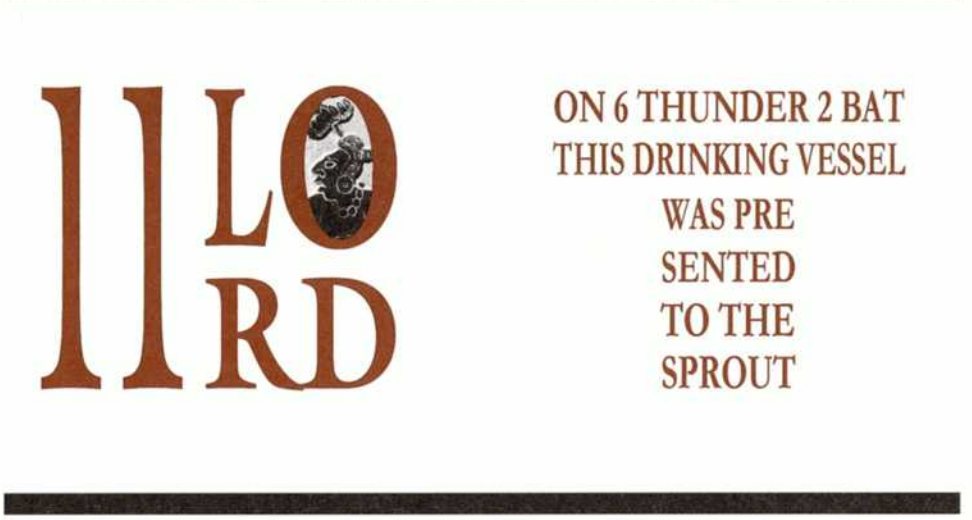

acter in the reading order, forming the right arm of the **T**, identifies the recipient of the vessel as a *ch'ok,* or "sprout," a young person belonging to the lineage of the donor.

In and of itself, the text that forms the **T** provides no clue to the identity of the sprout beyond the dedication date. But there is a clue in the shape of the **T**, which makes the text into a sort of monogram. The logograph for the day name Ik', or "Wind," at left in the following illustration, has a **T** shape as its identifying mark:

Further, this day name sometimes takes the form of the second logograph in the illustration, with a **T** on the cheek of the profiled head of the god whose name, Chaak in Yukatek, can be translated as "Thunderbolt." In third place is the head of an imperson-

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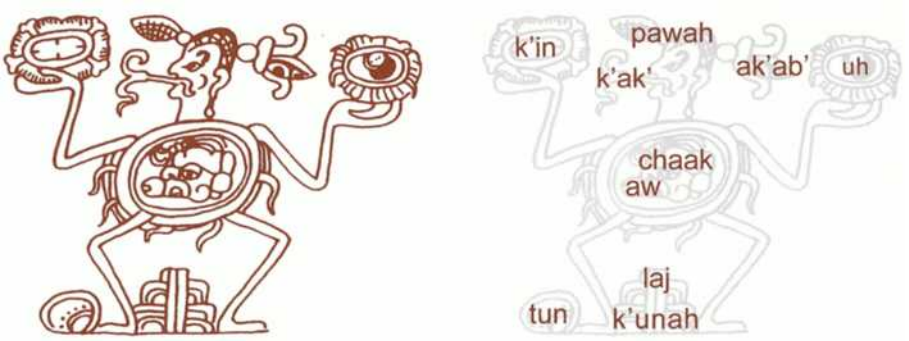

Fig. 23. Painting from a Late Classic bowl. Through a combination of writing and iconography, it records the attributes of the god Pawahtun.

ator of this god, from a carved stone relief at Chichén Itzá in north-central Yucatán. At the city of Uxmal, in northwest Yucatán, Chaak is written in the manner of the logograph at right, with a stylized version of the head that incorporates the **T** above a phonetic complement that reads *k(i)*. The lord who ruled Uxmal in the late ninth and early tenth century, several generations after the creation of the vessel with the **T** sign, bore the name Chan Chaak K'ak'nal Ajaw, "Sky Thunderbolt Fireplace Lord." It is possible that some of the previous rulers of Uxmal shared the Chaak part of his name, and that the young person who received this vessel became one of them.

Our final example of concrete poetry is painted on a pottery bowl of a type that was made in the lowlands between 550 and 700 (figure 23). In this case, the signs of the text are inserted into the picture rather than the other way around, but they are not organized into a caption. Instead, they label particular objects or take the place of objects that might have been depicted. The figure in the picture is that of the god Pawahtun, whose identity is revealed at the iconographic level by his hairnet, the markings on his face, his spidery arms and legs, and the orb web suggested by the concentric lines around his body. The text also identifies him, though all three of the signs that spell his name are embedded in the iconography. The artist has drawn Pawahtun's hairnet (at left in the illustration below) in a way that suggests a combination of the syllabic signs for *pa* (in the middle) and *wa* (at right):

The sign for *tun,* which means "stone," is appropriately located at ground level, in front of his right foot.

The responsibilities of Pawahtun are on a cosmic scale. He holds the sun in his right hand, marked with a sign that reads *k'in,* or "sun." In his left hand is a sign that reads *ja* when it serves as a syllable and *k'al,* or "twenty," when it is associated with counting, but in the present context, where it is paired with the sun, it means *uh,*

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"moon." Both the sun and moon signs are iconic: the sun sign has rays in four directions (apart from the rays around the object it labels) and the moon sign is crescent shaped. On his sun side, Pawahtun has the sign for *k'ak',* or "fire," coming out of his mouth, and the central element in the headdress on his moon side is the sign for *ak'ab',* "night."

On Pawahtun's body, between the level of the sun and moon and that of the earth, is a version of the profiled head sign for Chaak, or "Thunderbolt," a weather deity with whom he is closely associated. But the head has a sign for *aw* in its mouth, which transforms Chaak into *chakaw,* meaning "heat" or "anger." Between Pawahtun's feet is a stepped pyramid bisected by a pair of vertical bars. The bars are from the sign for *lajun,* or "ten," but here they simply mean *laj,* "all." The pyramidal form is the sign for a word for temple, possibly *k'unah.* Thus Pawahtun, holding the sun and moon, embodying the weather, and linking everything together with a web, stands over all the temples of the earth. In effect, the writer-painter of this plate has retrieved logographs and syllabic signs from the world of language and returned them to the external world of visible objects, abandoning sentence structure in favor of a cosmic diagram.

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11 Graffiti

MAYANS OF ANCIENT TIMES sometimes did their drawing and writing on surfaces that had not been intended as a medium for graphic expression. Among the surviving works of this kind, the most abundant are inside the rooms of masonry buildings whose walls and vaulted ceilings survive. The plaster that covered the doorjambs, floors, benchtops, walls, and vaults of these rooms is often intact, complete with the scratched lines of ancient graffiti.

The only site that has seen a sustained effort to document graffiti on plastered surfaces is Tikal, in northern Guatemala. It has the longest recorded history of all the Classic cities in the rainforest, running from 292 to 869. Here (at left) is the emblem of its ruling dynasty. The main sign is an image of hair gathered together and tied with a piece of cloth. It reads Muutal, meaning "that which is gathered in or made smaller," which in this case is a hair knot. The city had the same name, but after a member of the Hair Knot dynasty moved away and founded a new city in 629, the name of the original city was written as at right. Yax Muutal means "First (or Original) Hair Knot Place."

Common among the pictorial graffiti of First Hair Knot Place are animals, monsters, and profiled human faces. Lords in full regalia are subjects as well, some of them carried in palanquins. Also common are diagrams of a board game, always rendered with the same number of squares in the same rectangular arrangement as in the example in figure 24. Players would have thrown some kind of dice and moved tokens along the pathways. Most diagrams were drawn on horizontal surfaces, but this example was inscribed on a wall, requiring tokens that would stick to the plaster. They were probably made of chicle, a latex that comes from a local rainforest tree, the sapodilla *(Achras zapota)*. Chicle is the principal ingredient of today's chewing gum.

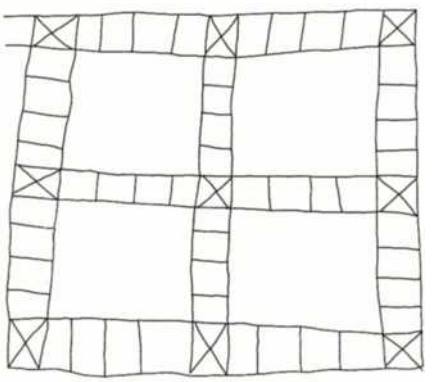

Fig. 24. A game board incised on a plastered wall at Tikal, Guatemala.

A player starting at one corner of a diagram would have to advance twenty squares

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to reach the opposite corner, whether staying on the perimeter or going through the middle, and twenty more to get back home. Indigenous games that require a minimum of forty moves to complete a circuit are found as far north as the Navajo and Pueblo peoples of the southwestern United States. The rules of the Mayan version are not known, but in the northern versions, a player who lands in a place already occupied by an opponent sends the opponent back to the starting place.

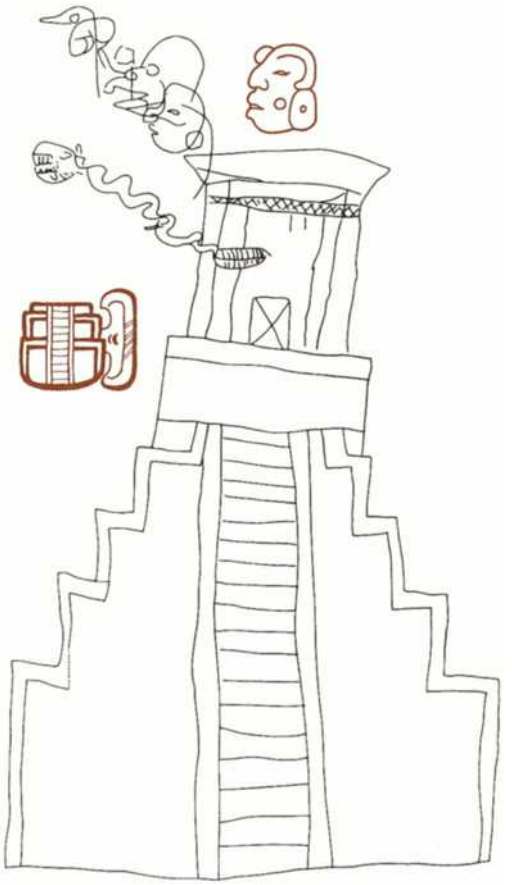

Fig. 25. A pyramid with a temple on top, drawn on a plastered wall at Tikal. Examples of the written signs that probably provided models for parts of the drawing are in red.

Standing on the border between drawing and writing are various depictions of pyramids topped by temples, such as the one in figure 25. The character shown alongside it (in red) refers to a stepped pyramid with a temple on top. The main sign is an image of a pyramid, but the temple is indicated by the logographic suffix to the right, which reads *nah,* meaning "house" or "temple." In the drawing, the image of the pyramid is similar to the one in the glyph, but the suffix has been dropped in favor of an image of a temple. Rising from the temple are spiritual images whose verbal description would require a lengthy text. Taking flight from the door is a celestial rattlesnake. Above the snake, emanating from the upper left corner of the roof, is a series of images that dramatize a shamanic journey to a higher world. The profiled human head that comes first in the series is a sketchy version of the logograph (shown in red beside it) for *xib',* "male person." In the next image, overlapping with the first one but higher and farther from the temple, the same man wears a mask with a prominent beak. Beyond that image, reaching still higher, he appears as a bird in flight.

The textual qualities of the drawing of the pyramid and the still-human profile may offer us a glimpse into the margins of Mayan literacy. The drawing could be the work of a person who was not formally trained as a writer but who had enough knowledge of writing to recognize iconic signs and integrate them into larger images. Further glimpses into the margins are provided by graffiti that consist of freestanding characters. Among these are dynastic emblems, including this sketchy rendition of the Hair

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Knot emblem (in black next to the official version). Far more common are isolated day names from the divinatory calendar, sometimes prefaced by bar-and-dot numbers. In figure 26, a formal version of the logograph for the day name Ajaw, or "Lord," (in red) is provided for comparison with a version occurring at the upper left edge of a cluster of wall graffiti (in black). The informal version is playful and perhaps irreverent, with the eyes looking upward and a quick touch of naturalism in the drawing of the nose. At bottom center are two more characters, one above the other, that appear to belong together. They are difficult to read, but the top one, prefixed by the single bar of the number 5, may be another rendition of the day name Ajaw.

Fig. 26. A cluster of graffiti incised on a plastered wall at Tikal, with characters from the Mayan script that include the logograph for Ajaw. In red at left is a formal example of Ajaw.

Dates from the divinatory calendar also occur in the graffiti at the Late Classic site of Comalcalco, on the extreme western edge of the Mayan world in the Mexican state of Tabasco. Much of the construction at this site was done with fired bricks, and many bricks were inscribed by their makers before they were dried and fired. In figure 27, the date 13 Ik', or "13 Wind," is legible, but the day name is at right angles to its proper position, with the trefoil device appearing to the right of the main sign rather than beneath it (as in the formal version shown in red). This shift could be a mistake by a brick maker with a low level of literacy, but it could also be an expression of the same playfulness we see in the profiled head above the date. This skillfully rendered drawing pushes the style of official art toward caricature. The subject is a reigning lord, probably the lord of Comalcalco.

Nearly all the characters in graffiti are written singly, without any role in a connected text. But in one group of wall graffiti at Tikal, shown in black in figure 28, nearly every item is a character or at least resembles one. The overall visual effect is like that of a two-column inscription, but the space between the columns is unusually wide and the rows are out of line with one another. Four of the characters in the left-hand column, beginning with the second one, are legible despite the sketchy manner in which they are rendered, and they make sense when they are read together.

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Fig. 27. A brick from Comalcalco, Tabasco, with graffiti that include a date from the divinatory calendar. In red at left is a formal version of the same date.

The first character in the group of four combines a bar-and-dot 6 with the sign for the day K'an, or "Net," which is missing the suffix that usually appears beneath the formal version (in red at upper left in figure 28). The character below it combines the number 8 with a sketchy rendition of a day sign for Ajaw, or "Lord," resting on an equally sketchy base (again the formal version is in red). The interval from 6 Net to 8 Lord happens to be 236 days, equal to 8 synodic months of 29.5 days each. This number is the length of the period a table in the Dresden Codex assigns to the planet Venus in its role as the morning star. Moreover, the first of the five types of morning star described in the table always begins its term on a day named Net and ends it on a day named Lord, with variable number prefixes.

The third and fourth characters in the group confirm the astronomical significance of the first two. The third one is an abbreviated version of a character whose formal version (in red) has falling droplets of blood on both sides, a star sign on top, and a spiral sign for the syllable *yi* under the star

Fig. 28. Two columns of writing on a plastered wall at Tikal. In the left column are four characters that form a coherent text, laying out a time window for a possible attack on the town of Itzan. In red at far left is a formal version of the text.

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sign. The exact reading of this character is not known, but it is a verb, marked as transitive and passive by the final syllable, and it means that a city was attacked or is to be attacked. In formal inscriptions, this character refers to attacks that took place when Venus was prominent in the sky, hence the star sign. It is followed, as it is here, by the emblem of the rulers of the city under attack. The present emblem is that of the lords of the town whose ruins are known today as Itzan, which lies about seventy miles southwest of Tikal in the Petexbatun region.

The official written record, so far as it is known, says nothing about an attack on Itzan that originated from Tikal, but it does speak of a period when Hair Knot lords from Tikal played a role in the affairs of the Petexbatuns. In 629, a Hair Knot named B'alaj Chan K'awiil, "Tied Sky Scepter," entered the region and established a new town at a site now known as Dos Pilas, about fifteen miles from Itzan. He married a woman from Itzan, which points to an alliance rather than a military conflict. By 648, he had also formed an alliance with the Rattlesnakes of Calakmul, archenemies of the Hair Knots of Tikal. In 672, Tikal attacked Dos Pilas and drove Tied Sky Scepter into exile, but he was able to return to Dos Pilas when Tikal was on the losing side of a battle with Calakmul in 677. Two years later, he joined Calakmul in dealing a further blow to Tikal. Itzan would have been on the side of Dos Pilas during these conflicts, but this alliance is not mentioned in the available record.

Events began to shift in Tikal's favor in 682, when Jasaw Chan K'awiil, or "Clear Sky Scepter," came to power. In 695, he turned his military attention eastward, bringing Naranjo under his control, and then northward, defeating Calakmul and bringing down its lord. He seems to have paid little attention to Dos Pilas. One last conflict took place between Tikal and Dos Pilas in 705, by which time Clear Sky Scepter's successor was in office.

In all likelihood, the attack on Itzan described in the Tikal graffiti would have taken place during the period of hostilities between Tikal and Dos Pilas, lasting from 648 until 705. During those years, an eastern rise of Venus on the divinatory date 6 Net occurred only once, on 9.12.9.17.4 6 Net 2 Bat, or April 22, 682. Venus was four days past its conjunction with the sun, putting it in the right position to begin a period as the morning star. The end of the period came on 9.12.10.11.0 8 Lord 18 Hawk, or December 14, 682. Two important events are on record for the interval between these dates.

On 9.12.9.17.16, twelve days after Venus made its first morning appearance, Clear Sky Scepter became lord of Tikal. And four days later, on 9.12.10.0.0, Tied Sky Scepter, the founding lord of Dos Pilas, formally renewed his alliance with the enemies of Tikal. He was at Calakmul on that day, performing a ritual dance in the company of the reigning Rattlesnake lord. The record says nothing about military activity during this period, which raises the possibility that the attack on Itzan was a proposal that was never put into action. This would help explain why the text on the wall at Tikal lacks a specific date for an attack, instead opening up a range of possibilities that spans an entire 236-day period in the cycle of Venus.

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Whatever the story behind the four characters that suggest an attack on Itzan, the fact that they form the outlines of a coherent text sets them apart from the other characters that appear in the graffiti of Tikal. They are also remarkable for their lively lines, rendered rapidly but gracefully. Clearly, they are the work of someone with more than a casual knowledge of writing. Perhaps the writer planned to make a formal proposal on a later occasion. Among all the texts in the Mayan script, this one is the closest thing to a rough draft.

In at least one interior space in the Mayan world, nearly all the marks on the available surfaces were the work of individuals who were skilled at writing and drawing. The space is an extensive limestone cave that was a major pilgrimage site during Classic and Postclassic times. It is located in the Maya Mountains, which rise along the southeast edge of the southern lowlands and are divided by the boundary between Guatemala and Belize. When the cave came to the attention of archaeologists in 1980, they gave it the name Naj Tunich, meaning "Stone House" in Mopan, the Mayan language spoken in the area. But its original names, as stated in a number of the texts painted on its walls, are as shown at right. Mo' Pan means "Macaw Cavern" in Mopan and other Yukatekan languages, and this could be the place that gave the Mopan Mayans their name. Mam Na means "Grandfather House," which suggests that the cavern is an abode of ancestors.

Macaw Cavern may have received its name because macaws once nested near the entrance, or the name may have seemed appropriate because the cavern's main passage runs northward from the entrance, toward the realm of a deity whose name is K'inich K'ak' Mo', or "Sun-Eyed Fire Macaw," in Yukatek and Wuqub' Kaqix, or "Seven Macaw," in K'iche'. This god once claimed to be the sun, but his pride led to his downfall. According to the Popol Vuh, twin heroes shot him out of his tree and he fell into the earth. The seven stars of the Big Dipper, which remain as his sign, reach their high point above the North Star and their low point in the underworld beneath it, disappearing below the horizon. The twins continue their adventures by entering a cave that gives them access to the underworld, where they eventually find the graves of their twin fathers and establish the custom of honoring the dead.

There are a few tight places in the tunnel system of Macaw Cavern, but the main passage averages fifteen yards wide and has a very high ceiling. The pictures and texts on the walls occur in widely separated clusters, each one near deposits of charcoal left behind by fires that consumed offerings and provided light. Many of the texts include dates, mostly of the calendar-round kind. These dates are hard to anchor in historical time, but there are two long-count dates: 9.13.0.0.0 and 9.17.0.0.0, falling in 692 and 771. The calendar-round dates reveal that some of the authors of the texts must have come from outside the world of lowland Mayans. Eleven of these dates follow the standard lowland system for matching the named and numbered days of the 365-day

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On 11 Snake

18 Penance,

the ones who visited

Macaw Cavern,

Grandfather House

were Celestial

Turtles,

Flintstone Lords,

the ones who stand firm,

actors,

companions:

Constant Dreamer,

a diviner,

Turtle,

Flintstone Lord,

sage,

sprout,

and his companion,

8 Heaps of Corn,

Turtle,

Sprout Lord,

Flintstone

Lord

who stands firm,

an actor.

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year to those of the 260-day divinatory calendar, but six other dates follow a system specific to the Guatemalan highlands. The numbers and names of the highland dates are written with logographs that could have stood for different words in different languages. Many of the signs in the passages that follow these dates are difficult to reconcile with standard lowland forms. Perhaps the authors of such passages were writing in a language that was neither Ch'olan nor Yukatekan and were using a version of the Mayan writing system specific to the Guatemalan highlands.

Again and again, visitors who wrote on the walls of the cavern treated them as a sort of guest book in which they registered their presence. One of them, calling himself Wayasmal, or "Constant Dreamer," authored three texts, one of which consists solely of his name and titles. He prefaced the other two texts with calendar-round dates for his visits that follow the standard lowland system: 12 K'an 2 Muwan, or "12 Net 2 Hawk," and 11 Chikchan 18 Tzeek, or "11 Snake 18 Penance." The corresponding long-count dates have been reconstructed as 9.16.3.10.4, falling on November 11, 754, and 9.16.4.1.5, falling on May 11, 755. On the later occasion, he entered the cave with a companion whose name, 8 B'a Nal, or "8 Heaps of Corn," he added to his own. His description of this person follows the same general lines as his description of himself. Each of them is a member of a lineage or clan named Aak, or "Turtle," and each is a *ch'ok,* or "sprout," a young heir to a royal position. Already they both hold the title of Tok' Tuun Ajaw, "Flintstone Lord," perhaps referring to their status as warriors. Finally, each of them "stands firm" as a *b'akab',* which is a Yukatek term for an "actor" or "impersonator." This term serves as the name of four divinities who held up the sky at the four corners of the world and were themselves actors. Perhaps the two pilgrims had impersonated these gods in a ritual drama.

Fig. 29. A drawing on the wall of the Naj Tunich cave, in Guatemala, showing a lively discussion between the Mayan hero twins. On the left, with spots on his body, is One Lord, or One Blowgunner; on the right, with patches of jaguar skin on his body, is First Jaguar, or Little Jaguar Sun.

For a translation of the full record of the visit of Constant Dreamer and 8 Heaps of Corn to Macaw Cavern, see the opposite page. The text is in single columns, with characters running all the way down the first column before the second column comes into play.

The spiritual presences in Macaw Cavern are revealed not by the words the pilgrims wrote but by the pictures they drew. Near the end of the main passage is a drawing of the hero twins, speaking and gesturing in conversation (figure 29). The young man

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Fig. 30. A drawing on the wall of the Naj Tunich cave, showing One Lord, or One Blowgunner, dressed as a ballplayer. His brother's absence, together with the number 9 above the ball rolling down the side of the court, suggest that the ball is the head of his brother.

on the left, whose identity is revealed by the black spots on his face and body, would have been known to the cave's lowland visitors as Jun Ajaw, or "One Lord," whereas highland visitors would have known him as Junajpu, or "One Blowgunner." The one on the right, identified by the patches of jaguar skin on his body, was known as Yax B'alam, or "First Jaguar," in the lowlands and Xb'alanq'e, or "Little Jaguar Sun," in the highlands. The cavern must have enjoyed a reputation as the place (or one of the places) where the twins entered or emerged from the underworld in the course of their adventures. Not far beyond their picture is a pit with a vertical drop of at least one hundred eighty yards (the bottom has yet to be found).

In a side passage that branches off to the west of the main passage, a pilgrim who used the highland system for reckoning calendar-round dates drew two pictures. One is a scene from an underworld episode in the story of the twins, featuring One Lord, or One Blowgunner (figure 30). He is identifiable from the black spots on his cheek and his straw hat. This is the same hat he would wear if he were taking a shot at a macaw in a tree, but here he wears it in his role as a ballplayer, playing a game against the Lords of Death. The ball is bouncing off the terraced side of a ball court, and he is ready to receive and return it with the padded device he wears around his midsection. Normally he would play alongside his brother, but in this game, his brother's head is temporarily serving as the ball, as is revealed by the bar-and-dot number 9 above it. *B'olon* is the word for "nine," but the number glyph can also be read

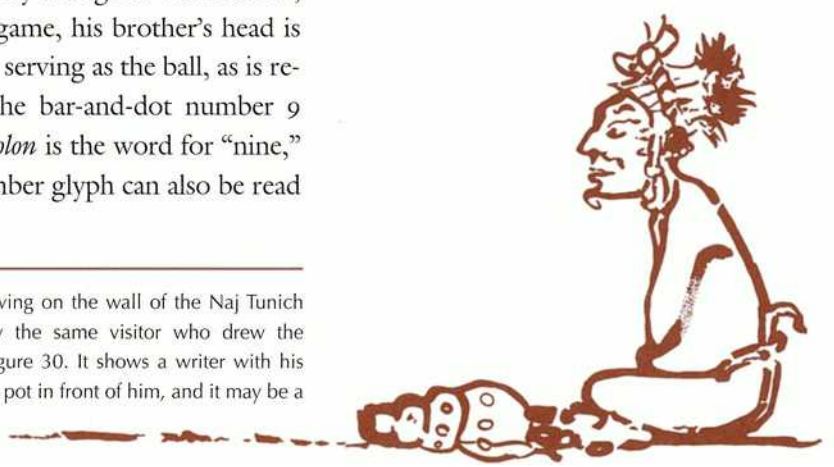

Fig. 31. A drawing on the wall of the Naj Tunich cave, made by the same visitor who drew the ballplayer in figure 30. It shows a writer with his conch-shell ink pot in front of him, and it may be a self-portrait.

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as *b'o'lay,* meaning "jaguar." Either reading calls up the presence of First Jaguar or Little Jaguar Sun, who is the patron of the number nine.

On the same cave wall as the ballplayer, a little higher up, is a second figure drawn by the same visitor (figure 31). It appears to be a self-portrait, showing him in his role as a writer. He has set down his conch-shell ink pot in front of him, upside down on the floor of the cave. His arms are folded, perhaps because he is trying to keep warm in the cave, and he gazes straight ahead. Perhaps he sees something in the darkness.

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12 The Question of the Beginning and End of Time

FAR TO THE NORTH of Tikal and Calakmul, in the northeastern part of the Yucatán peninsula, are the ruins of a large city that has always been known by its original name, right down to the maps and guidebooks of the present day. The name appears in print as Cobá, from Yukatek Maya Koba', meaning "Gray Waters." The city was built around five small, shallow lakes. Today the area in and around the lakes and ruins is wooded, not as densely as the rainforest to the south but more so than the drier thorn forest to the north. On the Caribbean coast to the east, at a distance of about twenty-five miles, are several lagoons that once served as ports for Mayan seagoing canoes.

The recorded history of Cobá, so far as it is presently known, begins in the Late Classic period, in 623. For a time, it was the largest city in northern Yucatán, remarkable for the wide, straight roads, still visible, that reached out in five directions from its center. The roadbeds, paved with cement, were raised above ground level and rested on fill held in by stone retaining walls. Two of the roads ran straight across the lakes that lay in their paths. The authors of the Popol Vuh mention a road of this kind, describing their ancestors as having returned from a pilgrimage to a great city by crossing a body of water on *cholochik ab'aj, boqotajinaq sanayeb',* "courses of stone, piled up gravel."

The longest of the Cobá roads runs sixty miles westward to the site of Yaxuná, which was ruled by Cobá from the seventh to the tenth century. But in the ninth century, a short distance north of Yaxuná, the city of Chichén Itzá began rising in prominence, and by 950, it had taken control of Yaxuná. Cobá went into a decline after 1000 and had hit bottom by the end of the twelfth century. Chichén Itzá was abandoned by the end of the thirteenth century, but Cobá underwent a renewal in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and its final abandonment did not occur until shortly before the Spanish invasion. Today, at a small hearth in the rubble at the foot of the pyramid now known as La Iglesia, local Mayans burn candles and copal incense.

Cobá has numerous stelas, including three that record the placement of the three hearthstones on 4 Lord 8 Kiln, at the end of the era preceding the present one. But these inscriptions, instead of limiting the long-count date of that event to a five-place number, as at Quiriguá, carry it out to twenty-four places, creating the longest of all long-count dates. For the full sequence, see the passage from Stela 1 on page 132. It gives names to each of the twenty-four periods, but the erosion of the stone surface obscures the names for the highest periods. Where the characters are at least partially legible, they combine the words for bundle *(pih)* or stone *(tun)* with modifiers. The term for the seventh place from the bottom of the number can be read as *tzutz pih,* "ended

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bundles," and the sixth-place term is *to pih,* meaning something like "higher bundles." Next, reading down through the last five places, come the more familiar terms, referring to ordinary bundles lasting 144,000 days each, scores of stones lasting 7,200 days each, individual stones lasting 360 days each, scores of days, and finally, individual days. The date 4 Lord (from the 260-day calendar) is separated from the date 8 Kiln (from the 365-day calendar) by the naming of the current lord of the night and a description of the current state of the moon. Rewritten in the long-count notation used by Mayanists, the date on this stela comes out as follows:

13.13.13.13.13.13.13.13.13.13.13.13.13.13.13.13.13.13.13.0.0.0.0

The mathematical poetics of the $13 \times 20 = 260$-day calendar have left their mark here, not only in the use of the integer 13 but also in the number of times it has been written: from the bundles of the fifth place on up, it occupies twenty consecutive places. Bundles, as we already know, top out at 13 rather than 20, and the repetition of 13 in the nineteen higher places suggests that each of them was conceived as reaching completion with 13 as well. A few inscriptions at sites other than Cobá include numbers with as many as six or eight places, and in some cases, the integer that occupies the sixth place is greater than 13. But those numbers appear to be measurements of the intervals between dates rather than constituting long-count dates.

In effect, the number 13 serves the same function in the fifth and higher places that zero does from the fourth place on down, in the sense that zero can mean closure or completion rather than nothing. If we think of the Cobá date in this way, all twenty-four places are occupied by zeroes, in that they have all been filled to the point where they equal an amount belonging to the next higher place. When the count of scores of stones in the fourth place reaches 20, making a total of $20 \times 20 \times 360 = 144{,}000$ days, it produces a number equivalent to one bundle of stones and belongs in the next higher place. But the count of bundles reaches its maximum at 13 rather than 20, and the total of $13 \times 144{,}000 = 1{,}872{,}000$ days is equivalent to one of the "higher bundles" belonging to the sixth place. When these higher bundles reach 13, totaling $13 \times 1{,}872{,}000 = 24{,}336{,}000$ days, they are equivalent to one "ended bundle," belonging to the seventh place. And so it goes, from one place to the next-higher place.

A problem arises when we come to the twenty-fourth place, at the top of this tall number, and encounter 13 yet again. If we insist on reading the number upward, then the highest 13 implies an unwritten twenty-fifth place occupied by the integer 1, to account for the unit of time passed up to it from the twenty-fourth place. If, on the other hand, we read the number downward, which is the way it was written, we can retain the notion of 13 as the particular kind of completeness that belongs to the twenty highest places while at the same time allowing time itself to have a beginning point. In this interpretation, the highest 13 registers a complete set of the longest of all periods, beginning from the moment when time itself was set in motion. This accounting requires no higher place because we have nothing to measure above the twenty places that carry the integer 13.

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13 . . . ,

13 . . . stones, 13 . . . bundles,

13 . . . , 13 . . . ,

13 . . . bundles, 13 . . . bundles,

13 . . . , 13 . . . ,

13 . . . stones, 13 . . . stones,

13 . . . stones, 13 . . . stones,

13 . . . stones, 13 . . . stones,

13 . . . stones, . . . 13 lord stones,

13 ended bundles, 13 higher bundles,

13 bundles, no scores of stones,

no single stones, no scores of days,

no single days, on 4 Lord;

the ninth lord of the night wore the headband,

and 3 days ago the moon had arrived,

. . . is the name of the new

month of a score and 9 days; it was on 8 Kiln

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If we look at the way the number is positioned on the surface of the stela, it conveys a sense of the nothingness preceding time. The twin columns that set out the twenty-four places fit into the available space in such a way as to leave insufficient room for a left-hand character in the top row, so that the count begins with a right-hand character that has an oddly shaped empty space to its left. Further, there is no room for the Introductory Series Initial Glyph that would normally precede a long-count number, announcing a count of drumbeats and stones by a god. The message seems to be that at the very beginning of time, no one was present to do the counting that would lead to the placement of the hearthstones on 4 Lord 8 Kiln.

This interpretation of the longest long-count date gives us a finite number, but it still produces an interval so enormous that it exceeds the powers of the imagination. For that reason, I have not carried out the calculation of a precise grand total, converted to a decimal number. But I can say that the resultant time span would be more than a billion times longer than the age astrophysicists currently assign to the universe, which is 13.7 billion years.

When the Quiriguá authors wrote a five-place long-count date for the hearthstone event, they might have understood 13.0.0.0.0 to mean that only thirteen bundles had been completed since time began. But it is also possible that the single 13 in their number stood for the completeness of a whole series of higher places. The authors of Palenque avoided this problem by not writing a five-place long-count number with 13 in the highest place. When referring to the hearthstone event of 4 Lord 8 Kiln, they either counted backward from later dates or simply mentioned the completion of 13 bundles without writing a five-place number. Either way, they left open the possibility of places higher than the fifth one.

The long count starts over again after the hearthstone event, and human history is reckoned as beginning when the count has already grown to a five-place number. After it reaches 9.3.0.0.0, in the Gregorian year 495, monuments bearing long-count dates become common in the center of the Mayan world, between northern Yucatán and the Guatemalan highlands. Thereafter, new monuments appear at an accelerating rate, reaching a peak on 9.18.0.0.0, in the year 790. But during the score of stones that reached completion on 9.19.0.0.0, in 810, nine cities and towns recorded dates that were destined to be their final contributions to history. All across the central region, cities suffered from depopulation and even abandonment, driven by deforestation, soil depletion, drought, and increased warfare.

The decline slowed during the next three scores of stones, as if the completion of a bundle of stones in 10.0.0.0.0 had inspired hopes for renewal rather than a sense of doom. But after the score of stones ending on 10.3.0.0.0, in 889, ten sites posted dates that would be their last. The last known five-place date on a monument was carved at the site of Itzimte, in the northern Guatemalan lowlands. The count had reached 10.4.1.0.0, equivalent to January 13, 910.

Even before the last long-count number was written on a monument in the central region, an abbreviated method for dating the deeds of humans had come into

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use farther north, in Yucatán. This method reached no higher than the *k'atun,* or "score of stones," which occupies the fourth place in the long count. As we saw in chapter 10, scores of stones were reckoned as reaching completion at 13 rather than 20, which is to say that the use of 13 as the limiting integer passed downward by one place. This method of dating was in use at the time of the Spanish invasion and continued in alphabetic texts as late as the early nineteenth century.

As for the long count, the writers of Mayan books continued to use it well after the last five-place number appeared on a monument. They framed records and predictions of astronomical events in long-count terms, continuing a practice that was probably older than the erection of monuments to mark events in the lives of royal individuals. The five-place dates in the Dresden Codex run from 9.9.9.16.0 to 10.19.6.1.8, or from February 7, 623, to September 25, 1210. Further, there are interval numbers that project the course of astronomical events all the way into our own times. When we consider the history of monumental long-count dates from the perspective of the authors of this book rather than that of rulers who commissioned monuments to themselves, the last of the monumental dates falls in the middle of a long story rather than marking the end.

The long count will reach 12.19.19.17.19 on December 20, 2012. The passage to December 21 will complete the count of 20 days in the lowest place of this number, thus raising by 1 and bringing to completion the count of 18 score days in the second place. This second-place number, in turn, will raise by 1 and thus complete the count of 360-day stones in the third place, which will raise by 1 and thus complete the count of scores of stones in the fourth place. There remains the question of what to write in the fifth place to indicate that the count of bundles of stones has been raised by 1 and is thus complete at 13. If we want to write this date in the manner of Quiriguá, it will be 13.0.0.0.0. On the other hand, if we want to handle the problem in the manner of Palenque, we can avoid writing the full long-count date and simply state that 13 bundles have been completed, or we can wait until sometime later and count back far enough to reach this date. Whichever choice we make, the count toward a five-place number would start over again on December 22, reaching 1.0 with the completion of one score of days, 1.0.0 with the completion of one stone, 1.0.0.0 with the completion of one score of stones, and 1.0.0.0.0 with the completion of one bundle of stones.

The problem with limiting a future count to a five-place number is that we lose the original hearthstone event as a starting point. If we wish to think as expansively about the time after that event as the authors of the Cobá date thought about the time before it, we will need to move the long count forward to a six-place number. December 21, 2012, would bring the count to 1 *to pih* or "higher bundle," written as 1.0.0.0.0.0, and the following day would be 1.0.0.0.0.1. An additional twelve of these higher bundles would necessitate a seven-place number, and so on into an unimaginably long future.

On 1.0.0.0.0.0, the calendar-round date will be 4 Ajaw 3 K'ank'in, "4 Lord 3 Yellow Sun." Thus, the 260-day divinatory calendar will stand at the same place it did when the hearthstones were put in place, but the 365-day calendar will be running not through Kiln, which comes last among the 20-day periods of the year, but through

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Yellow Sun, which comes in fourteenth place. The sun will be in the middle of the part of the Milky Way that passes by Scorpius, at the base of the giant tree. The hearthstone stars of Orion, instead of rising at midnight and reaching the middle of the sky at dawn, as they did (in theory) at the end of the previous count of thirteen bundles, will rise at dusk and reach the meridian at midnight.

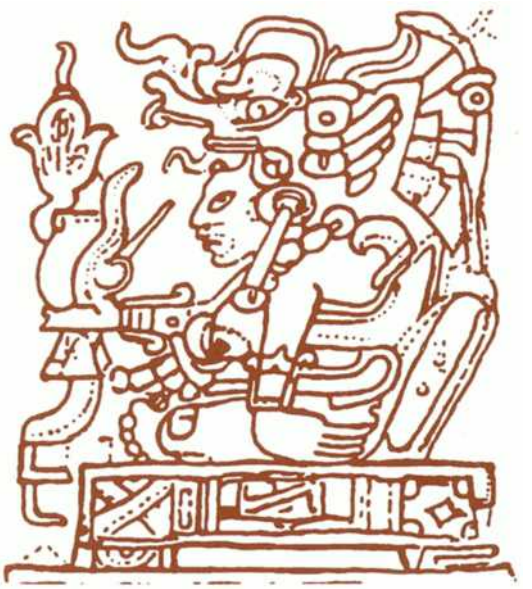

Fig. 32. Lady of the House, seated on her throne and receiving offerings. The geometric designs on her dais mark it as the vault of the sky. From the Dresden Codex.

In the alphabetic Chilam Balam books of Yucatán, the stars that reach the meridian shortly before sunrise announce the character of a new era. In the present case, these stars will be Spica and others in or near Virgo, where the goddess Ix Ajaw Nah, or "Lady of the House," has her home. The Dresden Codex shows her seated on a throne in the sky, receiving offerings (figure 32).

The stars of Virgo correspond to one of the thirteen signs of the Mayan zodiac. They have been the location of the autumnal equinox throughout Mayan history, which probably accounts for the fact that Lady of the House is called *ix k'in sutnal,* "she of the sun's place of return" or "coming around," in the Ritual of the Bacabs, an alphabetic book from Yucatán. Autumn is a dry time there, but she is also called "Lady of the Well," "she who sits in the mud," and "she who emerges from the sand," and her spirit familiar, as pictured in the Paris and Madrid codices, is a frog (figure 33). The Paris Codex shows the frog taking the sun in its upraised mouth, meaning that the sun has entered the place where the lady resides and autumn is arriving. But the Madrid Codex shows the frog head down, bringing rain. To understand this seeming contradiction, we must think of Lady of the House at the time of the vernal equinox, when her stars are visible all night instead of being rendered invisible by the sun. That would be in March, about a month before the first

Fig. 33. The spirit familiar of Lady of the House in the form of a frog in the Paris Codex (left) and Madrid Codex (right). The Paris frog swallows the sun, signifying that the sun has entered the part of the sky occupied by stars corresponding to Virgo. The Madrid frog brings rain at the opposite season, when the same stars are visible all night.

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planting of corn takes place in Yucatán. At that time, Spica is the first star to become visible in the east after sunset, signaling that Lady of the House is taking the role of the current bringer of night. At some point during her term, which lasts twenty-eight days, the rain will begin to fall and the frogs will begin to sing.

Returning to the question of the dawn of 1.0.0.0.0.1, or December 22, 2012, the presence of Lady of the House at the meridian suggests that the new era will have a feminine character, at least until 1.0.1.0.0.0. It should be a good time for planting, and for making new starts of all kinds.

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13 The Mouth of the Well of the Itza

THE SAME PERIOD that saw the decline and eventual abandonment of many of the cities and towns at the center of the Mayan region brought growth, prosperity, and innovation to the north. This contrast creates a problem for archaeologists, who have a tradition of dividing time into stratified periods that can be contrasted in general terms. For many years, specialists in the Mayan field defined the Late Classic period as running from 600 to 900, followed by an Early Postclassic period, running from 900 to 1200. More recently, they have cut the Late Classic short at 800 and followed it with a Terminal Classic period that runs past 900. The end date depends on whether the focus is on the period of decline in the central area or on the new developments that were meanwhile under way in the north. Those who desire to extend the notion of the "Classic" era only far enough to cover the last monuments that celebrate dynasties within the framework of the long count need only push the Terminal Classic a little beyond the former end of the Late Classic, to 925. Those who desire to bring the grandest material remains in the north under the Classic umbrella need to reach as far as 1100 or even later.

At the center of this problem is one of the most powerful and cosmopolitan Mayan cities in all of history. According to archaeologists, the city was founded around 750 and enjoyed its glory days from 850 to 1250. It was built not in the rainforest but in the comparatively arid thorn forest of north-central Yucatán. The Chilam Balam books give it two names: Wuk Yab'nal, "Place of Seven Bushes," and Chichén Itzá (more properly Chi'ch'e'n Itza), meaning "Mouth of the Well of the Itza." The well in question is a round, sheer-sided sinkhole in the local limestone bedrock, with a pool at the bottom. It was probably a destination for pilgrims before the city was built, and it was still a pilgrimage site when Fray Diego de Landa visited the ruins of the city in the middle of the sixteenth century.

The founders of the city at the well were the Itzas, speakers of a Yukatekan language who came from somewhere in the rainforest to the south. At their new city, they formed alliances with their northern neighbors and other peoples whose homeland was in Tabasco, on the southern coast of the Gulf of Mexico. The coastal peoples were the Chontals, the westernmost speakers of a Mayan language, and their neighbors, the easternmost speakers of Nahuatl, the principal language of the central Mexican highlands. Among the Chontals and their neighbors were merchants who traveled in large canoes, following routes along the coast and, where possible, on rivers. The rulers of Chichén Itzá doubtless had the cooperation of these merchants when they established

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control over a string of ports running along the northern and eastern coasts of Yucatán and on the island of Cozumel. These ports formed the eastern half of a trade network whose western half was on the west coast of Yucatán and in Tabasco.

A new form of government was instituted at Chichén Itzá, called *multepal.* This term combines *mul,* meaning "shared in common" in Yukatek, with *tepal,* a word of Nahuatl origin. Words built on the stem *tep-* carry a sense of domination by conquest in Nahuatl, but in Yukatek, the meanings of *tepal* came to include prosperity, abundance, glory, and the contentment they bring. As a political term, *multepal* refers to a sharing of power among lords, which is reflected in the art and architecture of the city. Instead of ruling from palaces with damp, dark rooms, built around private courtyards, the lords held court in broad colonnaded spaces that could shelter large numbers of people while admitting plenty of air and light.

The inscriptions and monuments of Chichén Itzá do not tell the usual Classic story of dynastic origins and lines of succession. Instead, they concern the deeds of groups of people who were contemporaries, acting together. The ultimate subject of the pictorial art is the power and glory of the Itza state, celebrated in scenes whose actors, mostly unnamed, play deadly ball games, carry out military operations by land and by sea, and sacrifice prisoners of war.

On the south side of the city, the architecture follows a northern Mayan style that first appeared during the ninth century, marked by the use of elaborate stone mosaics on upper façades. On the north side, the style is international, sharing such features as snake columns and colonnades with the Toltec city of Tula, which rose to prominence in central Mexico around 900. In their own time, Chichén Itzá and Tula were the eastern and western holders of the rank of Places of Cattails, restoring the cosmological role of cities to the grand scale of the era of Kaminaljuyu and Teotihuacan. During the interval that separated these two eras, Copán and Palenque had claimed the eastern and western roles, but on a scale limited to the Mayan world.

Archaeologists once thought that the northern part of Chichén Itzá was built by Toltec invaders from Mexico and that Mayans of an earlier time accounted for the southern part. Later investigations have revealed that some of the so-called Toltecan features that appear in the art and architecture of Yucatán predate the foundation of Tula and that the two districts of Chichén Itzá coexisted for much of their history. It is even possible that some of the buildings at Tula were modeled on those of Chichén Itzá rather than the other way around. During this same period, a Mayan hand is evident in the relief sculpture at Xochicalco and the murals of Cacaxtla, sites that lie close to the Valley of Mexico. Rather than being the passive victims of a foreign invasion, Mayans were taking an active role on a stage that reached far outside their homeland.

Within the Mayan world, the political and religious influence of Chichén Itzá was felt far beyond northern Yucatán. In the Guatemalan highlands, the successors of the K'iche' and Kaqchikel lords who once journeyed eastward to Copán now had a new destination to the north. According to the Popol Vuh and the Annals of the Kaqchikels,

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these later pilgrims presented themselves to a lord with the Nahuatl name Nacxit, which is one of the titles taken by Itza lords. The Popol Vuh account states that the pilgrims brought back emblems of lordship with foreign names such as *k'us b'us,* which means "gourd of tobacco" in Yukatek, and *makutax,* from Nahuatl *macuetlaxtli,* meaning "armband." The combination of Yukatek and Nahuatl terms points to Chichén Itzá as the source of the emblems.

Mayan and Mexican deities coexisted in the pantheon of Chichén Itzá. Prominent among the indigenous deities was Chaak, a bringer of rain whose Yukatekan name came to mean "Thunderbolt" or "Thunderstorm." The principal Mexican deity, who took the form of a celestial dragon, was known as K'uk'ulkaan, a Yukatekan name in which *k'uk'* is "quetzal," *k'uk'ul* means "plumed," and *kaan* is "serpent." This name is a direct translation of Quetzalcoatl, the Nahuatl name for the same deity. In his draconic aspect, he had enjoyed a previous era of international prominence that coincided with the glory days of Teotihuacan, when the Mayans of the rainforest knew him by the Ch'olan name Waxaklajun Ub'ah Chan, "Serpent of Eighteen Bodies."

One of the main subjects of the inscriptions of Chichén Itzá is the dedication of temples. The example on pages 143–43 is from a stone lintel over one of the four doorways of the building now known as the Temple of the Four Lintels, located at the southern end of the city's main north-south roadway. The text opens with a calendar-round date, 9 Lamat 11 Yax, or "9 Sunk 11 Green," and then goes on to state that this date fell within the thirteenth stone of a score of stones that ended on 1 Ajaw, or "1 Lord." The long-count equivalent is 10.2.12.1.8, corresponding to July 11, 881.

The primary language of the writers of Chichén Itzá was Yukatekan, but the inventory of signs available to them had been developed for the writing of a Ch'olan language. In theory, they could have avoided some of the problems arising from language differences by using as many logographs as possible, omitting phonetic complements so as to leave the question of pronunciation open. In practice, however, they used syllabic signs more often than their Ch'olan counterparts, as if they wished to make the differences clear. A case in point is the word for "fire," which is ***k'ahk*** in Ch'olan and *k'ak'* in Yukatekan. The available logograph (at right) is an image of a two-tongued flame that can also serve as a sign for the syllable *k'a.* The writer of the present text chose alternative spellings that eliminate the Ch'olan pronunciation of the word for "fire" in favor of the Yukatekan one:

The first spelling retains the two-tongued flame but uses it as the second of two signs for the syllable ***k'a.*** In the second spelling, the nonflame sign for ***k'a*** is written twice. Either spelling results in ***k'ak',*** which is unmistakably Yukatekan.

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Another example of the desire for phonetic clarity is the treatment of the word for "snake," which is *chan* in Ch'olan and *kan* in Yukatekan. The most obvious logographic choice is the profiled head of a snake (at right). But the writer preferred the following syllabic spellings, both of which explicitly eliminate *chan* in favor of *kan:*

There was no need to invent new spellings of *ajaw,* or "lord," because this word has the same form in Ch'olan, Yukatekan, and other Mayan languages. Our writer used two of the available logographs but could not resist providing the reader with additional tips on pronunciation. One of these logographs is the profiled head of the god Jun Ajaw, or "One Lord," and stands for the day Ajaw. In the Late Classic example, at left in the illustration below, the trefoil below the head is a semantic determinative, confirming that the intended meaning is temporal in nature. The writer wrote the day name (on the right) by simplifying the head, adding a logographic prefix, and substituting a syllabic suffix for the semantic sign:

Ch'olan texts use the prefixed pair of signs that reads *ajaw* and the suffixed phonetic complement for *-aw* when the reference is to a human lord rather than the day named Lord, and they place these signs above and below the name of a dynasty. By using these signs in the spelling of the day name, our Yukatekan writer has moved them outside the domain of dynastic politics and generalized their relationship to the *ajaw* sound combination.

In this next spelling of *ajaw,* as in the first one, the main sign comes from a logograph for the day name (at left) and is sandwiched between affixes for *ajaw* and *-aw:*

But this time the reference is not to a day but to persons who claim *ajaw* as a title. In other words, the writer has removed the day sign from the domain of time and made it into a general sign for *ajaw.* In yet another spelling, again referring to a titled person, the writer resorts to a purely syllabic spelling of *ajaw:*

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The varied spellings of *k'ak', kan,* and *ajaw* bespeak a writer who saw the richness of the available stock of signs as an invitation to try out new combinations. Further, the frequent use of syllabic signs and the construction of characters that say the same thing in more than one way are reader friendly. For the Yukatekan reader, dealing with a text laden with Ch'olan logographs might have been something like the problem facing present-day Japanese readers who encounter borrowed Chinese characters in a text otherwise composed of syllabic signs.

The inscription mentions names that also turn up in the Chilam Balam books and other alphabetic texts that were written in Yucatán. It states that the Temple of the Four Lintels is the house of a group of gods called the B'olon ti K'u Ajawob', "Nine Temple Lords," and B'olon ti Kab' Ajawob', "Nine Earth Lords." In the alphabetic literature, these are the gods of the nine levels of the earth, who have celestial counterparts pertaining to the thirteen levels of the sky.

The name of the man who renovated the temple, unveiled the lintels, and officially opened the doors is Yax Pech Kan Ajaw, or "First Tick Snake Lord." Pech and Kan (Can in colonial spelling) are family names that continue among the present-day people of Yucatán. The inscription describes First Tick Snake Lord as the "only one who is lord and owner" of the K'ak' Upakal K'awiil, or "Fire Shield and Scepter," which probably means that he ranked first among the various lords who ruled Chichén Itzá. The Chilam Balam books mention an Itza lord who took K'ak' Upakal as his name.

The writer further describes First Tick Snake Lord by repeating one of the *ajaw* characters discussed earlier but inserting the image of a bone awl into the region of the nose of the profiled head, as shown at right. The awl seems to indicate that the septum of this lord had been pierced for the insertion of an ornament. Only a warrior of noble descent who had taken a prisoner enjoyed this privilege. Most of the men depicted in the relief sculpture of Chichén Itzá wear nose ornaments, and the authors of the Annals of the Kaqchikels state that Kaqchikel pilgrims had their noses pierced during their visit to the city.

At the end of the half of the inscription that deals with First Tick Snake Lord, he is further described as the lord and keeper of something named by the logograph at right. Except for the round sign at the lower right corner, this logograph refers to a ball court, though the corresponding Yukatekan word is not yet known. The image consists of a crosssection through one side of a ball court, complete with a ball rolling down a stepped incline and a pole that marks the playing field. The sign at lower right, whose Yukatekan reading is *b'e,* could be a phonetic complement belonging to the

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unknown term for ball court, but it could also be the word for "road." The road whose southern end is at the Temple of the Four Lintels has its northern end at one of the city's ball courts, and for this reason I translate the character as a whole as "Ball Court Road."

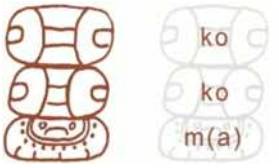
The second half of the inscription names two other lords who joined First Tick Snake Lord at the opening of the temple, one of them a "Sun Priest" and the other bearing a title that may read K'ul Ajsajil, "Master of Great Fear." Both of them are "Lords over the Earth" and "Lords of Fire," and both are described as the bearers of death-dealing axes. They may have been priests whose functions included the beheading of prisoners of war.

The writer arranged the characters in sixteen groups of four each, illustrated and translated on pages 143–44.

At the end of the twelfth century, a group of lords from Chichén Itzá founded a new city fifty miles to the west. It was Mayapán, whose name combines Maya', the Yukatek name for the land of the Yucatán peninsula, with *pan,* meaning "banner." A stela at the site commemorates the completion of a score of stones on 10 Lord, which would have happened in 1185, but the Chilam Balam books say the city was founded during the following score of stones, which ended in 1204. In the new city, as in the older one, government took the form of *multepal,* or "shared rule," but with one feature that may have been new: the lords from towns outside Mayapán were required to live in the city. The houses were packed more tightly together than at Chichén Itzá, and the entire city was surrounded by a wall.

Mayapán attacked Chichén Itzá during the score of stones that ended in 1204, forcing some of the Itzas who still lived in that city to leave. The exiles went southward into the rainforest of northern Guatemala, to the area around the lake known today as Petén Itzá. Whether they reoccupied ancestral towns, or rejoined Itzas who had never gone north, or founded new towns, there was an Itza presence in the area at the time of the Spanish invasion. Those who remained at Chichén Itzá after the attack managed to retaliate against Mayapán during the score that ended in 1244, but the balance of power in northern Yucatán was shifting toward the newer city.

A group of Itzas returned from the rainforest and settled in Mayapán during the score of stones that ended in 1263, and another group arrived from Chichén Itzá during the next score, bringing Nahuatl-speaking mercenaries with them. The name of a lordly family in the later group first appeared in the inscriptions of Chichén Itzá, written with syllabic signs. In the building known today as Akab Tzib, in an area between the northern and southern districts of the city, their name is written as at right. Kokom (Cocom in colonial spelling), meaning "one who listens with attention," continues today as a surname in Yucatán.



In Mayapán, the Cocoms took over the dominant role, replacing many of the earlier buildings with new ones modeled on those of Chichén Itzá. Their principal rivals among the lordly families of Mayapán bore the name Xiw (Xiu in colonial spelling).

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It came on the day Nine Sunk

11 Green, during

the 13th stone of 1 Lord:

the unveiling, the initiation

of the lintel of the house

and the doorway of the home

of the 9 Temple Lords.

First Tick Snake

Lord is the name

of the one who opened the door, the renovator,

the manly one, the only one

who is lord and owner

of the Fire Shield and Scepter,

a pierced lord, a penitent,

a maker of fire, Lord of

Ball Court Road, the one who keeps it in order.

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Present on 11 Green

for the unveiling, the initiation

of the lintel of the house,

the capstone of the home

of the Lords of the 9 Levels of the Earth

were First Tick Snake

and the Lords over the Earth

as they are called, standing there:

the Sun Priest who hastens death,

who cuts with an ax,

a Lord of Fire,

in the company of the Master of Great Fear,

Lord of the Blade,

also a Lord of Fire,

who has his own

ax, as a Lord over the Earth.

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They were probably indigenous to that part of Yucatán. During the score of stones that ended in 1401, the Cocoms expelled the Xius from the city, starting a feud that continued up to the time of the Spanish invasion. During the score that ended in 1461, the Xius led a revolt, killing all but one of the highest-ranking Cocom lords and looting and burning Mayapán. By the time the Spanish first appeared, in 1517, Yucatán was divided among eighteen principalities. The Xius ruled one of these from the town of Maní, south of the site of Mayapán, and the Cocoms ruled another from the town of Sotutá, east of Mayapán.

Transcending all these divisions was a priesthood that sat in judgment over the legitimacy of local lords and attempted to organize the ceremonial life of the peninsula into a single system. The Chilam Balam books reveal that the seat of the priesthood rotated among different towns, with the transfers scheduled for the changes from one score of stones to another. This system continued to operate at the clandestine level after the Spanish invasion, lasting well into the eighteenth century.

Some of the Itzas remained in Yucatán after Spanish rule was established in 1546, but others sought refuge by going south to join the Itzas who resided in the rainforest. Two principalities in the area of Petén Itzá maintained their independence from Spain and from the Roman church until 1697, reading and writing the Mayan script long after the roman alphabet had replaced it elsewhere. Their descendants, speakers of Itzaj Maya, live in the same area today.

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14 Writing on the Pages of Books

FOR THE PERIOD of Mayan literary history that runs from 400 B.C.E. to the thirteenth century, the only texts that survive were painted or carved on pottery, stucco, stone, bone, shell, or rot-resistant wood. It is likely that more writing was done on paper than on any other surface, but what little remains is unreadable. At several Classic sites the disintegrated remains of books have been found in tombs, having been placed on the chests or next to the heads of their deceased owners. The four books that survive in legible condition date from more recent times. The earliest one is the Grolier Codex, from central Chiapas. Its radiocarbon date is 1230 ± 130 years, and it contains an almanac for the planet Venus that would have been in effect during that time. It was left as an offering in a dry cave, so that ten of its pages were partially preserved. Because the text is limited to dates from the divinatory calendar and interval numbers, the language of its writer is not known.

The other three books, named for the European cities in which they ended up, date from still later times. The Dresden Codex was written in the fifteenth century but was based, in part, on earlier texts. It may have been collected as early as 1519, when Cortés and his men landed on the island of Cozumel. They reported finding books in houses whose residents had fled at the news of their approach, and Cortés included at least one Mayan book in his first shipment of treasure from the New World. The Madrid Codex has been traced to the area of Chancenote, in northeastern Yucatán. In 1607, it was confiscated by a missionary, who took it to Spain in 1618. It was probably written shortly before or shortly after the Spanish invasion, as was the Paris Codex. The texts in these three books combine Yukatekan and Ch'olan features. Like the inscriptions at Chichén Itzá, they have a higher proportion of syllabic signs than the Ch'olan inscriptions of the cities farther south.

All Mayan languages have a term for "paper," and in all cases it can also mean "book." In Ch'olan languages, the term is presently *hun* and once took the form *huun,* and in Yukatekan languages, it is *hu'un* or *hu'um.* Tzeltalan languages have *hun* (in Tzeltal itself) and *wun* (in Tzotzil). The K'ichean terms are *ju* (in Q'eqchi'), *huuj* (in Poqomchi'), and *wuj* (in the rest). The paper of the surviving books was made from the inner bark of a tree of the fig family *(Ficus cotinifolia).* This kind of paper was widely manufactured in ancient Mesoamerica, and it is still produced in a number of indigenous communities in central Mexico.

Mayans made paper by soaking the bark fibers in a solution of lime and then beating them into thin sheets. Next they felted or glued two sheets together, one on top of

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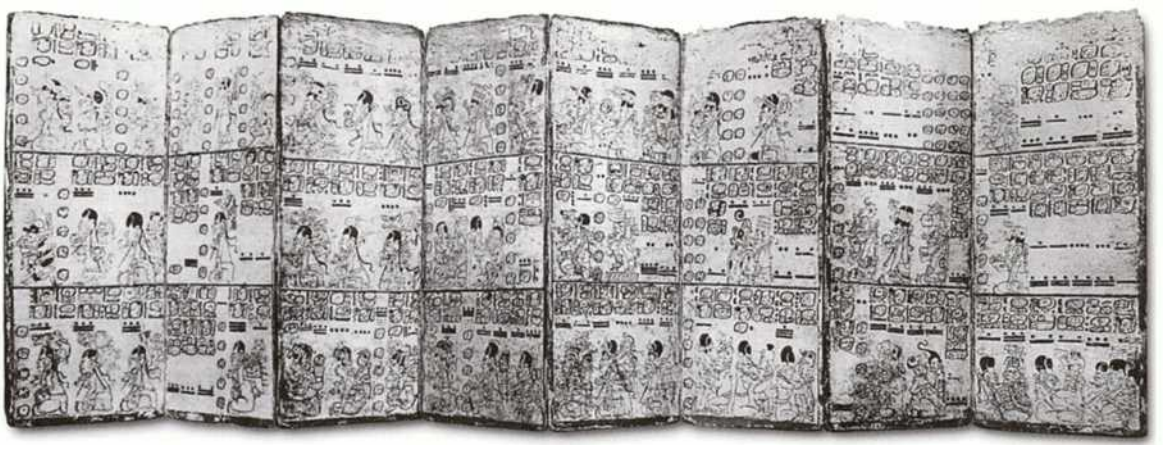

Fig. 34. Eight pages from the Dresden Codex, opened partway to show the folds.

the other, to reach the proper thickness for paper. Then they created a long strip of paper by joining a series of thickened sheets edge to edge, felting or gluing one to the next. In the surviving books the height of the strip ranges from eight to nine inches, and the greatest known length, that of the Madrid Codex, is twenty-two feet six inches.

In the next step, the papermaker folded the strip back and forth like a screen to divide it into pages (figure 34). The pages were half as wide as tall or a little narrower, ranging from 3½ to 4½ inches across in the known books. Once folded, the paper was coated on both sides with a solution of calcium carbonate to give it a white surface. The surface was then smoothed and polished, probably with a pebble that had a smooth, flat side. In preparation for writing, a thick border was painted around the four sides of each page with a red pigment made from hematite, and the spaces to be filled with characters and pictures were mapped out with a grid of very thin lines in a diluted red.

Last came the writing and drawing itself, most of which was done in two colors: the same red that was used for page borders and a black made from soot. Writers sometimes added yellow, green, and blue pigments, usually in the pictures. The containers for the pigments were conch shells cut in half lengthwise (figure 35). The ridges between the convolutions allowed the use of more than one pigment in the same shell, or one pigment in different degrees of dilution. Classic vase paintings that show writers at work often depict such containers. The writer in figure 36 sits in front of a stack of folded paper, holding a halved conch in his left hand

Fig. 35. A conch-shell container for pigments, from the Classic period. The stains in the compartments are from a red pigment.

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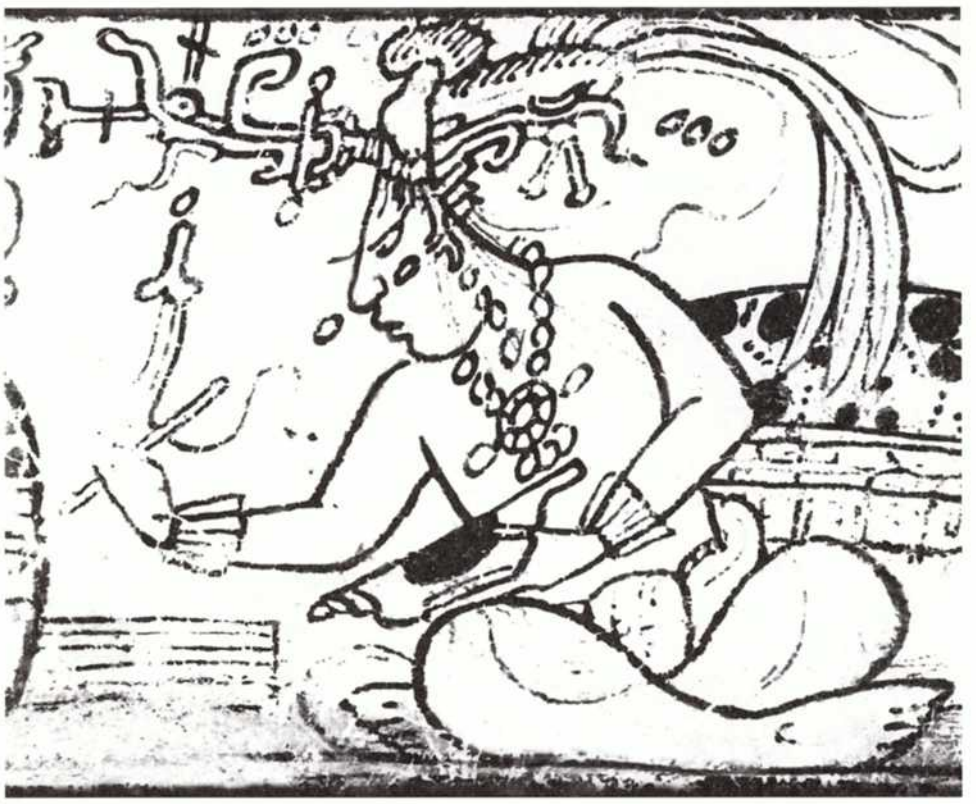

Fig. 36. A writer with a reed pen in his right hand and a conch-shell ink pot in his left. Below his pen is a stack of paper. Detail from a painting on a Late Classic chocolate-drinking vessel.

and a writing instrument in his right. Two kinds of instruments were used: a reed pen with a bunch of hair inserted in the tip or tied to it and a quill pen that was normally stripped of its barbs. Quill pens are usually depicted as curved, so the instrument in figure 36 is probably a reed pen.

The first and last pages of a book were glued to thin boards that served as covers. In Classic depictions of bound books, the boards are covered with jaguar skin or painted with jaguar spots. The logograph for "book," whose Ch'olan reading was presumably *hun,* is a schematic representation of a book of this kind (at left). This is a closed book seen on edge, with jaguar-skin covers above and below and paper pages in the middle. The covers signify that books contained the knowledge of priest-shamans who counted jaguars among their guardian spirits. At the same time, the jaguar spots, as symbols of the stars, suggest that some Classic books were like the surviving ones in containing astronomical information.

Some paintings on ceramic vessels show a writer at work on a book that already has its covers attached. In such cases, the writer is always shown in profile, but the book is turned toward the viewer, as if the writer were both working on it and pre-

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Fig. 37. A writer holding an open book in one hand while writing in it with the other. The artist has turned the book toward the viewer. Detail from a painting on a Late Classic chocolate-drinking vessel.

senting it to the viewer. In figure 37, the book is tilted away from the viewer just far enough to show the covers, with the top one folded out of the way to the left and the bottom one resting on the left hand of the writer. With his right hand, he applies a curved quill pen to an open page in the middle of the book. The edges of blank pages are visible beneath this one, and the edges of finished pages can be seen to the left, as if the viewer (rather than the writer) had put them aside while leafing through the book from left to right. Except for two pages in the Paris Codex, the same left-to-right reading order is followed in all the pages of the surviving books.

Some interpreters of images like the one in figure 37 see the writer and the book as belonging to the same perspective, which would mean that the pages of Classic books, unlike those of later books, opened from bottom to top, like a calendar, rather than sideways. But this interpretation is contradicted by a Late Classic clay figurine from the island of Jaina, off the west cost of Yucatán. The figure is a seated woman with her right hand resting on the closed book she holds in her lap (figure 38). The folds that connect the pages, visible above her knee, indicate that this book would have opened sideways rather than from bottom to top.

Fig. 38. A woman resting her hand on the screen-folded book she holds on her lap. Detail of Late Classic clay figurine from Jaina, in Campeche.

Some vase paintings show twin monkeys, the divine patrons of writing, holding books in front of them. In figure 39, closed books are piled up beneath the

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Fig. 39. Writers with the faces of howler monkeys speaking while pointing at (or writing in) the open books in front of them, which rest on other books. Rollout view of a Late Classic painting on a chocolate-drinking vessel.

open ones. The bodies of the writers are human, but their faces are those of howler monkeys. Projecting forward from the tops of their heads are large hairnets, a common feature in Classic depictions of writers. The long, thin objects thrust into the undersides of the nets and pointing downward at an angle (most clearly seen above the right wrist of the monkey at right) are reed pens, ready to be pulled out when needed. The objects that make both monkeys look as though they have pointed ears are in fact feathers, with their shafts inserted behind the actual ears. The eyelike markings on these feathers identify them as the tail feathers or upper tail coverts of an ocellated turkey *(Meleagris ocellata)*. Turkey feathers are the likeliest source for Mayan quill pens, but the feathers pictured here have yet to be stripped of their barbs.

The right hands of the monkeys metamorphose into conch shells whose pointed ends touch the open pages of their books. At first glance, this would seem to be a joke: instead of choosing among their pens, the monkeys are pouring ink directly onto the paper. But this image is more than a sight gag. For one thing, poetic resonance may have played a role in the thinking of the artist. The Yukatekan (and possibly Ch'olan) term for a conch shell is *hub'*, sharing its first syllable with *hu'un,* the term for "book." Further, conch shells were used as trumpets, and the fact that a complete shell could produce a sound may have given the halved shells extra symbolic weight as containers for the pigment that transformed the sounds of spoken words

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into visible marks. In effect, the ink in the container takes the place of the breath that passes through a trumpet.

The small, bonelike objects in front of the monkeys' snouts do not represent vocal sounds but are nose ornaments whose real counterparts typically dangled from a string. The monkeys are indeed vocalizing, but this is indicated by the fact that they have their mouths wide open. The calls of howler monkeys, like the notes blown on conch-shell trumpets, are long-winded and low in pitch and carry very far.

Writing has another patron in the elderly deity Pawahtun, who is like the monkeys in the painting in wearing a hairnet. He is also a god of the four directions and is sometimes conceived as four separate gods. A painting that runs around the outer surface of a vertical-sided bowl shows two scenes in which two members of the Pawahtun foursome, both of them left-handed, teach writing to young pupils who appear to be thoroughly human (figures 40 and 41). One teacher has whiskers on his chin, and the other does not. On one side of the bowl, the bewhiskered teacher has a book with a jaguar-skin cover on the floor in front of him, and he speaks to a pair of rather stocky pupils while gesturing toward an open page with the reed pen he holds in his left hand (figure 40). The pupil in front has his eyes fixed on the page. The teacher has two additional reed pens stuck in his hairnet, and tucked in the front of the headdress of the more distant pupil is a cluster of objects that may be pens (indicated by the fine parallel lines that meet the top margin of the picture). The two round objects on the

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Fig. 40. A bearded Pawahtun pointing out an error in the writing of numbers to two pupils. Rollout view of a Late Classic painting on the outer surface of a bowl with vertical sides. This image is half of a painting whose other half appears in figure 41.

teacher's back, which would be suspended from his neck by a cord, are gourd containers. One is for powdered tobacco and the other for powdered lime, the ingredients of a mixture made for chewing. The wearing of gourds is a badge of priestly status. The pupil in front also wears gourds, one of which is visible hanging on his chest.

Numbers are the subject of the lesson in progress, and the teacher, with a stern look on his face, is reading aloud what the front pupil has written on the open page. The bar-and-dot numbers that start behind the teacher's head, running to the right and then down in front of him, constitute a quotation of what he is saying. They are connected to his mouth by the thin, wavy line that reaches to the bottom number. Apparently he asked the pupil to set down a series of numbers with ascending values, but the pupil has written 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, and 11, with 10 missing and 11 out of place. The other pupil, instead of leaning forward and looking down at the page, stares blankly toward the teacher and keeps his arms folded.

On the other side of the bowl, the teacher without whiskers sits in front of two other pupils, again speaking sternly about the results of a writing exercise (figure 41). He, too, gestures toward something with his left hand, but he points with his forefinger instead of a pen. Again, the object of his attention and that of the pupil in front of him is something written, perhaps on a piece of paper that rests on the floor between them. This teacher, like the other one, has a couple of pens in his hairnet, but now the pupil in front is the one with a bunch of quill pens tucked in his headdress. Pairs of gourds hang on the chest of the teacher and on that of the pupil who sits behind.

In this scene, the lesson includes the writing of words other than numbers. The teacher's comment runs from left to right above his head and then down in front of him, again connected to his mouth by a wavy line. A clear interpretation of the entire quotation has yet to be worked out, but the teacher begins by reading aloud the pupil's

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Fig. 41. A beardless Pawahtun pointing out an error in the writing of parallel phrases to two pupils. The other half of this painting appears in figure 40.

scrambled version (below at left) of a phrase whose correct form (at right) can be found in the Dresden Codex:

Leaving aside the differences in style between the painter of the vase and the writer of the codex, the pupil's error is clear. He has reversed the order of *yax* and *k'an* and split the two dots of the number 2 between them, writing 1 twice when he should have written 2 once. And instead of inserting a single space filler between the two dots, linking them to form the number 2, he has used two space fillers to enclose each of them, making it clear that he intends the number 1. The result is *1 k'an 1 yax,* "1 yellow 1 green," instead of the desired *2 yax k'an,* "the 2 that are green and yellow," a phrase that invokes a pair of ears of corn and alludes to the stars Castor and Pollux, which mark the celestial home of a corn deity (see chapter 16).

The second pupil, unlike his counterpart in the other scene, is looking at what was written and grasping the nature of the error. With one hand palm up and the other palm down, and with his forefingers extended at different angles, he gestures as if he imagined himself reversing the order of the *k'an* and *yax* signs. The next three characters in the quotation from the teacher have yet to be interpreted, but the last one, which constitutes his evaluation, is clear. Starting from the identical prefixes on the

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front and top and then moving to the main sign, it reads *ta-ta-b'i,* yielding *tataab',* which means "badly written."

This painting reveals a number of things about the teaching of writing among ancient Mayans. The teachers and at least some of their students shared a priestly status, but the students were not yet allowed to wear hairnets. Exercises involved the use of pen and paper, with a progression from writing bar-and-dot numbers to writing phrases that might include numbers (as in the present example) but also involved syllabic signs and nonnumeric logographs.

None of the students in the painting has the body of an ordinary, hardworking corn farmer: one of them (on the right side of the scene involving numbers) has the well-developed upper body of an athlete, but the rest have the fat, sagging bellies of sedentary individuals. All of them would have come from families that were not fully dependent on food production or other hard physical labor for their livelihoods. Some would have come from royal households, but others could have come from families specializing in the arts, religion, medicine, or trade. In the case of works like the Vase of the Seven Gods, where the identity of the author can be traced, the trail often leads to a member of a royal family. But anonymous works are in the great majority, and it could be that only authors with royal pedigrees were so bold as to inscribe their own identities in the same space in which they wrote about gods and dynasties.

The pupils depicted in the painting are all males, but we have plenty of evidence that women were among those who learned to read and write. The figurine of the woman with a book on her lap (shown in full in the frontispiece) provides one example. Another example comes from a painted vase that shows women shamans healing a male patient. At the end of a long inscription, the artist signed her name and followed the last two characters with a small self-portrait (at right). The upper character belongs to her name, and the lower one, starting from the prefixes at left and on top and ending with the main sign, identifies her as an *ajtz'ib',* or "writer." In the picture, she leans forward, like most of the other writers who appear in paintings, holding a book in her left hand and a writing instrument in her right. Instead of stuffing her hair into a net, she has gathered it, tied it with a cloth, and let it fall forward. But like the others, she is bare chested, which is why the artist has painted herself with her breast hanging down.

In some Classic carvings and paintings, individuals who are marked as writers by the pens in their headdresses are described in the accompanying texts with characters like these:

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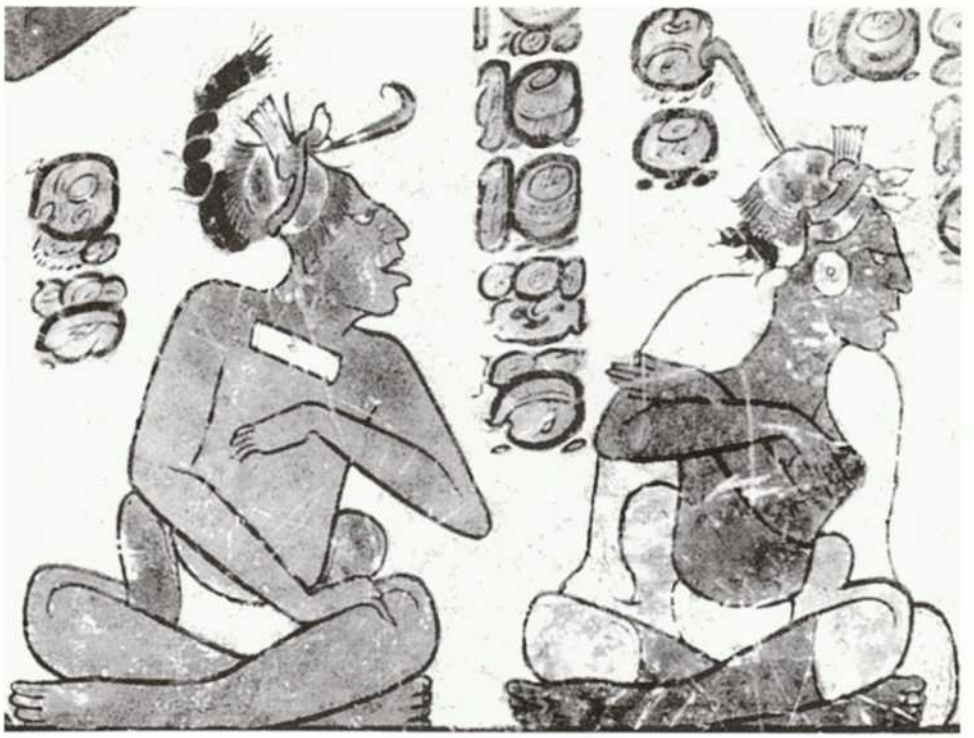

Fig. 42. Two seated men, marked as literate by the pens in their headbands. The two characters behind the speaker on the left identify him as a book person, and the two behind the head of the other speaker identify him as an interpreter. Detail from a Late Classic painting on a chocolate-drinking vessel.

The left-hand example reads *ajch'uh huun,* in which *aj-* is occupational, *ch'uh* means "to look after" or "care for" in this context, and *huun* is "books" or "papers." The right-hand example reads *ix ajch'uh huun,* in which *ix* identifies the book person as a woman.

People whose occupation centered on books might have combined some or all of the roles of an author, calligrapher, copyist, librarian, researcher, or diviner. They might also have been called upon as speakers, whether they read aloud from a book or were more like the jongleurs of medieval Europe, who claimed textual authority for the stories they recited from memory. But there is evidence that the art of oral performance was separate, to some degree, from the art of reading and writing. A Late Classic vase painting of a palace scene seems to make such a distinction (figure 42). Seated before a lord are two men, both of them marked as literate by the bunches of pens tucked into their headbands and both of them speaking and gesturing. The two characters written behind the head of the man on the left identify him as an *ajch'uh huun,* a person in charge of books, but the two characters behind and above the right shoulder of the other man label him as a *chilam,* a person who speaks on behalf of someone else or interprets what someone else has said.

The *chilam* in this painting may be translating between two languages, one spoken by the book person behind him and the other spoken by the lord in front of him, or perhaps the difference is between two levels of usage in the same language. If the book

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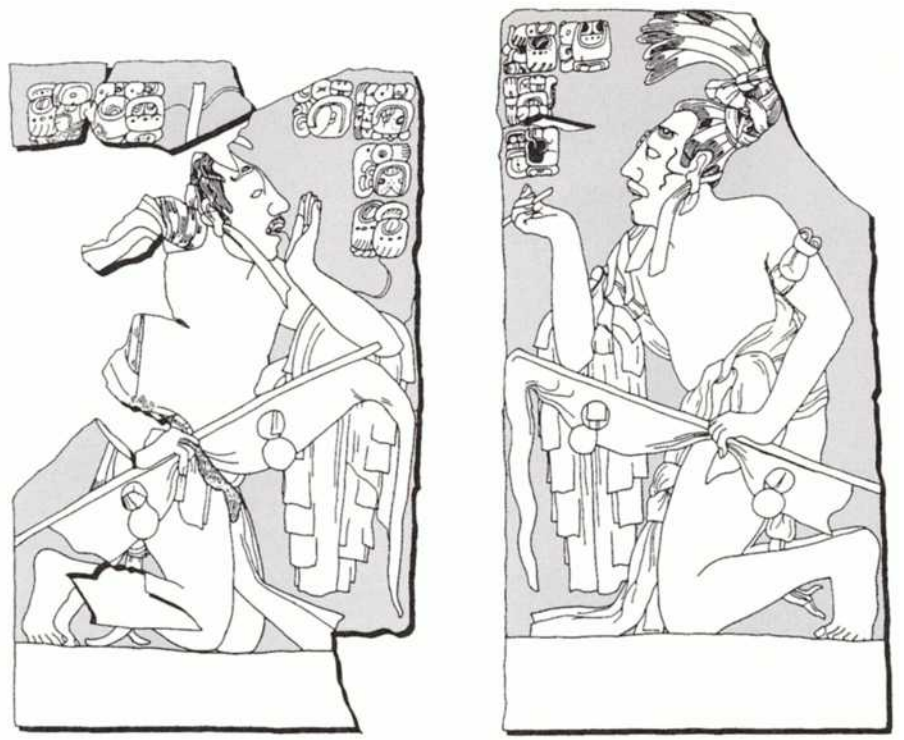

Fig. 43. Kneeling figures dressed as penitents. The man on the left is an orator who uses his upraised hand to make his voice carry, and the man on the right is a writer who holds a pen in his hand. Late Classic relief panels that flanked a stairway leading to a throne in the palace at Palenque.

person is giving voice to discourse of the kind found in texts, he is neither telling a fully plotted story nor arguing a point of view. Instead, he is speaking a poetic discourse that favors metaphors, allusions, and sound patterns at the expense of plot and argument. Moreover, he may be using words and phrases that are esoteric or have passed out of common usage. For any or all of these reasons, his audience may need an interpreter to understand what he is saying. Even in societies that lack writing, verbal artists can develop widely different levels of discourse. Among the Kuna of Panama, for example, a speaker who performs at the highest level requires two successive interpretations by two additional speakers before his message reaches a general level of understanding.

Further evidence for a distance between the Mayan arts of writing and speaking appears in a pair of Late Classic relief panels that once flanked the stairs leading to a throne in the palace at Palenque (figure 43). The two kneeling figures, dressed as penitents, were originally positioned so that they looked toward the throne. The inscriptions on the panels have not been fully deciphered, but both of them are phrased in the second person, indicating that the penitents are addressing the person sitting on the throne. A curving line connects the open mouth of the figure on the left to the words written above and in front of him, and he holds a cupped hand near his mouth as if to make his voice carry. For both reasons, he has long been thought of as an orator. The

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figure on the right also has an open mouth, but no line connects him to the words in front of him. He, too, raises one hand in front of him, but instead of using it to direct his voice, he holds a pen, as if he had written his words rather than speaking them.

Neither the book person in the vase painting nor the holder of the pen in the relief panel has his mouth closed in silence, and the interpreter in the painting wears pens in his headband. It would seem that writing and speaking did not belong to sharply divided professions but rather that they involved partnerships between individuals whose interests gravitated in one direction or the other.

DIVINATORY ALMANACS

The pages of the surviving books are filled with almanacs and tables that organize events according to recurring patterns in the intervals that separate them. Each event or type of event is given a date on the 260-day divinatory calendar and sometimes on the 365-day calendar as well. Additional dating appears on one side of the Paris Codex and on one page in the Dresden Codex, where scores of stones (periods lasting 7,200 days) come into play. Occasionally, the Dresden book provides full long-count dates. Many of the events are illustrated, usually in a space below the text. None of the actors in the events are human. Instead, they are gods, animals, or monsters whose actions prefigure events in the human world.

In most almanacs, the only dates come from the divinatory calendar and cover periods limited to 260 days. The shorter intervals between dates seem to be governed by numerological considerations rather than observable phenomena. But there are other almanacs and tables in which the timing of astronomical events plays an obvious role, whether in the shorter intervals or in the overall lengths of the periods. On a short scale, the lunar almanacs in Dresden and Madrid track the moon's rapid movement among the fixed stars. The New Year almanacs in the same two books measure 365-day years against the divinatory calendar. A seasonal almanac in Dresden charts solstices, equinoxes, and rainfall patterns. Two pages in Paris follow the sun through the thirteen constellations of the Mayan zodiac, and an almanac in Dresden puts the sun and moon together, charting the dates of possible eclipses. Dresden and Grolier track the alternation of Venus between its roles as morning and evening star and its position among the fixed stars, and Dresden includes an almanac dealing with the periodicity of Mars.

Some almanacs focus on a specialized area of human activity, despite the fact that the characters are not human. The story of Venus, in both Dresden and Grolier, centers on the fortunes of war, whereas agriculture is the main focus of the seasonal almanac in Dresden. The subjects of the Madrid almanacs include carving, weaving, beekeeping, and the trapping of turkeys and deer.

For Mayan readers, applying book knowledge to human affairs required the construction of allegories, with calendar dates providing the points of contact between the

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divine and human worlds. The allegory might deepen the understanding of an event that had already occurred, or it might suggest the shape of events yet to come. Or it might reveal the most appropriate time to schedule an event, such as a planting, a wedding, an accession to office, an expedition to trade or make war, a harvest, or a remembrance of the dead.

CLUES TO THE CONTENTS OF LOST BOOKS

Ancient Mayan books covered many more subjects than are represented in the four that survive. Not only are they few in number, they all have missing pages. Clues to the contents of lost pages and lost books can be found in texts and pictures that have survived because they were painted or carved on durable surfaces. In the astronomical realm, for example, the inscriptions carved on the tablets commissioned by Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar at Palenque contain precise information about the periodicity of Jupiter (discussed in chapter 6), suggesting that it was among the planets tracked by almanacs in the books of that time.

The accounts of royal succession inscribed on the dynastic vases of Calakmul (discussed in chapter 9) appear to be excerpts from longer accounts that could have been written in books. Such a book could have been one of the sources consulted by the authors of the inscriptions at Palenque, who interwove their astronomical narrative with a dynastic one. The court records of colonial Yucatán contain further evidence that dynastic narratives were among the subjects of books. A witness at a sixteenth-century trial testified that his father had been shown an ancient document containing the history of his family. In the Guatemalan highlands, the alphabetic Popol Vuh includes accounts of the succession of K'iche' lords in three lineages, reaching back thirteen generations for two lineages and nine for the third. The authors introduce these accounts by stating, *Wa'e k'ute xchiwachin uwach jujun chujujunal ajawab' K'iche'*, "And here shall appear the faces, one by one, of each of the K'iche' lords." The surviving copy of the text gives the names of the lords in alphabetic spellings and has no illustrations, but the introductory statement suggests that an earlier manuscript might have paired the alphabetic names with their renditions in what the authors call the "prior writing."

Another clue to the subjects covered by ancient books is offered by a scene painted on a Late Classic vase from Nebaj, at the northern edge of the Guatemalan highlands (figure 44). At left, a kneeling vassal presents tribute to the lord at the center, who sits on a dais. Among the payments are rolled-up textiles with fringed edges, piled at the front of the dais, and two baskets filled with foodstuffs, one on top of the textiles and the other on the dais, directly in front of the man seated behind the lord. In his left hand, that man holds a small book with its cover open, shown on edge and turned toward the viewer as in other paintings, and he applies a pen to it with his right hand. The obvious interpretation is that he is keeping an account of payments received. No such accounts have survived in the Mayan region, but the legacy of the royal courts of

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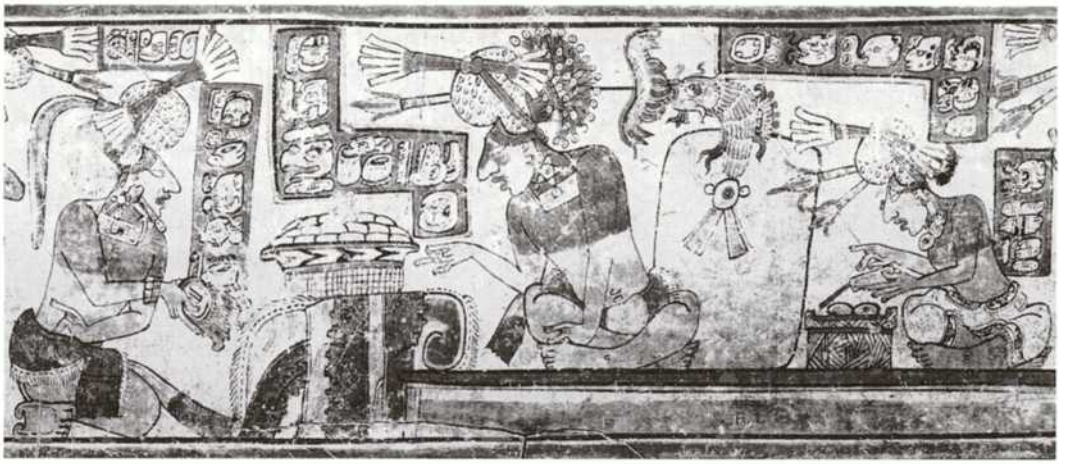

Fig. 44. A court scene in which a visiting subject (at left) presents tribute to a lord on a dais (at center) while a scribe (at right) makes a mark in the small book he holds in his left hand. Rollout view of a portion of a Late Classic painting on a chocolate-drinking vessel from Nebaj, Guatemala.

central Mexico includes documents listing the names of subject towns and describing the kinds and amounts of tribute they owed.

Many of the scenes painted on Classic vases, like the one from Nebaj, are interspersed with brief texts that include the names of the actors. Similar scenes abound in the art of the Mixtecs of Oaxaca, but they appear in the pages of books. The example in figure 45, with the texts highlighted in red, is a court scene from page 9 of the Codex Bodley. The three characters are named by the signs written behind each of them, and the name of the year in which the event occurred is written between the standing visitor and the seated lord at the front of the dais. The character who shares the dais with the lord is his wife. Other scenes precede and follow this one, each one constituting an episode in a long narrative.

Some of the Classic Mayan books may well have been filled with scenes like the one on the Nebaj vase, taking their places in narratives like the ones that fill Mixtec books. If so, the balance between pictures and texts would have been different from the one

Fig. 45. A Mixtec court scene in which a visitor (at left) comes before a lord on a dais (at center) who has his wife seated behind him (at right). Highlighted in red are signs from the Mixtec writing system, naming the characters and the year in which the event occurred. Scene from a narrative in the Codex Bodley.

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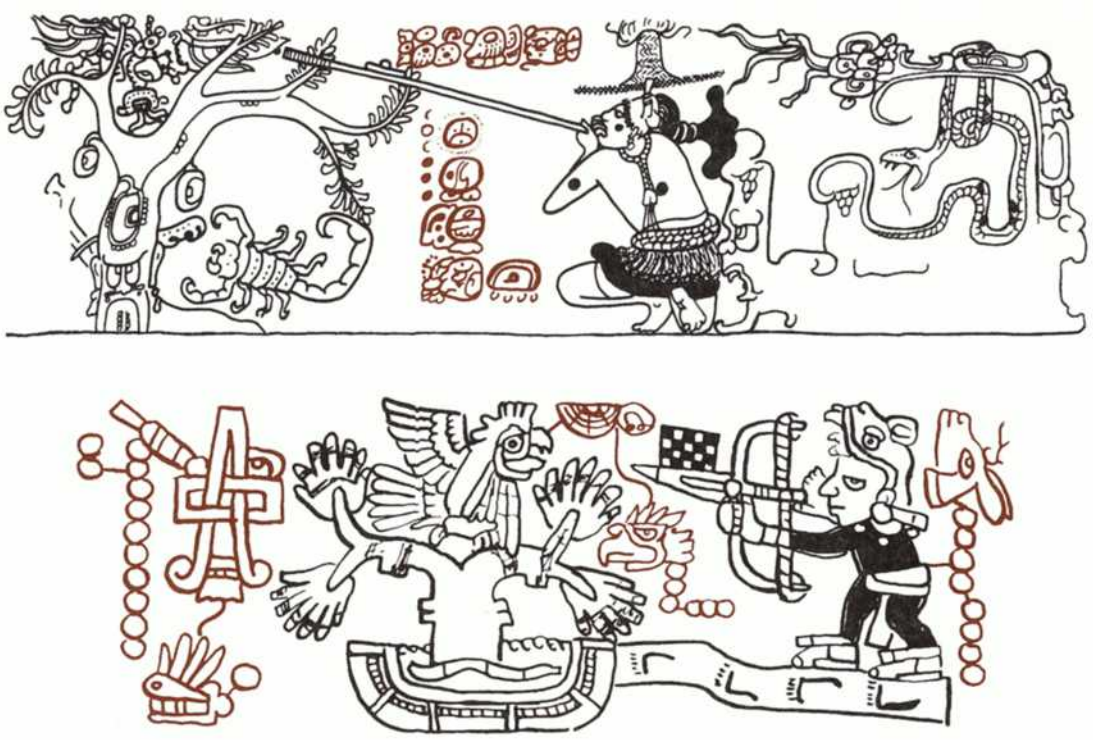

Fig. 46. Painted scenes from Mayan (above) and Mixtec (below) narratives, both of which combine texts (highlighted in red) and pictures in the same space. The Mayan scene is from a Late Classic chocolate-drinking vessel, but it could have been based on a scene in a book; the Mixtec scene is from an actual book, the Codex Bodley.

that prevails in the few Mayan books that survive. Instead of narratives carried by texts and supplemented with pictures, there would have been narratives carried by pictures and supplemented with texts.

Both of the scenes in figure 46, with their texts marked in red, are episodes from longer narratives. The upper scene, from a Classic Mayan vase, could have been based on a scene from a pictorial narrative in a book. The lower scene is from page 14 of the Codex Bodley, where it occupies a place in the same narrative as the court scene in figure 45. Despite obvious differences in drawing styles and writing systems, the two scenes have features that bespeak a shared tradition. Both encode the location of the event in the iconography rather than in the text. In the vase scene, the location is named to the right of the crouching hunter by the combination of a mountain, represented by an irregular mass with profiled faces on both sides and on top, and a dangling snake, yielding something like "Snake Mountain." In the book scene, the location is named by the parrot, the tree, and the cross-sectioned river at the bottom of the tree, yielding "Parrot Tree River."

In both scenes, the texts include the date of the event and the names of two characters in the narrative. On the vase, the calendar-round date is given by the first two characters in the lower text as 1 Ajaw 3 K'ank'in, "1 Lord 3 Yellow Sun." In the book scene,

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the current Mixtec year is named at upper left as 12 Reed and the divinatory date is named at lower left as 1 Grass (the numbers are given by the dots). In the vase scene, the day 1 Lord is also the name of the hunter with the blowgun, and the name of the bird in the tree is given by the last two characters in the lower text as Itzam Yeh. In the book scene, the warrior with the bow and arrow takes his name from the day 8 Deer, written behind him. His wife's name, written in front of him, combines the day 6 Eagle with signs representing a spider's web and a jaguar's ear, placed above the date. Her name is connected to the parrot by a line because Parrot Tree River is her place of origin. Her husband is understood to be attacking that place (rather than hunting an actual parrot), and in later scenes, his attack results in his capture and sacrifice.

The pages of the surviving Mixtec books, unlike those of the surviving Mayan books, are designed to accommodate broad scenes such as the ones illustrated here. The average height of a Mixtec page is 9 inches, which is at the upper limit for Mayan pages, and the average width is 10½ inches, as compared with 4½ inches for the widest Mayan page. Mixtec pages are divided into either three or five registers, creating broad spaces that make it unnecessary to run a scene across the crease between one page and the next. The extant Mayan pages, which are divided into a maximum of four registers, would require the writer to spread scenes like the ones painted on vases across three or four pages. But there is evidence from the Classic period that Mayans once possessed books whose pages were more like those of the extant Mixtec books. The pages of the book that rests on the lap of the clay figurine of a woman from Jaina (see figure 38) are a little wider than they are tall and are somewhat more than twice as wide as the woman's hand. In both respects, they resemble the pages of the Codex Bodley and a number of other Mixtec books. A decayed book found in the tomb of a scribe at Copán had pages that were close to square in shape and somewhat larger than the pages of Mixtec books.

THE BIRTH VASE

Alongside the Classic books with wide pages were others whose pages were narrow, like those of the extant Mayan books. The best evidence for this is provided by the ceramic work known as the Birth Vase. It is not cylindrical but has four flat sides of equal size. Its height, at 9⅞ inches, is nearly an inch greater than that of the tallest surviving codex (Madrid), but the width of each side, at 4 inches, is in the middle range. Each panel follows the pattern of many of the pages in the codices, with a text at the top, a picture below, and a red border enclosing both. The top borders have worn away because a ceramic lid, now missing, was taken off and put back on many times by the ancient users of the vase, and the panel that opens the sequence has lost most of its text as well.

The subject of all four panels is the practices of midwives, and the first panel (at left in figure 47) centers on a woman about to give birth. Following a practice still in use among Mayans, she is holding on to a birthing rope whose upper ends would have

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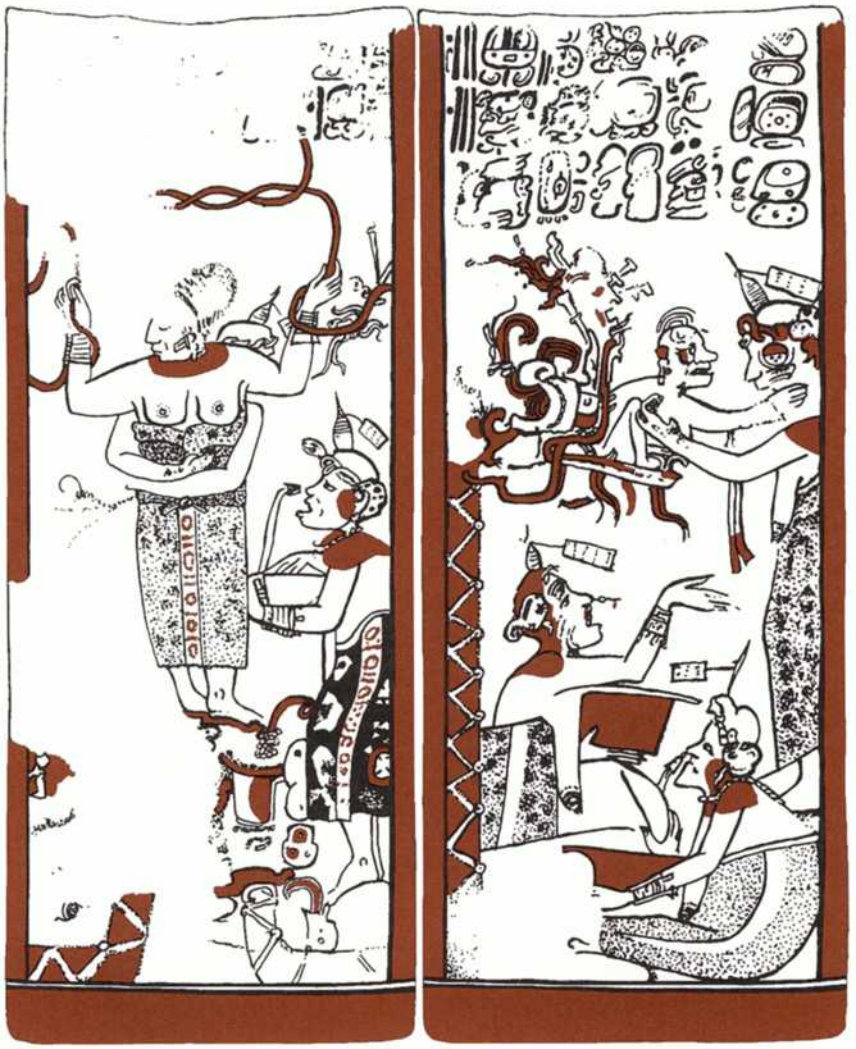

Fig. 47. Paintings modeled on pages from a book, from two sides of the four-sided Birth Vase. The subject is midwifery, performed by humans on the left and goddesses on the right. The human scene centers on a woman who is about to give birth, whereas the divine scene centers on an infant who is being delivered from the mouth of a dragon.

been attached to the center roof beam of her house. Her feet rest on the floor, which here takes the shape of the top of the head of an earth monster with one of its enormous eyes visible beneath her left foot and the other side of its face worn away. She is attended by two elderly midwives, one of them standing behind her and the other at the right side of the picture. On their heads, both midwives wear a spindle whose wound-up yarn symbolizes the growth of a child in the womb. Both of them have shamanic power, as their jaguar attributes attest. The right hand of the midwife behind the woman giving birth is turning into a jaguar paw, and the other midwife has a jaguar ear. The one with the paw is squeezing the abdomen of the woman who is giving birth, while the one with the ear holds the bowl that will receive the afterbirth.

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The second panel (at right in figure 47) takes the story back to an event that happened long before the human birth of the first panel. The first double column of the text at the top sets out an interval number, counted backward from a date that was probably included in the missing part of the text of the first panel. If the number were complete, it would have seven places, but the numbers of the days and scores of days either were noted on the first panel or are understood to be zero. The numbers that appear here begin with 16 stones (of 360 days each), followed by 10 (or possibly more) scores of stones, 16 bundles of stones, an unknown number of ended bundles, and (at lower left) 1 higher bundle.

Whatever the date from which this enormous number was reckoned, it puts the event on this panel far deeper in the mythic past than the earliest events of the Palenque tablets but not as deep as the twenty-four-place long-count date on Stela 1 at Cobá. The character at the bottom of the second column refers to the event as a "birth," but it is not a human birth like the one on the previous panel. In the picture, a rather precocious infant emerges from the mouth of a celestial dragon.

Again, two midwives with spindles on their heads are in attendance, only these are the divine predecessors and patrons of the shamanic midwives in the first panel. The one at right, taking hold of the infant, has a jaguar eye, jaguar ear, and jaguar spots on her left hand. The other midwife, seated below the dragon's head, extends her right hand beneath the infant and holds a bowl for the afterbirth in her left. A third old woman, seated at the bottom of the picture, holds another bowl. The emerging infant is none other than one of the four directional gods named Pawahtun, already looking old in the face despite his small size.

The remaining two panels of the Birth Vase are not as well understood as the two shown here, but they continue the story. All four directional gods appear as full-size old men on the final panel, one of them in conversation with a goddess who is younger than the midwives. The book whose pages served as a source for the painter of this vase probably contained many more than four pages. For example, it could have included almanacs whose purpose was to divine the future of a newborn child, partly on the basis of omens that occurred during the pregnancy or birth and partly on the basis of the date of birth. Other sections could have focused on the curing practices of women, a possibility suggested by a scene from a vase discussed earlier, the one that was signed by the woman who painted it. The patient in this scene (figure 48), with a quill pen stuck behind his ear, is one of the monkey gods of writing, and the last character in the upper caption, which reads *ajhuun,* or "book person," probably refers to him. The younger woman standing at right has the headdress of a scribe and wears a sarong with a single-column text (rendered in a sketchy fashion) running down the side. She holds the head of the patient with both hands while the other woman, who is identified as a shaman by her jaguar eye, retrieves the contents of his stomach.

The Dresden and Madrid codices contain almanacs that midwives might have consulted in connection with childbirth, especially the ones that track the movements of the moon goddess, but none of the surviving books contains a chapter explicitly de-

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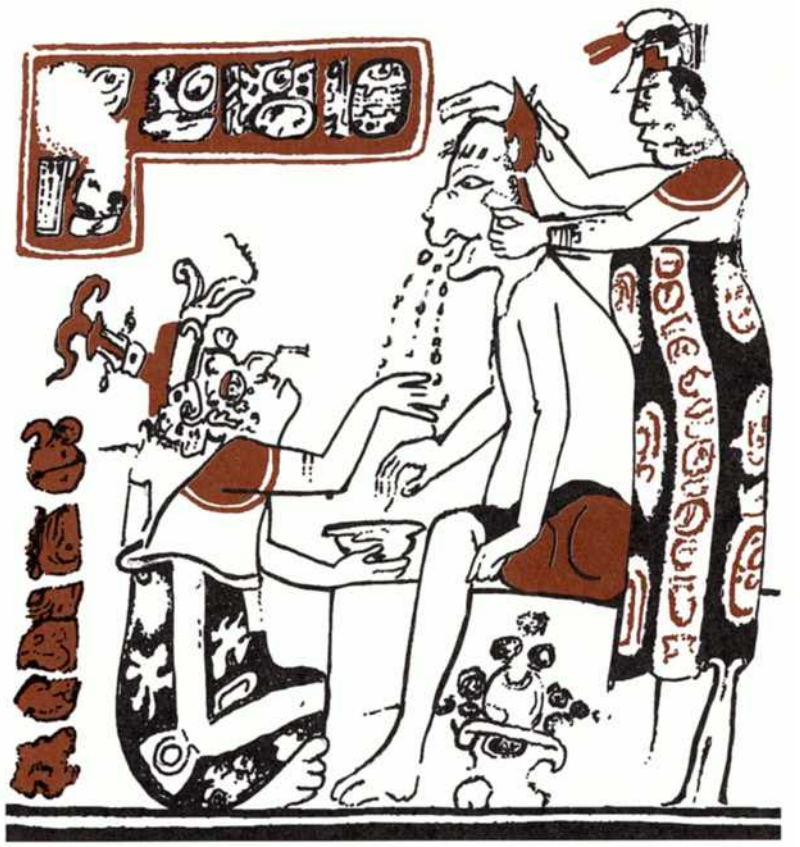

Fig. 48. Two of the same goddesses who appear in the right-hand panel of figure 47, practicing as healers by purging the stomach of one of the monkey patrons of writing. Detail from a Late Classic chocolate-drinking vessel.

voted to the concerns of midwives. If writing by women on subjects of interest to women continued after the Late Classic period, no trace of it appears in early Spanish accounts. This is not surprising, given that all such accounts were written by men who received their information from men. As for alphabetic writing, the early missionaries offered instruction only to men, and the Mayan authors who used it to produce such works as the Chilam Balam books and the Popol Vuh were all men. The Birth Vase and the curing scene give us a glimpse of a lost world.

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15 Signs of the Times

ONCE THERE WAS a world in which the divinatory calendar, with its 260 combinations of numbers and names for days, was the only measure of time. Already present in this world was the goddess whose names are Uh Ixik and Sak Ixik, "Moon Woman" and "Moonlight Woman," but the moon had yet to travel through the loom of time, adding the weft threads of sidereal and synodic months to the warp threads of the progression of days. Also present was the god K'in Ajaw, "Day Lord" or "Sun Lord," but the sun had yet to add the weft threads of seasons and years. Days already existed, but the only events that could have marked them off were the rising, setting, and reappearance of fixed stars in an otherwise dark sky.

The only inhabitants of that early world were gods—Moonlight Woman, Day Lord, and many others. Their actions are the subject of the almanacs that fill the first fifteen pages of the Dresden Codex. Each almanac deals with anywhere from two to twenty events, locating them within the framework of the divinatory calendar. All the events in an almanac involve the same action, but the actors and the results of their action change from one event to the next.

The narrative moves across an almanac from left to right, with the events occurring at measured intervals. The length of time covered by a single pass across an almanac is always 26, 52, or 65 days, and when that pass is completed, the same events are repeated with a different set of dates. An almanac with a narrative lasting 26 days provides for 10 repetitions, thus completing a total of 260 days. In a 52-day almanac, only 5 repetitions are needed to reach that total, and a 65-day almanac needs 4. The gods had no need to participate in these narratives more than once, but their actions continue to reverberate as the divinatory calendar goes on playing itself out in the human world, adding thread after thread to the loom of time. By this process, myths are converted into rituals and the divine past becomes the human present.

Neither the Dresden Codex nor any of the other codices contains a simple, day-by-day account of dates, whether in the form of a list or a table. The writers assumed that their readers knew how to count through the days of the divinatory calendar from memory. Each almanac is prefaced with a list of starting dates, but after that the reader is expected to rely on interval numbers to reach later dates. Sometimes the almanacs provide number coefficients for later dates, but the day names are nearly always left to the memory of the reader. The diviners of present-day highland Guatemala rely entirely on their memories to count beyond a chosen starting date, simultaneously keeping track of each combination of number and name as they go.

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The first readable almanac in Dresden is on the second page, the first page having been reduced to a blur by heavy use. Even on the second page most of the red ink has worn away, but the black ink remains. Traces of horizontal red lines divide the page into four registers, each of them containing an almanac whose narrative repeats at 52-day intervals. Figure 49 shows the first of these almanacs and a key to its contents.

Some of the coating of the paper has chipped off, leaving a blank area at the upper right of the almanac, but its organization is clear. At the left edge is a column with the number 13 at the top, followed by five day names. The original bars and dots of the number, which were written in red, have been replaced by black ones, filled in by a reader who knew what should be there. Each day name that follows is meant to be prefaced with this number. The first date in the series is 13 Kawak, or "13 Pride."

The first event in the almanac, described and pictured in the second column, comes 5 days after the opening date (see the key). The number 5, written with a single black bar between the caption and the picture, has an empty space to the right of it. Once there was a red number here, corresponding to the date of the event in this column, but the reader who restored the number 13 in the first column did not do the same for later day numbers.

The next event, described and pictured in the third column, comes 12 days after the first one. The writer has fit descriptions of later events into narrower columns, leaving no room for further pictures. The interval numbers needed to reach these events sit at the bottoms of the columns: 11, 12, and 12. In the last column, the length of the narrative reaches 52 days, where the event falls on 13 Chuwen, or "13 Artisan." This date brings the reader back to the first column, where it occupies second place in the list of five dates. It serves two purposes at once, bringing one narrative to an end and announcing the start of another with a different series of dates. A second complete run through the events will bring the count to the third date on the list, 13 Ak'b'al, or "13 Night," and the third and fourth runs will bring it to 13 Men, or "13 Work," and then 13 Manik', or "13 Deer," at the bottom of the list. Starting from there, a fifth run will complete a grand total of 260 days and bring the reader back to the date at the head of the list.

For the first event, the action undertaken by the god in the picture is described by the two characters at right. The prefix of the first character is an image of the stone head of an ax, and *ch'ak* is a verb for chopping or cutting through something. The *b'a* of the main sign makes this verb reflexive. In the prefix to the second character, *t-* is prepositional and *-u* makes the object of the preposition "his." The remaining signs spell out this object, which is *tuuch,* "umbilical cord." In other words, the actor in this event "cuts his own umbilical cord." The next character in the caption

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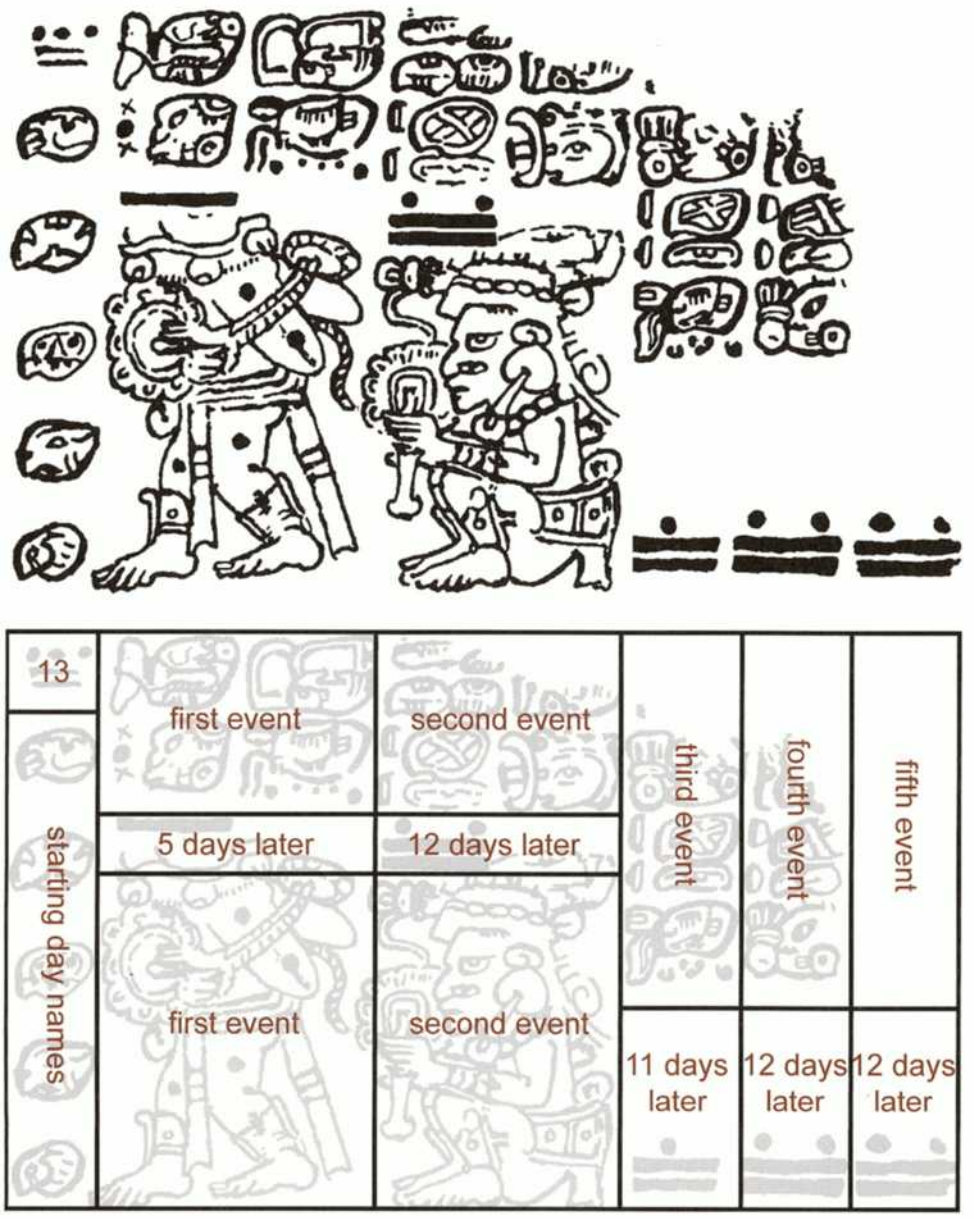

Fig. 49. The first readable almanac in the Dresden Codex, from page 2a. The chart below it shows the organization of the text and pictures.

names him as Jun Ajaw, or "One Lord," one of the twin heroes whose exploits are depicted in numerous vase paintings of the Classic period. It would seem that like Junajpu, his counterpart in the Popol Vuh, he was precocious from the very beginning of his life.

The fourth character in the caption, which gives the portent of One Lord's action, reads *mul* or possibly *umul,* meaning that some kind of news is on the way or that the news of his action will spread, making him famous. In his picture, which seems

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intended as something of a joke, we see him much later in life, his arms bound behind him with a cord. Something has been cut through, but instead of his umbilical cord, it is his neck. His head is gone, but that does not prevent him from walking upright. Junajpu also loses his head, and he is even able to participate in a ball game before he gets it back. He is a trickster, and assuming that One Lord is a trickster as well, the touch of humor in his picture is appropriate.

The second caption begins rather than ends with a portent, bringing *wah ha',* "food and drink." The source of this abundance is ***utuuch yatan Nal,*** "the umbilical cord of the wife of Corn," whose husband, the god of corn, is the subject of the picture. He and his wife are the parents of One Lord, and the umbilical cord, carrying food and drink, is the one that connected her to her son before he cut it.

The wife of Corn is named in the third text, where the first character is missing but the next one reads *Sak Ixik,* "Moonlight Woman." Her counterpart in the Popol Vuh is also a lunar goddess, Xkik', or "Blood Moon." The last character gives the portent, which is the same as in the first text: news will come, or fame. Moonlight Woman is named again in the partially readable fourth text, where a fragmentary character that seems to read *utuuch* is followed by *yatan Sak Ixik,* producing "the umbilical cord of his wife, Moonlight Woman." The fifth text is completely gone, but it might have concerned One Lord's twin brother, whose name is Yax B'alam, or "First Jaguar," in lowland texts and Xb'alanq'e, or "Little Jaguar Sun," in the Popol Vuh.

This almanac may have been used for scheduling the ceremonies attending the birth of a child, exploring the future of a child, and deciding what might be necessary to ensure a good future for the child. A full translation appears on the next two pages. Words in italics supply information that would be known to a reader trained as a diviner.

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13 is the number of the starting days:

Pride

Artisan

Night

Work

Deer.

When he cuts his own umbilical cord,

One Lord becomes famous.

5 days bring 5

Net

Wax

Sunk

Lord

Stairway.

Food and drink flow from the umbilical cord

of the wife of Corn.

12 days bring 4

Wax

Sunk

Lord

Stairway

Net.

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When Corn has

Moonlight Woman

as his wife,

something new happens.

11 days bring *2 Deer, Pride, Artisan, Night, Work.*

When . . .

. . . umbilical cord

of his wife,

Moonlight Woman.

12 days bring *1 Pride, Artisan, Night, Work, Deer.*

. . .

. . .

. . .

. . .

12 days bring *13 Artisan, Night, Work, Deer, Pride.*

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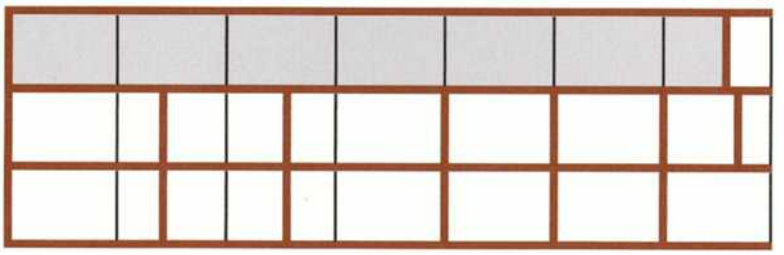
SOUNDS AND POWERS OF THE NINETEEN GODS

In the Dresden pages that deal with the world whose only calendar was the divinatory one, the almanac with the most events fits twenty of them into a 52-day span. The actors are nineteen male deities, one of whom appears twice. The number of actors may relate to the nineteen divisions of the 365-day year, which is made up of eighteen periods of 20 days each plus a final division lasting 5 days. In any case, the intervals in this almanac have been constructed in such a way as to exclude the rhythms of the year. All the intervals between one event and the next are shorter than 5 days, and though there are two sets of consecutive intervals that total 20 days, they overlap rather than being consecutive. One string begins with the fourth interval and runs through the eleventh ($2+4+2+2+4+2+2+2=20$ days), and the other begins with the ninth interval and runs through the sixteenth ($2+2+2+4+3+2+3+2=20$ days).

The pages in which this almanac appears are divided into three equal registers. The almanac runs across the top register, starting on page 4 and ending on page 10, with other, shorter almanacs occupying the registers beneath it. In the diagram that follows, the black lines mark the boundaries between pages, the red lines show the boundaries of the almanacs on all three registers, and the shaded area corresponds to the almanac under discussion:



Because the pages are folded like a screen rather than bound on edge, a reader can open enough of them to get a panoramic view of all twenty events in the top almanac.

Like other almanacs with a 52-day span, this one is prefaced with a column that provides five dates, each one serving as a pivot point between one full run of the narrative and another. The day number, which holds constant, is written only once, in red. Beneath it, in black, are the day names, which change from one run to another. After the preface come the twenty texts that describe the events, each one serving as the caption of a picture.

Between each caption and its picture are two numbers, one black and the other red. The black number gives the number of days needed to reach the event in question, starting from the preface (in the case of the first event), or from the preceding event (in all other cases). The red number belongs to the day of the new event, but the name of the day, as usual, is left to the reader to determine.

In nearly every case, the caption describes with these two characters what a particular god is doing:

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Pekaj has two meanings. The god could either be making a sound, especially a deep and powerful sound, or be holding an object in his hand. The sound he makes or the object he holds is described as his *chich,* which can mean either "word" or "power." Some of the gods in the pictures gesture with their hands, and in most such cases they have their mouths open as if they are speaking. Others, some of them with their mouths shut, hold wands or scepters in front of them. The translation offered here renders *pekaj tu chich* as "the sound of the word" of empty-handed gods and as "the power in the hands" of gods who hold objects. But a god might also "sound his power," in the sense of having a powerful voice or using powerful words, or might "hold his word in his hands," in the sense of using his hands to make meaningful gestures.

The god who appears first in this almanac (see page 175) is called "Water Lily Serpent, Wind Quetzal Serpent" in the translation on the basis of his known attributes rather than the two characters that name him, which remain undeciphered. In Classic art, he sometimes wears an ear ornament with a wind sign. Elsewhere in Dresden he is depicted as a snake with a water lily on his head, and the scepter he holds in the present picture takes the form of a snake. Mounted behind him is a quetzal bird, with its head behind his own and its tail hanging down his back, and the bird and the snake together associate him with K'uk'ulkan, the "Plumed Serpent" of Yucatán. He reappears in the eighth episode (at the bottom of page 177), where he looks younger, wears less formal attire, and holds a different scepter. The caption for this picture reverses his two names. One of them is prefaced with the number 3, a reference to his sometime role as the patron deity of that number.

Occupying second place in the sequence (at the bottom of page 175) is Chaak, whose name is translated as "Thunderstorm" here but could also be rendered as "Lightning Bolt," "Rainstorm," or "Downpour." He was one of the most frequently invoked deities in Yucatán, and in most of the almanacs that fill the second half of the Dresden Codex he is the sole actor.

The third god (at the top of page 176) is Pawahtun, and although he is pictured as a single being, his name is prefaced with the number 4, referring to the existence of four Pawahtuns corresponding to the four sides or corners of the world. He is followed (in the middle of the same page) by a god whose name has been lost from the present text but is given elsewhere in Dresden as P'e, "Split," or Tz'up'e, "Split Down the Middle." His celestial home is between Scorpius and Sagittarius, where the path of

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the sun, moon, and planets crosses the part of the Milky Way that is split by a black rift. The black mark on his face is emblematic of the rift.

In the fifth place comes a being (at the bottom of page 176) described as a *ch'uh tokal,* "sower of clouds," and as a provider of good health. In contrast, the god who follows him in the sixth place (at the top of page 177) is described as bringing "a sudden fever." He is K'in Ajaw, "Lord of the Sun" or "Lord of Day."

The name of the god who comes seventh (in the middle of page 177) combines the number 11, of which he is the patron, with *kab',* "earth." On his cheek is a curved line, which the text describes as a blemish. In the eighth place (at the bottom of the same page) is the same god who appeared first.

Very little remains of the captions for the ninth and tenth pictures (at the top and middle of page 178), but both gods are clearly recognizable from their pictures. The first one is Akan, the patron of alcoholic beverages, who is sometimes shown chopping off his own head with an ax. Like Split Down the Middle, he resides at a crossroads, but this one is on the opposite side of the sky. It is located between Taurus and Gemini, where the sun, moon, and planets cross the part of the Milky Way that has no rift. After Akan comes a god who travels the roads on the surface of the earth when he is in his role as the patron of merchants. When he is at home, he lives the life of a lord, as we saw in the scene painted on the Vase of the Seven Gods. His name is given as "Black-Faced Lord" on the vase, and he is pictured with a black face in the almanac.

In the eleventh position (at the bottom of page 178) is a god whose only human features are his posture and his right hand. The caption names him as Tzul, "Dog," and he looks the part. The object he holds is a flaming torch, and elsewhere in Dresden he is portrayed as a bringer of hot, dry weather. Fire is present again in the twelfth position (at the top of page 179), where an image of flames prefaces the god's name. He is K'ak' K'awiil, or "Fire Scepter," also known as Nehn K'awiil, or "Mirror Scepter." We have already encountered him in the inscriptions of Palenque, Calakmul, and Chichén Itzá. Here, as at Palenque, he is described as a youth.

Very little is known about the god named Mas, or "Dwarf," who occupies the thirteenth place (in the middle of page 179) in the sequence. Like an iguana, he has a serrated ridge along his spine. The features of the fourteenth god (at the bottom of the same page) are almost entirely those of an animal. Except for his posture, he is entirely a jaguar. The caption names him as Chak B'olay, in which B'olay refers to feral felines in general and Chak, meaning "great" or "red," serves to distinguish a jaguar from the others.

The fifteenth god (at the top of page 180) has the head of a king vulture *(Sarcoramphus papa),* and his name takes the form of the same head. This vulture is the largest of several species occurring in Mesoamerica, and it has other features that give it a striking appearance. Above its bill are large orange and red wattles, represented by the object on top of its bill in the picture. On its body and wings are contrasting areas of black and white feathers, represented by the black and white areas on the body of the

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god in the picture. The reading of his name is uncertain, but one of the Classic logographs for *ajaw,* or "lord," takes the form of a vulture's head. It seems likely that the king vulture is the animal guardian of Jun Ajaw, or "One Lord." It is also likely that Mayan lore is the source of the regional Spanish name for this bird, *zopilote rey,* "vulture king," which is the source of the English term.

In the sixteenth place (in the middle of page 180) is the "Far Seer" or "True Magician" named Itzamnaaj. He is one of the three gods who laid out a triangle of stones in the story of the beginning of the present world, as told at Quiriguá. His celestial home is in the vicinity of the Pleiades, whose name in Yukatek is Tzab', referring to the rattle on the tail of a rattlesnake. To understand this name, we must cross the boundary between vision and audition, transforming the sparkling, pulsing quality of the light of the star cluster into the sound of a rattle. In the present picture, True Magician shakes a rattle with three rattlesnake rattles mounted on it.

A blindfolded god comes seventeenth in the sequence (at the bottom of page 180). The caption calls him Uxhalan or Uxha'an, referring to the act of picking something clean, such as a pot full of food or a tree full of fruit. He appears to be on the receiving end of the bounty created by the eighteenth god (at the top of page 181), who is Nal, "Corn." The tiny logograph on top of Corn's head reads *k'an,* referring to an ear of ripe corn. He may be the same god who is called Jun Ye Nal Tzuk, "Corn Silk at the Tip of a Single Ear," at Palenque.

With the last two gods (in the last two positions on page 181), the story told by this almanac comes to a dark end. The nineteenth god is 13 Kan Kuy, "13 Sky Owl." Kuy, which also means "talon," refers to horned owls in particular, and this god has the head of a horned owl. The completion of the narrative comes with Kimil, or "Death," literally "the dead one," whose sound can be seen coming out of his mouth.

The entire almanac is illustrated and translated on pages 175–81. Words in roman type are direct translations of the texts. Italics indicate information that has been supplied, including translations of characters that have been lost from the text but are easy to reconstruct, approximate readings of characters whose exact meaning is uncertain, and day names that were omitted from the text but would be known to a diviner.

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10 *is the number of the starting days:*

Ceiba

Lack

Snake

Earth

Tribute.

The power in the hands

of Water Lily Serpent, Wind Quetzal Serpent

has a meaning that cannot be unraveled.

2 days bring 12

Night

Work

Deer

Pride

Artisan.

The sound *of the word*

of the Lord of 9 Gifts, Thunderstorm,

brings changes, wedding feasts.

4 more days bring 3

Deer

Pride

Artisan

Night

Work.

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The sound of the word

of . . . ,

Fourfold Pawahtun *brings. . . .*

3 more days bring 6

Foot

Wind

Jaguar

Death

Blade.

The power in the hands

of Split Down the Middle, . . .

is a portent of. . . .

2 more days bring 8

Stairway

Net

Wax

Sunk

Lord.

The sound of the word

of the sower of clouds brings wedding feasts.

He is the lord of medicine, of wellness.

4 more days bring 12

Wax

Sunk

Lord

Stairway

Net.

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The sound of *the word*

of the Lord of Day, 7 . . .

brings a sudden fever, work comes to an end.

2 more days bring 1

Blade

Foot

Wind

Jaguar

Death.

The sound of the word

of 11 Earth, with his blemish,

brings a harvest of sprouts, a change of lords.

2 more days bring 3

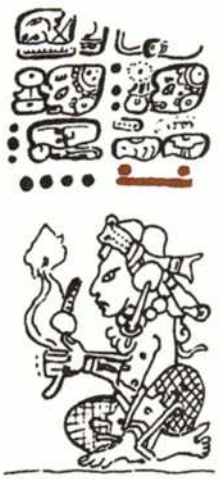
Lord

Stairway

Net

Wax

Sunk.



The power *in the hands*

of *Wind Quetzal Serpent, 3 Water Lily Serpent,*

brings wedding feasts, plenty of food and drink.

4 more days bring 7

Net

Wax

Sunk

Lord

Stairway.

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The power in the hands

of the god who cuts off his own head

brings news. . . .

2 more days bring 9

Death

Blade

Foot

Wind

Jaguar.

The sound of the word

of the god of merchants . . .

. . . brings flowers.

2 more days bring 11

Sunk

Lord

Stairway

Net

Wax.

The power in the hands

of the Dog who brings work to an end

has a meaning that can't be unraveled.

2 more days bring 13

Foot

Wind

Jaguar

Death

Blade.

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The sound of the word

of Fire Scepter, the strong young man,

brings flowers, wedding feasts.

4 more days bring 4

Jaguar

Death

Blade

Foot

Wind.

The sound of the word

of the Dwarf brings news,

warns of something bad.

2 more days bring 6

Wax

Sunk

Lord

Stairway

Net.

The sound of the word

of Great Jaguar makes things better,

brings plenty of food and drink; things change.

3 more days bring 9

Pride

Artisan

Night

Work

Deer.

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The sound of the word

of Lord Vulture . . .

work comes to an end. . . .

2 more days bring 11

Ceiba

Lack

Snake

Earth

Tribute.

The power in the hands

of True Magician brings flowers,

. . . gets better.

3 more days bring 1

Net

Wax

Sunk

Lord

Stairway.

The sound of the word

of the one who picks all the fruit brings bad

news, work comes to an end.

2 more days bring 3

Death

Blade

Foot

Wind

Jaguar.

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The sound of the word
of Corn brings plentiful food and drink,
wedding feasts in the evening.
3 more days bring 5

Tribute
Ceiba
Lack
Snake
Earth.

The sound of the word
of 13 Sky Owl
brings news of a bloody fight.
2 more days bring 8

Artisan
Night
Work
Deer
Pride.

The sound of the word
of Death, whose touch comes suddenly,
portends something new.
2 more days bring 10

Lack
Snake
Earth
Tribute
Ceiba.

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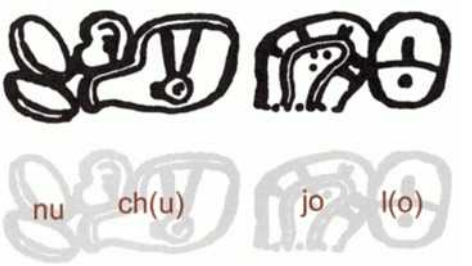
THEY PUT THEIR HEADS TOGETHER

Running parallel to the Almanac of the Nineteen Gods, on the middle register of Dresden pages 8 and 9, are two almanacs in which the gods converse with one another rather than make pronouncements. The pictures show two gods sitting face-to-face, gesturing with their hands while talking. The captions describe their interaction with this pair of characters:



Nuch is "to join" and *jol* is "heads," yielding an expression that means the same thing as "they put their heads together" in English.

One of these almanacs spans 52 days, and the other spans 65. Despite their difference in length, they are organized in the same way. They both describe the first of two events with six characters that serve as a caption for an illustration that runs twice the usual width, and they describe the second event with four characters and no illustration.

At the head of the list of five starting day names that prefaces the first almanac is a bar-and-dot 8 in red (see page 184). The other almanac spells out the number that heads the list of four day names with black syllabic signs for *o* and *xo,* yielding *ox,* "three" (see page 185). The intervals that separate the events in both almanacs are large enough to be written with two-place numbers, but they are not rendered in this way. In the first almanac, the interval number (used twice) is 26, which could be written as a two-place number, with a single dot for 20 above and a dot and bar for 6 below. Instead, a logograph that means *k'al,* or "twenty," without reference to its place in a larger number, is combined with a bar-and-dot 6. For the first event, ***k'al*** is written in front of 6, and the translation reads "a score and 6," but for the second event, 6 is written above ***k'al,*** and the translation reads "6 and a score." In the other almanac, both intervals are written with ***k'al*** in front of a bar-and-dot number, 13 in one case and 12 in the other, yielding totals of 33 and 32 days.

Pictured and named in both almanacs is Itzamnaaj, or "True Magician," who sits on the left for his first appearance and on the right for his second. In the first almanac, he is dressed rather informally, but in the second, he wears the finery of a great lord. The caption refers to his first conversant only as *le'ti ajaw,* "this lord," as if the reader would know him from the accompanying picture. Judging from the black spots on his forehead and chin, he may well be One Lord. The conversant in the other picture is Nal, "Corn." Again, as in the Almanac of the Nineteen Gods, he wears the logograph for *k'an,* or "ear of ripe corn," on his head.

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When True Magician goes head-to-head with the unnamed lord and with Corn, the results are positive, as are the outcomes of the solo performances of True Magician and Corn in the Almanac of the Nineteen Gods. No outcomes are described for the events that come second in each of the present almanacs, but judging from the actors, they are probably negative. Replacing True Magician as the god who engages in both conversations is Kimil, "Death." He goes head-to-head first with 13 Kuy, "13 Owl" (the same god as 13 Sky Owl), and then with P'e, "Split." If True Magician and his companions are planning flowers and feasts, then Death and his companions are probably plotting actions that will bring bad news. The two almanacs are fully illustrated and translated on the next two pages.

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8 is the number of the starting days:

Deer

Pride

Artisan

Night

Work.

They put their heads together:
True Magician makes flowers bloom.
This other lord makes seeds.
A score and 6 days bring 8

Lack

Snake

Earth

Tribute

Ceiba.

They put their

heads together:

Death and

13 Sky Owl.

Days numbered 8
Pride, Artisan, Night, Work, Deer
come after 6 and a score more days.

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Three *is the number of the starting days:*

Tribute

Jaguar

Pride

Net.

They put their heads together:
True Magician makes flowers bloom.
Corn produces drink and food.
A score and 13 days bring 10

Wind

Deer

Stairway

Earth.

They put their

heads together:

Death and

Split Down the Middle.

Days numbered 3
Jaguar, Pride, Net, Tribute
come after a score and 12 more days.

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16 Moon Woman Meets the Stars

IN THE ALMANACS that fill the first fifteen pages of the Dresden Codex, the connecting thread is the action, which remains the same from one event to another while the actors change. Next come eight pages in which most of the almanacs have two connecting threads: one is repeated action, as before, and the other is repeated appearances of the goddess named Moon Woman or Moonlight Woman. She is present for every event in these almanacs, interacting with a second character who is different from one occasion to the next. Each successive character occupies a different position in the sky, marked by stars or (in one case) a feature of the Milky Way that lies along the Mayan zodiac.

The sidereal month, the time necessary for the moon to complete a circuit among the fixed stars, is 27.3222 days. The Mayan zodiac has thirteen equal sections, so that the moon spends an average of 2.1017 days in each. But none of the lunar almanacs simply tracks the moon from one section to the next. The shortest interval between events is 4 days, enough to move the moon ahead by two sections, and the longest interval is 33 days, enough to complete a sidereal month and then move the moon three sections beyond the position of the previous event.

Most of the lunar almanacs have five starting dates, with a single reading of the events spanning 52 days. That leaves the moon 2.6444 days short of completing two sidereal months, more than enough to leave it in a different section of the zodiac from the one in which it started. To repeat the narrative while using the specified starting dates, the reader needs to compensate for this discrepancy. Some of the other astronomical sections of the Dresden Codex are prefaced with instructions for overcoming discrepancies, but the lunar almanacs provide no such help to their readers. All we can do is look for a hypothetical solution that keeps the narratives reasonably in line with observable phenomena.

The simplest solution is to let $2 \times 260 = 520$ days go by after completing a single reading and then to begin a new one using the same starting date as before. This approach puts the moon a little less than 1 day beyond the 519.1104 days of 19 sidereal months. If we apply this method twice, running up $4 \times 260 = 1{,}040$ days, the moon will still run less than 2 days behind, at 1,038.2230 days for 38 sidereal months. For a third reading, we need only drop down the list of starting dates by one row and thus add 52 days, bringing the total to 1,092 days. This is less than one day short of the 1,092.8664 days of 40 sidereal months. A fourth reading is then possible if we return to the strategy of waiting 520 days and staying on the same row, reaching a total of

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1,612 days and thus falling less than three hours short of the 1,612.0098 days of 59 sidereal months.

BURDENS ON THE BACK OF MOON WOMAN

Lunar almanacs can be divided into three types, defined by the words that describe Moon Woman's relationship to her counterparts and the moon's relationship to the stars that mark the homes of the counterparts. The commonest relationship is the one specified by this character:

In an almanac of this kind, each of Moon Woman's counterparts is ***ukuch,*** "her burden," and she carries them on her back in the pictures. Restated in astronomical terms, this characterization means that the moon is rising just ahead of the stars corresponding to the burden.

The lunar almanac presented on pages 188–89 comes from the middle register of Dresden pages 16–17. Moon Woman carries a succession of four deities as her burden, resulting in four auguries. In her right hand, she holds a logograph that reads *wa,* referring to foods made of corn dough and ultimately to food in general, but the captions say nothing about this food. Red day numbers were omitted by a scribe who got ahead of himself while writing in black and forgot to go back and fill them in. Words appearing in italics in the translation provide information that is not included in the almanac but would be known to a diviner. The day names in italics have been counted from the names in the opening list, using the black interval numbers provided for each event.

The locations of the four events in the narrative of this almanac can be tracked through the sky. Moon Woman's second counterpart, whose location is clear from other sources, provides a point from which to measure the distances to the others. The star maps that follow have been calculated for the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century in the latitude of northern Yucatán. Running across each chart is a horizontal line representing a portion of the eastern horizon, with a mark indicating due east. The rising moon's position on the horizon is indicated by the character for Uh Ixik, "Moon Woman."

To this day, Mayans prefer to use easily observable phenomena when tracking the progress of the night and the seasons, including very bright stars, dense clusters of stars such as the Pleiades and the Hyades, and the dark areas that split part of the Milky Way into two strands. Wherever an area of the Western zodiac contains nothing but dim stars, Mayan observers reach well outside it. Such is the case with the attention they give to the stars of Orion, including the ones that mark the triangle of the Three

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These are the starting days:

Tribute

Ceiba

Lack

Snake

Earth.

Thunderstorm is the burden

of Moon Woman. Lords do their work.

13 days bring

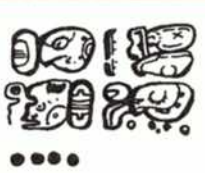
Wind

Jaguar

Death

Blade

Foot.



Death is the burden

of Moon Woman. Something new happens.

4 days bring

Death

Blade

Foot

Wind

Jaguar.

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True Magician

is the burden

of Moon Woman.

Flowers bloom.

20 days bring *Death, Blade, Foot, Wind, Jaguar.*

Split Down the Middle

is the burden

of Moon Woman.

Nothing happens.

15 days bring *Ceiba, Lack, Snake, Earth, Tribute.*

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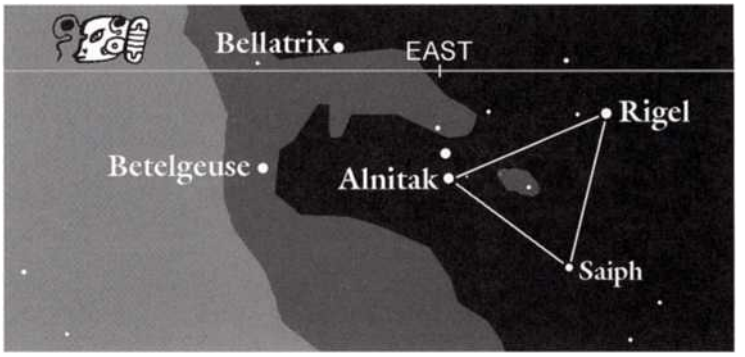


Map 6. The moon as it rises ahead of most of the bright stars in Orion. Chaak, or "Thunderstorm," may correspond to Betelgeuse. The triangle marks the hearthstone stars.

Hearthstones. When the moon is in the position shown in map 6, rising just ahead of the Three Hearthstones and most of the other bright stars in Orion, the almanac names Chaak, or "Thunderstorm," as Moon Woman's burden. The exact location of his stars is not known, but if they included a bright one not accounted for as a hearthstone, Betelgeuse is an obvious candidate. It stands out as the only star with a reddish hue in this area.

After a 4-day interval comes the second event of the almanac, which puts Moon Woman in a position where the brightest star that follows behind her is Regulus, in Leo (map 7). Her current burden is Kimil, or "Death." Mayan observers saw the stars in the Sickle of Leo (connected by lines in the map) as ornaments outlining the profiled skull of Death. The zodiacal almanac of the Paris Codex pictures such a skull swallowing the sun (figure 50).

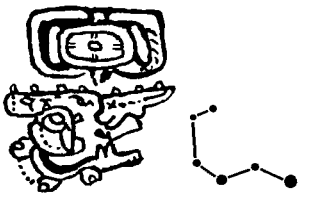
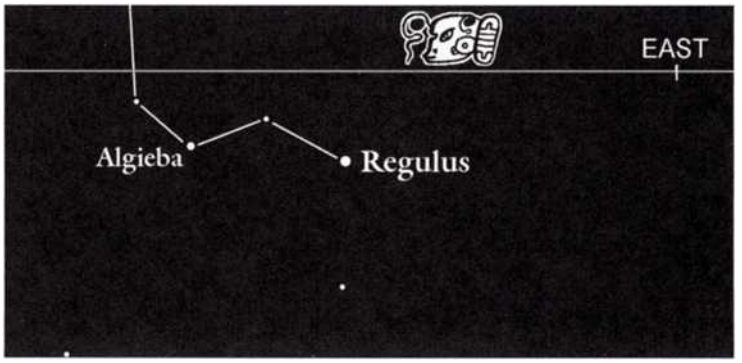


Fig. 50. The skull of Death, facing upward, opening its mouth to eat the sun in the zodiacal almanac of the Paris Codex. The round ornaments on the skull and its eye are star signs. To the right is a diagram of the Sickle of Leo.

Moon Woman reaches her third position after 20 more days, taking Itzamnaaj, or "True Magician," as



Map 7. The moon as it rises ahead of Regulus, the brightest star in Leo, the home of Death, and one of the stars in the Sickle (connected with lines).

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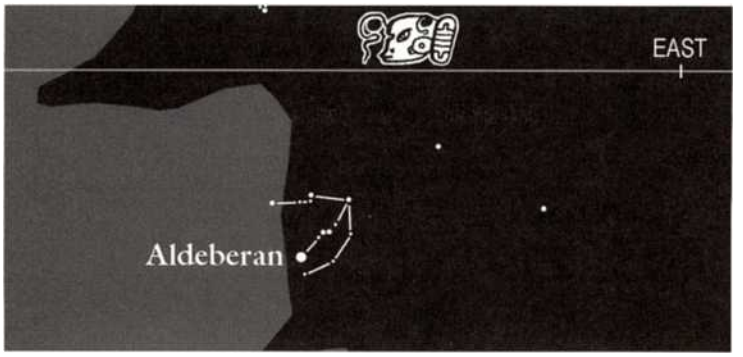

Map 8. The moon as it rises ahead of the Hyades, the three-pronged wand of True Magician, in Taurus.

her burden. Following behind the moon, still out of sight, are Aldeberan and the other stars of the Hyades (connected by lines in map 8), which are in Taurus. Mayan observers in Yucatán saw the Hyades as a three-pronged wand held by True Magician, who is shown in figure 51 as he is depicted in the Almanac of the Nineteen Gods (see chapter 15).

Another 15 days bring Moon Woman to her fourth position, where her burden is another god who appears in the Almanac of the Nineteen Gods, Tz'up'e, or "Split Down the Middle" (map 9). Here the moon rises just ahead of the opening of the Great Rift in the Milky Way, which lies north of Sagittarius.

In the almanac presented on page 192, from the lower register of Dresden pages 18–19, the writer has filled in the red day numbers. As before, there are

Fig. 51. Itzamnaaj, or "True Magician," holding a three-pronged wand. From the Almanac of the Nineteen Gods in the Dresden Codex.

Map 9. The moon as it rises ahead of the opening of the Great Rift, the home of Split Down the Middle, in the Milky Way.

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13 *is the number of the starting days:*

Lord

Stairway

Net

Wax

Sunk

White Frog/Red Frog is the burden

of Moon Woman. Something new happens.

A score and 12 days bring 6

Death

Blade

Foot

Wind

Jaguar.

The 2 that are green and yellow are the burden

of Corn. Drink and food are plentiful.

A score of days brings 13

Death

Blade

Foot

Wind

Jaguar.

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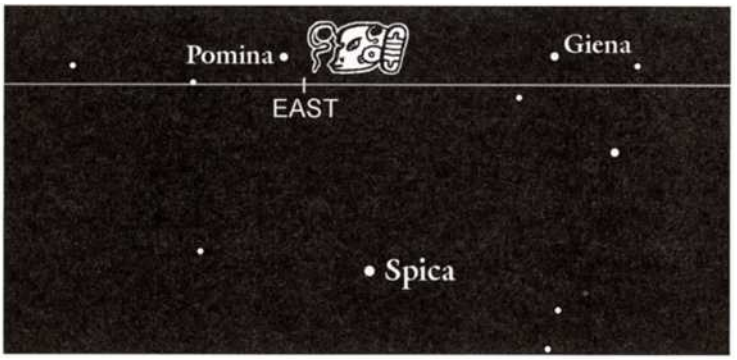
five starting dates for a narrative that spans 52 days. The italics in the translation add information that would be known to a diviner.

The first caption offers an example of the use of a single character to write a couplet consisting of two parallel noun phrases (above). *Much* is a noun that is meant to be read twice, once for each of the adjectives supplied by the prefixes. The result is Sak Much / Chak Much, "White Frog / Red Frog." These words do more than give a name to the celestial being Moon Woman carries on her back; they belong to the poetry of incantation, whose purpose is to summon the presence of spiritual beings. The same pair of color terms (but with red mentioned before white) occurs in the incantations recorded in the alphabetic Ritual of the Bacabs, which served as a handbook for shamans in Yucatán. The two colors serve as metonyms for a full range of colors. Here they make the frog carried by Moon Woman stand for all possible frogs. It is the guardian spirit of the goddess who resides in this location, whose name, according to the Dresden Venus table and the Ritual of the Bacabs, is Ix Ajaw Nah, "Lady of the House."

Moon Woman is not mentioned in the second caption, but the text indicates that her burden belongs to her counterpart, Nal, or "Corn." His burden is *rax k'an,* which could mean that its contents are "green (or blue)" and "yellow" or that they are "new (or fresh)" and "ripe." If ears of corn are the burden, they could be blue and yellow, or all the ears could be yellow, still fresh inside their green husks. In the picture, Moon Woman is the carrier of the burden, but it consists of the same *rax* and *k'an* logographs as in the caption. The message seems to be that the burden she carries is not a deity named Corn but rather the bounty he can offer. In effect, her burden is already an augury of what happens when the moon rises ahead of his stars, and the caption merely offers a comment: "drink and food are plentiful."

When Moon Woman carries the frog as her burden, the moon rises ahead of Spica, the brightest star in Virgo (map 10). The words "White Frog / Red Frog" may refer directly to Spica. The zodiacal almanac in the Paris Codex also puts a frog in this area



Map 10. The moon as it rises ahead of Spica, the brightest star in Virgo, the home of White Frog / Red Frog.

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Map 11. The moon as it rises ahead of Castor and Pollux, or "the two that are green and yellow," in Gemini.

of the sky, and as we saw in chapter 12, the Madrid Codex depicts this frog as a bringer of rain.

After 33 days, the burden of Moon Woman (or Corn) is "the 2 that are green (or blue) and yellow." As it turns out, she carries not only ears of corn but a pair of stars as well, because the moon rises ahead of Castor and Pollux in Gemini (map 11). Another god named Corn, the so-called Tonsured Maize God we encountered in the inscriptions at Palenque, resides on the opposite side of the sky in the region of Sagittarius or Capricornus. In distinguishing between these two gods, the Chilam Balam book from the town of Tizimín calls one of them "the two-day sign." This would seem to be a reference to the fact that it takes 2 days for Castor and Pollux to complete their entrance into the sky as the bringers of night, rising over the eastern horizon before any other stars become visible there. When Castor shows up at dusk for the first time, it is joined by Pollux on the next day. The two stars also happen to be distinct in color, with a cool white for Castor and a warm yellow tint for Pollux. Together, they may have been seen as signs of color differences in varieties of corn.

BIRDS THAT TAKE FLIGHT AHEAD OF MOON WOMAN

In two of the Dresden lunar almanacs, Moon Woman's counterparts rise above her rather than riding on her back. Most of them are described as *umuut,* "her herald," by the character at left. *Muut* is also a term for birds whose sudden flight was regarded as ominous, such as the Great Curassow, and most of the heralds in these almanacs are birds or bats. In the pictures, they open their wings and take flight, rising over Moon Woman's head. The corresponding stars appear above the horizon ahead of the moon.

Six heralds precede Moon Woman in the almanac presented on pages 195–97, which comes from the lower register of Dresden pages 16–17. Each complete run of

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These are the starting days:

Tribute

Jaguar

Pride

Net

Tribute.

13 Sky Owl is the herald

of Moon Woman. Something is hidden.

8 days bring

Earth

Wind

Deer

Stairway

Earth.

Quetzal brings news

of Moon Woman. Wedding feasts take place.

13 days bring

Foot

Work

Lord

Snake

Foot.

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Macaw is complete as the herald

of Moonlight Woman. Something is hidden.

13 days bring

Night

Sunk

Lack

Blade

Night.

Bat Hawk

is Moon Woman's

herald.

Lords do their work.

13 days bring *Wax, Ceiba, Death, Artisan, Wax.*

Lord Vulture

is complete as the herald

of Moon Woman.

Nothing happens.

8 days bring *Net, Tribute, Jaguar, Pride, Net.*

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Turkey

is the harbinger

of Moon Woman.

Food and drink are plentiful.

10 days bring *Jaguar, Pride, Net, Tribute, Jaguar.*

the narrative spans 65 days, with four starting dates to choose from. The list of day names in the preface is five items long, but the last name repeats the first one. As in the case of the lunar almanac presented at the beginning of this chapter, the scribe forgot to add red day numbers.

In the pictures, Moon Woman gestures with her right hand and speaks, as if she herself were delivering the auguries described in the captions. In the third and fifth captions, the term for herald, *muut,* is prefixed by *xul,* specifying that the moon must be preceded by the "end" or "completion" of the herald in question, which is the rise of all of the corresponding stars. The sixth caption describes Moon Woman's counterpart not as her *muut* but rather as her *mu'wa,* an alternative term for "herald" that is rendered as "harbinger" in the translation. Again, information that would be known to a diviner has been supplied in italics.

For the first two heralds in this almanac, celestial locations can be described only in approximate terms. The story begins with a herald whose full name, 13 Kan Kuy, or "13 Sky Owl," is shortened to 13 Kuy here. There are two widely separated celestial owls in the Mayan sky, of which this one is somewhere in the region of Virgo, perhaps in Corvus. Next, after 13 days, comes K'uk', or "Quetzal," located in the region around Aquarius or western Pisces.

After another 13 days comes the third herald, Mo'o, or "Macaw," who can be located more precisely than the first two. The Popol Vuh gives his name as Wuqub' Kaqix, or "Seven Macaw," and his stars are the seven that compose the Big Dipper. Among the contemporary K'iche', who divide the dry season into 28-day periods by watching for the early evening rises of a succession of bright stars, the Big Dipper comes into play between Regulus (in Leo) and Spica (in Virgo). Halfway between their evening rises comes the appearance of Alkaid, which is the brightest star on the eastern horizon when it completes the visibility of the Big Dipper. In map 12, Alkaid is

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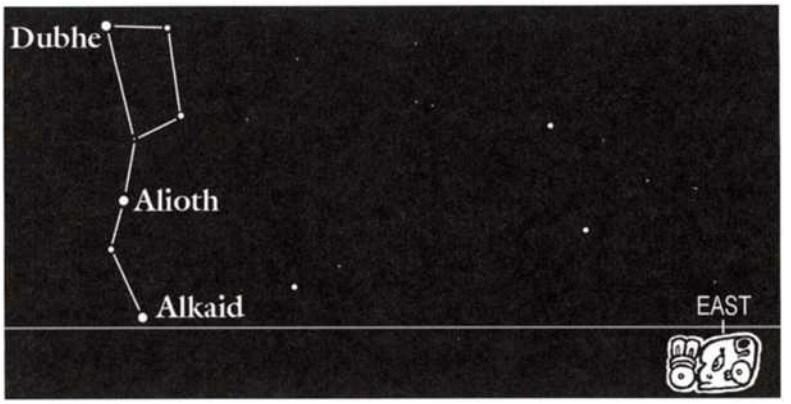

Map 12. The stars of the Big Dipper, or Macaw, rising ahead of the moon.

the tip of the tail of the ascending Macaw, rising just ahead of the moon. At this point, Macaw has become Moonlight Woman's *xul muut,* or "complete herald," as the caption puts it.

The text describes the fourth herald, who comes after another 13-day interval, as *ya sotz'il,* or "batlike." His location, in the general area of eastern Pisces, is occupied by a bat in the Paris zodiac. The present almanac has no picture, but the other Dresden almanac that deals with Moon Woman's heralds shows him as a bird rather than a bat (figure 52). The bird has the beak and talons of a raptor, which suggests that it is the small hawk called *sutz' muwan,* or "bat hawk," in Ch'orti'. Perhaps the writer who drew the bat in the Paris zodiac was reinterpreting what was originally a hawk, or the writer who named and drew the "batlike" bird in the Dresden lunar almanacs was reinterpreting what was originally a bat.

Fig. 52. A hawk described as "batlike" rises above Moon Woman. From a lunar almanac in the Dresden Codex.

The fifth herald, who takes flight 8 days later, is the King Vulture we already encountered in the Almanac of the Nineteen Gods. The brightest stars rising ahead of the moon in map 13 (next page) are Capella (in Auriga) and Aldeberan (in Taurus). Because Aldeberan and the Hyades are accounted for by True Magician, Capella remains as a prominent candidate for a star belonging to King Vulture. He is the avian guardian spirit of Jun Ajaw, or "One Lord," and the Dresden Venus table locates One Lord himself in this same area of the sky.

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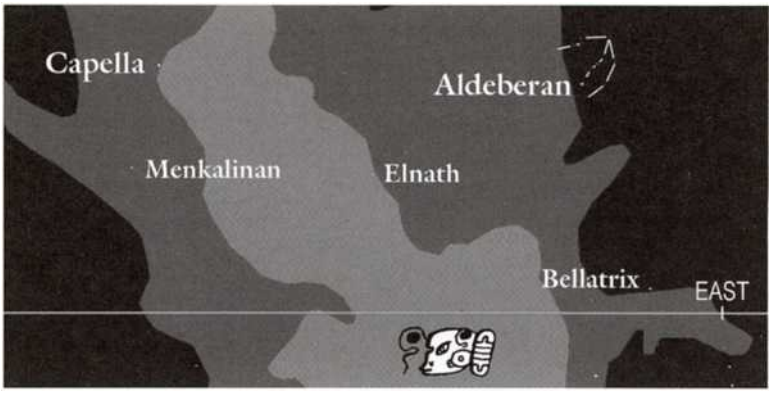

Map 13. Capella (in Auriga) and Aldeberan (in Taurus) rising ahead of the moon. Capella may be one of the stars of the King Vulture and One Lord.

The passing of 10 more days brings Kutz, or "Turkey." This is the last of Moon Woman's heralds, residing somewhere in the area of Libra.

MEETING MOON WOMAN FACE-TO-FACE

Three almanacs describe the relationship between Moon Woman and her counterparts with this character:

Yatan can mean that she is "the wife of" her counterpart, but a more literal meaning is that her counterpart is "face-to-face" with her, which is the position we see in the pictures. Restating the matter in astronomical terms, the corresponding stars rise neither before nor after the moon but appear on the same level with the moon.

In the almanac presented on pages 201–2, from the lower register of Dresden pages 21–22, Moon Woman comes face-to-face with four different deities. The first is Jop Pawahtun, or "Shining Pawahtun," whose name is elsewhere prefaced with *kan,* meaning "four" or "square." The moon itself is among the stars of Pisces, which are faint. But nearby are the four bright stars shown in map 14, forming what Western observers call the Great Square of Pegasus. The square is on a tilt when it rises, as it is in the map, but when it straddles the meridian, its four sides face the four directions. Moreover, in Mayan latitudes, it passes directly overhead, enclosing the zenith. Mayans must have assigned Pawahtun (or the Pawahtuns of the four directions) to this location because they saw the square as a four-cornered microcosm.

After 21 days, Moon Woman finds herself face-to-face with a young man named Yax B'alam, or "First Jaguar," the brother of Jun Ajaw, or "One Lord." At this time, the

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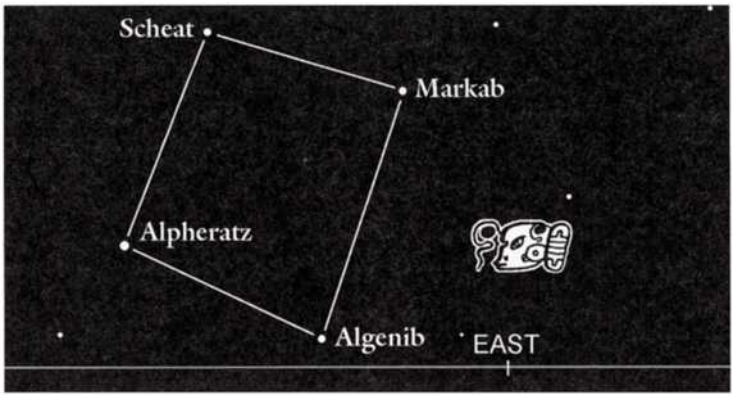
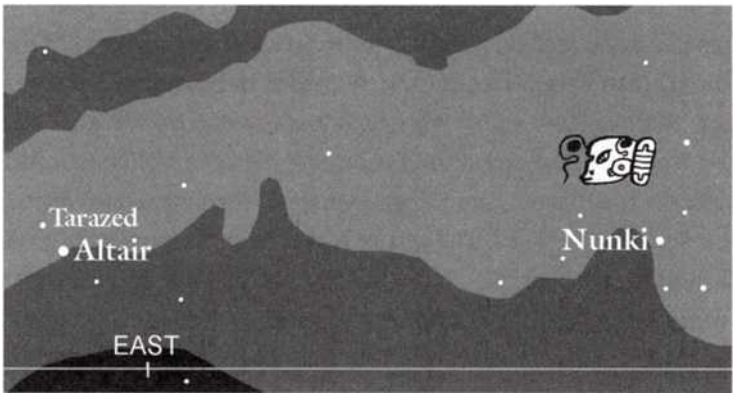


Map 14. The moon rising with the stars of the Great Square of Pegasus (marked with lines), the home of Pawahtun (or the four Pawahtuns).

moon is in a position where the brightest rising stars close to her level are Nunki (in Sagittarius) and Altair (in Aquila), as shown in map 15. The zodiacal almanac in the Paris Codex assigns a jaguar to this same general area of the sky.

Moon Woman's third encounter, coming 15 days after her meeting with First Jaguar, brings her face-to-face with a personage who is difficult to identify. Prefixed to the name is the number 4, which has *kan* as its sound value and could mean "sky." The main sign is a profiled head that looks like the logograph for *maax,* "monkey," but it is missing the solid black areas that normally fill much of the space in that sign. The picture is a generic representation of an elderly male, lacking enough detail to permit a specific identification. The location is in the general area of Cancer, where the only bright star nearby is Procyon, in Canis Minor.

The fourth event in this almanac, coming 10 days later, brings Moon Woman face-to-face with Split Down the Middle. At this time, the moon is on a level with the opening of the Great Rift.



Map 15. The moon rising with Nunki and Altair, the brightest stars in Sagittarius and Aquila. First Jaguar has his home in this area.

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These are the starting days:

Earth

Tribute

Ceiba

Lack

Snake.

Shining Pawahtun is face-to-face

with Moon Woman. Lords take their thrones.

5 days bring

Wind

Jaguar

Death

Blade

Foot.

First Jaguar is face-to-face

with Moon Woman. There is deceit.

A score and 1 days bring

Night

Work

Deer

Pride

Artisan.

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Sky . . . is face-to-face with her.

Wedding feasts take place, flowers bloom.

16 days bring

Pride

Artisan

Night

Work

Deer.

Face-to-face

are Split Down the Middle

and Moon Woman.

Something new happens.

10 days bring *Tribute, Ceiba, Lack, Snake, Earth.*

The Dresden almanacs that track the sidereal movement of the moon end on page 23. After that come six pages whose main subject is the planet Venus, followed by eight pages devoted to lunar and solar eclipses. The lunar contribution to the rhythm of these pages is no longer the sidereal month, as measured by the moon's completion of a journey among the fixed stars, but the synodic month, as measured by the moon's completion of its phases. Western astronomers reckon the length of the synodic month as 29.5306 days, but Mayans reckoned a series of variable months, lasting 29 or 30 days each and averaging 29.5306 days over the long run.

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17 The Power of the Great Star

THE STORY OF the planet Venus, called Chak Ek', "Red Star" or "Great Star," is told in the pages that immediately follow the lunar almanacs in the Dresden Codex. It is a story that requires the addition of new threads to the weft of time. Venus takes 584 days to complete its period, appearing as the morning star, disappearing for a time, reappearing as the evening star, and disappearing again before it repeats its role as the morning star. The idealized year of 365 days also becomes a thread in the story, with five Venus periods and eight years adding up to the same total: 2,920 days. The codex organizes the events in the story into a five-page table, with one page for each of the five periods. After one pass across the table, Venus begins to repeat the sequence of its previous relationships to the fixed stars. For example, when it makes its next five appearances as the morning star, the sidereal locations of these events are similar to what they were during the previous eight years.

What happens when the Great Star enters the space of a deity who resides among the fixed stars is quite different from what happens in the lunar almanacs. Moon Woman, as one deity moving among others, has an interpersonal relationship with her counterparts. The Great Star, on the other hand, is not a deity but rather the visible sign of a dangerous power that passes from one deity to another, taking the form of a dart when one of them seizes it. Whoever holds this dart is transformed into a warrior who loads it into his dart thrower and shoots a neighboring deity, as is shown in the pictures that illustrate the table. Here is the caption for two of these pictures, one showing the warrior and the other his target:

K'aalaj means that something is "caught" or "taken hold of," and *lak'in* means that this happens "where the day begins," or at dawn. The captured object is the Chak Ek', "Great Star," or the dart corresponding to it, and the deity who catches it is the patron of merchants, here named Ek'el B'akab', or "Black Actor." Then comes a second clause, *K'awiil ujulu,* meaning something like "Fire Scepter is the one who gets shot." The first

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picture below this caption shows Black Actor as a warrior (figure 53). Instead of holding a staff and carrying a backpack, as he does when he plays his role as a merchant, he holds a shield in one hand and a dart thrower in the other. He has already shot a dart at a target below him in the sky and pictured lower on the same page (figure 54). The dart, which has a hooked tip, has hit Fire Scepter in his midsection, knocking him to the ground and causing him to cry in pain and drop his shield (the oval object at lower left).

Fig. 53. Black Actor (Ek'el B'akab') armed with the power of the Great Star and looking down toward his target, who is pictured in figure 54. From the Venus table of the Dresden Codex.

Fig. 54. Fire Scepter, wounded and knocked to the ground by a dart shot by Black Actor (in figure 53).

Black Actor resides in the area of Pisces, and when he is in the east, Fire Scepter, who resides in Aries, is immediately below him. But only when Black Actor possesses the power of the Great Star does he shoot his neighbor with a dart. When he is in his role as traveling merchant, he may carry Fire Scepter as his burden, as Moon Woman would do if she were rising with the stars of Fire Scepter right behind her. In figure 55, which shows Black Actor with his walking staff, his burden is Fire Scepter as an infant—or perhaps he carries an icon of Fire Scepter, intended for sale.

As in the pages that precede the story of the Great Star, each event is assigned a number of possible dates on the 260-day divinatory calendar. But now, for the first time, dates from the 365-day calendar are listed as well, making it possible for the reader to create composite dates of the calendar-round kind. Moreover, the table has a

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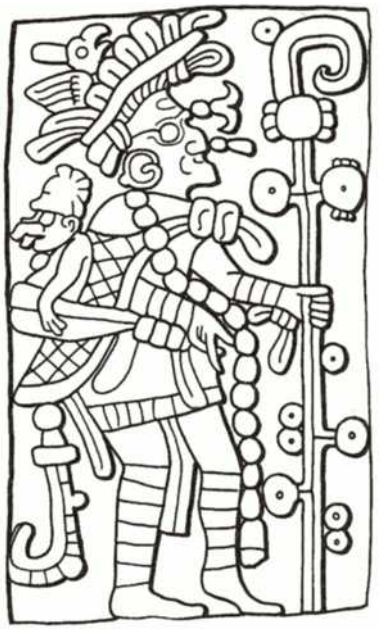

Fig. 55. Black Actor in his role as a merchant, carrying Fire Scepter on his back instead of shooting him. A Terminal Classic carving on a column from Santa Rosa Xtampak, in Yucatán.

one-page preface that correlates its calendar-round dates with the long count. As in monumental inscriptions like those of Quiriguá and Palenque, the anchors are widely separated in time, with one of them reaching back into mythic time and the others staying within the frame of recorded Mayan history. The mythic long-count date is expressed as a negative number, –6.2.0, equivalent to 12.19.13.16.0 in the era that ended with the placement of the Three Hearthstones on 13.0.0.0.0. The historical date is 9.9.9.16.0, equivalent to February 7, 623, which may be the date when Venus tables like this one first came into use. If so, they were still a relatively recent invention in 682, when someone at Tikal used divinatory dates from such a table to create a time frame for a possible attack on Itzan.

The table provides three sets of dates from the 365-day calendar. One set belongs to the mythic past, and the other two belong to the historical era of the table's readers. In the case of historical dates, the need for a periodic change was created by a discrepancy between the idealized scheme of the table and the observable movements of Venus. The Mayan solution to the problem was to count one out of every sixty-one Venus periods as lasting only 580 days. This adjustment produced an average Venus period of 583.93 days, coming within a quarter of an hour of the 583.92 days measured by Western astronomers.

Each of the 584-day episodes in the story of Venus is divided into four intervals. For all but one of these intervals, the determining factors include synodic months and (in one case) a half-month. Venus is visible as the morning star for an average of 263 days, but this interval is rounded down to 236, equivalent to a combination of four 29-day months and four 30-day months. When Venus has completed its time as the morning star, it disappears for an average of 50 days, but this interval is rounded up to 90, equivalent to three 30-day synodic months. Venus then becomes the evening star for an average of 263 days, but this interval is rounded down to 250, equivalent to three 30-day months, five 29-day months, and one 15-day half month. At this point, the running total is 576 days, which is the nearest whole-day equivalent of nineteen and a half synodic months (575.85 days by Western measure). The remaining 8 days, which are assigned to the disappearance of Venus before it returns to its role as the morning star, match the average length of this interval as determined by Western observations.

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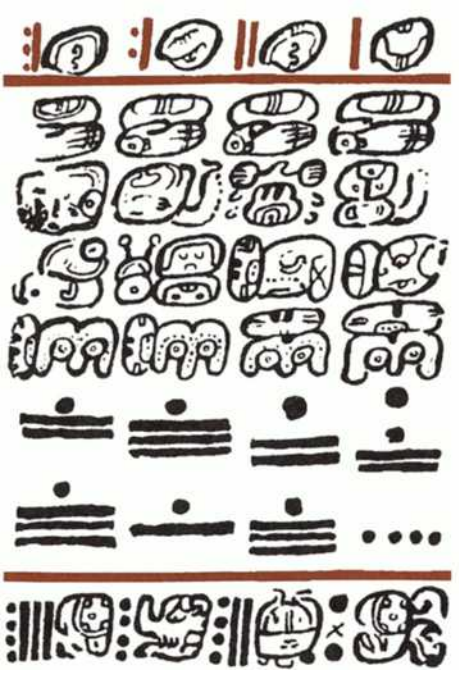

On 8 Wax, the Great Star is caught at the first corner by the Snail, when 236 days have passed, on 19 Song.

On 7 Death, the Great Star is caught where the day ends by the Scorpion, when 326 days have passed, on 4 Bat.

On 10 Wax, the Great Star is caught to the right by the Great Nibbler, when 576 days have passed, on 14 Drum.

On 5 Net, the Great Star is caught where the day begins by Death, when 584 days have passed, on 2 Song.

On 7 Lord, the Great Star is caught at the first corner by the Penis, when 820 days have passed, on 13 Green.

On 6 Foot, the Great Star is caught where the day ends by Akan, when 910 days have passed, on 3 Hawk.

On 9 Lord, the Great Star is caught to the right by 13 Sky Owl, when 1,160 days have passed, on 8 Well.

On 4 Sunk, the Great Star is caught where the day begins by Square Pawahtun, when 1,168 days have passed, on 16 Well.

Each of the table's five sections has four columns corresponding to the events that divide the 584-day period into four intervals. At the top of each column is a list of thirteen possible divinatory dates for the event in that column. The day name stays the same all the way down the list, but the day number runs through all thirteen possibilities. This results from the fact that the 2,920-day width of the table is evenly divisible by 20 but not by 13, which brings about a recurrence of the name but a change in the number. In the excerpt from the table on pages 206–208, the divinatory dates that run across the top are from the thirteenth row of the full table.

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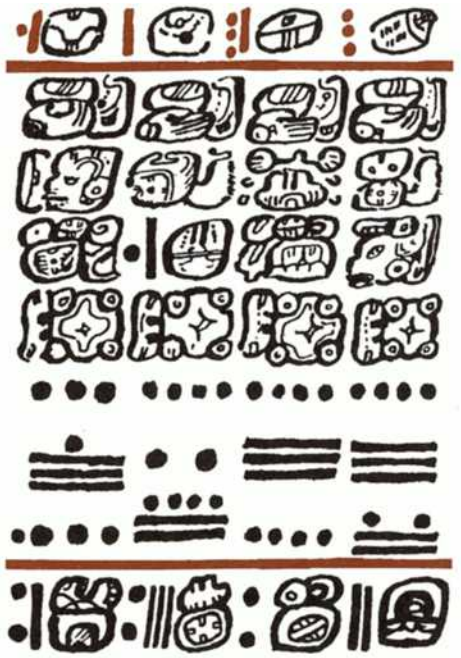

On 6 Net, the Great Star is caught at the first corner by Lord of the Sun, when 1,404 days have passed, on 7 Hunter.

On 5 Jaguar, the Great Star is caught where the day ends by the Standing Green Bird, when 1,494 days have passed, on 17 New Sun.

On 8 Net, the Great Star is caught to the right by Lord of the Night, when 1,744 days have passed, on 2 Sign.

On 3 Stairway, the Great Star is caught where the day begins by Lady of the House, when 1,752 days have passed, on 10 Sign.

On 5 Sunk, the Great Star is caught at the first corner by True Magician, when 1,988 days have passed, on 6 Yellow Sun.

On 4 Blade, the Great Star is caught where the day ends by Death, when 2,078 days have passed, on 16 Kiln.

On 7 Sunk, the Great Star is caught to the right by the Fire Scepter, when 2,328 days have passed, on 1 Point.

On 2 Wax, the Great Star is caught where the day begins by One Lord, when 2,336 days have passed, on 9 Point.

Running across the bottom row of the excerpt are dates from the 365-day calendar. They belong to the more recent of the two historical periods covered by the full table, where they also occupy the bottom row. In the first column of the excerpt, the calendar-round date produced by combining the information in the top and bottom rows is 8 Kib' 19 K'ayab', or "8 Wax 19 Song." In the last column, the combination is 1 Ajaw 3 Xul, or "1 Lord 3 Point." The best fit between these calendar-round dates and the actual movements of the Great Star runs from 11.4.14.9.16 to 11.5.2.0.0, or from August 23, 1317, to December 28, 1324.

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On 4 Stairway, the Great Star is caught at the first corner by Corn, when 2,572 days have passed, at the seating of New Sun.

On 3 Wind, the Great Star is caught where the day ends by the Black Actor, when 2,662 days have passed, on 10 White.

On 6 Stairway, the Great Star is caught to the right by 7 Macaw, when 2,912 days have passed, on 15 Penance.

On 1 Lord, the Great Star is caught where the day begins by the Crocodile, when 2,920 days have passed, on 3 Point.

Between the top and bottom rows in the excerpt, the sequence of characters in each column is exactly the same as in the full table. In the second row, the verb for the catching of the Great Star is repeated in each column. The third row gives the direction in which the Great Star is located, the fourth row gives the names of the deities who catch it, and the fifth row repeats the name of the Great Star in each column. The wording follows the model of the caption for the pictures of Black Actor and Fire Scepter, except that no space is given to the naming of a target.

In the third row of the excerpt, the directional characters have a temporal meaning as well as a spatial one. The term for west (in the second column of each section) is *chik'in,* meaning the place where the sun or day *(k'in)* reaches its limit *(chi)*. The term for east (in the fourth column) is *lak'in,* meaning the place of arrival of another *(lak')* day *(k'in)*. The other two directions (in the first and third columns) are *xaman,* meaning something like "first corner," and *nojol,* "on the right hand," meaning on the right side of a person facing east. These two terms, along with their equivalents in Mayan languages other than Yukatek, carry the sense of "north" and "south" when the reference is to the surface of the earth, but when the context is astronomical, they carry a sense of "above" and "below." The astronomical meaning is present in Classic texts and continues in many Mayan languages that are spoken today, but it has been lost in Yukatek. The logic of the sequence of directions in the table is that the Great Star, like the sun, must travel above the earth on its way from east to west during the day and below the earth on its way from west to east at night.

Many of the names of deities in the fourth row of the excerpt are familiar from the almanacs in earlier pages, and the ones that are different may simply be alternative ways of referring to individuals who have already been mentioned. As in the Almanac

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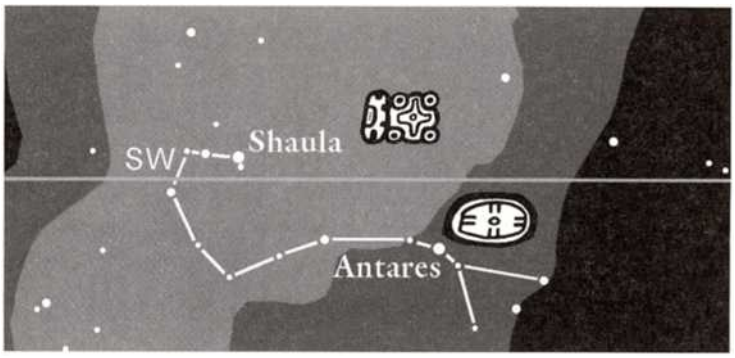

Map 16. The Great Star just above the western horizon and sun just below it, on the evening of November 21, 1317 (Gregorian), in the latitude of Yucatán. The lines connect the stars of Scorpius.

of the Nineteen Gods (in chapter 15), there is a series of twenty events in which one of the deities appears twice, so that the number of distinct individuals is nineteen. Among the nineteen is Black Actor (in the second column of the last section), but instead of appearing in the east, as he does in the picture discussed earlier, he appears in the west. This difference is due to the fact that the picture illustrates an event that took place in the mythic past, whereas the names in the table are arranged to fit the era of its readers.

Below the row that names the Great Star are bar-and-dot numbers that give a running total for the intervals that lead from one column to the next. The number in the first column is 236, the number of days since the Great Star appeared in the east in the last column of the last page, at the end of the row of divinatory dates that precedes the one in the excerpt. In the fourth column, the total reaches the scale of a three-place number: 1.11.4, equivalent to $360 + 11 \times 20 + 4 = 584$ days, which completes one full Venus period and brings with it a new eastern appearance of the Great Star in this same column. In the twentieth column, the total reaches 8.2.0, equivalent to $8 \times 360 + 2 \times 20 + 0 = 2{,}920$ days, the length of five Venus periods.

The translation for each section of the table is presented in four paragraphs below it. Each successive paragraph corresponds to a different column, following the same order as the columns.

Little is known about the character named Yulum, or "Snail," in the first column of the table's first section. Second comes Sina'n, or "Scorpion," who catches the Great Star in the west. This event took place on 11.4.14.14.6 7 Kimi 4 Sotz', or "7 Death 4 Bat," equivalent to November 21, 1317. In map 16, which shows a portion of the western horizon shortly after sunset on that day, the positions of the Great Star and the sun are

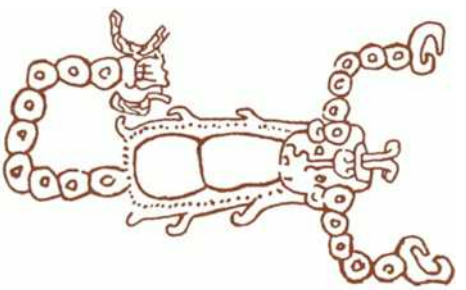

Fig. 56. The Mayan Scorpion constellation, corresponding to stars in Scorpius. The circular elements that compose the arms and tail are star signs. From the Madrid Codex.

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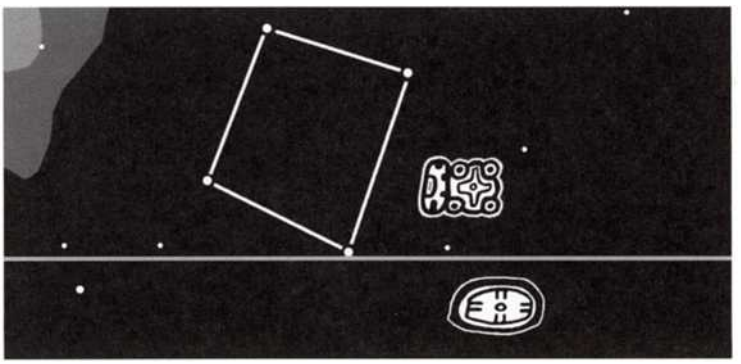
marked by their respective characters. The stars connected by lines are those of Scorpius. Mayans saw a similar image in these stars, judging from pictures of their Scorpion in the Madrid Codex (see figure 56 for an example). The third column in the table's first section has Chak Pe', "Great (or Red) Nibbler," possibly referring to a rabbit. In the fourth column comes Kimil, or "Death," who is familiar from the lunar almanacs and located in Leo.

Fig. 57. The monstrous Bat, also called Penis, who resides among stars in the vicinity of western Pisces. Detail of a painting on a Classic drinking vessel.

Leading off the second section is Kep, or "Penis," a character who lives in the vicinity of western Pisces. The moon almanacs put a bird named Bat Hawk in this location, whereas the Paris zodiac pictures an actual bat. The name in the Venus table is consistent with the characterization of bat deities in Classic vase paintings (see figure 57). After Penis comes Akan, a patron of alcoholic beverages we have already encountered at Palenque and in the Almanac of the Seven Gods. Coming third in the same section is 13 Kanal Mut, or "13 Sky Owl," one of two celestial owls. The present one is in the area of Pisces and Aquarius, not far from the bat, whereas the one encountered by Moon Woman was on the opposite side of the sky, in the area of Virgo and Corvus.

Occupying the last position in the second section is Pawahtun. The table gives his name as 4 Pawahtun, in which *kan* (the word for "four") can also be understood as "square." The date for this event is 11.4.17.2.8 4 Lamat 16 Ch'en, or "4 Sunk 16 Well," equivalent to March 12, 1320. The Great Star was near the Great Square of Pegasus (map 17), in almost the same position as that of Moon Woman when she was face-to-face with Pawahtun.

The first deity who catches the Great Star in the third section of the table is K'in Ajaw, or "Lord of the Sun." The implication is that the present-day sun once had a



Map 17. The Great Star just above the eastern horizon and the sun just below it, on the morning of March 12, 1320. The lines connect the stars of the Great Square of Pegasus.

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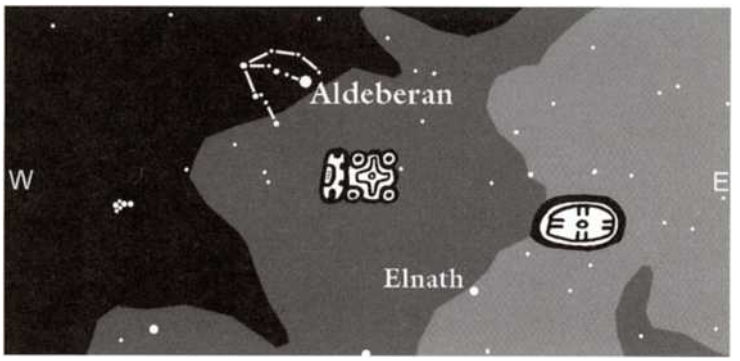
home among the fixed stars, or that a present-day star was once the sun. The location would be in Libra or among brighter stars in the same general area. Little is known of the next two characters beyond their names: Wak Yax Mut, or "Standing Green Bird," and Ak'ab' Ajaw, or "Lord of the Night." Last comes Ix Ajaw Nah, or "Lady of the House," located in Virgo. One of the lunar almanacs in the previous chapter puts her guardian—White Frog/Red Frog—in the same place. In her present role, she becomes a warrior like any other deity who catches the Great Star. She has a counterpart among the Mixtecs of Oaxaca, where a goddess with the calendrical name 8 Grass arms herself with a shield and uses weaving implements as weapons.

The fourth section opens with Itzamnaaj, or "True Magician," familiar from the almanacs in the previous two chapters. The date for this event, located in the "above" direction, is 11.4.19.7.8 5 Lamat 6 K'ank'in, or "5 Sunk 6 Yellow Sun," equivalent to June 10, 1322. In the middle of that day, the Great Star was a short distance from the stars that mark the home of True Magician, Aldeberan and the Hyades. Map 18, showing a segment of the sky overhead, is timed for the moment when the Great Star reached its highest point, which was almost exactly at the zenith. True Magician is followed by Death, the only god who makes two appearances in the table, first in the east and now in the west. Next comes Fire Scepter, who was hit by a dart during the era of the invention of the table but now gets his chance to shoot one. Last in the fourth section comes the hero Jun Ajaw, or "One Lord," whose animal guardian is a vulture. He enters the story when the Great Star is in the vicinity of the King Vulture that resides among the stars of Taurus or perhaps Auriga, the same bird that took flight when Moon Woman followed these stars into the sky.

In the fifth and final section, the first character is one of two gods named Nal, or "Corn." This Corn is the one we encountered at Palenque, located in the vicinity of Sagittarius and Capricornus, rather than the one in Gemini, whose stars followed the moon into the sky. Next, appearing in the west, comes Black Actor. The name of the third character has yet to yield a clear reading except for being prefaced with the number 7. He is probably the gamekeeper named elsewhere in the Dresden and Madrid codices as 7 Sip, and who is still known as Sip (without the number) among the



Map 18. The positions of the Great Star and the sun at noon on June 10, 1322. The lines connect the stars of the Hyades.

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present-day deer hunters of Yucatán and Belize. The last of all the characters is Ayin, or "Crocodile," who catches the Great Star when it is in Sagittarius. His home is probably in the Milky Way, perhaps in the part that includes the Great Rift.

The divinatory date for the last of the twenty events in the excerpt, which is from the last of the thirteen rows of such dates in the full table, is 1 Ajaw, or "1 Lord." This date is the pivot point in the time frame of the table, the point at which the story begins all over again. By the time of the next event, back in the first of the twenty columns, the Great Star will have been appearing in the east for 236 days. In the Popol Vuh, the myth that accounts for the pattern of the Great Star's movements begins with brothers whose K'iche' names are the dates 1 Junajpu and 7 Junajpu, equivalent to 1 Lord and 7 Lord. The two dates stand for all days named Junajpu, because the sequence of number prefixes for a series of days of the same name is 1, 8, 2, 9, 3, 10, 4, 11, 5, 12, 6, 13, and 7. In other words, 1 and 7 are first and last, and naming them serves as an invocation of all 13 numbers.

Following the same logic as with the naming of the two brothers in the Popol Vuh, the enemies who bring their lives to an end are 1 Kame and 7 Kame, or "1 Death" and "7 Death." Not coincidentally, when the Great Star makes its first western appearances in the Dresden table (in the second column of the first section), it does so on days named Death (Kimi in Yukatek). Its next appearance in the east is on days whose name is K'an in Yukatek and K'at in K'iche', meaning "Net" in both cases. In the Popol Vuh, the mother of the dead brothers reads the imprint of a net in the ground as a sign that their story is not yet over. She knows that their sons will carry on after them.

In portraying the gods as taking the roles of warriors and victims when the Great Star comes into their lives, the Dresden Codex follows the same plot line as do central Mexican accounts of the planet Venus, and it even replaces Mayan names for gods with Nahuatl ones in some of the captions for the pictures. The story told in the Popol Vuh is quite different and is more in keeping with the mythic events depicted in Classic Mayan vase paintings. Instead of making war, the protagonists hunt birds, engage in sports, play tricks, dance in masks, and stage magic shows. And instead of manifesting as a dart, the Great Star takes on a series of other guises, all of them round in shape. It can appear as a rubber ball, a skull that turns into a calabash, a ball that turns out to be a skull, a skull that turns out to be a pumpkin, a bouncing ball that turns out to be a hopping rabbit, or a skull that seems to be a mere stage prop but turns out to be a real one.

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18 Thunderstorm

THE PAPER OF the Dresden Codex is folded into thirty-nine leaves, making seventy-eight pages. All the pages we have looked at so far are on the front side of the paper, the side that begins with the title page. Counting from that page, the section dealing with the Great Star ends on page 29. Of the ten remaining pages on the front side of the paper, nine are filled with tables that identify possible times for lunar and solar eclipses. The last page seems to be the first in what was once a longer section that tracked the rhythm of changes in human society by the measure of the *k'atun,* or "score of stones," lasting 7,200 days.

Among the pages on the back side of the paper are four dealing with the 365-day year and two dealing with the planet Mars. The rest of these pages are filled mostly with almanacs that track the activities of a god (or a group of gods) named Chaak, or "Thunderstorm." Like Pawahtun (or the four Pawahtuns) and the Bacabs, Thunderstorm can be thought of as four gods located in the four directions. Sometimes the writer mentions a fifth god, Yaaxal Chaak, or "Green Thunderstorm," whose directional assignment is the middle of the world.

Thunderstorm continues to show up in the present day. The corn farmers of Yucatán hold a rain ceremony whose name, Ch'a Chaak, describes its purpose: "to bring Thunderstorm," who will hopefully manifest as an actual thunderstorm. He is also among the most ancient of Mayan gods, making his first recognizable appearance during the Late Preclassic (400 B.C.E.–100 C.E.). One of his earliest images is carved on Stela 1 at the site of Izapa, on the Pacific coast of Chiapas (figure 58). In this representation, he already has the long nose that characterizes his later images. His snake belt is a sign of his ability to strike lightning.

Fig. 58. An early image of Chaak, or "Thunderstorm." He has a fishnet in his hands and carries rain clouds in his backpack. From a Late Preclassic carving on Stela 1 at Izapa, in Chiapas.

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Fig. 59. Thunderstorm, holding a fishnet, standing in a lagoon. From an almanac in the Dresden Codex.

Clouds billow from the top of the net bag he carries on his back, and rain falls from beneath it. With his hands, he lifts a fishnet, letting water run down through the mesh.

In a picture drawn more than a thousand years later (part of an almanac presented on pages 217–20), Thunderstorm stands in a lagoon that has fish in it, again holding a bowl-shaped net (figure 59). The almanacs often show him in watery places, and sometimes he strains rainwater through his fingers. At other times, he holds a sinuous object that represents a lightning bolt or beats a drum to make thunder. His favorite implement is a lightning-striking ax, but sometimes he holds a spear or an oar. In a number of pictures, he holds a tamale—or rather the logograph for *k'an,* the word for "tamale." He may sit in the doorway of a house or on a scaffold, or in bushes or treetops, or on a mountaintop, or even on top of the vault of the sky.

The three Thunderstorm almanacs presented here run continuously across the bottom register of Dresden pages 62–72. In the first of these almanacs (pages 215–16) the narrative spans 65 days, with four possible starting dates. Thunderstorm moves from one direction to another, changing color as he does so. He is white at "the first corner" (north), black in the west, yellow "on the right" (south), and red in the east.

In effect, the first almanac is a schedule for the presentation of offerings to Thunderstorm. Appearing in the preface and in the illustrations are logographs (or details resembling logographs) that describe a variety of offerings. At the bottom of the list of dates in the preface is a jar topped with foam that is probably from one of several kinds of alcoholic beverages called *ki,* some of which contained honey (thus the reference to mead in the translation). Another kind of offering, described as "the blood of trees" in the translation, is indicated by a logograph that reads *k'ik',* a term for "blood" that applies to the resin from which copal incense is made. The offerings described as "yellow, green" in the translation would be ears of corn.

Translations of the captions and of words embedded in the pictures are in roman type. Additional information derived from the pictures is in italics, along with day names that would be known to a diviner.

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3 *is the number of the starting days:*

Jaguar

Pride

Net

Tribute.

Mead *is his offering.*

Here he is at the first corner:

White Thunderstorm Man.

16 days bring 6 *Foot, Work, Lord, or Snake.*

A turkey tamale *is his offering.*

He rows his canoe.

Here he is where the day ends:

Black Thunderstorm Man.

16 days bring 9 *Death, Artisan, Wax, or Ceiba.*

He sits over a well striking lightning.

The blood of a tree, an iguana tamale *are his offerings.*

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Here he is on the right:

Yellow Thunderstorm Man.

16 days bring 12 *Wind, Deer, Stairway, or Earth.*

A fish tamale *is his offering.*

Yellow, green and the blood of trees *are his offerings.*

He beats a pottery drum.

Here he is where the day begins:

Red Thunderstorm Man.

17 days bring 3 *Pride, Net, Tribute, or Jaguar.*

Yellow, green and the blood of trees *are his offerings.*

He spears a deer.

The narrative of the next Thunderstorm almanac (pages 217–20) runs 117 days, with a preface that offers a choice among twenty starting dates. There are four columns of dates, each headed with a red number 11 and each containing five day names. The sequence of these dates runs down each column and then continues in the next column, and the interval between one date and the next is always 117 days.

The 117-day interval in this almanac is the synodic period of Mercury. For the naked-eye observer, the easiest way to measure this period would be to record the planet's return to its highest position above the horizon during its term as a morning star. Many such observations would be necessary, because the period is highly variable. Western astronomers have calculated a range from 111 to 122 days and an average of 115.88 days. From an observational standpoint, 116 days would have been a better choice for an idealized Mercury period than 117, but the larger number offers numerological

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These are the starting days:

11	11	11	11
Lord	Snake	Foot	Work
Earth	Wind	Deer	Stairway
Jaguar	Pride	Net	Tribute
Artisan	Wax	Ceiba	Death
Sunk	Lack	Blade	Night

Perhaps Thunderstorm is there

in the red tree where the day begins.

13 days bring 11

Lack

Foot

Deer

Net

Ceiba.

Thunderstorm is there

in the barren white tree at the first corner.

13 more days bring 11

Death

Night

Lord

Earth

Jaguar.

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Perhaps Thunderstorm is there

in the black tree where the day ends.

13 more days bring 11

Pride

Wax

Lack

Foot

Deer.

Perhaps Thunderstorm is there

in the yellow tree on the right.

13 more days bring 11

Stairway

Tribute

Death

Night

Lord.

Perhaps Thunderstorm is there

haunting a tidal lagoon.

13 more days bring 11

Snake

Wind

Pride

Wax

Lack.

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Perhaps Thunderstorm is there

nesting in the sky.

13 more days bring 11

Blade

Work

Stairway

Tribute

Death.

Perhaps Thunderstorm is there

nesting at the top of a sprouting plant.

13 more days bring 11

Artisan

Sunk

Snake

Wind

Pride.

Perhaps Thunderstorm is there

in a hollowed-out tree, inside a new house.

13 more days bring 11

Net

Ceiba

Blade

Work

Stairway.

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Perhaps Thunderstorm is there

in the thickets, Lord of the Arts.

13 more days bring 11

Earth

Jaguar

Artisan

Sunk

Snake.

advantages. For one thing, it is evenly divisible by 13 and thus results in a constant number coefficient for the starting dates. For another, an interval of $5 \times 117 = 585$ days brings five idealized Mercury periods within 1 day of equaling a single Venus period of 584 days. Using a Mercury period of 116 days would reduce the total for five periods to 580 days, an interval the Dresden Venus table assigns to only one out of every sixty-one Venus periods.

Over the short run, users of this almanac could have seen Mercury return to a previous moment in its period right on target or within a few days on either side of 117 days. Perhaps they were only looking for a way to schedule a series of ceremonies that coincided with a single Mercury period. If so, all they had to do was look for a starting date that would combine the number 11 with a desirable position for Mercury. If they wanted to bring Venus into play as well, they could have looked for a time when Mercury and Venus were appearing together as the morning or evening star and then counted five Mercury periods while tracking Venus through one period.

Because Mercury is very close to the sun and is much dimmer than Venus, it is clearly observable as a morning or evening star for only a few days at a time. Even on days when it does appear, it is visible for only a short time before the dawn light obliterates it or before it sets in the dusk light. It comes and goes far more swiftly than any other planet, which may explain its association with a deity who manifests as thunderstorms. Like the planet, Thunderstorm comes and goes swiftly.

The character that opens most of the captions in this almanac reads *u anwa,* in which *u* is a pronoun referring to Thunderstorm, *an* is a verb whose meanings include existing in a location, and the suffix *-wa* introduces an element of doubt, translated here as "perhaps." Thus, the almanac treats the locations of Thunderstorm as possibilities rather than facts.

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Like the previous almanac, this one follows Thunderstorm through a counterclockwise circuit of the four directions. The captions ascribe the colors to a series of trees rather than to Thunderstorm himself, though he himself is colored in the earlier picture of the western tree. After the four directions come five other locations, reaching as low as a tidal lagoon and as high as the sky.

In the last caption, "Lord of the Arts" translates Menel Ajaw, in which *menel* covers occupational skills in general. Words in italics add information that would be known to a diviner. In this almanac and the one that follows, areas that are gray in the pictures are blue in the codex itself, indicating water.

The last of the Thunderstorm almanacs presented here (pages 222–28) has only one starting date, 13 Ajaw, or "13 Lord." This date appears in the first caption, with the day number in red and the name in black. A black interval number (9) separates this date from that of the first event, which is 9 Muluk, or "9 Tribute." Each subsequent caption includes a black interval number and the date reached by it, with the day number in red and the name in black.

A single reading of the narrative spans the full length of the 260-day calendar, returning the reader to the starting date at the end. The twenty events are divided into four groups, each spanning 65 days and each repeating the same sequence of intervals: $9 + 11 + 20 + 10 + 15 = 65$ days. Thunderstorm is sitting in a house after each interval of 9 days, sitting in the sky after each interval of 11 days, standing in the rain or in a watery place after each interval of 15 or 20 days, and sitting on a mountain or in a valley or walking the earth after each interval of 10 days.

As in the previous almanac, most of the opening verbs are suffixed with *-wa,* translated as "perhaps." The word *tun,* or "stone," in the twelfth caption refers to the period lasting 360 days. In the seventeenth picture, "the Owl's place in the sky" may be one of the two owl constellations mentioned in the lunar almanacs (in chapter 16) and the Venus table (in chapter 17). Words in italics add information provided by logographs or other details embedded in the pictures.

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No, he's not inside the house.

Thunderstorm is conjuring *tamales* in the doorway.

13 Lord and 9 days bring 9 Tribute.

Perhaps he is the Lord of Growing Fruit *in the sky*.

Thunderstorm hits the mark *with his ax*.

11 more days bring 7 Lord.

Perhaps Thunderstorm is there

in a watery place.

A score of days brings 1 Lord.

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Perhaps Thunderstorm is there

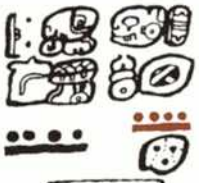
compressing the air with his hands *on a mountaintop.*

10 more days bring 11 Foot.

Perhaps Thunderstorm is there

on the green earth, straining water through his fingers.

15 more days bring 13 Snake.



Perhaps Thunderstorm is there

in front of his own house *at the middle.*

9 more days bring 9 Jaguar.

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Perhaps Thunderstorm is there

in the sky, weighing a surplus *of tamales.*

11 more days bring 7 Snake.

Perhaps Thunderstorm is there

stooping as he goes along. The rain has arrived.

A score of days brings 1 Snake.

Perhaps Thunderstorm is there

suddenly making things white.

10 more days bring 11 Work.

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Perhaps Thunderstorm is there *in a well*

getting his hands wet day and night.

15 more days bring 13 Foot.

Perhaps Thunderstorm is there

on his rainmaking scaffold, in his bloodletting house.

9 more days bring 9 Portal.

Perhaps Thunderstorm is there

stopping to rest, Lord of the Stone *in the sky.*

11 more days bring 7 Foot.

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Thunderstorm is there *under the sky,*

and the rain came day and night.

A score of days brings 1 Foot.

Perhaps Thunderstorm is there

in the valley, full of energy.

10 more days bring 11 Lord.

Perhaps Thunderstorm is there

getting his hands wet, stopping to rest *in a well.*

15 more days bring 13 Work.

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Perhaps Thunderstorm is there

in the dry season, with cracks in his house *at the middle.*

9 more days bring 9 Net.

Perhaps Thunderstorm is there

stopping to rest *at the Owl's place* in the sky.

11 more days bring 7 Work.

Perhaps he is reaching somewhere very high,

a watery place, *during a solar or lunar eclipse.*

A score of days brings 1 Work.

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Perhaps he really is there,

stopping to rest on *Thunderstorm* Mountain.

10 more days bring 11 Snake.

Perhaps Thunderstorm is there *with a bowl of tamales*

at a place where the well is full of water.

15 more days bring 13 Lord.

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19 Diagrams of the Days

When Mayans used graphic designs to represent the passage of time, they nearly always used tables of dates in which the events on a given row were different from one column to the next but the events in a given column were the same except for the dates on which they occurred. Most of the almanacs in Mayan books are abbreviated tables that leave it up to the reader to fill in the omitted details, using a single list of starting dates and a single row of interval numbers and nameless day numbers.

To read through all of a table's events in consecutive order is to move across the first row from left to right until all the columns are completed and then do the same thing on the second row, and so on. A reader who wishes to follow events back into the past can choose a starting point and then move leftward through the rows and upward through the columns. Another option is to study the pattern of dates for a particular kind of event, reading upward or downward through a given column. Pursued far enough, any of these options eventually leads the reader to a point at which the same event takes place on the same date. At the scale of the full table, the event in the last column of the last row is followed by the event in the first column of the first row, and so on.

The movements made by a person writing or reading a table resemble those of a weaver stringing a loom or crossing warp threads with weft threads, or those of a composer writing a piano score that consists of a series of chords. None of the movements made in the writing and reading of a table, the weaving and unraveling of a textile, or the composition and performance of a musical score is circular. Even so, the literature on Mayan thought is filled with such terms as "cycle," "cyclical time," and even "wheel." Textbooks and reference works often illustrate the workings of Mayan calendars with intermeshing cogwheels: a small one for the thirteen day numbers, a somewhat larger one for the twenty day names, and a much larger one for the 365-day year. Such an image certainly demonstrates the influence of the mechanical clock on the Western imagination of time, but it tells us nothing at all about the Mayan imagination.

Western thinkers have long been in the habit of locating non-Western others, including Mayans, in the conservative world of "cyclical time," as contrasted with the progressive world of "linear time." It is therefore ironic that the argument for Mayan cyclical time should involve such a strongly Western image as that of a mechanism with spinning cogwheels. But not everyone who desires a circular image of Mayan time is satisfied with this one. Some have sought such an image within Mayan culture itself. The problem is that circles are limited to the alphabetic documents of colonial

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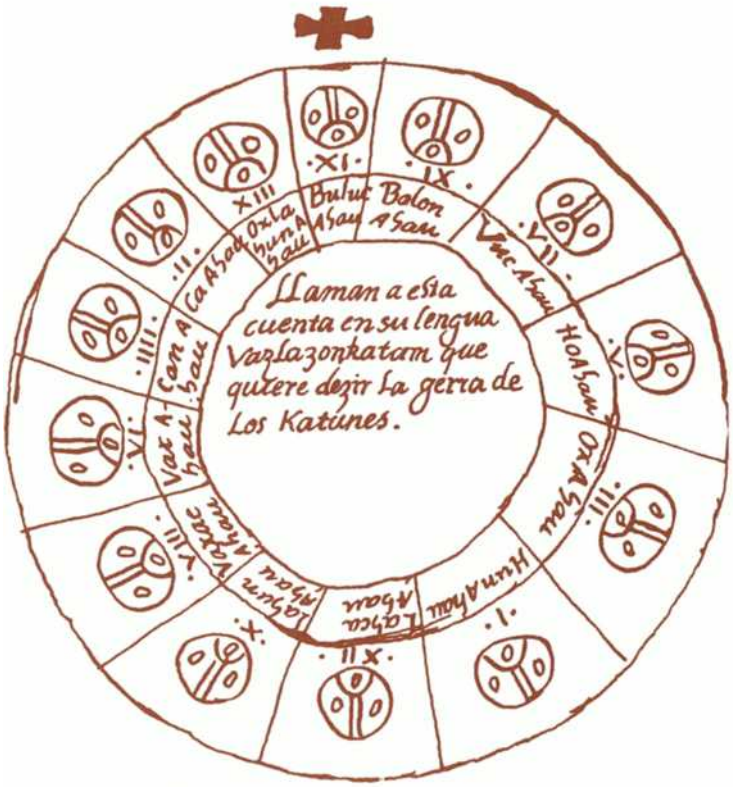

Fig. 60. A diagram of the thirteen kinds of *k'atun,* or "score of stones," running clockwise through the divinatory dates on which each one ends. The cross at the top, which marks the east, anchors time in space. From Diego de Landa's *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán.*

Yucatán. They appear in the Chilam Balam books from the towns of Kaua and Chumayel and in Diego de Landa's *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán.*

Each of the circular diagrams in colonial documents illustrates the relationship among thirteen consecutive periods of time of the kind called *k'atun,* or "score of stones," lasting 20 × 360 = 7,200 days. Each score of stones is named for the divinatory date on which it ends, which is always Ajaw, or "Lord," but with a number prefix that runs through all thirteen possibilities. The sequence begins with 11 Lord, followed by 9, 7, 5, 3, 1, 12, 10, 8, 6, 4, 2, and 13 before the numbers begin to repeat. The circles have thirteen segments corresponding to the thirteen numbers, with the last score of stones (13 Lord) followed by the first score (11 Lord) at the top.

Those who use these diagrams to exemplify Mayan thought invariably describe them as "k'atun wheels." The most frequently reproduced example is the one in figure 60, from Landa's *Relación.* Written in each of the outer segments is the day sign for Ajaw, with a roman numeral underneath. The inner segments contain the Yukatek numbers and names for the same dates, rendered in alphabetic writing. In the center of the circle, Landa wrote a caption in Spanish that says, "In their language they call this account *wazlazonkatum,* which means 'the rotation of the katuns.' " After correcting

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for Landa's imprecise ear and modernizing his spelling, the Yukatek term for this diagram comes out as *wasak'om k'atun,* which means that a score of stones "returns" like a person coming back from a journey, or like a road that turns back toward its starting point. In other words, the circle is not a wheel that revolves but a curved pathway to be followed.

The cross at the top of the circle, above the position of 11 Lord, marks not only the starting point of the journey but also the direction of the rising sun. The Chilam Balam books label all four directions in the circles, with east at the top. So all of these circles are diagrams of space as well as time. They are motionless maps, resting flat on the surface of the earth, and the only thing that moves is the eye of the reader or the feet of the traveler.

Those who are not satisfied with the time circles constructed during the colonial period have kept an eye out for Pre-Columbian examples. So far, they can do no better than point to a carved stone turtle from the Late Postclassic period, excavated at Mayapán (figure 61). A series of thirteen Ajaw day signs is carved around the margin of its carapace. Though the signs are not accompanied by numbers, they must have been intended to signify a series of thirteen scores of stones, each bearing a different number. The association between turtles and the number thirteen has a basis in natural history, though it is the large laminae that compose the dome of the carapace that number thirteen rather than the small ones on the margins. One thing turtles do *not* do is spin their shells around an axis. Even so, the stone turtle has been labeled a "k'atun wheel."

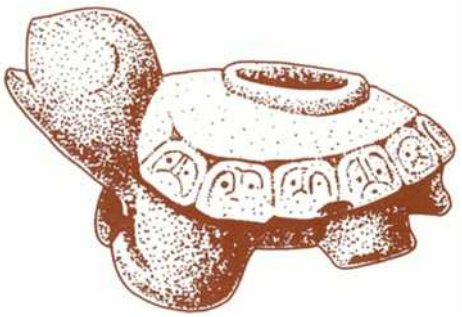

Fig. 61. Turtle with thirteen Ajaw signs carved around the edge of its carapace, standing for thirteen periods lasting a score of stones each. The turtle's head was probably meant to face east. Late Postclassic stone carving from Mayapán, in Yucatán.

Mayans conceived the earth as resting on the back of an aquatic creature that had risen to the surface, envisioned as a turtle or crocodile. It therefore seems likely that the stone turtle, like the circles drawn in documents, was intended as a diagram of space as well as time. Information about the turtle's orientation when it was found is not available, but a good guess is that its head was toward the east. In the circle in the Chilam Balam book from Chumayel, the succession of thirteen segments is interrupted between 13 Lord and 11 Lord by an extra segment labeled *ti lik'in waye,* "east is this way."

If we let go of the Western preference for circles but hold on to the idea that some Mayans of the past visualized a period of time as a continuous path that returns to its starting point, we are led to a diagram that is far more complex than the arcs or circles that represent scores of stones, on pages 75–76 of the Madrid Codex. It fills an area that is not circular, but square (figure 62). Written counterclockwise around the square are rows of dots, punctuated by divinatory dates, that stand for a series of days. Time runs parallel to a side for 13 days and then, as it comes to a corner, turns diagonally inward

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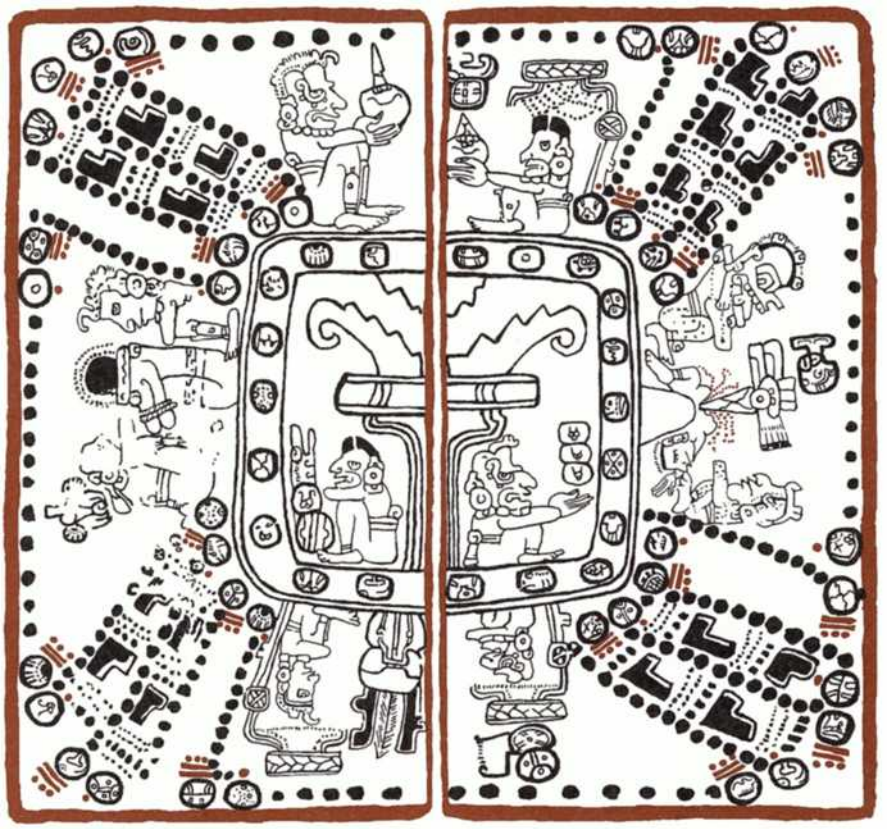

Fig. 62. Diagram of time and space from the Madrid Codex, filling two pages. The east side of the diagram is the bottom one, and the direction of motion in time and space is counterclockwise.

for 13 days, then outward for 13, then inward for another 13, and outward for 13 more, reaching a total of 65 days before it runs along a side again. The remaining three sides and three corners raise the total to the full 260 days of the divinatory calendar. The repeated use of the sign shown at right in the spaces between diagonal rows confirms that the dots were conceived as a roadway on the surface of the earth. This is a stylized human footprint that serves as a logograph for *b'e,* meaning "road."

We can read the movement of time in the diagram in at least four ways, mapped in the illustrations on the pages that follow. The first reading (page 233) takes into account all of the dates connected by dots to come up with a span of 260 days. The second reading (page 234) combines dates and dots from the four corners and four sides of the diagram to account for 52 years of 365 days each. The third reading (page 235) divides years into four types according to the day names that mark their boundaries, and the pictures on the four sides of the diagram show the appropriate rituals for each type of year. In the fourth reading (page 236), the focus shifts to the day names that fill the border of the smaller square within the larger one. These names are organized in groups of five that reflect the structure of the Dresden Venus table.

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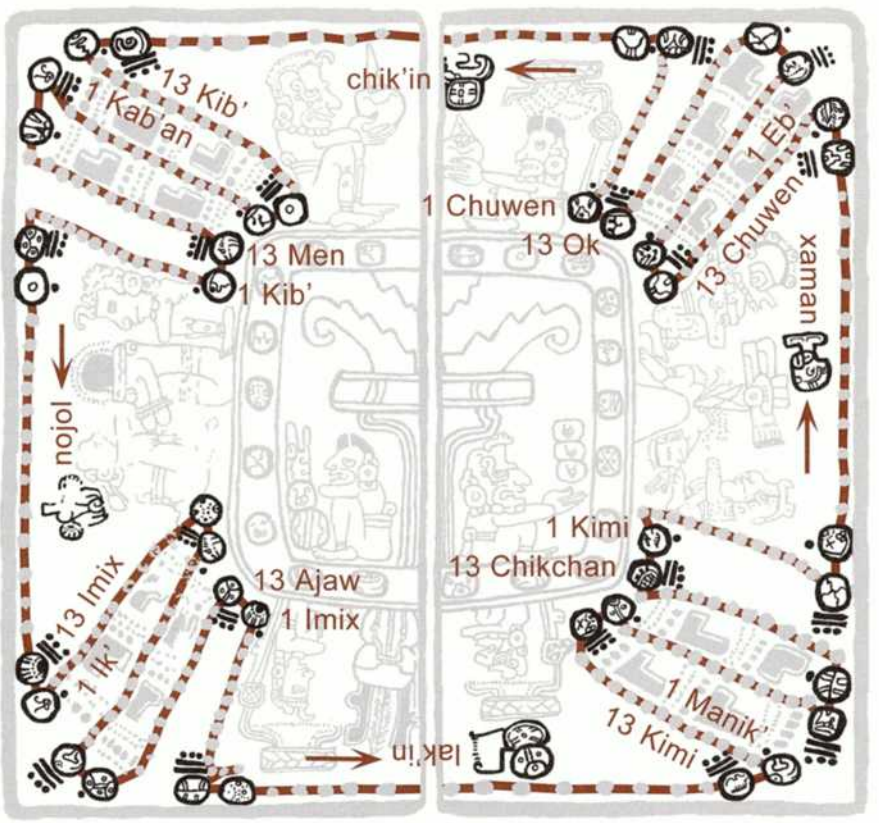

The Road of 13 Score Days

The names of the four directions (in black with red transcriptions) are written on each side, with north *(xaman)* on the right, west *(chik'in)* at the top, south *(nojol)* on the left, and east *(lak'in)* at the bottom. The road of days (marked by a red line) runs counterclockwise (as indicated by the red arrows). At each turn in the road, two successive dates are written (in black with red transcriptions for some of them). Each turn occurs at a point where the day numbers have reached their maximum at 13 and then start over again at 1. Dates corresponding to the dots that lead from one pair of characters to the next must be supplied by the reader.

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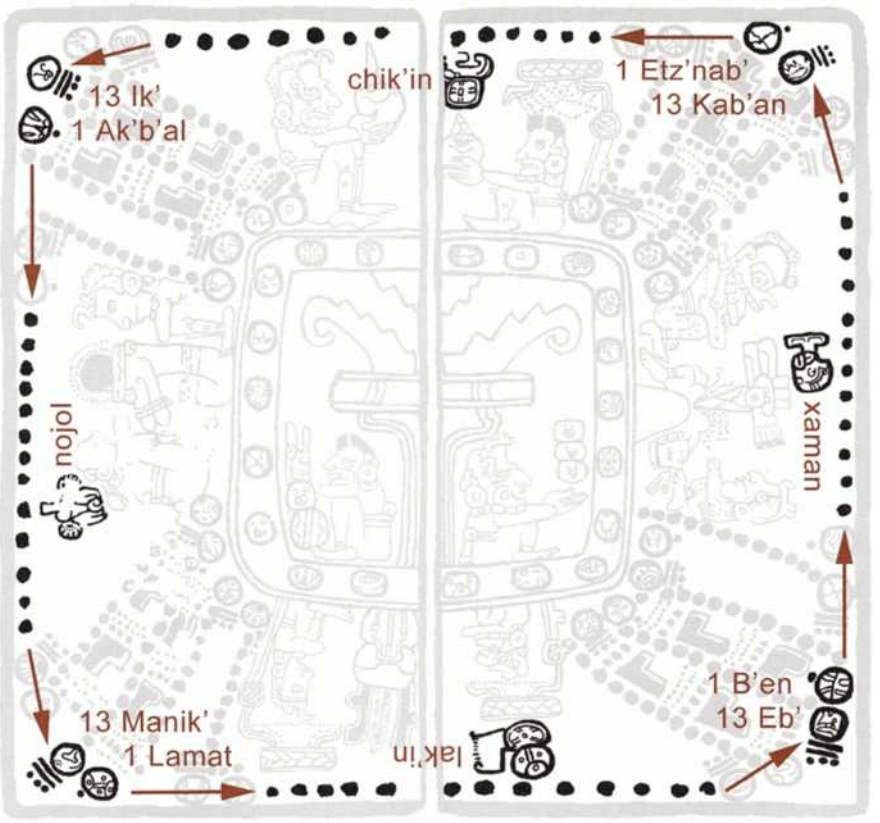

The Road of 52 Years

At each of the outer corners of the diagram is a pair of divinatory dates (in black with red transcriptions) that can be read as corresponding to the last day of an old year of 365 days and the first day of a new one. Thirteen years separate each pair of dates from the next, signified by the 13 dots (in black) that run along each side of the diagram (one dot is missing on the right side). A transition between years takes place at the upper right corner on 13 Kab'an and 1 Etz'nab', or "13 Earth and 1 Blade," and is followed, 13 years later, by a transition that takes place at the upper left corner on 13 Ik' and 1 Ak'b'al, or "13 Wind and 1 Night," and so on. The completion of all four sides of the diagram takes 52 years.

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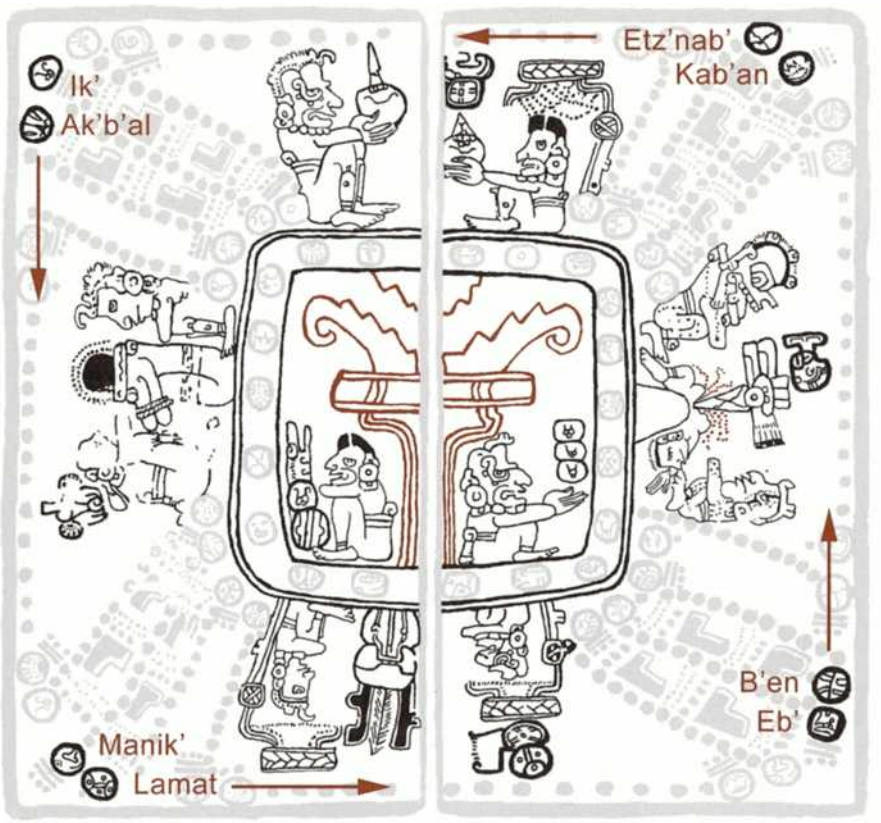

The Road of the Four Kinds of Year

The day names at the four corners mark transitions between years, recurring every four years with variable number prefixes. In a year that begins on B'en, or "Lack," Death and Split Down the Middle receive a human sacrifice in the north (to the right). In the next year, which begins on Etz'nab', or "Blade," True Magician and Moon Woman (who is seated in a temple) receive offerings in the west (at the top). Next, in a year beginning on Ak'b'al, or "Night," two deities of uncertain identity receive a bound prisoner in the south. And then, when the year begins on Lamat, or "Sunk," two unidentified deities (both seated in temples) receive a stack of offerings in the east. At the center, which may pertain to all years, is a flaming and smoking ceramic incense burner (in red), flanked by True Magician and Moon Woman.

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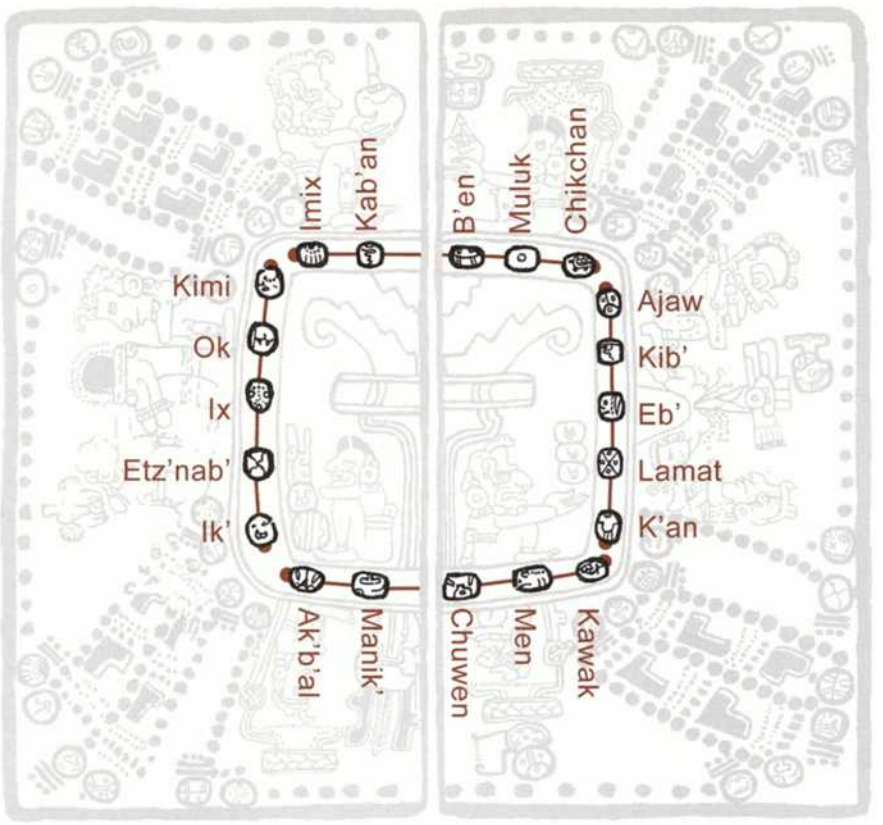

Twenty Day Names Divided by Four

The day names in each series of five (joined by a red line) are spaced at four-day intervals. The last day in a series returns the count to its starting point, because $4 \times 5 = 20$. In the series at right, which reads upward, the days are those of possible eastern appearances of the Great Star, listed in the same order as in the Dresden Venus table: K'an, Lamat, Eb', Kib', Ajaw, or "Net, Sunk, Stairway, Wax, Lord." The days in the series at left, which reads downward, are those of possible western appearances of the Great Star, again following the order of the table: Kimi, Ok, Ix, Etz'nab', Ik', or "Death, Foot, Jaguar, Blade, Wind." The other two series, which read from right to left across the top and left to right across the bottom, account for the remaining ten names but have no known astronomical meaning.

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PART TWO

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20 The Alphabet Arrives in the Lowlands

DURING A SCORE of stones named 2 Lord, beginning in 1500 and ending in 1520, foreigners from across the Atlantic began to appear in the Mayan world. In 1502, on his fourth and final voyage, Cristóbal Colón had a peaceful encounter with a large Mayan trading canoe in the Gulf of Honduras. In 1511, eleven shipwrecked Spanish sailors drifted ashore on the east coast of Yucatán. Five of them were sacrificed by a local lord, and the other six escaped into a neighboring kingdom, only to be enslaved. When an opportunity to rejoin their countrymen arose in 1519, only two of the sailors were still alive. Gerónimo de Aguilar became an interpreter for Hernán Cortés, but Gonzalo de Guerrero chose to remain in the town of Chetumal, which is now the capital of the Mexican state of Quintana Roo. By this time, he had a family there, having married the daughter of Nachan Kan, the local ruler.

For most of the communities in Yucatán, the first experience of the European presence took the form of a smallpox epidemic. It began, according to Mayan accounts, in 1513. The virus might have been carried by one of the shipwrecked sailors, or it might have spread overland from the Spaniards who had established a colony in Darien, in present-day Panama.

In 1517, an expedition led by Francisco Hernández de Córdoba sailed from Cuba and arrived at the northeastern tip of Yucatán. When Córdoba came ashore and encountered some Mayan fishermen, he attempted to learn the name of the place from them by speaking Spanish and gesturing. They understood him to be pointing to nearby houses and said *kotoch,* which means "our houses." As a result, he wrote the name of the place as "Cabo Catoche," which is what it is still called on maps. When he continued his inquiry, thinking to learn something about the land that lay beyond the shore, he heard the fishermen say something he wrote down as "Yucatán." What they actually said was *k'i ut'an,* which means, "The way he talks is funny."

From Cabo Catoche, the expedition continued westward and then southward along the Gulf coast of Yucatán as far as a town whose local name became Champotón in Spanish accounts. When the Spaniards came ashore, they met with military resistance, and despite their guns and swords, they were defeated and driven away. Hernández de Córdoba sailed back to Cuba, where he died of the multiple wounds he had received at Champotón.

In 1518, the expedition of Juan de Grijalva set sail from Cuba, first landing on the island of Kusamil, or "Place of Swallows," which became Cozumel in Spanish accounts. From there, he sailed down the east coast of Yucatán, catching sight of several towns

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that included the one whose ruins are known today as Tulum. Then, thinking to avenge the defeat of Córdoba, he reversed course and followed the coast all the way around to Champotón, on the other side of the peninsula. There he encountered fierce resistance and returned to Cuba with his wounds.

At some point during these early encounters, Mayans saw Spaniards consuming *op'*, a variety of anona or custard-apple they considered insipid and therefore not worth eating. From this observation came the earliest Yukatek term for the newcomers, *aj tz'utz' op'*, which means "anona suckers."

In 1519, Hernán Cortés landed on Cozumel, the first stop in an expedition that would eventually take him to the Aztec capital at Tenochtitlán. When his men first came ashore, they found some houses that had been hastily abandoned by people who saw them coming. They found no gold in these houses, but they took other items that interested them, including books. When Cortés found out he made them put everything back, with the possible exception of the book he later included in his first shipment of treasure to his sovereign, the Holy Roman Emperor and king of Spain. This book may have been the one that ended up in Dresden.

Cortés had two missionaries with him, and while he was on Cozumel, he staged the first performance of a religious drama that would be repeated many times in Mesoamerica. At his orders, his men rolled the image in a local temple down the stairway and replaced it with an image of the Madonna and Child, after which a mass was celebrated. The deity whose image they destroyed was probably Ix Cheel, or "Rainbow Woman," a divine midwife and healer whose temple was a destination for pilgrims from the mainland. Spanish accounts of these dramas always refer to the local icons as *ídolos,* as contrasted with Christian *imágenes.* Such terms as "idol" and "idolatry" belong to a Christian vocabulary whose purpose is to denigrate the religions of others, but they have been endlessly repeated by Western historians and anthropologists.

When Cortés reached the west coast of Yucatán, it was his desire to avenge Córdoba and Grijalva, but winds and tides prevented him from making a landfall at Champotón and he continued westward along the Gulf coast, making his next landing in Tabasco.

A score of stones named 13 Lord, beginning early in 1520 and ending late in 1539, brought Francisco de Montejo to Yucatán. He had been granted royal permission to conquer Yucatán, and he attempted to do so in 1527 and again in 1531. First he invaded from the east and then from the west, but when the score of stones named 13 Lord came to an end, all he had to show for his efforts was a small foothold at Champotón.

During the next score of stones, named 11 Lord and lasting from 1539 until 1559, an aging Francisco de Montejo left the task of conquering Yucatán to his son of the same name. The success of the younger Montejo was made possible by the collaboration of the Xius, the same western lineage that had brought about the destruction of Mayapán in 1461. In 1542, the younger Montejo founded a new city among the ruins of an ancient Mayan city called Ich Ka'an Sijo', "Birthplace of the Face of the Sky." He named the new city after Mérida, a Spanish city that was (and still is) famous for its Roman

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ruins. In 1546, an independence movement broke out among the kingdoms on the east side of the peninsula. The invaders counted their defeat of the rebels as the event that completed the conquest, which had taken almost twenty years.

NACHI COCOM GIVES DIEGO DE LANDA A WRITING LESSON

Among the early missionaries to arrive in the province of Yucatán was Diego de Landa, a Franciscan who came in 1549. In Sotutá, he learned a great deal about Mayan history and customs in his conversations with Nachi Cocom, who had recently been baptized with the name Juan. In his *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán,* Landa writes that "Don Juan Cocom was a man of great reputation" and "great discernment" who was "well acquainted with native matters." Cocom told him "many facts concerning antiquities" and showed him "a book which had belonged to his grandfather." Nevertheless, scholars have long been in the habit of attributing Landa's knowledge of Mayan history, culture, and writing to Gaspar Antonio Chi, whom he never so much as mentions. Chi was a Xiu from Maní who served as an interpreter for the provincial government.

The book Cocom showed to Landa was bound between two boards that had been stained with verdigris to keep fungus and insects away. Between them was a single long strip of paper, folded back and forth to make pages that were one handbreadth wide and two handbreadths high by Landa's measure. On one of these pages he saw a picture of a "large deer." This description is puzzling, because the images on a given page in a Mayan book are neither drawn to scale nor in perspective. There are larger and smaller *images* of deer, but there is no way to tell the image of a large deer from that of a small deer. Figure 63 shows an excerpt from a section of the Madrid Codex that deals with the trapping of deer. In the middle register is a large picture of the ventral side of a male deer, and the bottom register has two small pictures of trapped deer whose forelegs were hoisted off the ground by bent saplings when they stepped into nooses.

Fig. 63. A page from the Madrid Codex that deals with the trapping of deer. In the lowest of the three registers are two deer that have sprung traps, leaving them with their forelegs hoisted off the ground.

As with so many other things Landa says about Mayan books and writing, the best

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way to understand his "large deer" is to reconstruct his conversation with Cocom, working backward from his account of what Cocom said. Landa may have pointed to a particular picture of a deer and said something like, "Why is this one so large?" He describes Cocom's response this way: "His grandfather had told him that when large deer of this kind came into that country," meaning the cows that Spaniards brought with them, "the worship of the gods would cease." Later it came to light that Cocom was continuing Mayan religious practices in secret at this time, so he may have invented his interpretation of the image of the deer in order to throw Landa off the track. At the same time, such an interpretation would have appealed to Landa's sense of pride. The early missionaries were tireless seekers after evidence that their arrival in the New World had been prophesied, just as the arrival of the Messiah in Palestine had been prophesied in the Old Testament.

The system of writing used in the book seemed ponderous to Landa. Most of the characters were more complicated than letters of the alphabet, and they were far greater in number. Even so, he decided to find out how the spelling might go for some of the Mayan words he had learned. Perhaps because he had seen pictures of trapped deer in Cocom's book, the first word he thought of was *le,* the term for "noose." This was an ominous choice, because he would later conduct Inquisition trials in which the primary torture consisted in closing nooses around the wrists of Mayan witnesses and then hoisting them off the ground with their feet dangling.

Landa assumed from the start that he was dealing with an alphabetic writing system, but he could not understand why the results of his inquiry were so complicated. When he asked for the spelling of *le,* he made Cocom "understand that there are two letters," but here is what Cocom wrote (at right). As we now know, the first and third signs stand for the syllable *e,* and the second and fourth stand for the syllable *le.* To understand why Cocom wrote four signs, we must reconstruct Landa's side of the conversation. When Landa asked for two letters, he must have gone on to spell the word, naming its letters in Spanish as "ele, e" and then pronouncing the word, saying "le." Cocom heard four syllables—*e, le, e, le*— and wrote exactly what he heard.

Landa interpreted the second and third signs as the two letters he had expected, *l* and *e.* He imagined that the extra *e* at the beginning was an indication of the breathiness with which the *l* sound is pronounced in Mayan, a sort of hissing in which he thought he heard a faint foretaste of the vowel that follows *l* in *le.* But he still had one more sign to account for, the fourth one. Not realizing that it was the same as the second sign, he must have entered into an exchange that went something like this:

> "But what's this?" Landa asked, pointing to the fourth sign.
> "Well, that is *le,*" Cocom replied.
> "All by itself?" Landa asked.
> "Yes," said Cocom.

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From this response, Landa concluded that it must be a Mayan custom to follow the spelling of the individual sounds of a word with a final character that sums everything up. He could have found out, had he asked, that the second and fourth signs were the same, though they looked slightly different. But it seems that his discomfort with casting himself in the role of student was such that he preferred the invention of a private theory about the information he had been given to the embarrassment of seeming to be a slow learner.

Cocom, on his side, must have been wondering what Landa's problem was. Hadn't he given the Spaniard a spelling that used only two different "letters"? Not that anyone but him would ever say something like *ele e le,* which was nonsense—unless he actually meant to be saying what it almost sounded like he was saying, "testicle blade noose"

Still hoping for simplicity, Landa chose another monosyllabic word for the next step in his writing lesson. He asked Cocom to spell *ha,* the word for "water," and he demanded just two letters again, naming them in Spanish as "ache, a," and then saying "ha." By now Cocom understood that Landa really wanted two "letters" and two only, even though he had once again pronounced four syllables. Cocom's solution to this problem was to omit one syllable and write *ache ha* in two parts (at right). In the first part, the left half is a sign for the syllable *a* and the right half is a sign for *che,* and the separate sign that follows is for *ha.* Landa mistakenly labeled the entire first part as "a," but he correctly labeled the second part as "ha." As in the case of the "e" before "le," it seemed to him that this "a" before "ha" must call for a breathy pronunciation of the consonant in *ha.*

Again, Cocom must have wondered whether Landa had any idea what he was saying when he asked that his statements be written down. It happens that *ache* is a word and that *ache ha,* if anyone ever said such a thing, would mean "Hello, water."

Now Landa decided to ask Cocom to write something longer, and while he was at it he may have tried to explain what a "sentence" was. In any case, he left the choice of words up to Cocom, and the result was this sentence:

The first sign stands for the syllable *ma,* which in this context is a word that makes the sentence negative. Then comes *in,* meaning the pronoun "I," spelled with two signs. The first one is for *i* and the second for *ne,* with the context signaling that the final *e* is not pronounced. The last two signs, standing for *k'a* and *ti,* spell the verb *k'ati,* "to want." *Ma in k'ati* is the result, meaning, "I don't want to."

Landa transcribed this entire sentence into alphabetic writing as if it were a single word, but he wrote down a correct translation. At this point in the interview, there may have been a moment of silence while he struggled with the thought that Cocom might have intended this sentence to send a message. Whether or not he was troubled by this possibility, he decided to press on, but with another change in his line of ques-

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tioning. His new project was to elicit what he called the Mayan "abecedario," or ABCs, letter by letter. When he asked for the letter *a,* he got three versions (at left). We know now that all of these signs represent the syllable *a.* The first one is the same sign Cocom used in his spelling of *ache.*

When Landa asked for the next letter, whose name is pronounced "be" in Spanish, he got two versions (at right). Both of these signs stand for the syllable *b'e,* and the first one happens to be ideographic. The word for "road" is *b'e,* and this sign is crossed by a road with a footprint on it. It is a shorthand footprint with only three dots for the toes, like the footprints in the diagram of time in chapter 19. But Landa was not interested in what these signs looked like. He only wanted to know how they matched up with the letters of his alphabet, which don't look like anything except themselves. Once he had his *b'e,* or rather two of them, he moved on, not realizing he was dealing with signs for syllables and should ask for *b'a, b'i, b'o,* and *b'u.*

Because Landa was from Castile, he would have sounded as though he had a lisp when he asked for "c," saying "the" rather than "se." Mayan languages have no "th" sound, but Cocom came as close as he could (at left). Landa labeled this sign as "c," but the syllable it stands for has turned out to be *tze.*

By the time they got to *z,* Cocom was probably at the end of his patience. The name of this letter, in Landa's pronunciation, would have come out as "theta." So Cocom heard two syllables, not one, with a "th" sound into the bargain. Here is what he wrote in response (at right). No one, in all the time since then, has been able to figure out what he meant by this.

ACTS OF FAITH

The next score of stones, named 9 Lord, began during 1559 and ended during 1579. Landa was becoming increasingly alarmed by rumors of covert activities among the Christian converts of Yucatán, who were said to be performing indigenous religious rites that included human sacrifice. In 1562, he and his fellow Franciscans conducted a series of trials in the name of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, though they had not been authorized to do so. They tortured 4,549 witnesses, of whom 157 died as a result and 32 ended up maimed or crippled. Another 13 individuals committed suicide before they could be arrested, and 18 others disappeared under circumstances that pointed to suicide. Two suspects who were already incarcerated in a monastery managed to end their lives by striking themselves in the throat with a stone, as if to make doubly sure of not having to speak. And finally, 140 persons were convicted posthumously, resulting in the disinterment and cremation of their remains.

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The Inquisition trials in the town of Maní were followed by a grand public ceremony, held on the side of the monastery that faced the plaza. The prisoners came out in penitential robes, carrying images, books, and the bones of the guilty parties whose graves had been opened. Their sentences, which included periods of penance and servitude lasting as long as five years, were translated for them by Gaspar Antonio Chi. Then they were given as many as two hundred lashes and were forced to throw the images, books, and bones into a fire. Of the books, Landa wrote, "As they contained nothing in which there were not to be seen superstition and lies of the devil, we burned them all, which they regretted to an amazing degree."

A month later, Landa reconvened his tribunal in Sotutá. The stories he extracted from witnesses in this town featured Juan (Nachi) Cocom and his brother Lorenzo as the main characters. Juan had died some years before, and his brother had committed suicide ten days before Landa arrived in town. The most sensational story about them concerned the fate of two girls they had allegedly taken to the churchyard, where they had set up images. They tied the girls to crosses, stood the crosses up, and then sermonized, saying, "Let these girls die crucified, even as Jesus Christ did, he whom they say is our lord, though we do not know whether this is so." Then the two brothers took the girls down and cut them open, offering their hearts to the images and their bodies to a nearby well.

Landa had no doubt that this story was true, revealing an act of blasphemy that could scarcely have been more diabolical. For recent generations of scholars, who have also taken it to be true, the story has served as an especially powerful example of syncretism, the process whereby native peoples combine Christian rites with their own. But what seems more likely, now that we better understand the intimate relationship between torturer and victim in the proceedings of the Inquisition, is that the story was created by two imaginations, working together. The interrogator asks leading questions that contain clues to his fantasies, and the witness tries to imagine answers that will fulfill and even exceed those fantasies. If the story that emerges lacks enough circumstantial detail to make it seem real, the interrogator demands more details and the witness provides them. But there are limits. The witness in the case of the Cocom brothers, who may have been repelled at the thought of nails in the hands and feet of the two children, declared that they had been tied to the crosses.

As for the general plot of the story of the crucified children, it was already well known to the interrogators. At the end of the fifteenth century, tales of ritual murders committed by Jews had circulated throughout Spain. The most sensational story was that of the Santo Niño de la Guardia, which resulted in the trial and execution of six Jews and six Jewish converts to Christianity in 1491. According to the defendants' own testimony, taken under torture, they had carried out a ritual in which they crucified a Christian child, a boy, and then *cut his heart out.* For Landa and his colleagues, the recent history of Spain seemed to be repeating itself in New Spain.

Francisco Toral, the first bishop to serve in Yucatán, arrived while the Inquisition was in progress. Opposed to the use of torture, he put an end to the trials and

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conducted an investigation of Landa's actions. Concluding that the testimony given in the trials was largely false, he reduced some sentences, revoked others, and released all prisoners. Landa fought back for a time, but in 1564 he left Yucatán and took his case to Spain, just ahead of a royal summons that would have forced him to appear there. While awaiting his hearing in Spain, he wrote his *Relación*. He was eventually exonerated, but Philip II removed jurisdiction in matters of the faith from monastic orders and exempted all Indians from prosecution by the Inquisition.

When Bishop Toral died in 1571, the man appointed as his successor was none other than Diego de Landa, who returned to Yucatán in 1573. He died in April 1579, not long after the beginning of a new score of stones named 7 Lord.

BOOKS AFTER THE BURNING

The story of Landa's public burning of books in 1562 has been retold many times, acquiring the proportions of a myth in the process. Landa has become the antihero who brought the Mayan writing system to a sudden and definitive end, clearing the way for the triumph of the roman alphabet. It is true that Mayans began using the alphabet to write in their own languages during this period, but the Mayan script continued in use for a long time. As we saw in chapter 14, the confiscation of the Madrid Codex did not occur until 1607. It is even possible that it had not yet been written at the time of the burning.

In an account written in 1696, Fray Andrés de Avendaño reported seeing Mayan books that contained accounts of successive scores of years, which is true of the Paris Codex. He understood these accounts to be prophetic, and he had attempted to use this notion to his advantage in January of that year, when he was in the rainforest on a mission to an Itza town on an island in Lake Petén Itzá. The Spanish name for this town was Tayasal, from a Nahuatl source, but the Itza name was Nojpeten, "Big Island." Avendaño's plan was to persuade Kan Ek', who resided on the island and was the lord of one of two Itza principalities that were still independent, that the time was right to submit to the Spanish crown and accept the Christian religion. In arguing his case, he cited the count of scores of stones, apparently thinking that a change to a new score had taken place recently.

As things turned out, Kan Ek' and his council disagreed with Avendaño's calendrical computations, telling him that the time for a change had not yet arrived. They were right: the completion of 10 Lord, the current score, would not come until a year and a half later, on the Gregorian day July 15, 1697. The new score would be 8 Lord, and as we will see in the next chapter, the Itzas might well have expected that this date would bring major changes in their situation.

The colonial government of Yucatán, unimpressed with Avendaño's attempts to bring the Itzas under control by peaceful means, launched a major military assault that

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destroyed the town on Big Island. The attack took place on March 13, 1697, when the arrival of the new score of years was still four months away, which may partly explain why the Itzas put up a massive resistance. But when 8 Lord did come, the change it brought was not submission. For the next three generations, the Itzas and their Mayan neighbors in the rainforest engaged in active and passive forms of resistance, staging revolts or taking refuge in places that were beyond Spanish control.

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21 The Books of Chilam Balam

WHILE IT IS TRUE that the early missionaries in Yucatán and elsewhere in the Mayan world sought to replace the Mayan script with the roman alphabet, they did not seek to replace Mayan languages with Spanish. Working in collaboration with native speakers, they adapted the alphabet to the sounds of those languages and produced grammars and dictionaries, along with translations of sermons, prayers, catechisms, and confessionals. Each parish had a native *maestro cantor,* or "choirmaster," whose duties included keeping the parish records, teaching alphabetic writing, and selecting and training scribes. Choirmasters were recruited from high-ranking families, and their pupils were boys from such families.

Many of the choirmasters were individuals who had served as shaman-priests in the older religion, or who would have been selected for such roles. Time and again they were discovered to be serving both religions, keeping "idols" in their schoolhouses and possessing manuscripts that were not in conformity with church doctrine. The Madrid Codex was confiscated from a choirmaster, and around that same time (the early seventeenth century) a copybook was taken from another choirmaster when it was found to contain an alphabetic version of a Mayan story of how the world began.

The principal surviving sources of works by the indigenous authors of colonial Yucatán are the books named for the Chilam Balam, or "Jaguar Spokesman," a Mayan prophet who lived in the period just before and just after the Spanish invasion. Each of the nine surviving books is written in the alphabet on paper of European manufacture, and each is named for the town where it was acquired by a collector or where the original still resides. The books that have received the most attention are those of Maní, Chumayel, Tizimín, and Kaua.

The Chilam Balam books have overlapping contents, but each one has some features that are unique. All of the books are anthologies of works that were originally committed to alphabetic writing by different authors at different times. Their contents include origin stories, prophecies, song texts, rituals, almanacs, medical treatises, chronicles, and detailed accounts of historical events. Also included are translations of Spanish catechisms and astrological treatises, together with diagrams from Spanish works that deal with such topics as the scientific explanation of eclipses and the art of summoning spirits with magical diagrams.

In most Chilam Balam books, the only Mayan sign that appears within the otherwise alphabetic text is the one for the day name Lord *(Ajaw),* but the book from Maní has passages that include signs for all twenty day names. The signs have been re-

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Fig. 64. The names of five consecutive days—K'an, Chikchan, Kimi, Manik', and Lamat—as they are written in the Dresden Codex (at left) and in the Chilam Balam books of Maní (in the middle) and Chumayel (right).

designed, as can be seen from a comparison with the versions in the Dresden Codex (figure 64). The Maní forms have rectangular frames like the ones that enclose the day names in some Aztec and Mixtec books. They have also been made more abstract, perhaps in response to the lack of imagery in the letters of the alphabet. But each of them (including the ones not pictured here) retains features that distinguish the Dresden day signs from one another, and in that sense, they remain legible from the perspective of the original writing system. There may well have been other experiments in the redesigning of Mayan signs, but they have yet to come to light.

Some of the writings incorporated in the Chilam Balam books may date as early as the sixteenth century, but most of them are probably later. The surviving books are the end products of a long process of copying and recopying. The earliest manuscripts date from the late seventeenth century, but most date from the eighteenth century. The excerpts presented below and in the next two chapters come from the Chumayel manuscript. Nearly everything in its pages is written in the hand of Don Juan Josef Hoil, who signed and dated his work in 1782. Minor additions appear in other hands, some of them on a page he left blank, that date as late as 1838.

THE RECORD OF EACH SCORE OF STONES

Among the contents of the Chumayel manuscript are five chronicles that organize events according to the score of stones in which they occurred or were predicted to occur. Each score is named for the date of its completion, as reckoned by the 260-day divinatory calendar. As we have seen in previous chapters, the final day name is always Ajaw, or "Lord," but with a changing number. All of these chronicles express the notion that events occurring during scores whose names have the same number may be similar (but not identical). Thus, a relatively recent event may be read as having been prefigured by an event in the more distant past, or it may be read as prefiguring a future event. In two of the chronicles, the entry for a given score of stones combines an account of the past with a prophecy. In the other three chronicles, the focus is on

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the rhythm of past events, leaving it up to the reader to project that rhythm into the future.

The regularities in these chronicles appear to be the result of a backward projection of a theory of history that developed during the colonial period. Authors of the Classic period certainly looked for ways to connect the actions of living rulers to those of their human and divine predecessors, but they did not create narratives in which the major events in the history of a kingdom occurred at regular intervals or were projected into the future by means of such intervals. Moreover, the authors of the chronicles written during the colonial period were familiar with the prophetic theory of history that was brought to Yucatán by Christian missionaries. When we consider their works in the light of these circumstances, they have the look of an experiment. The authors were not simply preserving their history against the possibility of loss but were giving it a prophetic reinterpretation.

The fine point here, easy to miss if we simply look for evidence of Christian "influence," is that the authors of these chronicles did not remake their own history into a subset of the master narrative of the Christian invaders. They did reexamine prior history for a pattern of destiny, but in so doing, they used Mayan rather than Christian ways of measuring time. And when they reached the point in their narratives where the invaders arrived, they treated the Christian calendar as an *addition* to their own rather than as a *substitute* for it.

The chronicle presented here (from pages 74–77 of the Chumayel manuscript) is the first of the three that focus on the past. Its main subject is the history of the Itza people, which it traces through four full groups of thirteen score stones each and then continues for seven score more. The entry for the first score of stones named 13 Lord states that "the mat was put in order," referring to the fact that in matters of ceremony, 13 Lord was reckoned as completing a series of thirteen score stones. The twelve boundaries separating those scores were thought of as the twelve *wutz',* or "folds," in a mat like the one in figure 65. Such a mat is made by plaiting two strips of cattail leaf, with the cut ends of the strips sticking out at the corners. Each of the long sides of the mat has four folds and each of the short sides has two, making a total of twelve. The coming of a new set of thirteen score stones, beginning with 11 Lord, brought the construction of a new mat of twelve folds. Several of the major events in the present chronicle are described as being separated by the folding of thirteen score stones, but in these cases, the change from one set of folds to another takes place between 8 Lord and 6 Lord rather than between 13 Lord and 11 Lord.

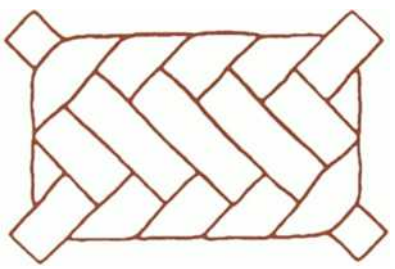

Fig. 65. Mat with twelve folds, made from two strips of cattail leaf.

The score that opens the chronicle, ending on 6 Lord, is described as the one in which Chi'ch'e'n Itza, or "Mouth of the Well," was founded. It correlates with a period running from December 435 to August 455 on the Christian calendar, but the authors of these chronicles

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did not project Christian dates backward beyond the Spanish invasion. Instead, they treated the Christian calendar as if it had not existed until the invaders arrived. The archeological estimate for the founding of Mouth of the Well puts that event three centuries later than does the present chronicle, but future excavations may narrow the difference.

Each time 8 Lord comes around, the Itzas leave their homes, and an implicit 8 Lord departure from an unnamed place precedes the first event in the chronicle, the founding of Mouth of the Well during 6 Lord. Other chronicles have the Itzas reoccupying Mouth of the Well during the third occurrence of 6 Lord, but in this one their return to that place is implicit. During the second and fourth occurrences of 4 Lord, the Itzas occupy land at places other than Mouth of the Well. For the second 4 Lord, that place is Chak'an Putun, or "Savannah of the Beans," which was probably near Lake Petén Itzá. The chronicle has them arriving there for the first time two scores earlier, during the same 8 Lord in which they left their previous home. For the fourth 4 Lord, the place of arrival is Mayapán, which by then had replaced Mouth of the Well as the principal city of Yucatán.

The irregularities in the chronicle, such as occurrences of 6 Lord and 4 Lord in which nothing happens and the splitting of the arrival at Savannah of the Beans between 8 Lord and 4 Lord, are evidence of an unresolved tension between a theory of history and historical records that were relatively free of theory. As the narrative comes closer to the present of its composers, the frequency of events increases, the intervals that separate them become more irregular, and their descriptions become more detailed.

During the third occurrence of 8 Lord, the Itzas leave their homes because of an attack by the lord of Izamal, a town northwest of Mouth of the Well. The person to blame for this attack is Junak Ke'el, or "Forever Cold," the lord of Mayapán. The narrator reports that he "made tortillas" with the people of Izamal, which seems to mean that he conspired with them, persuading them to take his side by means of "deceitful words." During the following 4 Lord, the Itzas find new homes at Mayapán, presumably at a time when Forever Cold is no longer on the scene.

Disaster strikes again with the next return of 8 Lord, when disagreements over *multepal,* or "joint rule," result in the fall of Mayapán and the dismantling of the wall that surrounded it. Other sources indicate that this incident was the latest in a long feud between the Itza lineage of Cocom and the non-Itza lineage of Xiu. On the present occasion, the Xius killed the first-ranking Cocom lord and all but one of his brothers. During the next 4 Lord, "vultures entered the fortress," which sounds like a further description of the decline of Mayapán. The writer makes no mention of a new home for the Itzas here or in the remaining entries in this chronicle, but we know that the Cocom lineage ended up in Sotutá, the town where Diego de Landa would eventually meet Juan Nachi Cocom.

In the same paragraph with the vultures of 4 Lord is an entry for 2 Lord, the only score of stones for which no roman numeral appears in the margin. All previous in-

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stances of 2 Lord lack events, but now it becomes the score that brings *noj k'ak'il,* the "great fire" or "great fever," which was smallpox. By Christian reckoning, this score began in 1500 and ended in 1520.

THE DEATH OF THE RAIN PRIEST

A score named 13 Lord comes next, bringing the death of Napot Xiu, a rain priest. According to Landa, he was the leader of a group of Xiu pilgrims who were seeking to end a drought by making sacrifices at Mouth of the Well. To do so, they needed to pass through Itza territory, and they were offered hospitality by the Cocoms, who seemed to be setting past differences aside. But once Napot Xiu and his party were all inside the house that was opened to them, they suffered the same fate as Beowulf and his companions. The house was torched, and everyone in it was killed. Landa refrains from naming the man who played host to the Xius, but he was none other than Nachi (later Juan) Cocom. Whether or not the guests knew the identity of their host, they were dealing with a grandson of the Cocom lord whose brothers had been killed by the Xius at Mayapán.

The entry for 13 Lord includes a detailed explanation of the date of the death of Napot Xiu. First, the chronicler says that it occurred during the sixth year of 13 Lord. Counting the 365-day year that was already under way when that score of stones began, and taking into account the fact that the dates in the twenty-day periods of years were counted from one to twenty (rather than from zero to nineteen) at this time, the sixth year would have begun on 9 Night 1 Mat (9 Ak'b'al 1 Pop), July 21, 1525, on the Julian calendar then in use by Europeans. Next, the chronicler tells us that the divinatory date 4 Net (4 K'at) arrived when the first of that year's scores of days had been completed, meaning that the calendar-round date now stood at 4 Net 1 Sign (4 K'at 1 Wo). Then, after a digression concerning the violence of the year that was under way, he returns to the question of dating by moving ahead to the next score of days after the one named Sign, mentioning 1 Hunter (1 Sip). After this step, he puts the number of completed scores of days at three, starting from 1 Sign, which brings the count to the last day in the score named Bat (Sotz'). He mentions only the divinatory part of that date, but the full calendar-round date would have been 9 Ceiba 20 Bat (9 Imix 20 Sotz'), equivalent to October 7, 1525. That was the day when Napot Xiu died.

Up to this point, the entry for 13 Lord is quite precise in its time reckoning. But it ends with a statement that must have been added by someone who lacked an understanding of calendars (whether Mayan or European) and of arabic numerals. The anno Domini of the death, according to this addition, was "158."

The next score of stones, 11 Lord, which ran from 1539 to 1559, brings the arrival of the *k'ul winikob',* or "godly people," possibly referring to the Franciscan missionaries who began arriving in the 1540s. But the rest of the entry appears to refer to the impact of Spanish invasion in general, which was "ruinous." The statement that the condi-

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tions of this period had their beginning in 1513 is likely a reference to the smallpox epidemic described in the entry for 2 Lord.

The entry for 9 Lord presents the notion of "rebirth," adopting the rhetoric of evangelism. Diego de Landa conducted his Inquisition during this score of stones, but he is not mentioned here. Instead the writer introduces Bishop Toral, who put an end to hanging by the wrists. On the Christian calendar, the year of his intervention was 1564, but here it appears as 1546, a transposition that may have originated with the same person who wrote 158 at the end of the entry for 13 Lord.

The entry for 7 Lord, which began near the end of 1598, is brief: "Bishop de Landa died." The score of stones was only twenty-three days old when he died, but the chronicler chose his passing as the memorable event of the entire score. Two more scores of stones, 5 Lord and 3 Lord, complete the chronicle, reaching as far as 1638. Following the pattern of all their previous occurrences, these two scores lack events.

In the pages that follow, a translation of this chronicle is placed opposite a photographic image of the manuscript.

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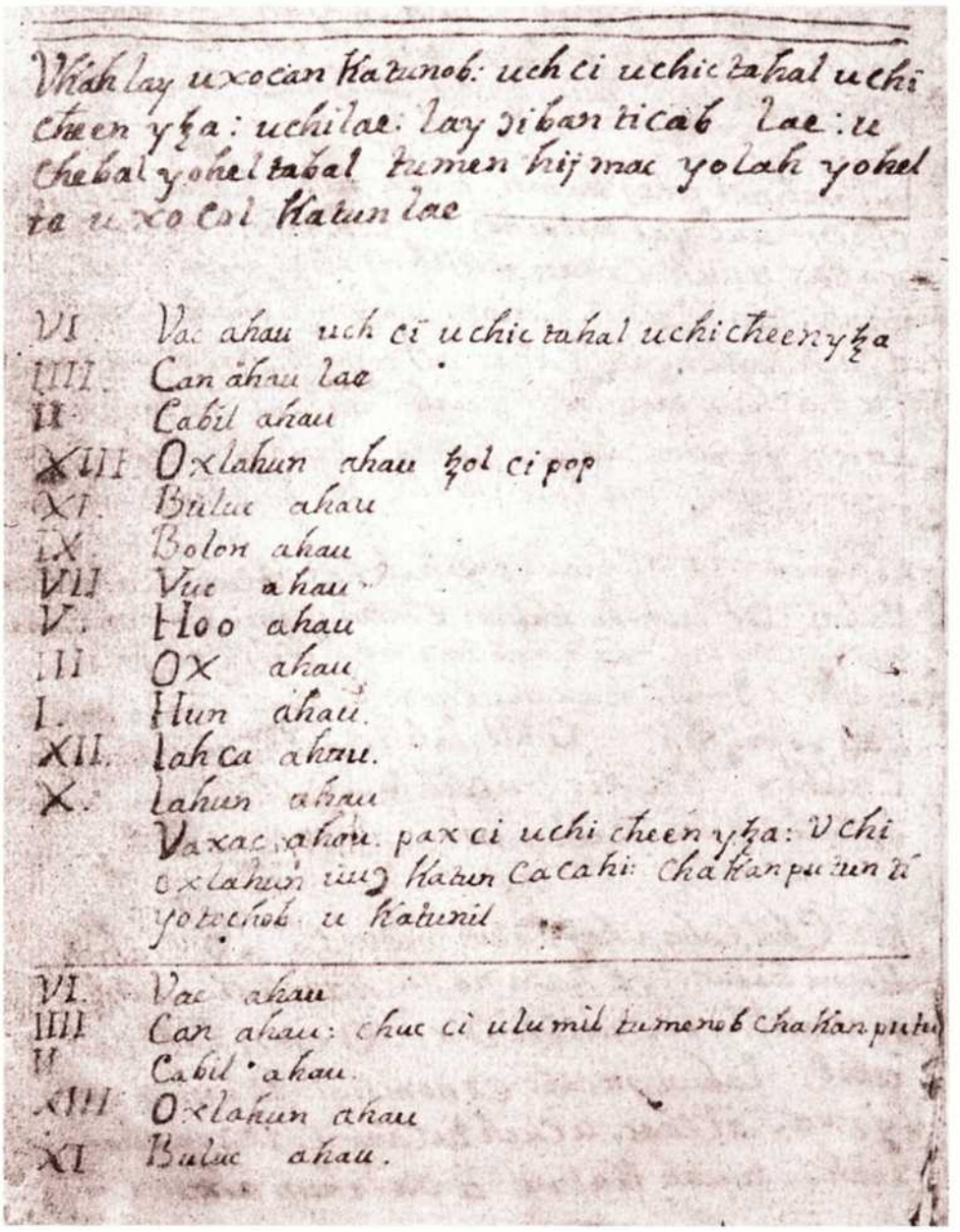

Vhah lay uxocan Hatunob: uch ci uchic tahal uchi cheen yţa: uchilae: lay xiban ti cab lae: u chebal yohel tabal tumen hij mac yolah yohel ta u xocol Hatun lae

VI Vac ahau uch ci uchic tahal uchi cheen yţa
IIII Can ahau lae
II Cabil ahau
XIII Oxlahun ahau ţol ci pop
XI Buluc ahau
IX Bolon ahau
VII Vuc ahau
V Hoo ahau
III Ox ahau
I Hun ahau.
XII Iahca ahau.
X Lahun ahau
Vaxac ahau. pax ci uchi cheen yţa: V chi oxlahun iuil Hatun Cacahi: Chakan putun ti yotochob u Hatunil

VI Vac ahau
IIII Can ahau: chuc ci ulumil tumenob Chakan putu
II Cabil ahau.
XIII Oxlahun ahau
XI Buluc ahau.

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The record of each score of stones since the occasion when the Mouth of the Well of the Itza was found. This is written for the town, compiled so that it can be known by anyone who wishes to learn the count of these scores of stones.

VI Six Lord. The Mouth of the Well of the Itza was found.
IIII Four Lord then.
II Two Lord.
XIII Thirteen Lord. The mat was put in order.
XI Eleven Lord.
IX Nine Lord.
VII Seven Lord.
V Five Lord.
III Three Lord.
I One Lord.
XII Twelve Lord.
X Ten Lord.
Eight Lord. The Mouth of the Well of the Itza was abandoned. It happened when thirteen score stones had been folded in that town. They built their homes in Savannah of the Beans during this score.

VI Six Lord.
IIII Four Lord. Land was occupied by them at Savannah of the Beans.
II Two Lord.
XIII Thirteen Lord.
XI Eleven Lord.

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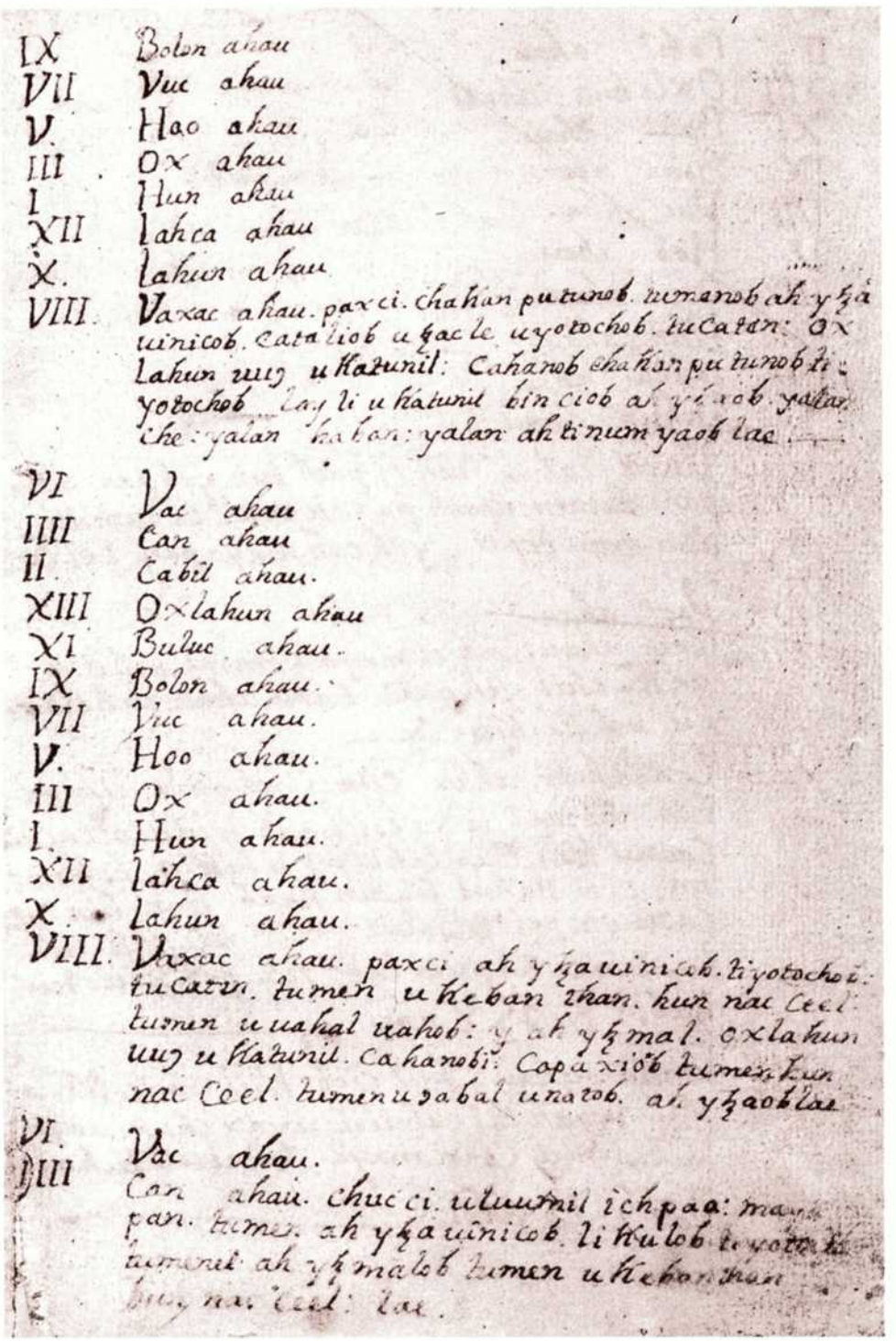

IX Bolon ahau
VII Vuc ahau
V. Hoo ahau
III Ox ahau
I Hun ahau
XII Lahca ahau
X. Lahun ahau
VIII. Vaxac ahau. paxci. chahun putunob. numanob ah yꝫa uinicob. cata liob u ꝫac le uyotochob. tu Catun: Ox Lahun uuy u Katunil: Cahanob chahun putunob ti: yotochob lay li u Katunil bin ciob a. yꝫaob. yalan che: yalan kaban: yalan ah tinum yaob lae.

VI Vac ahau
IIII Can ahau
II. Cabil ahau.
XIII Oxlahun ahau
XI Buluc ahau.
IX Bolon ahau.
VII Vuc ahau.
V. Hoo ahau.
III Ox ahau.
I. Hun ahau.
XII Lahca ahau.
X. Lahun ahau.
VIII. Vaxac ahau. paxci ah yꝫauinicob. ti yotochob. tu Catun. tumen u Kheban chan. kun nac Ceel. tumen u uahal uahob: y ah yꝫmal. Oxlahun uuy u Katunil. Cahanob: Copa xiob tumen kun nac Ceel. tumen u zabal unaob. a. yꝫaob lae

VI. Vac ahau.
IIII Can ahau. chuc ci. ululmil ichpaa: may pan. tumen. ah yꝫauinicob. li Kulob. u yotoch tumenil ah yꝫmalob tumen u Kheban chan kuy nac Ceel: lae.

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IX Nine Lord.

VII Seven Lord.

V Five Lord.

III Three Lord.

I One Lord.

XII Twelve Lord.

X Ten Lord.

VIII Eight Lord. Savannah of the Beans was abandoned by the Itza people. Then they came in search of homes again. Thirteen score stones were folded while they lived in Savannah of the Beans, in their homes. As usual, this was the score of stones when the Itzas went beneath the trees, beneath the bushes, beneath the vines, in misery.

VI Six Lord.

IIII Four Lord.

II Two Lord.

XIII Thirteen Lord.

XI Eleven Lord.

IX Nine Lord.

VII Seven Lord.

V Five Lord.

III Three Lord.

I One Lord.

XII Twelve Lord.

X Ten Lord.

VIII Eight Lord. The Itza people abandoned their homes again because of the deceitful words of Forever Cold, because he made tortillas with the people of Izamal. Thirteen score stones were folded while they lived there, then they left because of Forever Cold, because he interfered in the affairs of the Itzas.

VI Six Lord.

IIII Four Lord. Land was occupied at the fortress of Mayapán by the Itza people, the ones whose homes had been ruined because of the people of Izamal, because of the deceitful words of Forever Cold.

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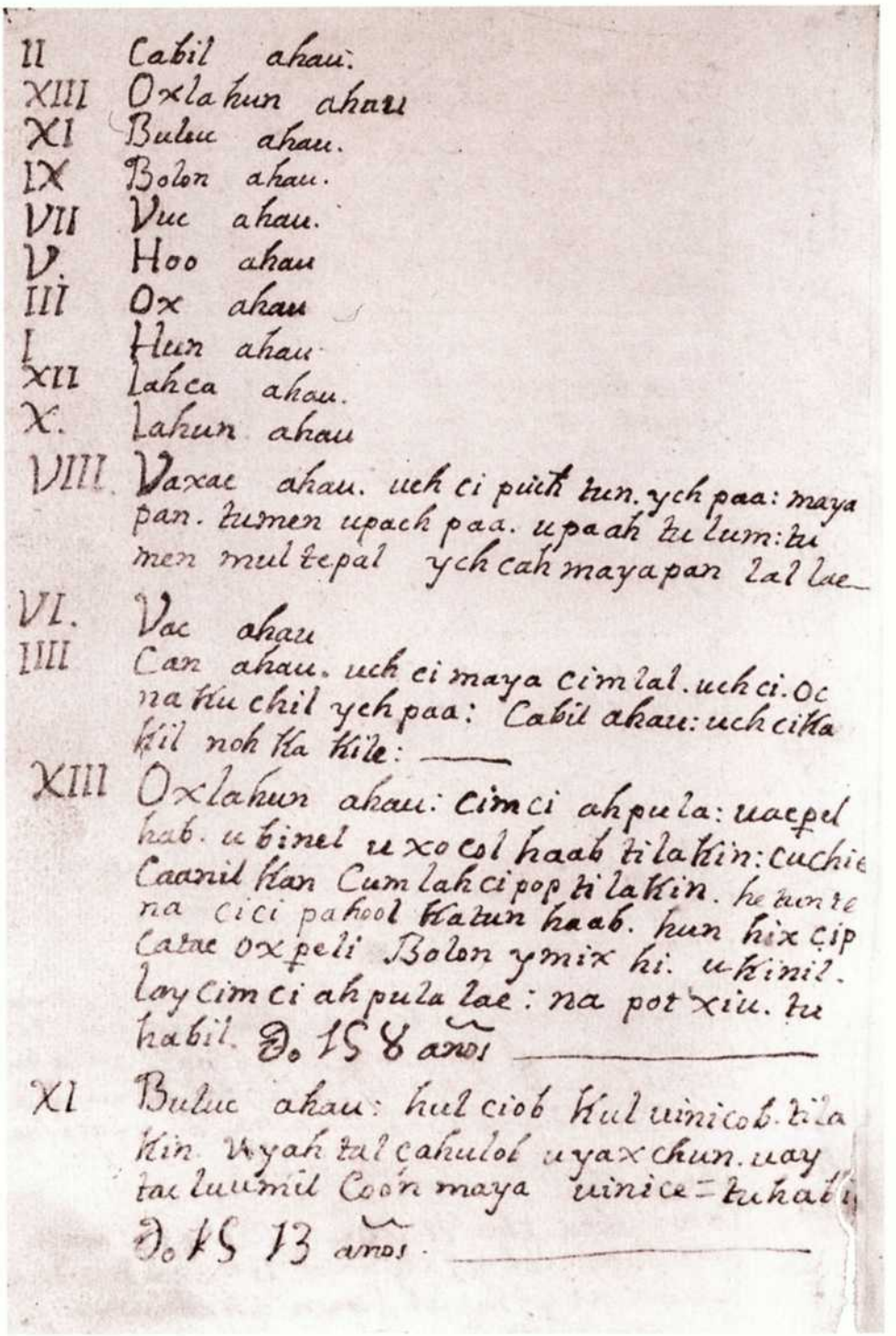

II Cabil ahau.
XIII Oxlahun ahau
XI Bulue ahau.
IX Bolon ahau.
VII Vuc ahau.
V. Hoo ahau
III Ox ahau
I Hun ahau
XII Lahca ahau.
X. Lahun ahau
VIII Vaxac ahau. uch ci puch tun. ych paa: maya pan. tumen upach paa. upaah tu lum: tu men multepal ych cah mayapan lal lae
VI. Vac ahau
IIII Can ahau. uch ci maya cimlal. uch ci. Oc na tu chil ych paa: Cabil ahau: uch cita kil noh ka kile: ——
XIII Oxlahun ahau: cimci ahpula: uacpel hab. u binel u xoc ol haab ti lakin: cuchie Caanil kan Cumlah ci pop ti lakin. he tun re na cici pahool katun haab. hun hix cip catac oxpeli Bolon ymix hi. u kinil. lay cimci ah pula lae: na pot xiu. tu habil. Do 158 años ——————
XI Bulue ahau: hul cioc kul uinicob. ti la kin. Uyah tal cahulol u yax chun. uay tac luumil Coon maya uinice = tu hab
Do 13 años. ——————

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II Two Lord.

XIII Thirteen Lord.

XI Eleven Lord.

IX Nine Lord.

VII Seven Lord.

V Five Lord.

III Three Lord.

I One Lord.

XII Twelve Lord.

X Ten Lord.

VIII Eight Lord. This was when stones were toppled at the fortress of Mayapán, because of the capture of the fortress. They tore down the walls because of joint rule in the town of Mayapán.

VI Six Lord.

IIII Four Lord. This was when death came easily, when vultures entered the fortress. Two Lord. This was the time of the fire, the great fire. ____

XIII Thirteen Lord. The rain priest died in the sixth year. The count of the years passed to the east. Four Net came when Mat had been completed in the east. Because suspicion was everywhere, it was a violent year. Then came 1 Hunter, and when three score days had been completed, Nine Ceiba was the day when he died, the rain priest Napot Xiu. It was in the year the anno Domini 15[25]. _____

XI Eleven Lord. The godly people arrived from the east. They brought about a situation that was ruinous. It first began to happen here in this land of ours, we who are the Maya people, in the year the anno Domini 1513. _____

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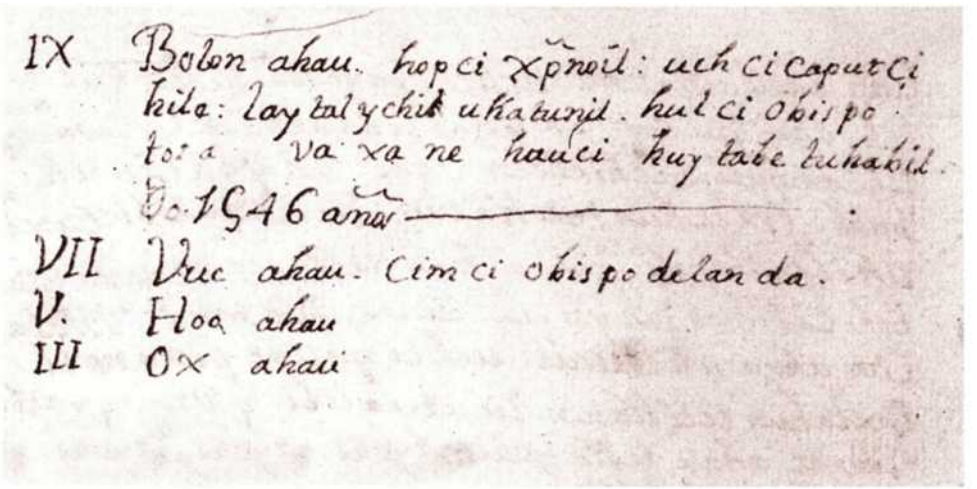
IX Bolon ahau. hop ci Xp̃noil: uch ci caput ci
hila: lay tal y chib u katunil. hul ci obispo
tos a va xa ne hau ci huy tabe tuhabil.
Do. 1546 añs
VII Vuc ahau. Cim ci obispo delan da.
V. Hoa ahau
III Ox ahau

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IX Nine Lord. Christianity began. Rebirth took place. It was this score of stones that brought the arrival of Bishop Toral as well, who put an end to hanging by the wrists in the year anno Domini 15[64]. _____

VII Seven Lord. Bishop de Landa died.

V Five Lord.

III Three Lord.

Even when events were no longer reckoned in terms of Mayan measures of time, the desire to discover rhythms in historical occurrences continued. At the end of the last of the five Chumayel chronicles that go by scores of stones, Juan Josef Hoil added this entry on the day of a hurricane: "Today, on the 18th of August in the year 1766, what occurred was a great windstorm. I have written a record of it so that it can be numbered, so it can be seen how many years will pass until this happens again."

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22 Understanding the Language of Suyua

ON THE LAST DAY of a score of stones in Yucatán, local officials called "leaders of the towns" *(b'atab'il kajob')* were submitted to an examination that determined whether they were worthy to continue in office during the following score. It was administered by a higher official called a "man in command" *(halach winik)*. Officials with these two titles continued to play a role during the colonial period in Yucatán, and questions and answers from the examination are recorded on pages 28–32 of the Chilam Balam manuscript from Chumayel. This version of the examination was prepared for use at the end of a score of stones that ran from 1618 to 1638, ending on Three Lord (Ox Ajaw).

In his preface to the examination, the author makes the radical suggestion that "Mr. Gov. General" (Señor Gov. Mariscal), the head of the Spanish colonial administration, ought to be among those who are examined. He does not identify the governor by name but notes that his trees and his residence (meaning his hacienda) are at a place called Stack of Tortillas (Tzuk Waxim), east of the Birthplace of the Sky's Face (Ich Ka'an Sijo'), or Mérida. By saying that the governor's "day in office" and "way of life" will come to an end, the author likens him to town officials who fail the examination.

The author presents seven questions and answers. He titles his work *Suyua t'an yetel na't,* in which *t'an* means "language" or "speech" and refers to the questions, and *na't* means "understanding" or "comprehension" and refers to the answers. The language in which the questions are posed is distinguished from ordinary usage by the adjective *suyua,* whose meanings include "mixed" and "confused." In this context, it means that the language of the questions is metaphorical rather than literal. The questions are riddles, and the answers require an understanding of metaphor.

When the word *suyua* occurs as part of the name of a town, it indicates that more than one language is spoken there. Among the several towns called Holtun in the Chumayel book, one is distinguished from the others by the double name Holtun Suyua. The exact location of this town is unknown, but it is described as the western member of a four-directional group of towns that bounded a world in which Chichén Itzá occupied the central position. It could have been as far west as Tabasco, where there were towns whose residents spoke a Mayan language alongside Nahuatl. In the Popol Vuh, a city where many languages are spoken is called Tulan Suyua. The name Tulan signifies a place where pilgrims could have their royal status validated, which is why the founders of the K'iche' kingdom went there. The name Suyua, in addition to fitting the multilingual character of the city, suggests that pilgrims might have been required to solve riddles.

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The man in command poses each of his seven riddles by asking for something he wants in *suyua* language, and if the leader of a town is "in the lineage of lords," he will answer by bringing the desired object. One such object, called for by the third question, is a "shining white wreath" made from the flowers of a tree *(Pulmeria alba)* that is native to Yucatán and has long been cultivated there. The "coagulated blood" inside the flowers is their nectar, and its source, referred to as "she who has no mother" or "father," is the patron deity of the tree. Her male counterpart resides in a tree (not mentioned here) that is similar but bears red flowers *(Plumeria rubra)*. In English, the term for *Plumeria* flowers is "frangipani" (from Italian), whereas in Spanish, it is "flor de Mayo." Trees of this genus have been introduced in the Hawaiian Islands, where leis are commonly made from their flowers.

In the sixth question, the statement that "it shouldn't be so bad to gnaw on the trunk of a pochote tree" obscures the answer but carries a clue. The trunk of the tree in question *(Ceiba aesculifolia)*, in addition to being inedible, bristles with spines, but the scaly lizard's tail for which it serves as a metaphor contains desirable meat.

The answer to the seventh and last question is something edible again, but this time it comes from a plant *(Pachyrhizus erosus)*. The Yukatek term for this plant and its tubers is *chikam*, from the same Nahuatl source as the Spanish term *jícama*. The tubers have become available in many North American supermarkets, where they go by the Spanish name.

The human face that marks paragraphs in the manuscript is a Europeanized version of a common logograph for Ajaw, or "Lord," which is used as a paragraph marker in the present translation. The thick outline of the logograph, which was produced by a single brushstroke that started at the lower left corner, has been transformed into long hair that hangs down on both sides of the face in the manuscript. The face now has eyebrows and has been topped with a crenellated European crown.

In the last paragraph, the author describes the punishment that will be inflicted on "the fools, the madmen" who fail the examination. They are to suffer a public humiliation that will follow the Spanish practice of the time. Wearing wooden yokes, with their hands tied in front of them, they will be hauled along at the end of a rope. The illustration of this punishment that follows the final paragraph of the translation comes from the manuscript page that follows the last page of the text.

The ampersand (&) in the translation corresponds to *y* in the text, which is an abbreviation of the Yukatek conjunction *yetel*.

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Suyuaa than, y Naat. Vhal Cayam S.t Gos
Mary Cal, lay uchic u cah tal, tuc ua xim lae
tu la kin, ych Caan Cihoo, tiyan luum vchic
vyan talv pakali y v solak, u chic u cah tal
lae;. Binix kachue tu kin u kholol v bel
xan, talel u than vhalach vinic cil, chac
vthan Cabin ulue, chac cix tubue xen.

tlele ae tu Suyua than, lay binu
than, lay bin a kat vhalach u
nicil; cah lae, cabin kuchue tukil
v do col u than, ah ox khau katun
Cabin Culac uyanal katun; ah kun a
hau katun. Bay alanil lae

hex katun hele lae, ox ahau katun.
do cix uku chul tu kinil, u jacol
ya hau lil, y vtepal: halilibe: ma
nanix uyanal

hex hun ahau katun, Culan yichil
yo lOch ah ox ahau katun lae
yu la te, tan u sabal u chatan, tu muut
ah ox ahau katun lae: Sak zil, bin
bin balob, tu cahalob

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Suyua language & meaning. They pertain to our father, Mr. Gov. General, whose trees, whose residence is at Stack of Tortillas, east of the Birthplace of the Sky's Face. This is the land where his trees are, his recompense & his estate, the trees, the habitat that are his. And his day in office will come to an end, his way of life as well. Drawing near is the word of the man in command. Great are his words when he arrives, and grand are his garments as well. ____

On this day, in Suyua language, these are the words, these are the questions asked by the man in command of the town. When the days in office have been depleted for the master of Three Lord's score of stones, then the master of another score of stones is seated, One Lord's score of stones. Thus comes the next generation. _____

The score of stones today is Three Lord's score, but his day in office is finished, his lordship is finished, & his sovereignty. It has come to an end for him, and it goes to a different lease holder. _____

The master of One Lord's score of stones is seated inside the home of the master of Three Lord's score of stones. He is a guest there, while authority is transferred to him by the master of Three Lord's score of stones. Insults are traded, so they say, in the place where they reside.

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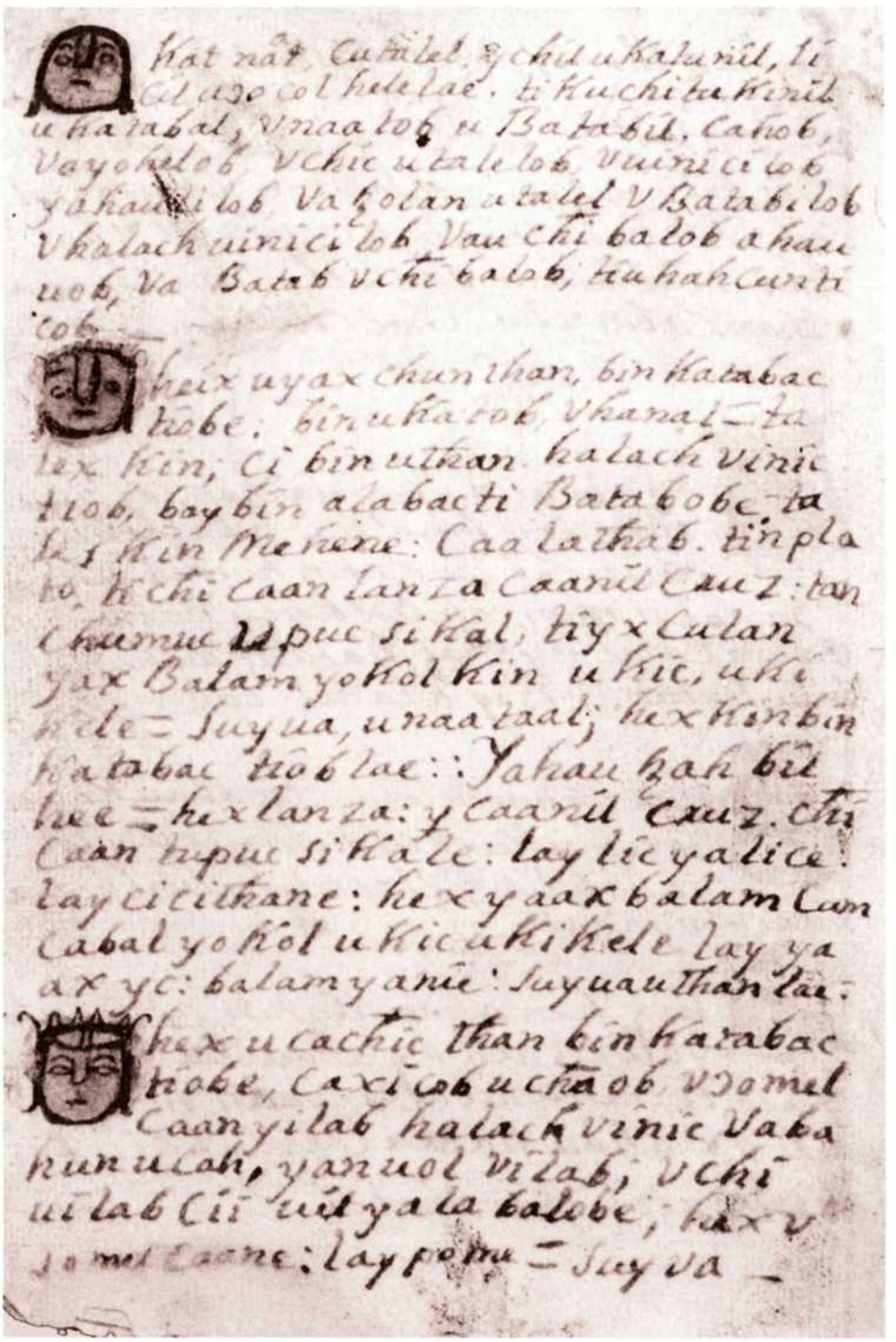

Hat naat Cutalel, y chi u kaluil, ti
Cil uo col hulelae. ti Kuchi tu Kinil
u ha tabal, Unaa tob u Batabil. Cahob,
Vayo kelob V chic u tale lob, Vuini ci ob
y ahau ilob Va holan u talel V Batabilob
V halach uinicilob Vau chi balob ahau
uob, Va Batab V chi balob, tu hahcunti
lob.

Heix uyax chun than, bin ha tabac
tiobe: bin u katob, V kanal-ta
lex kin; Ci bin u tikan halach vinic
tiob, bay bin a labacti Batabobe-ta
lex kin Mehene: Caa la thab. tin pla
to, ti chi caan lan za Caanil Cauz: tan
chuenuc lupuc si kal, tiy x Culan
yax Balam yo kol kin u kic, u kic
kele-Suy ua, u naa taal; hex kin bin
ha tabac tiob lae:. Jahau hah bil
lae-hex lan za: y Caanil Cauz. chi
caan lupuc si kale: lay lic ya lice:
lay ci cilthane: hex y aax balam Cum
cabal yo kol u kic u kikele lay ya
ax yc: balam y anic: Suy uau than lae:

Hex u cachic than bin ha tabac
tiobe, Caxi lob u cha ob V domel
Caan y ilab halach vinic Vaba
kun u cah, y an uol vilab; V chi
u lab Cii uil y a la balobe; hex v
domel Caane: lay polu-Suy va-

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This is the test of meaning that comes during the score of stones that is finished today. Now the day has arrived for questioning the knowledge of the leaders of the towns. Are they familiar with the trees where their personas originated, their lordly status? Do they come from the rank of leaders, of men in command? Are they in the lineage of lords? Are there leaders in their lineage? Now they must prove themselves. __

Now for the first words that begin the questions put to them. It is food they are asked for: "Bring the sun." Filled with delight are the words the man in command has for them, as they are spoken to the leaders: "Bring the sun, my son. Carry it in the palm of your hand, to my plate, with a lance run through it, a tall cross in the middle of its heart, with a crouching green jaguar piercing the sun, drinking its blood." In the meaning of Suyua, this is the sun that is asked of them: a fried egg of royal size. And this is the lance & the tall cross run through its heart: the implement in question is speech, it is the words of a blessing. And this is the seated green jaguar piercing the sun, drinking its blood: it is a green chili pepper. Such is the jaguar, in the language of Suyua.

Now for the piercing words of the second question put to them, when they go in search of the brains of the sky, so that the man in command can see how massive they are. "This is what I want to see. It's been some time since I've seen them," so they are told. And these are the brains of the sky: they consist of copal incense. Suyua.

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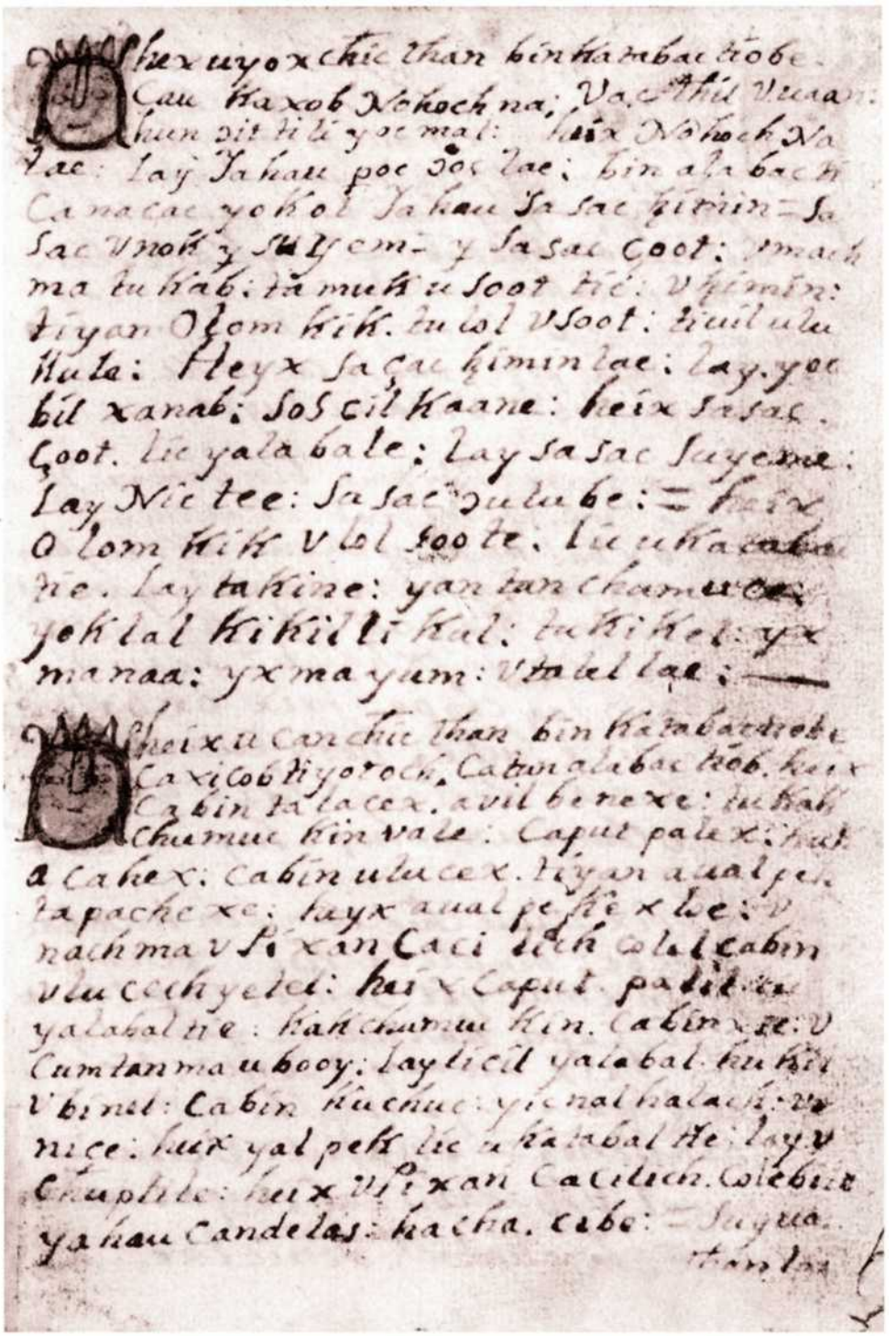

Whex uyoxchic than binhabac tobe.
Cau haxob Nohoch na; Va. Ahil Vuuan:
hun zit ti li yoc mal: hix Nohoch Na
tac: lay Ja hau poc boc lae; bin ah bac ti
Canacac yokol Ja hau Sa sac kirim = Sa
sac Vnoh y Sulyem- y Sa sac Coot: mach
ma tu hab: ta muth u Soot tic: Vkimin:
tiyan Olom kik. tu col Vsoot: tuul ulu
Hula: Hleyx Sa cac himin lae: lay. yoc
bil xanab: Soscil haane: heix Sa sac.
Coot. lic yala bale; lay Sa sac Sayexne:
Lay Nic tee: Sa sac Julu be: = heix
O lom kik V col coo te. lic u ha cabu
ne. Lay takine: yan tan chamuc
yokdal kikil li kal: tu ki kel: yx
manaa: yx ma yum: Vtal lae; ——

Cheix u Canchic than bin ha ba tzobe
Ca xi Cob ti yoroch. Cabin alubac tob. heix
Cabin ta la cex. avil be nexe: tu kab
chumuc kin vale: Caput palex: hul
a Cahex: Cabin ulucex. tiyu nual pe.
Sapache xe; tayx nual pe ti xe: V
nachma V Si xan Caci kech colel Cabin
ulucch yetel: hai x Caput. pabil te
yalabal ne: kah chumuc kin. Cabin xe: V
Cumtanma u booy: Layli cil yalabal. tu kit
V binel: Cabin kuchuc: yic nal halach: u
nice: huit yal pek lic u ha tabal te: lay. u
Cuplile: heix V Si xan Calcluch. Colebix
yahau Candelas: ha cha. cabe: = Sayua.
than lae

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Now for the piercing words of the third question put to them, when they lash together a large house, six posts long as measured from one post to the next. And this is the large house: it is a royal hat placed on the ground. One of them may be told to mount a royal and shining white horse. He wears a shining white mantle & cape, & shining white is the rattle he holds in his hand while he shakes it at his horse. There is coagulated blood in the flower of his rattle, which oozes out of it. And this is the shining white horse: it is an open-sided sandal made of henequen fibers. And as for the shining white rattle that is mentioned, along with the shining white cape: these are frangipani flowers, joined together in a shining white wreath. And this is the coagulated blood in the flower of the rattle that is asked of him: it is the gold, there in the center. Finally, there is the source of the bleeding. It is her blood, she who has no mother, she who has no father. It comes from her. _____

Now for the piercing words of the fourth question put to them, when they go to the man's home. They are told, "So now you will come, you will appear when it is hot, shortly after the middle of the day. You will be small children again, you will come crawling clumsily. When you arrive, your female dog will be there behind you. And this female dog of yours will carry the soul of Our Blessed Lady in her teeth when you arrive with her." And this is the return to childhood that is asked of him, in the heat of the middle of the day: he will go along casting his shadow, this is what is meant by crawling clumsily as he goes. Then there is the burden he brings to the man in command. This is the female dog that is asked of him: it is his woman. And this is the soul of Our Blessed Lady: it is candles of royal size, made of genuine wax. This is

Suyua language.

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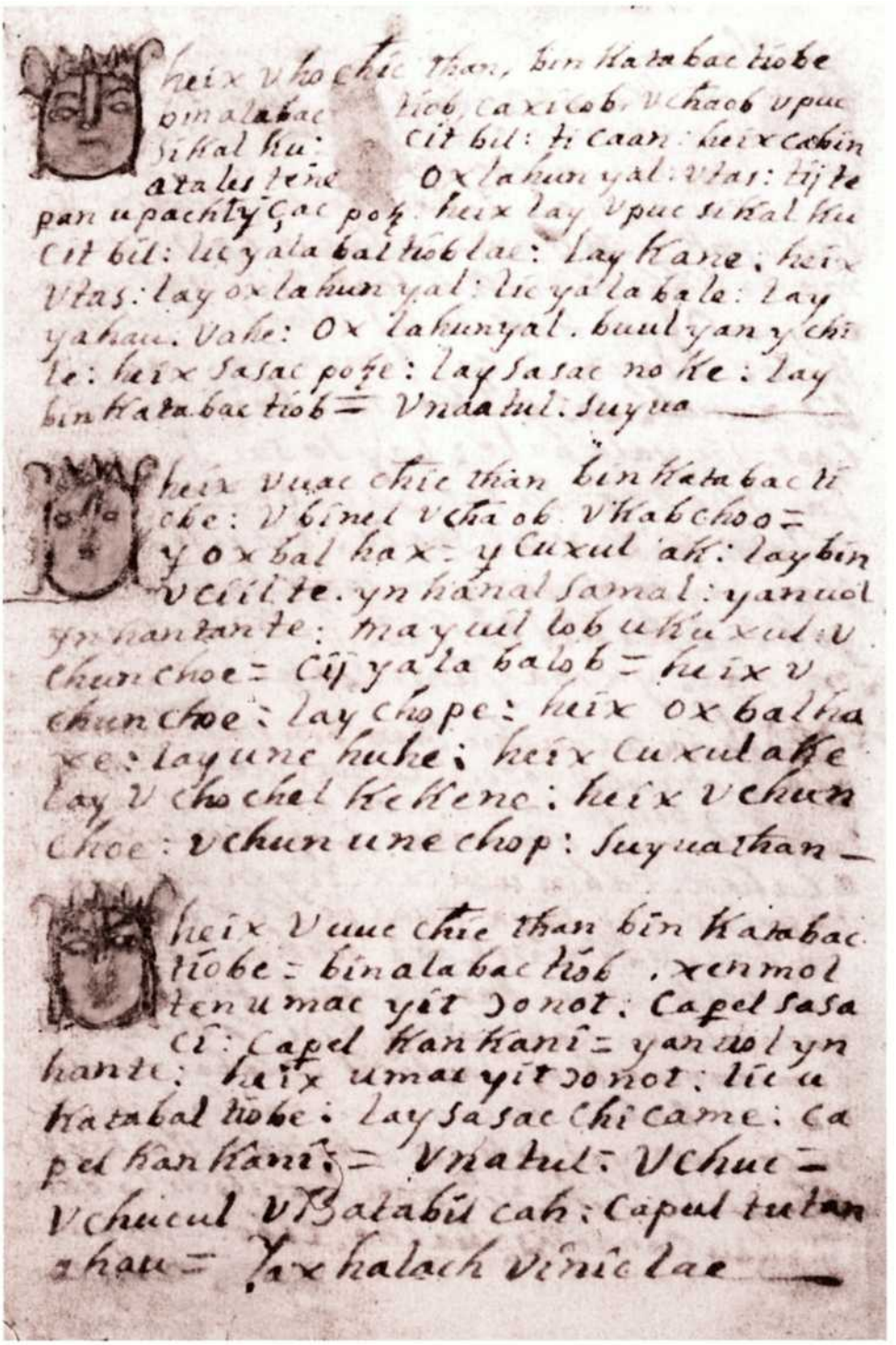

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Now for the piercing words of the fifth question put to them. They are told to go get the heart of the Divine Benefactor in the Sky. "And now you shall bring me thirteen layers of bedding, wrapped around with white cords." And this is the heart of the Divine Benefactor they are told about: it is a bead of precious stone. And this is the bedding in thirteen layers that is mentioned: it is a royal tortilla with thirteen layers of beans inside. And as for the shining white cords, what is asked of them is a shining white mantle, in the meaning of Suyua. _____

Now for the piercing words of the sixth question put to them. They go off to get a branch from a pochote tree, & a thread of three strands, & a living vine. These are what he savors: "They are my food for tomorrow, what I want to eat. It shouldn't be so bad to gnaw on the trunk of a pochote tree," so they are told. And this is the trunk of the pochote tree: it is a red and black lizard. And this is the cord of three strands: it is the tail of an iguana. And this is the living vine: it is the intestines of a peccary. And this is the trunk of the pochote tree: it is the base of the tail of a red and black lizard. Suyua language. __

Now for the piercing words of the seventh question put to them. They are told, "Go gather seashells at the bottom of the cenote, two of them shining white, two of them brownish gray. I want to eat them." And these are the seashells at the bottom of the cenote that are asked of them: they are two shining white jícama roots, and two that are brownish gray. These are the meanings they must grasp in order to take over the leadership of towns, when they are brought before the lord who is the first-ranking man in command. _____

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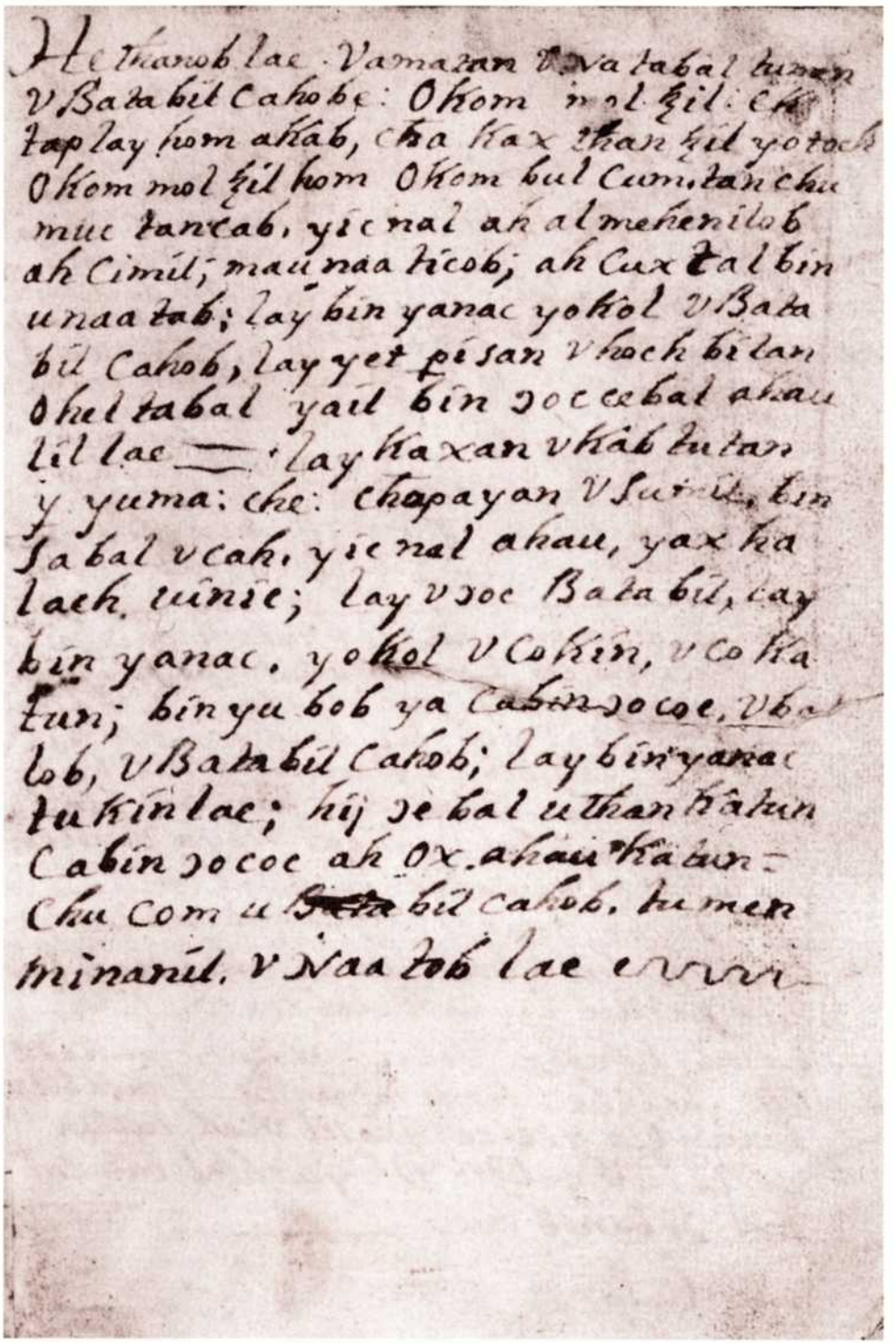

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Look upon these words. If they are not understood by the leaders of the towns, then a star of anguish and affliction will adorn the night. There will be dismay in their homes, anguish and affliction; the torment of large hairy flies will enter the patios of the nobility. Those who fail to understand will be dead; those who do understand will live on. This applies to the leaders of towns in general. The procedures have been transcribed here in order to make it known that the end of sovereignty is a grave matter. — Their hands are tied in front of them, & they wear a wooden yoke. They are dragged along at the end of a thick rope when they are taken to the place where the lord is, the first-ranking man in command. It is the end for leaders. This applies to the fools, the madmen of the day, of the score of stones. They will feel pain when the end comes for the business that concerns the leaders of towns. This will happen on the day that concludes the word of the score of stones, when the end comes for the master of Three Lord's score of stones. The leaders of the towns will be apprehended because they lack understanding of these things. ~~~~~~~~

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23 Song of the Birth of the Twenty Days

SOME OF THE WRITINGS collected in the Chilam Balam books are responses to Christian teachings. The authors of these works, unlike the missionaries whose preaching they had heard, did not set up an opposition between Mayan and Christian ideologies, arguing that one was true and the other false. Instead, they found ways to weave selected Christian ideas into what remained an unmistakably Mayan discourse. They used the alphabet but wrote in their own language, with the addition of a few new words they found useful. They used a prose format but followed an entirely Mayan poetics in their phrasing. The work presented in this chapter, from pages 60–63 of the Chumayel manuscript, has the appearance of prose, but it is constructed entirely of parallel phrases in groups of two, three, and four. The opening sentence describes it as a song *(k'ay),* but we do not know how it might have been sung.

The author of this work was obviously intrigued by the way in which Genesis combines the origins of the world and the week in the same narrative, but he substitutes the twenty Mayan day names for the seven days of the week. He was undoubtedly an *ajk'in,* or "daykeeper," a diviner who made use of the Mayan calendar that combines twenty names with thirteen numbers. In fact, he may have arrived at his story by posing the question of how the present world came into existence and then divining the answer. If so, he is not so much the author of the story he wrote down as the medium through which it was transmitted. He attributes it to a person he describes as the "first sage," named Melchisedek (rendered as "Merchise" in the manuscript), and the "first prophet" and "first daykeeper," named Napuctun.

Melchisedek is a biblical name, belonging to a righteous king who welcomed Abraham to his court. In Christian theology, the most important thing about Melchisedek is that the Bible does not name his parents or any other ancestors. Because of this theologians have interpreted his presence on earth as prefiguring that of Christ, who did not descend from a human father. Napuctun, for his part, is one of five Mayan priests who are described elsewhere in the Chumayel manuscript as having prophesied the coming of Christianity. Tun is his given name, and the rest of his name identifies his mother *(na')* as a member of the Puk lineage. His own lineage is unknown, which may be why the author identified him with Melchisedek.

The main character in the story transmitted to the daykeeper by Melchisedek or Napuctun is given the Spanish name Dios, always abbreviated as Ds. and always embedded in a reverential phrase whose longest version is *Ka yumil ti Dios kitb'il,* "Our Lord God the Father." The God of this story was the first man to walk on the earth,

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but his maternal grandmother, maternal aunt, paternal grandmother, and sister-in-law were already there. They discovered his footprints and measured the interval between them. His first footprint appeared on 12 Foot (12 Ok) and then, after forty days, his second footprint appeared on 13 Foot. Starting on that day, the four women walked along with him for twenty days, and he gave a name to each day as it came.

The accounts of events on particular days often involve plays on the sounds of the day names. In the simplest kind of play, the proper name is treated as if it were a common noun, as when Ok becomes *ok,* meaning "foot." In the same way, Eb' is treated as the term for "stairway," Kib' as the term for "wax," and Ik' as the term for "breath." Other names are transformed into slightly different words: Kab'an becomes *kab',* meaning "honey"; Kimi becomes *kimil,* meaning "death"; and Lamat becomes *lam,* referring to the act of submerging something.

In still other cases, the writer incorporates the sound of a monosyllabic day name or a single syllable from a longer name into a word or phrase that is otherwise quite different. The day name Ix, which could have been interpreted as meaning "jaguar," becomes a syllable in the phrase *unix pajal,* referring to the act of opening a gap between two objects by tilting one of them. The *me* in the day name Men becomes a syllable in *meyaj,* referring to an object that has been worked. Etz'nab' lends its first syllable to *etz'lajki,* meaning that something is put in place. Ak'b'al (miswritten as "Akal" the first time it appears in the manuscript) could have been interpreted as a word for "night," but it lends its first syllable to *yak'saj,* referring to the act of wetting something. An etymological interpretation of the day name Chikchan would produce *chan,* the Ch'olan word for "snake," but a sound play on *chik* produces *uchiktajal,* referring to the act of discovering something. And Muluk, which could have been interpreted as alluding to "tribute," lends its first syllable to *umuuk,* referring to the act of covering or hiding something.

At some point in the history of this text, a copyist who had noticed the sound plays changed one of the day names to fit its interpretation, apparently thinking that he was correcting an error. When he saw that the day Ox B'en (Three Lack) was followed by *u ment,* referring to the act of crafting something, he wasn't satisfied with the play on *en* and thought the day name should be Men, even though the day that properly bears this name comes two days later. Thus, he ended up with two days named Men, and he repeated this error in the list of twenty days (with different numbers) that follows the narrative. Both errors have been corrected in the present translation.

In Yucatán, the divinatory calendar disappeared during the colonial period, but numerous communities in highland Guatemala continue to use it. Daykeepers *(ajq'ij)* who speak K'iche', like the daykeeper who transmitted the text under discussion here, make extensive use of sound plays when they interpret the meanings of day names. In some cases, they interpret the proper names for days by treating them as common nouns—for example, by interpreting K'an as *k'an,* meaning "net," referring to a carrying net and (by extension) to burdens of all kinds. In other cases, they may play on the sound of the day name to produce a different word, as when they transform Aq'ab'al,

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which could be interpreted as meaning "night" or "early dawn," into *chaq'ab'aj,* referring to the casting of blame. In still other cases, they may take a single syllable from the day name, as when they transform Imox into *kamoxirik,* meaning that someone is going crazy.

One of the twenty day names is missing from the present story. The event of Three Death (Ox Kimi) is followed by that of Five Sunk (Ho Lamat), leaving Four Deer (Kan Manik') out of the account. A blank space separates the passages that concern Three Death and Five Sunk, indicating that the Chumayel copyist and perhaps some of his predecessors were aware of the absence of Four Deer. Perhaps someone in the line of transmission left it out by error and later copyists, thinking they might eventually find the missing passage in an alternative source, left a space where they could insert it. But Deer is no ordinary day, and its omission in a story attributed to the first daykeeper seems unlikely to be a mere copying error. In the Guatemalan highlands, where the divinatory calendar continues in widespread use, the powers of daykeepers reach their maximum on days named Deer. If the same was true in colonial Yucatán, then Four Deer could have been the day when the deity who is later named as First Lord of the Days, or the Sun (Yax Ajaw K'in), entered the story. The original author may have deliberately omitted this event, treating it as a secret that other daykeepers would understand. Another possibility is that a copyist thought the author had gone one step too far in placing a solar deity on the same stage with God. However, a later episode involving the First Lord of the Days remains intact. The First Lord asks God "whether there was any reason why the organs needed for speech shouldn't be opened, so that they could speak to one another." In the dialogue that follows, God transmits the names of the days to him.

At the end of the story comes a list of four dates for the burning of offerings. The interval between one date and the next is 65 days, thereby dividing the 260 days of the divinatory calendar into four equal parts. The word for "sun" or "day" *(k'in)* is written with ⊙, the logographic sign for "sun" in the notation system of European astrology. This sign is used as a visual pun on the letter O in the day name Ok (Oc in colonial spelling), which is rendered as "⊙c." Some kind of play with signs may also be at work in the writing in the box to the right of this list.

Offerings are burned at 65-day intervals in some present-day K'iche'-speaking towns, but with a different set of four days. Each of the four days calls for a visit to one of four shrines located in four directions from the town center, and daykeepers who represent the four districts of the town do the burning.

The Chumayel list of dates for burning offerings is followed by a list of twenty consecutive dates, presented in two columns of ten days each. The first date on this list is Eight Tribute (Waxak Muluk), which comes four days after the first date on the burning list. Inserted between the two columns are arabic numerals that provide alternative number prefixes for some of the day names in the right-hand column, but the significance of the resulting dates is not known.

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The prose format of the manuscript conceals the parallel lines of its verse. The following example of a triplet occurs just before the list of days for burning offerings:

Ka b'inob' tan yol kaan,
ka u machaaj u k'ab' tu b'a tan b'aob'e,
ka tun walaj tan chumuk peten.

Then they walked to the heart of the sky,
then they held hands facing one another,
then they stood in the middle of the peninsula.

The peninsula *(peten)* is Yucatán.

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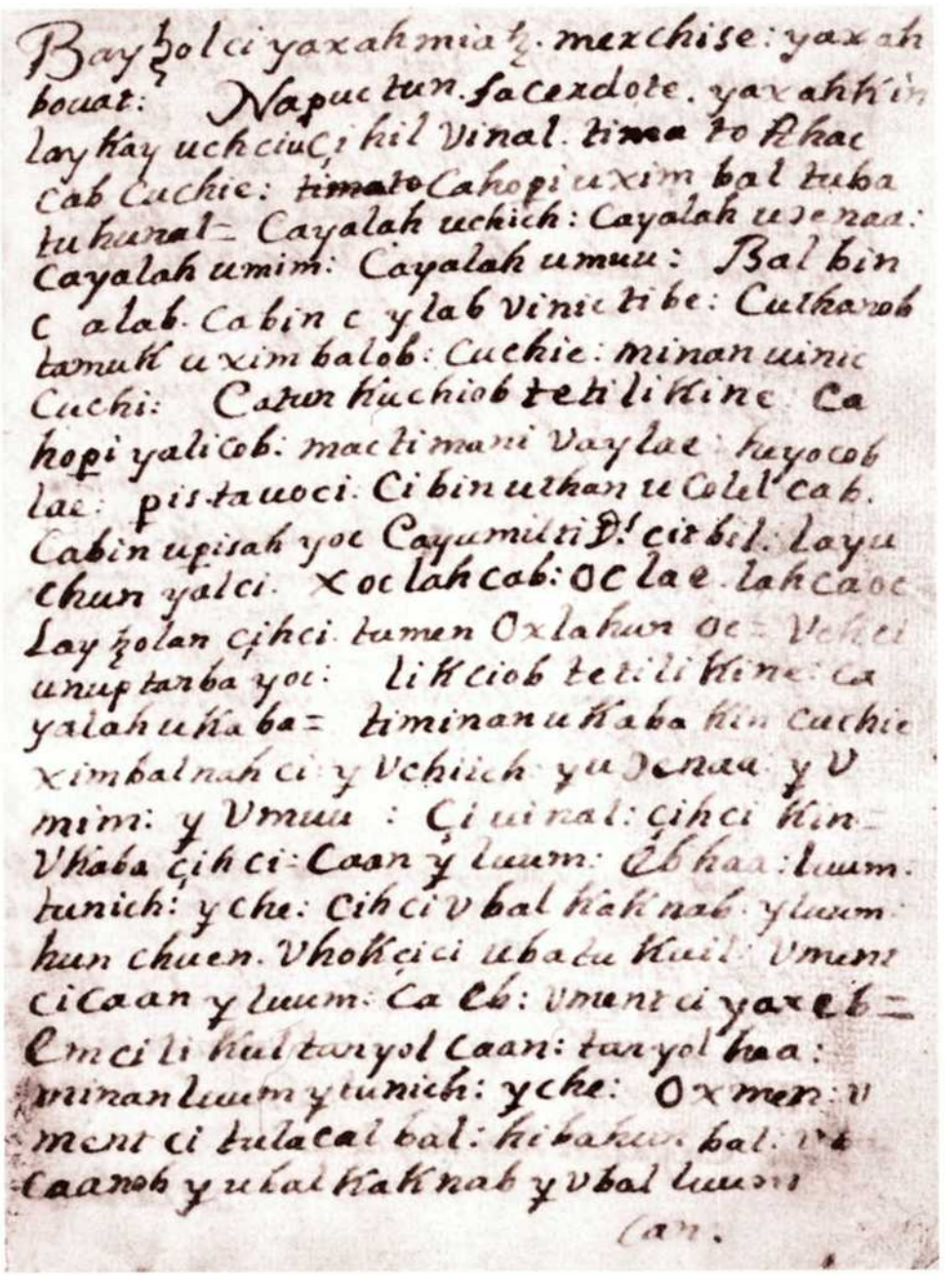

Bay ẓol ci yaxah mia ẓ. mexchise: yaxah
bouat: Napuc tun. sacerdote. yaxahtin
lay hay uchciuçi hil Vinal. tinaa to Ahac
cab Cuchie: timato Cahoçi uxim bal tuba
tu hunal= Cayalah uchich: Cayalah use naa:
Cayalah umim: Cayalah umuu: Bal bin
c alab. Cabin c y lab vinic tibe: Cutharob
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unuptanba yoc: li Hciob teti li Hine: Ca
yalah uHaba= timinan u Haba hin Cuchie
ximbal nah ci y Vchiich yu Denau y V
mim: y Vmuu: Çi uinal: çihci Hin=
Vhaba çihci: Caan y luum: Cbhaa: luum.
tunich: y che: Cihci V bal Hah nab. y luum
hun chuen. Vhohçici ubadu Huil: Vmen
ci Caan y luum: Ca Cb: Vmen ci yax Cb=
Cmci li Hul tan yol Caan: tan yol baa:
minan luum y tunich: y che: Oxmen: V
men ci tulacal bal: hi bahau bal: V
Caanob y u lal Hah nab y V bal luum

can.

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According to what was recorded by the first sage, Melchisedek, the first prophet, Napuctun, the priest, the first daykeeper, this is the song of the birth of the twenty days long ago. When the earth had not yet awakened he began to walk alone, on his own. Then his mother's mother said, then his mother's sister said, then his father's mother said, then his sister-in-law said, "What are we going to say when we see a man on the road?" So they said while they walked long ago. There were no men long ago. When at last they arrived in the east, they started talking. "Who walked this way? This is someone's footprint. Measure it with your foot." Filled with delight were the words of the Lady of the Earth. Then they measured the footprint of Our Lord God the Father. This is the origin of the saying, "Count the width of the world," which signifies the day Twelve Foot. This was the count when the days were born, and for this reason it was Thirteen Foot when the print of his other foot appeared. The days arose over there in the east as he spoke their names, long ago when there were no names for days. He walked along with his mother's mother, with his mother's sister, with his father's mother, with his sister-in-law. The twenty days were born, the names of the days were born, the sky was born with the land, the stairway of water, land, stone, and wood. The things in the sea and on land were born. One Artisan was the day when he revealed himself to be divine, he made the sea and land by hand. Two Stairway was the day when he made the first stairway, which descended from the heart of the sky to the heart of the water when there was no earth, or stone, or wood. Three Lack was the day when he crafted all things, as many things as there are, the things in the sky, and the things in the sea, and the things on the land.

Four

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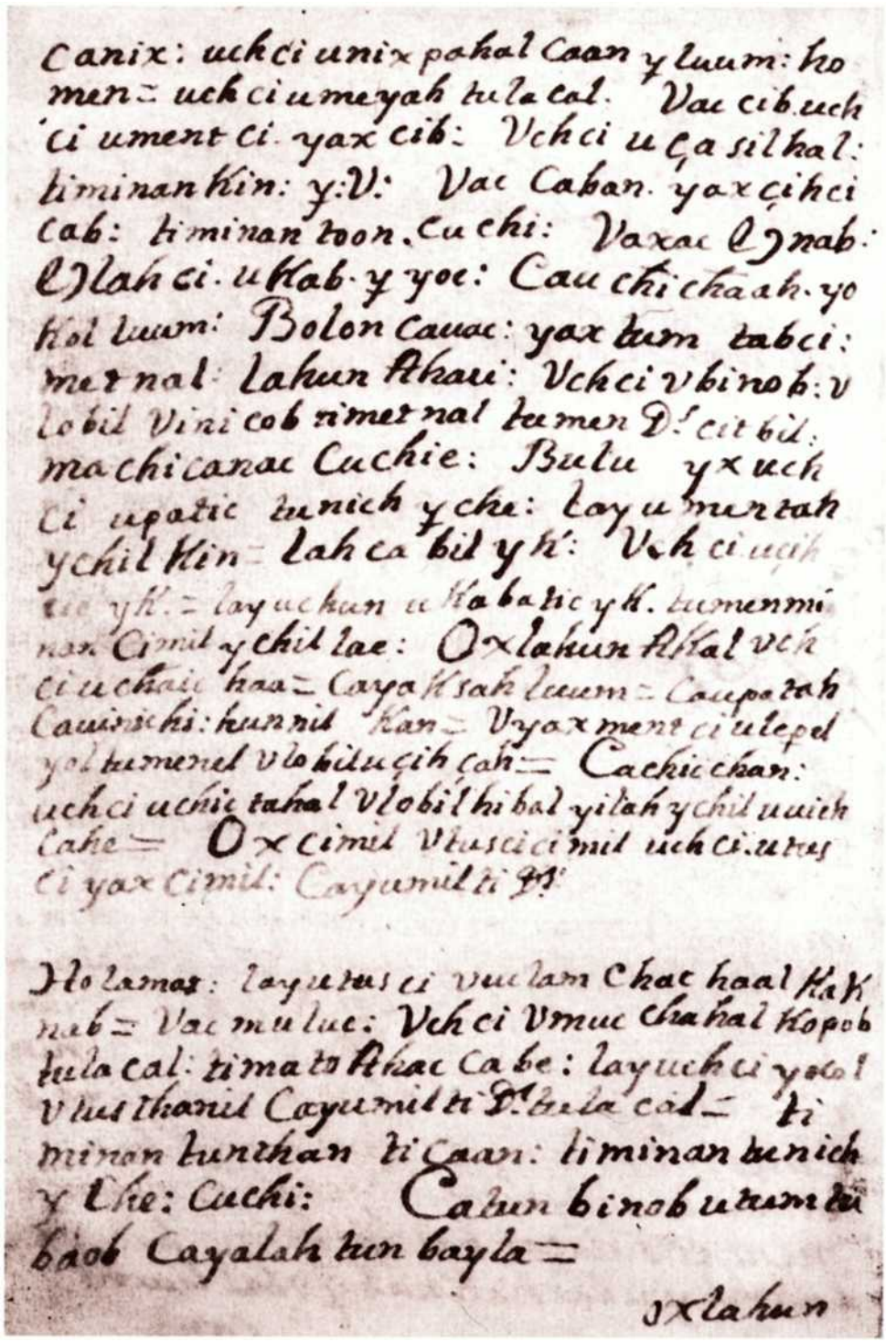

Canix: uchci unix pahal Caan y luum: ho
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nan Cimil y chil lae: Ox lahun ahal vch
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Cauinchi: hunnil kan= Vyax men ci uleped
yol tumenel vlobilu çih çah= Cachic chan:
uchci uchic tahal vlobil hibal yilah y chil uuich
cabe= Ox cimil Vtusci cimil uchci. utus
ci yax Cimil: Cayumil ti D.

Holanas: layutus ci vuclam Chac haal kak
nab= Vac mulac: Vchci Vmuc chabal kopob
tulacal: timatz ahac cabe: layuchci yocol
Vtus thanil Cayumil ti D. tulacal= ti
minan tunthan ti Caan: liminan tunich
y che: Cuchi: Cahun binob ukum ti
baob Cayalah tun bayla=

3x lahun

Four Jaguar was the day when the sky and earth were left ajar. Five Work was the day when the work of separation took place. Six Wax was the day when the first wax candle was made. Light was shining where there was no sun or moon. Seven Earth was the day that brought the birth of the first honey, which was not there for us long ago. Eight Blade was the day when he steadied his hands and feet, then he picked up seeds and sowed the land. Nine Pride was the day when the underworld came under consideration for the first time. Ten Lord was the day when it happened that people who were evil went to the underworld, since God the Father was not celebrated long ago. Eleven Ceiba was the day when he gave form to stone and wood, he made them on this day. Twelve Wind was the day when he brought about the birth of breath. The reason for calling it "breath" is that there was no death on this day. Thirteen Night was the day when he was hauling water, then he wetted the earth, then he gave the right form to it, then it became a person. One Net was the day when he made the first anger, because he had brought about the birth of evil. Two Snake was the day when he discovered evil, which he saw in the eyes of ordinary people. Three Death was the day when he devised death. It happened that the first death was an invention of Our Lord God.

Five Sunk was the day when he devised the seven submersions, the great waters of the seas. Six Tribute was the day when the caverns were covered over, all of them, when the earth had not yet awakened. Then came the introduction of the words composed by Our Lord God, all of them. There was no word in the sky, there was no wood or stone long ago. Then they went to test one another, and he spoke this way:

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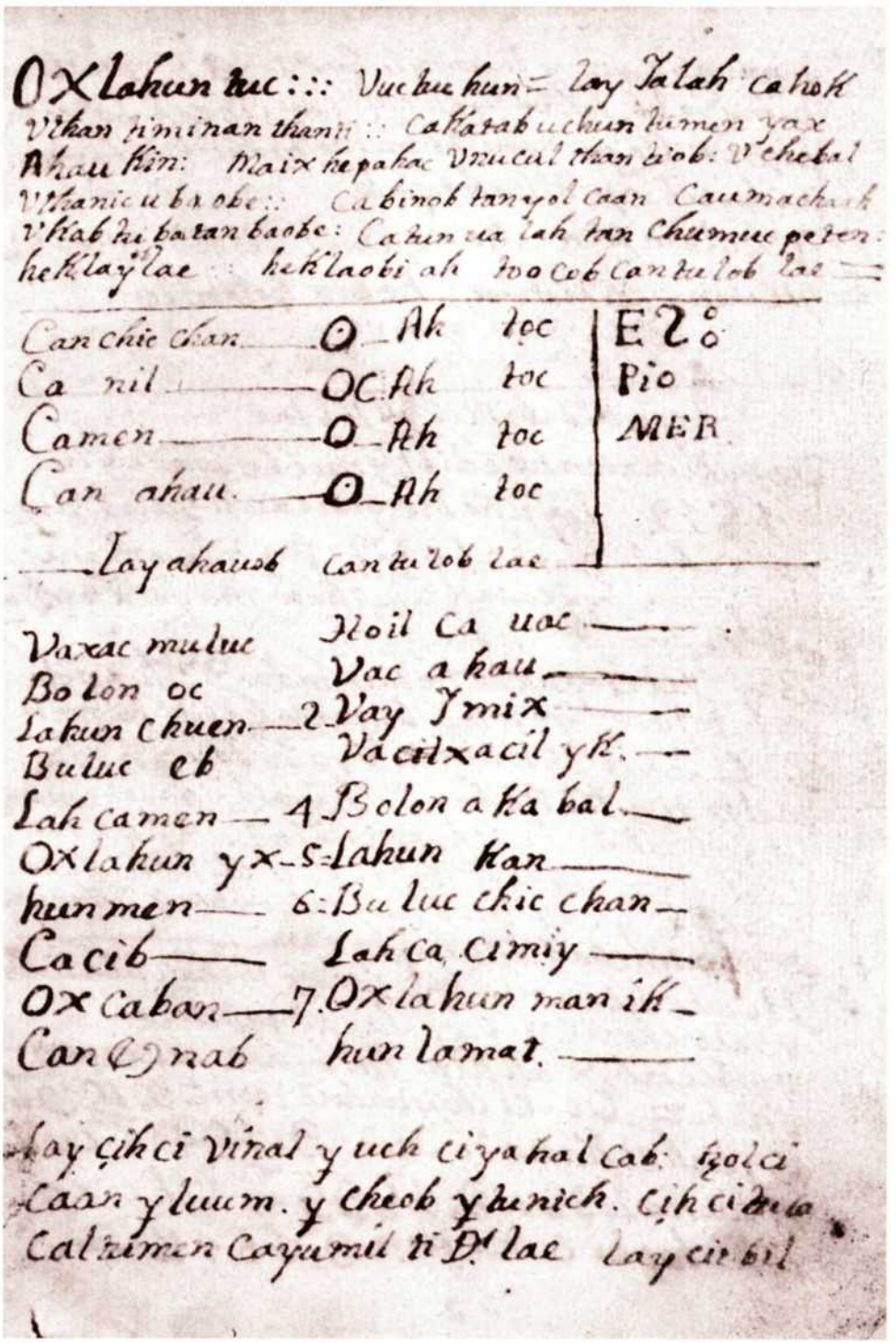

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Thirteen lots and seven lots make one," he said as he pulled out the words when there were no words. Then the first Lord of the Days asked whether there was any reason why the organs needed for speech shouldn't be opened, so that they could speak to one another. Then they walked to the heart of the sky, then they held hands facing one another, then they stood in the middle of the peninsula. The branches were separated. The days for burning offerings were set apart, four of them:

Four Snake ⊙ For burning	
Four F⊙OT For burning	
Four Work ⊙ For burning	
Four Lord ⊙ For burning	
These are the lords, four of them.	

Eight Tribute	Five Pride
Nine Foot	Six Lord
Ten Artisan	2—Seven Ceiba
Eleven Stairway	Eight Wind
Twelve Lack	4—Nine Night
Thirteen Jaguar	5—Ten Net
One Work	6—Eleven Snake
Two Wax	Twelve Death
Three Earth	7—Thirteen Deer
Four Blade	One Sunk

Thus were born the twenty days, and it came about that the earth was awakened. The sky and land and trees and rocks were arranged. All things were born because of our Lord God the Father.

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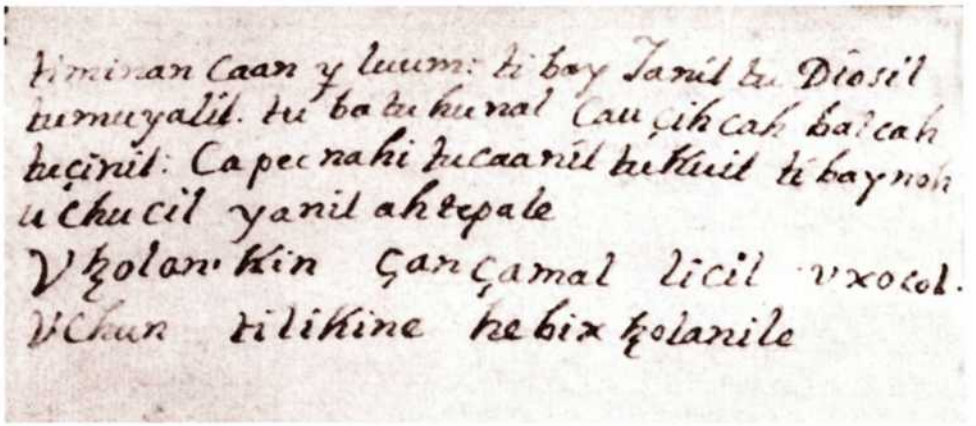
Yiminan Caan y luum: ti bay Tanil tu Diosil
lumuyalil. tu ba tu hunal Cau çih cah bal cah
tuçinil: Capec nahi tucaanil tukuil ti bay non
u chucil yanil ahtepale
Vholan kin çan çamal licil vxocol.
Vchun tilikine he bix holanile

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When sky and land did not exist, he was already there, a divine presence in the clouds, by himself alone, when he brought about the birth of the entire world, when his spirit moved in the sky. His power was already great, he was sovereign.

The days were ordered one after the other at the time the count began in the east, just as they are still ordered.

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24 Conversations with Madness

THE ANCIENT GODS of Yucatán continued to hear their names during the colonial period. Among those who invoked them were healers who treated a wide variety of illnesses, using combinations of herbs and words. At some point during the early seventeenth century, some of these practitioners used alphabetic writing to create collections of curative incantations. Today their works are known only from a single compendium that dates from the late eighteenth century, which draws on two or more earlier sources and is written in two different hands.

Prominent among the deities named in the incantations are the Four Gods, Four Actors (Kantul ti' K'u, Kantul ti' B'akab'), and for that reason, the compendium has been given the title "Ritual of the Bacabs." The manuscript itself carries no general title, but each incantation carries a preface that names the illness or illnesses in question and describes the corresponding incantation as an "oration" *(t'anil)* or "dialogue" *(ya'lab'al),* or else refers to its intended effect on the illness by calling it a "trap" *(petz'il)* or "destroyer" *(pa'il).*

Oral tradition may have been the only immediate source for the incantations, but it is possible that sources written in the Mayan script, which continued in use as late as the end of the seventeenth century, were in the line of transmission at some point. Whatever the sources, the writers added instructions for the proper use of the incantations and even suggested, in the case of the second of the examples presented here, the tone of voice the speaker should use.

The writers clearly sought to create scripts that could be studied and perhaps memorized in advance of a performance, or else read aloud. By comparison, the ritual texts in the surviving codices are more in the nature of prompts or outlines for a performer, and the only instructions concern the selection of appropriate dates for rituals.

First among the illnesses addressed by the incantations are various forms of madness whose symptoms include a lack of judgment, spasms, frenzy, fury, and shameless lust. The common term for all of these illnesses is *tankas* (or *tamakas*), which is also a term for the Milky Way. The connection may lie in the contrast between the character of the Milky Way and that of the ecliptic, the narrow path followed by the sun, moon, and planets. The Milky Way lies at right angles to the ecliptic, and it is wide and has blurry edges. Running through much of its length is a dark rift, the Black Road that leads to the underworld in the Popol Vuh, whereas the ecliptic is the path followed by the sky's brightest lights.

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The incantations treat illnesses as manifestations of sentient beings. The process of overcoming them involves exposing their identities, addressing them by name, and tracing them back to their birth at the beginning of the present world. These steps lay the groundwork for exorcising the illnesses, which means not only removing them from the patient but also throwing them all the way out to the edges of the living world or down into the realm of death.

Both of the incantations translated here mention the divinatory dates One Lord (Jun Ajaw) and Four Lord (Kan Ajaw). One Lord is the Yukatek name for the hero called Junajpu in the Popol Vuh, who survived his own death and (with his twin brother) overcame the lords of death itself. Four Lord, according to Classic inscriptions and the Dresden Codex, is the date that marked the transition between the previous world and the present one.

The first incantation is from pages 4–11 of the manuscript, and the second is from pages 25–30.

INCANTATION FOR JAGUAR MACAW MADNESS

The term *ch'ab',* translated here as "chaos," refers to disturbances in the natural order such as earthquakes and tidal waves. In the present context, it describes the state of flux that existed during the darkness that separated the destruction of the previous world from the ordering of the present one. The final end of the old world fell on a date whose name, Kan Ajaw, or "Four Lord," can also be taken to mean "Sky Lord." In the present world, chaos may erupt not only in the form of natural disasters but also in the madness of human beings. In Jaguar Macaw Madness, it takes the form of stupid, drunken, or lascivious behavior.

The reference to the plucking out of the sun's eye is probably an allusion to a story similar to the one about Seven Macaw in the Popol Vuh. During the previous world, he pretended to be the sun, but his shining eye was removed when that world ended. The noisy birds at the entrance to the underworld also appear in the Popol Vuh, but not the goddess invoked here as "Foreigner" and "Doorkeeper of the Earth." The general Mayan term for the underworld, Xib'alb'a, is replaced by Metnal, from Nahuatl Mictlan, translated here as "Hell."

Behind the various references to a lancet, the tip of the penis, and a needle for drawing blood is a ritual of sacrifice in which men of noble descent drew blood by piercing their foreskins. Judging from the incantation, this ritual was conceived as reenacting the myth of the founding of a patrilineage, with the instrument of sacrifice and the foreskin playing the parental roles and the child emerging in the form of blood.

Among the animals invoked by the incantation is the *kan ch'ah,* or "spitting snake," an unidentified species that is said to be large, yellow, and nonpoisonous. The omen-

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bringing birds called *sak tan sipip, chak tan sipip,* or "white-breasted falcons, red-breasted falcons," are probably collared forest falcons *(Micrastur semitorquatus naso),* whose hollow cries carry far and whose breast colors include white and buff. Also named as bringers of omens are *ixk'o,* or "thrushes," described as being in the sky. These birds would be clay-colored thrushes *(Turdus grayi),* which sing in rich and varied phrases while flying.

All of the trees mentioned have medicinal values, as described in treatises written by Mayan healers during the colonial period. The boiled bark and leaves of the prickly ash *(Zanthoxylum fagara),* named here as *tankas che,* or "tree of madness," are ingredients in a bath for sufferers of fevers, fainting spells, or eruptions of pustules. An unidentified disease that makes the gums and the palms of the hands turn greenish can be treated by a bath whose ingredients include the boiled leaves of a species of acacia *(Acacia filicioides),* named here as the *k'ante mo,* literally "yellow tree macaw" but rendered as "macaw acacia" in the translation. The fruit of the mamey *(Calocarpum mammosum),* named here as *jas,* is a remedy for diarrhea. The *k'ok'ob',* or "viper" tree *(Pilocarpus racemosus),* is named after an unidentified snake that is said to be the most poisonous of all the vipers of Yucatán. The bark is irritating to the skin, but it can be boiled to make medicines for dysentery. The flowers and leaves of frangipani trees (*Plumeria* spp.), named here as *nikte,* also found use in such medicines. The sap of these trees provides a salve for burns.

The red, white, black, and yellow colors ascribed to the trees are those of the four directions, named in counterclockwise order: east, north, west, south. On the third page, only red is named for the viper and the frangipani trees, but the other three colors are indicated by a threefold repetition of the abbreviation *y.,* which stands for *yetel,* "also." The writer may have chosen this conjunction because the abbreviation looks like Spanish *y,* "and."

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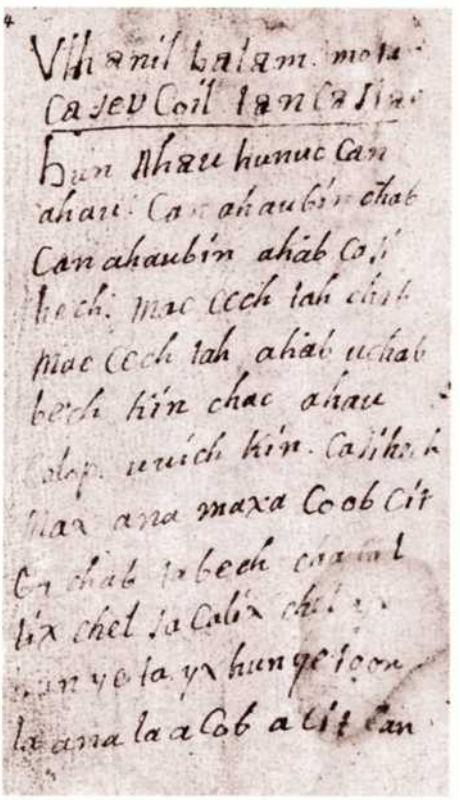
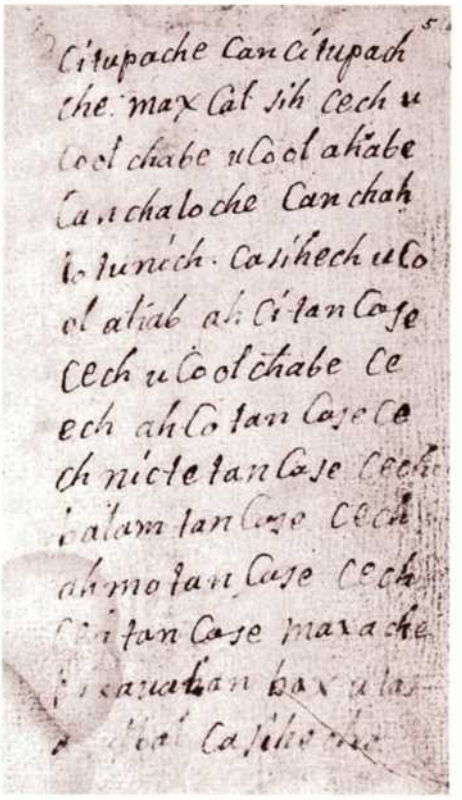


Incantation for Jaguar Macaw Madness, for the desire this madness brings:

"One Lord, one and only Four Lord, Sky Lord would have been in chaos, Sky Lord would have been dark when you were born. Who are you, owner of chaos? Who are you, owner of night? You are in chaos, Great Lord of Days, the eye of the sun was plucked out when you were born. Who is your mother, what father begets you when you do penance? She is Red Rainbow, White Rainbow, she is the point of the lancet, the tip of the penis, this is your mother, your father, begetter,



together behind there, together behind the sweat bath when you were born, the desire in that chaos, desire in that darkness, the spitting snake was in the tree, the spitting snake was on the rock when you were born, desire in the darkness. Master of Drunken Madness, you are the desire in the chaos, you are Master of Stupid Madness, you are Lascivious Madness, you are Jaguar Madness, you are Master of Macaw Madness, you are Deer Madness. Who is your tree? Who is your bush? What served as your bed, your bower when you were born?

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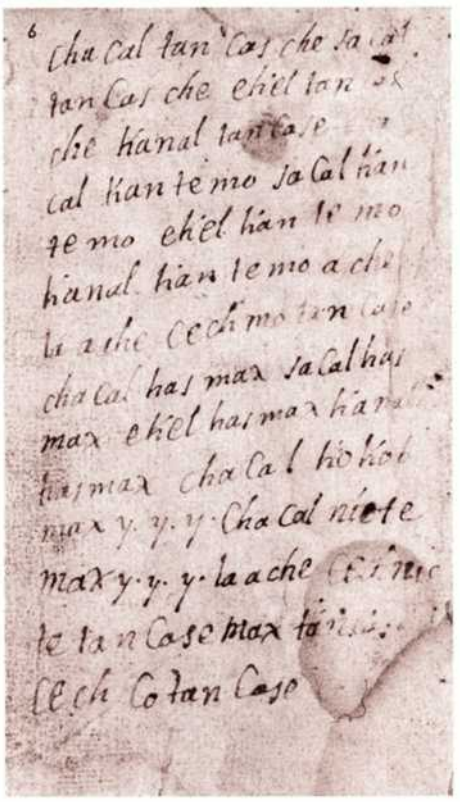
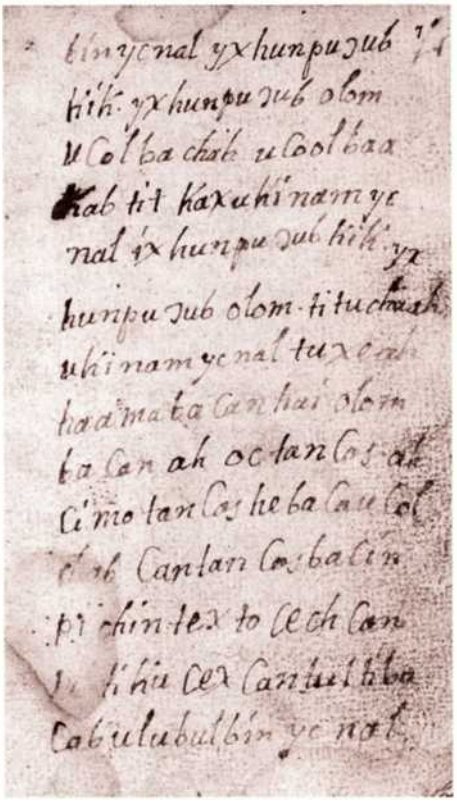


The red tree of madness, white tree of madness, black tree of madness, yellow tree of madness, the red macaw acacia, white macaw acacia, black macaw acacia, yellow macaw acacia are your trees. These are your trees, you Macaw Madness. The red mamey, who is the white mamey? Who is the black mamey? Who is the yellow mamey? Who is the red viper tree? Who is white, black, yellow? The red frangipani, who is white, black, yellow? These are your trees, Lascivious Madness. Who is the madness? You are Stupid Madness . . .



you will be where she is, a needle for drawing blood, a needle for gore, respite comes for the chaos, respite comes for the darkness, the bond is shaken loose where she is, a needle for drawing blood, a needle for drawing gore, the seizure is shaken out, there where he vomited water, only it wasn't water flowing, it was gore flowing, Master of Traveler's Madness, Master of Drunken Macaw Madness flowed out. What about the desire of chaos, the illness of madness? Drain them away then, you Four Gods, you Four Who Pour the Years. They will fall where she is,

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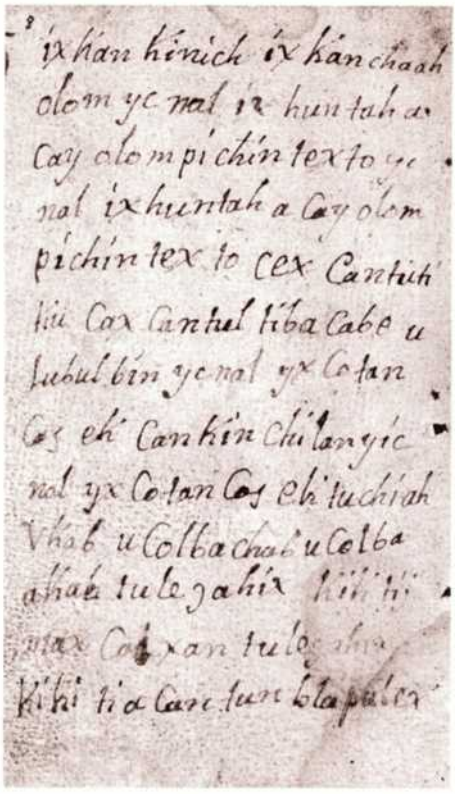
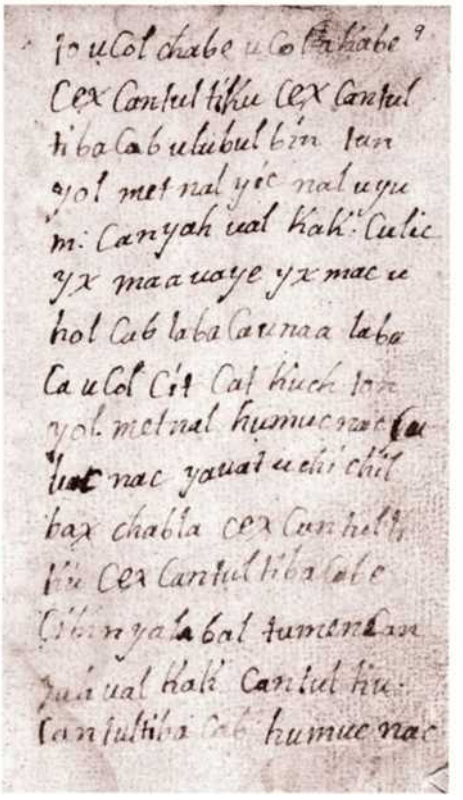


Yellow Sun Face, Yellow Dripper of Gore, where she is, the sole owner of the accursed gore. Drain it away then, to the place where she is, the sole owner of accursed gore, drain it away then, you Four Gods, you Four Who Pour the Years, it will fall where she is, the star of Stupid Madness, it will lie four days in the place where she is, the star of Stupid Madness. He bit his arm, relieving the chaos, relieving the darkness, and he also tasted the blood in the sweat bath, and he tasted the blood on the foundation stone. Well then, throw



the desire of chaos there, desire of darkness, you Four Gods, you of the Four Directions, it will fall into the heart of Hell where its father sits, Ultimate Enemy of Fire, where she is, the Foreigner, Doorkeeper of the Earth. This is its mother, this is its lustful father when it arrives in the heart of Hell. Raucous, thunderous are the cries of the birds. What about this chaos, you Four Gods, you of the Four Directions?" This will be the dialogue concerning the Ultimate Enemy of Fire when speaking to the Four Gods, the Four Directions. "Raucous are the

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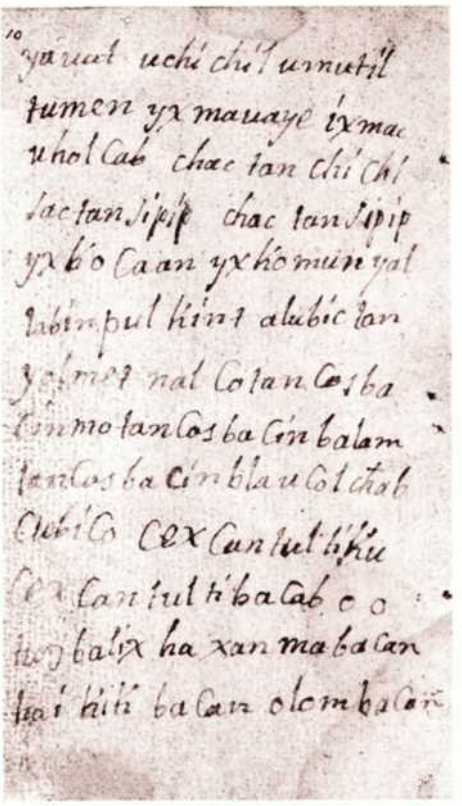
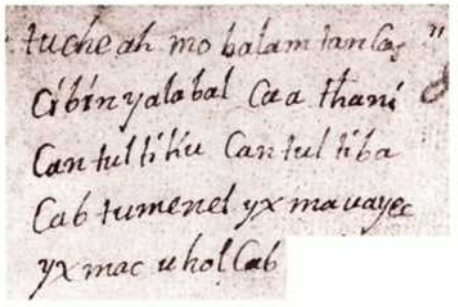


cries of the birds, the bringers of omens on her behalf, the Foreigner, Doorkeeper of the Earth, red-breasted birds, white-breasted falcons, red-breasted falcons, thrushes in the sky, thrushes in the clouds: these will portend your fall into the heart of Hell. What about stupid madness? What about macaw madness? What about jaguar madness? Well then, the desire of chaos is yours to level out, you Four Gods, you of the Four Directions. Aha! The water spreads thin, but what flows is not water but blood flowing, gore flowing from the



tree of Master of Macaw Jaguar Madness." This will be the dialogue when speaking to the Four Gods, those of the Four Directions, concerning her, the Foreigner, Doorkeeper of the Earth.

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This incantation requires a tone of complaint, and it is supposed to be repeated many times. The tobacco that goes with it would take the form of an oil extracted from green leaves, taken internally or applied as a poultice.

Sun-Eyed Fire Macaw is equivalent to Seven Macaw of the Popol Vuh. He and his spouse, Fire-Bellied Rainbow, are the parents of the madness in question, a creature whose birth (or hatching) is described in detail. Among other things, he bites the bark of a *k'anche,* or "yellow tree." This tree is the buttonwood *(Conocarpus erectus),* which provides ingredients for a medicine that cures foul yellow stools.

Two birds provide omens at the birth of the madness. One of them is the "red dove" *(chakal punab'),* which perches in a personified Red Macaw Acacia. This bird may be the ruddy quail-dove *(Geotrygon m. montana),* whose voice is low and moaning. The other bird, a "red-breasted guava" *(chakal tan pule),* shares the same name *(pule)* as the fruit, which can also be red. The tree named *sajim* (also known as *sijom*) is a soapberry *(Sapindus saponaria),* with a fruit whose pit is strung on necklaces and whose flesh can be made into soap.

The red god invoked near the end of this incantation, Pawahtun Thunderstorm (Pawahtun Chaak), occupies the eastern position among the four directional Pawahtuns, who came to be considered members of the company of Thunderstorm gods (Chaak) after the Classic period. They may or may not be the same gods as the Actors (B'akab'ob') mentioned at the beginning.

The "Amen" at the end, despite its Christian source, can be read as a pun on *ahmen,* the Yukatek term for shamans and healers of the kind who would have used this incantation.

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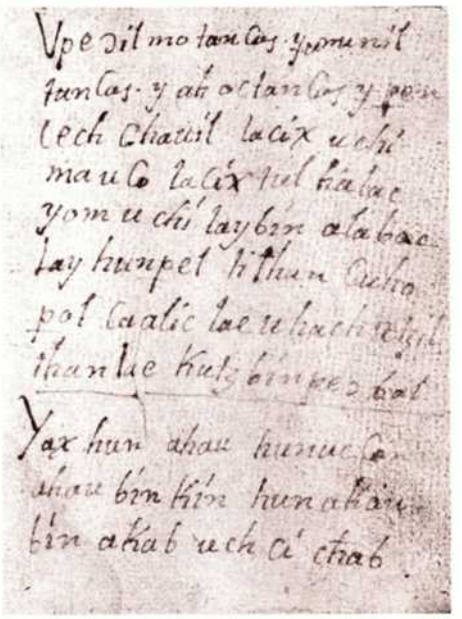
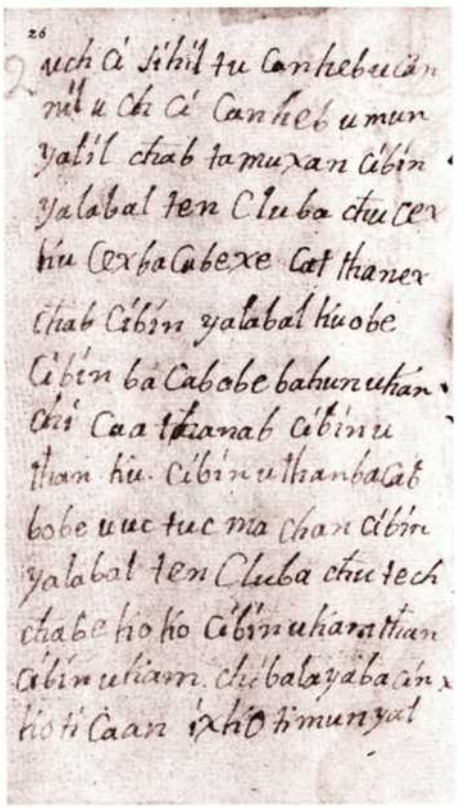


To entrap Macaw Madness, or Convulsive Madness, or Master of Traveler's Madness, when the fever is high, and the mouth is affected but not the teeth, and when foam gushes from the mouth, this should be spoken, this particular incantation. Begin by saying what follows, which is the best of the incantations. Tobacco will be the trap:

"Original One Lord, one and only Four Lord would be the day, One Lord would be the night when there was chaos,



when there was birth. The sky was divided in four, the clouds were divided in four while chaos was held back," this will be the dialogue. "I always fall in your trap, you gods, you Directions, when you invoke chaos," this will be the dialogue with the gods, the Directions. What a lot of grumbling there is when one invokes them! For invoking the gods, invoking the Directions, seven times are not enough. This will be the dialogue: "I always fall in your trap, stop telling lies," this will be the tough talk, the grumbling. "What pains you? It is her, the thrush in the sky, the thrush in the clouds.

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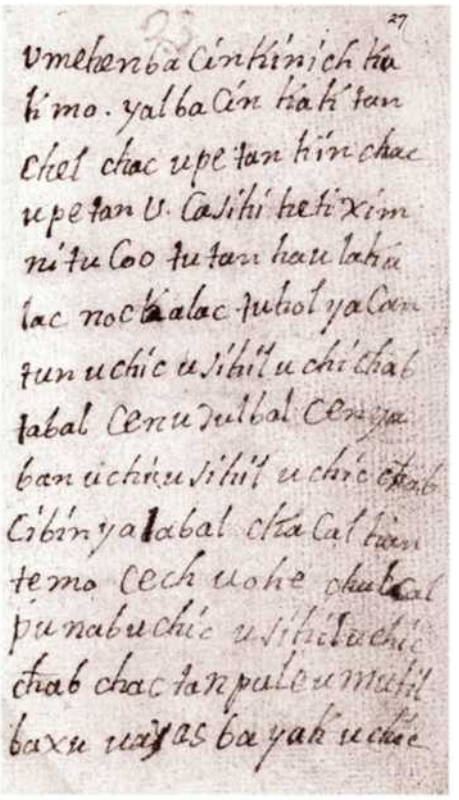
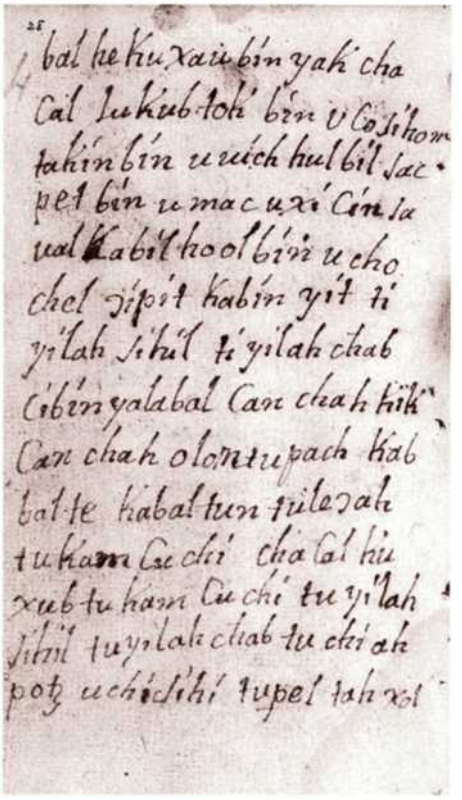


Who is his father? Sun-Eyed Fire Macaw. Who is his mother? Fire-Bellied Rainbow. Red was the sun's halo, red was the moon's halo when he was born. He cracked corn with his beak, he was right side up or upside down in the hole of the foundation stone when his birth occurred, when his change occurred. I was his shelter, I was his cover when his birth, his change occurred," this will be the dialogue. "Red Macaw Acacia, you bore the sign of the red dove when his birth occurred, his change occurred. The red-bellied carrier brings the omen. What meaning is hidden beneath his tongue?



One foot was on top of the other, they say. His tongue was as red as a sated knife, they say. The soapberry pit was golden, they say. A tortilla was pierced by an arrow, they say. His eardrum, his ear canal was open, they say. At the end of his gut was a finger ring, they say, when he saw his birth, saw his change," this will be the dialogue. "Four drops of blood, four drops of gore were on the wooden disk, the stone disk. He tasted them with his tongue, took them in his mouth, took the red achiote in his mouth, when he saw his birth, saw his change, he bit the cord when his birth occurred, he stripped the bark

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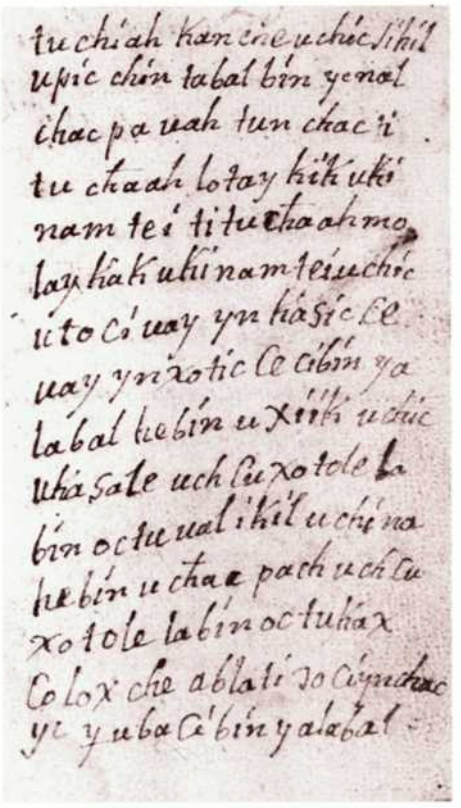
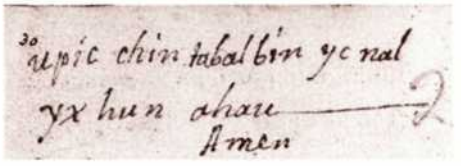


off the staff, he bit the buttonwood tree when his birth occurred. He will be thrown to Red Pawahtun Thunderstorm's place, where he took the mixed blood, the source of his strength, where he took his collection of fires, the source of his strength, where the burning occurs. I hereby destroy him, I hereby cut through him," this will be the dialogue. "His wings will be here when the injury occurs, when the cut occurs. Then a breeze will enter, fanned by the door of the house. His spine will be severed here, when the cut occurs. Then he will enter the woods, the corral. Such is the drama. I am finished cutting, so enough," this will be the dialogue.



"He will be thrown into the place where she is, One Lord _____
Amen."

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25 The Alphabet Arrives in the Highlands

IN 1520, THE MAYANS of the Guatemalan highlands experienced what was called *ri nima kamik ch'ak* in K'iche', "the great death from pustules," or simply *ri yawab'il*, "the sickness." This was a smallpox epidemic, coming six years after the "great fever" had arrived in Yucatán.

The events that led to the Spanish military invasion of the highlands began on the Pacific coastal plain of Chiapas and Guatemala. On that plain was the boundary between Soconusco, the easternmost province of the Aztec empire, and the westernmost reach of the kingdom of the K'iche' Mayans. The Aztecs had pushed the boundary of Soconusco farther east than it had been at the height of K'iche' power, but after the Aztec capital at Tenochtitlán fell to Cortés in 1521, the K'iche' began to push in the opposite direction. Local lords in Soconusco asked for help from Cortés, who answered by sending a military expedition under the command of Pedro de Alvarado. The Spaniards were accompanied by their Nahuatl-speaking allies from the kingdom of Tlaxcala, just as they had been when they triumphed at Tenochtitlán.

When Alvarado advanced into what is now Guatemala in 1524, K'iche' forces made three major attempts to stop him. The first battle took place where the Río Samalá crosses the coastal plain. From there, Alvarado turned northward and began his ascent into the highlands, and the second battle took place in a mountain pass. The third battle, and the one that resulted in the heaviest K'iche' losses, took place in a high valley in the upper reaches of the Samalá, near the citadel of Xelajuj Kej, "Under Ten Deer." Today the second-largest city in Guatemala stands near the battlefield, and as with many other places in Guatemala, its official name is the one given to it by Alvarado's Nahuatl-speaking allies: Quetzaltenango. But most Guatemalans, whether Mayan or not, call it by a shortened version of its K'iche' name: Xelaju, or just Xela.

When the lords of the K'iche' kingdom learned that their army had been defeated at Under Ten Deer, they decided to make peace. They invited Alvarado to come to the city of K'iche', where they had their palaces in a citadel that was given the name Utatlán by the Tlaxcalans, but whose K'iche' name was Q'umarka'j, "Old Camp." Ranking first and second among the lords who received Alvarado at the citadel were Oxib' Kej and B'elejeb' Tz'i', "Three Deer" and "Nine Dog," named for their days of birth on the divinatory calendar. They headed a council of lords from twenty-four royal houses.

Alvarado turned the peace conference into a trial, taking Three Deer and Nine Dog prisoner and removing them to open ground outside the citadel. There he accused

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them of having invited him into their citadel in order to assassinate him. And just as child crucifixions already had a place in the imagination of Landa when he conducted his inquisition, so the possibility of being trapped in a closed space already had a place in Alvarado's imagination when he interrogated his prisoners. When Alvarado and Cortés had been guests inside the central Mexican city of Cholula in 1519, they had taken violent action when they suspected a trap was being set for them. Alvarado, like Landa, submitted his prisoners to torture, and when they confessed, he had them burned at the stake. Mayan authors of alphabetic works in Guatemala, like the authors of the records of scores of years in the Chilam Balam book of Chumayel, treated the Spanish use of torture as a noteworthy historical event, but Western authors have generally treated it as a side issue that has no bearing on the factuality of the reported confessions.

After the torture and burning of the K'iche' lords, Alvarado's next destination was the capital of the rival kingdom of the Kaqchikel, not far to the southeast. The Tlaxcalans called this new place Tecpán Quauhtemallan (which is the source of the name Guatemala), but its Kaqchikel name was Iximche', "Corn Tree." Alvarado made an alliance with the Kaqchikel lords, who helped him complete his conquest of the K'iche' kingdom. Later, after a campaign that took him as far as what is now El Salvador, he returned to Corn Tree and founded the capital of the new Spanish province of Goathemala nearby. There followed a period of general revolt in the highlands. The Spaniards were driven out of their first capital and established a second one in 1527, farther east and closer to the site of present-day Guatemala City.

Kaqchikel resistance to Spanish rule continued until 1530, and the Rab'inal kingdom, to the east of the K'iche' and Kaqchikel domains, was still independent in 1537. In that year, the Spanish government took the task of bringing it under control out of military hands and gave it to missionaries of the Dominican order, under the leadership of Fray Bartolomé de las Casas. By 1547, the government recognized his experiment in nonviolent conquest as a success. Meanwhile, in 1541, the second capital of Guatemala had been destroyed by a mudslide from the Volcán de Agua. Alvarado died that same year while away on a new military adventure, so he did not live to see the founding of the third capital, a short distance east of the second one. This city was destined to be leveled by an earthquake in 1773, at which point the capital was moved to its fourth and present site, while the third site became known as Guatemala Antigua.

WRITING AND BOOKS IN THE HIGHLANDS

The story of nonalphabetic writing in the Guatemalan highlands has a beginning and end but no middle. Some of the earliest examples of writing anywhere in the Mayan region appear on carved stone stelas in the highlands and in the neighboring Pacific piedmont between 400 B.C.E. and 150 C.E., well before the Classic period begins, around 250. But after that, stone monuments become very rare, and carved inscrip-

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tions cease, leaving a gap in the physical evidence for writing that stretches all the way to the 1550s, when K'iche' and Kaqchikel authors began writing in the alphabet on European paper. They make various references to books that preceded the introduction of the alphabet, and for some reason, they have more to say on that subject than the authors of the Chilam Balam books of Yucatán.

The burning of books receives no mention in the historical records for colonial Guatemala, but in 1563, a year after Landa launched his inquisition in Yucatán, the colonial administration targeted the weavers of Guatemala with a ban on the use of brocading. To this day, brocading is the principal technique by which the women of highland Guatemala and Chiapas make textiles into texts, creating clothing that reveals the town, lineage, and individual identity of the weaver and wearer by means of *tz'ib'*, "writing" or "designs." The attempt to ban this technique was part of a more general program whose explicit purpose was to eradicate the Mayan memory of a world that had no Spaniards and no church in it. Public performances that brought the prior world to life by means of the verbal, musical, and dramatic arts were also banned.

Between 1554 and 1558, a group of K'iche' authors who identify themselves only as "we" created a lengthy alphabetic document whose purpose was to perpetuate the memory of the world before the invasion. Internal evidence indicates that they each held the title of Nim Chokoj, "Master of Ceremonies," or (literally) "Principal Convener of Banquets." Three officials held this title, one for each of the principal divisions of the K'iche' nation. We know the name of only one of the three, Cristóbal Velasco. In 1554, he signed a document in which he identified himself as Master of Ceremonies for the Kaweqs, the division that included the two highest-ranking royal houses.

Masters of Ceremonies were in charge of the banquets at which the members of two separate lineages came together to plan or perform a marriage. On such occasions, they were the principal speakers, and for that reason they were called Uchuch Tzij, Uqajaw Tzij, "Mothers of the Word, Fathers of the Word." To this day, the orators who perform at weddings in K'iche' towns have a reputation as the most eloquent of all speakers of the K'iche' language.

In the introduction to their work, the Masters of Ceremonies declare their intention to record the *ojer tzij,* the "ancient (or prior) word," which they contrast with *uch'ab'al Dios,* "talk about God." They identify one of the sources for their project as *nab'e wujil, ojer tz'ib'am puch,* the "original book and prior writing," but they are careful to locate this book beyond the grasp of the Spanish invaders. They state that it can no longer be seen and that its reader has a hidden identity. Because they themselves chose anonymity, unlike many of the highland authors who were their contemporaries, one of them may well have been the mysterious reader of the prior writing.

The authors give the title of the original book as "Popol Vuh" in the spelling of their time, equivalent to Popol Wuj in the spelling adopted by the Academia de las Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala in 1988. We do not know what title the authors might have given to their alphabetic work, but when the Dominican friar Francisco Ximénez copied the K'iche' text and added a Spanish translation around 1701, his title was "Las

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historias del orígen de los indios de esta provincia de Guatemala." His copy of the text, which is the only surviving manuscript version, remained unpublished until 1861. In that year, the Flemish priest Charles Etienne Brasseur de Bourbourg put the K'iche' text into print with a facing-page French translation. He was the first to use the words "Popol Vuh" as a title for the alphabetic work, a title that has persisted to this day. In his subtitle, he used the words "le livre sacré," and ever since, the words "Popol Vuh" have been printed without italics, following the same convention that is applied to revered books such as the Bible, the Quran, and the I Ching.

Popol, whose literal meaning is "of the mat," is a figure of speech for the royal council whose members sat on a plaited mat made from cattail leaves, and *wuj* is a term for "paper" or "book." The simplest English translation of Popol Wuj is "Council Paper" or "Council Book," but that interpretation does away with the image of the mat and the meanings it conveys. Cattail plants, which grow in thick masses with interconnected roots, were a universal Mesoamerican symbol for important cities. A mat of plaited cattail leaves could serve as a diagram of a period of time, as in the accounts of scores of years in the Chilam Balam books, and it could also serve as a diagram of the tight and orderly relationships among the members of a properly functioning council.

The original Council Book served its readers as an *ilb'al,* an "instrument for seeing." This term was also applied to mirrors and crystals, both of which were used for scrying. In the postinvasion world, it was extended to eyeglasses and other optical instruments. Tellingly, it was also applied to clocks, which became *ilb'al retal q'ij,* "instruments for seeing the signs of the day," new signs that extended the measurement of time to units that were shorter than the days and nights recorded in the prior writing.

The reader of the original book was an *ilol,* a "seer," and a *b'isol,* a "thinker," a person who ponders questions or takes the measure of things. The term *b'isol* also applied to a person suffering from melancholia; perhaps a reader who bent over the book, silently pondering some question of meaning, appeared melancholic to observers. But at other times, probably including wedding banquets, the seer and thinker took on the role of a speaker, producing *nim upeoxik, utzijoxik puch,* "a long performance and account" of *tzuk' ronojel kajulew,* "the lighting of all the sky-earth." Like the Dresden Codex, the long account begins in a remote time when the only calendar was the divinatory one, the only actors were divine, and the sun, moon, and planets had yet to appear.

No sooner do the authors of the alphabetic Popol Vuh mention the long account than they begin quoting from it. At first it sounds very formal, with long runs of parallel phrases, but then it develops into a masterpiece of the storyteller's art. The narrative voice, which follows the shifting tempo of the action, is interspersed with dialogues among the characters, whose speaking styles range from colloquial banter to solemn oratory.

In comparison with the long account, the nonalphabetic texts of Mesoamerica are extremely terse and relentlessly formal. In nearly all ancient Mayan texts, the only voice

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is an authorial monologue in the third person. Clearly, the alphabetic version of the long account is not a verbatim transcription from a text in the prior writing system. Instead, the authors chose to record the spoken words of a performer, one whose skills went far beyond the ability to read aloud. By making this record, they sought to avoid not only the loss of an ancient text but also the loss of the words of the interpreter of that text. On both counts, their worries were well founded. Books in the prior writing were likely to be confiscated and destroyed if discovered, and oral performances could only be held in secret.

Most of the characters and events in the long account are absent from the alphabetic works of Yucatán, but they are well represented in the Classic vase paintings of the rainforest. Among the characters are twin brothers whose names, Jun B'atz' and Jun Chowen, or "One Monkey" and "One Artisan," refer to the same day on the divinatory calendar. *B'atz'* is the term for the howler monkey in all Mayan languages, and it is the name of a day in all of those languages except Yukatek. Chowen is similar to Chuwen, the Yukatek name for the same day, which means "artisan." Classic paintings sometimes give one or both brothers the facial features of a howler monkey, and the long account includes an episode in which both of them are transformed into monkeys. Their main occupations, according to both sources, are writing and carving, and the long account mentions flute playing and singing as well.

At certain moments in the long account, it sounds as if the narrator were looking at a pictorial narrative of the kind that could have served as the source for the scenes on Classic Mayan vases, especially the ones that feature the hero twins Jun Ajaw and Yax B'alam, "One Lord" and "First Jaguar." The names of their K'iche' counterparts, Junajpu and Xb'alanq'e, are not as easily translated. Junajpu could originate in a combination of *junaj,* which means "unique," with *ajpub',* the term for "blowgunner." Xb'alanq'e, which carries the diminutive prefix *x-,* seems to combine *b'alam,* "jaguar," with *q'e,* which is a term for "sun" in some K'ichean languages but not in K'iche' itself. Hereafter, I will refer to them as Hunahpu and Xbalanque.

An episode in which Hunahpu and Xbalanque encounter a monstrous bird named Wuqub' Kaqix, or "Seven Macaw," could have been based on a painted scene like the one in figure 66. "This is the great tree of Seven Macaw, a nance," says the narrator, as if pointing at the left side of the painting, "and this is the food of Seven Macaw. In order to eat the fruit of the nance he goes up the tree every day." Then the hero twins enter the scene: "Since Hunahpu and Xbalanque have seen where he feeds, they are now hiding beneath the tree of Seven Macaw." In the painting, First Jaguar, the lowland equivalent of Xbalanque, is hiding. He is behind the tree, with only his jaguar forepaw showing (just beneath the fruit on the right side of the tree). "And when Seven Macaw arrived, perching over his meal," the story goes on, "it was then that he was shot by Hunahpu." In the painting, the bird has perched in the tree and One Lord, the equivalent of Hunahpu, has shot a pellet from his blowgun (the black dot just beyond the muzzle). The scorpion beneath the tree may have played a role in the Classic version of

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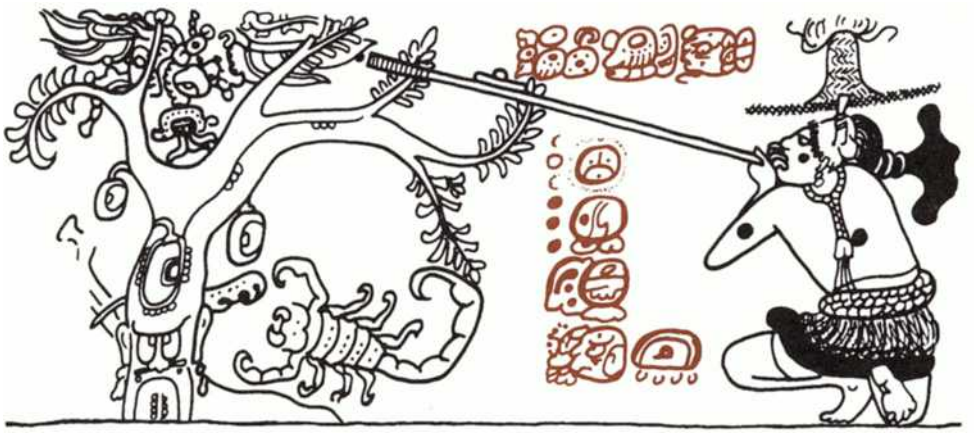

Fig. 66. The hero One Lord, the lowland equivalent of One Hunahpu in the Popol Vuh, shooting a macaw in a tree. From a Late Classic painting on a chocolate-drinking vessel.

this episode, but vase paintings sometimes combine elements from more than one episode. The hero twins of the long account do encounter scorpions, but not while they are dealing with Seven Macaw.

An episode that comes near the end of the adventures of Hunahpu and Xbalanque accounts for the nature of the divinatory day whose K'iche' name is Junajpu, equivalent to Ajaw in lowland texts. It takes place after the twins have avenged the death of their twin fathers, whose calendar names are dates complete with number prefixes: Jun (One) Junajpu and Wuqub' (Seven) Junajpu. The twins go to the grave of the father with the number seven and exhume his remains, thinking to put him back together and bring him back to life. "He had wanted his face to become just as it was, but when he was asked to name everything, and once he had found the name of the mouth, the nose, the eyes of his face, there was very little else to be said. Although his mouth could not name the name of each of his former parts, he had at least spoken again." At one level these words refer to the skeletal state of their father's face, which no longer gives him an individual identity. But at another level, they can be read as the origin story of the logographic day sign whose lowland reading would be Ajaw. Step by step, the narrator assembles "the mouth, the nose, the eyes" of the face of the day sign:

If this interpretation is correct, then the K'iche' were using the same sign for the day Junajpu that other Mayans were using for Ajaw. If, instead, they had been using Aztec or Mixtec signs for this day, then the image the father left behind as his memorial would have been that of a flower.

The twins leave their father at his grave, but they promise him that "you will be prayed to here" and that "you will be the first to have your day kept by those who will be born in the light, begotten in the light," meaning future human beings. In this way,

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they establish the custom of honoring the dead on days named Junajpu, which is followed by the K'iche' to this day.

At the same time that this story accounts for the origin of a day sign and the veneration of ancestors, it can also be read as a parable about the relationship between speech and writing. In effect, the narrators are saying that even the dead can speak, at least to the extent that written words can be given voice. But visible though the written words of the dead may remain after they themselves have decayed, it is not in the power of such words to reconstitute the full presence of living faces. Written signs are skeletal remains of the past.

The long account follows the story of the twins with that of the founding lords of the K'iche' kingdom and the subsequent history of that kingdom. In two different generations, the lords renew their royal status by going on a long pilgrimage to a city that has the status of a Tulan, a "Place of Cattails." The description of the earlier pilgrimage, which includes some words from a Ch'olan language, fits a possible visit to Copán, whereas the description of the later pilgrimage, which includes Yukatek and Nahuatl words, is consistent with a visit to Chichén Itzá. The later pilgrims return home with *utz'ib'al Tulan,* "the writing of Tulan," and by means of the words contained in this writing, they tell the story of their journey. They could have brought back a book resembling the pictorial histories of Mixtec dynasties, which include accounts of pilgrimages to cities whose place signs include cattails.

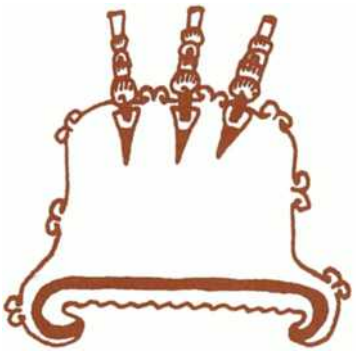

Fig. 67. Mixtec place sign pierced by darts, indicating that the place in question has been conquered. Detail from the Codex Zouche-Nuttal.

The writers of the alphabetic version of the long account sound as though they are looking at a pictorial history of the Mixtec kind when they tell the story of the K'iche' conquest of a series of fortified towns on the Pacific piedmont. "Projectiles alone were the means for breaking the citadels," they say, and "all at once the earth itself would crack open." In Mixtec histories, the place signs for towns that have been conquered are pierced by weapons. In the example in figure 67, the bell-shaped element is the sign for a mountain, and this mountain (which corresponds to a town) has been broken or cracked open by three darts.

DIVINATORY ALMANACS IN THE HIGHLANDS

It is difficult to say exactly where the authors of the alphabetic Popol Vuh stop quoting from the long account, but there comes a point where the voice of the account itself gives way to the voice of the authors who described it before they began quoting from it many pages earlier. Instead of adding more episodes to the story of the K'iche' kingdom, the authors enter into a general description of the way in which its affairs were

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conducted. Returning to the subject of the original book and prior writing, they give some credit for the accomplishments of the greatest K'iche' lords to the insight provided by the book:

They knew whether war would occur,
  everything they saw was clear to them.
Whether there would be death,
  or whether there would be famine,
    or whether quarrels would occur,
they knew it for certain,
  since there was a way to see it,
there was a book.
  Council Book was their name for it.

One possible way of interpreting this passage is that the part of the Council Book that dealt with human history was designed to yield prophecy, after the manner of the records of scores of years in the Chilam Balam books. The problem is that the version of this history that appears in the alphabetic Popol Vuh, unlike the Chilam Balam records, is not structured according to recurring sequences of measured periods of time. It therefore seems more likely that the original book provided insights into the future through the medium of divinatory almanacs. Be that as it may, the alphabetic book contains no almanacs, although the part that relates the deeds of the gods contains numerous references to divinatory dates that play key roles in the reckoning of the 365-day year, the periods of the planets Venus and Mars, and solar and lunar eclipses.

Divinatory almanacs are mentioned in the account of Kaqchikel history in the collection of alphabetic documents known as the Annals of the Kaqchikels. The author, writing in Kaqchikel, states that when the lords of the K'iche', Kaqchikel, Tz'utujil, and other highland nations went on a pilgrimage to the city whose insignia was bat (meaning Copán), the treasures that were bestowed on them included writings *(tz'ib'anik)*. Among these writings were *ch'ol q'ij, may q'ij,* "sequences of days, scores of days," meaning almanacs. Francisco Ximénez, the friar who made the surviving copy of the alphabetic Popol Vuh, saw documents of this kind as late as the early eighteenth century in K'iche' towns. He writes of diviners who "see things in a book they have as a source of predictions from the time of their heathenism, where they have all the months and signs corresponding to each day." He adds, "I have one in my possession, and each sign or signal of that day is one of the demons who figure in their stories."

The description offered by Ximénez fits almanacs that were in use all over Mesoamerica in preinvasion times. It leaves unanswered the question as to what extent the highland Guatemalan versions resembled the Mixtec and Aztec almanacs of highland Mexico and to what extent they were like the almanacs that fill the pages of the Dresden and Madrid codices. An answer is provided by an alphabetic document written during the same years as the Ximénez account, to be presented in chapter 31.

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26 A Way to See the Dawn of Life

In writing their introduction to the alphabetic Popol Vuh, the Masters of Ceremonies created one of the most intensely poetic passages in the entire corpus of Mayan literature. They combined a play of multiple meanings with multiple structures that include clearly patterned verse. Even so, the surviving copy of their work, made by Francisco Ximénez around 1701, is formatted as prose (see the excerpt in figure 68). The manuscript Ximénez worked from would not have looked very different from the one he produced. Alphabetic texts in Mayan languages that were composed or copied during the colonial period, whether by Mayans or missionaries, were all written out in a prose format. The only exceptions are item-by-item lists of such things as time periods or the names of successive holders of lordships. When the early missionaries introduced the use of the alphabet for writing Amerindian languages, they introduced the prose format along with it. When they listened to the speech of Mayans and other indigenous peoples of the Americas, they could not *hear* any meter or rhyme, and when they examined transcriptions of speech, they could not *see* any meter or rhyme. By default, everything was prose.

Concealed in the prose of the manuscripts of the Popol Vuh and other Mayan texts from the colonial period are lines of parallel verse. The rhythms of sound in this kind of verse follow rhythms of meaning rather than adhering to abstract schemes of meter and rhyme. Mayan verse, like that of other Mesoamerican languages, favors groups of lines that are analogous in their wording or meaning or both. Most of these lines are in pairs, but sometimes there are three or more, while singular lines mark beginnings and transitions. Groups of lines that dwell on single images or moments in time may be separated from one another by passages that break the rhythm of sound and meaning to shift the scene, switch from

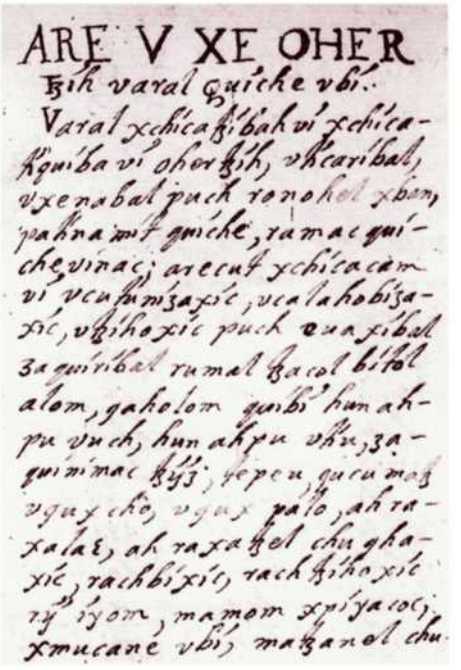

Fig. 68. Opening passage from the surviving K'iche' text of the Popol Vuh, copied from an earlier source by Francisco Ximénez around 1701.

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one speaker to another in a quoted dialogue, or move the action forward in a narrative. These passages, considered in isolation, have the sound and look of prose. However, in most Mayan compositions, neither the verse nor the prose mode is sustained from the beginning through to the end. Present-day medievalists are familiar with this problem. Those who deal with lengthy texts in the vernacular traditions of Europe describe them as "prosimetric," thus recognizing their internal shifts of form.

It was not until the middle of the twentieth century that the existence of parallel verse in Mesoamerican texts was recognized and acted upon. At first, attempts to reorganize texts and translations according to their verse patterns tended to go overboard. The predominance of couplets among parallel lines became the law of the couplet, and passages that could not be easily scanned as couplets were labeled as "weak" couplets or couplets with "missing" lines, or else they were simply broken into pairs of lines without apology. In this kind of work, we see the flip side of the same European mind that earlier heard and saw nothing but prose in the very same texts. Suddenly, texts that were all prose became texts that were all verse. In publications, what was once paragraphed prose with a justified right margin became lines of verse with a ragged right margin. Either way, the actual variety and complexity of Mesoamerican discourse was overridden by formats whose roots go back to the same Greek and Latin traditions that have made things difficult for medievalists who deal with vernacular texts.

In 1999, nearly three centuries after Francisco Ximénez made his copy of the Popol Vuh, and half a century after Miguel León Portilla first called attention to the presence of verse in the Popol Vuh, there appeared an edition of the text that reveals its full richness and complexity. It is the work of Sam Colop, a linguist and literary scholar who is a native speaker of K'iche', and it was published by Cholsamaj, a Mayan-owned press in Guatemala City. Sam Colop corrected the original slips of pen and spelling errors, modernized the orthography, and broke the text into lines that reflect the shifts in its poetic structure. In the excerpts from his work that follow here and in later chapters, a word or phrase that parallels what precedes it, dwelling on an idea, is set directly below the previous word or phrase, whereas phrases that move the discourse forward run horizontally. The facing-page translation is organized in the same way.

THE FIRST WORDS / THE FIRST ELOQUENCE

In their opening words, the Masters of Ceremonies locate themselves "here in this place called K'iche'," meaning the town of Santa Cruz Quiché, founded in 1539 and situated next to the site of the former capital of the K'iche' kingdom. When they write that they find themselves "amid the preaching of God, / in Christendom now," they use two words of Spanish origin, *christianoil* and *Dios,* but no other such words appear in their text until near the end, when they come back to writing about their own times.

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Unlike the Mayan authors of works that were composed for presentation in Spanish courts, the Masters of Ceremonies invoke Mayan gods by name and without apology. Instead of reducing these gods to the terms of Christian demonology, they praise them: "They accounted for everything/and did it, too, with a clear state of mind,/in clear words." Among the many names of these gods are "Bearer,/Begetter" (Alom,/K'ajolom), which is to say that they not only father the world but mother it as well, and indeed they are also called "Mother,/Father of life,/of humankind." In their roles as "Plate Shaper,/Bowl Shaper" (Ajraxa Laq,/Ajraxa Tzel), they give form to the space that separates the plate of the earth from the bowl of the sky. When pottery is described as *raxa,* it means the clay has yet to be fired, but *raxa* is also a term for green and blue, the colors of the earth and sky.

The oldest of the gods invoked by the authors are a married couple whose epithets include "Great White Peccary" and "Coati," but whose proper names, Xpiyakok and Xmukane, are untranslatable. Xmukane is also called "Midwife" (Iyom), and Xpiyakok is called by a term of address for the Master of Ceremonies at a wedding, translated here as "Matchmaker" (Mamom). In a later passage, the two gods take the role of diviners, counting the days of the 260-day calendar to find an answer to a question posed by the other gods. They have two sons whose names combine Junajpu, a day name from the K'iche' divinatory calendar, with "Possum" (Wuch') and "Coyote" (Utiw). Elsewhere, these sons are named for divinatory dates complete with numbers: Jun Junajpu and Wuqub' Junajpu, hereafter rendered as One Hunahpu and Seven Hunahpu. They are the fathers of the hero twins who establish the custom of venerating the dead (described in chapter 25).

In their account of how the gods created the present world, the authors make a number of allusions to Christian teachings. Some readers have described the authors as being "influenced" by those teachings, as if they had been led astray in the telling of what should have been a purely Mayan story. But a careful reading of their work reveals that instead of mixing Christian ideology with their own, they call attention to the differences. They go to some length to establish a picture of the primordial world in which calm prevails, as contrasted with the maelstrom of Genesis. By their account, the sky and sea are already separate, right from the beginning, and the earth is already there as well, hidden beneath the sea. The first major task of the gods, as in many of the indigenous origin stories of North America, is to raise the earth out of the water.

In place of the monologue of Genesis, the authors present a dialogue among the gods, who meet to exchange their thoughts about what should be done. The dialogue takes place at the center of the sea. The Maker, Modeler, Bearer, Begetter, and Resplendent Plumed Serpent are already there, covered with quetzal feathers that give off a glittering light. Three other gods, collectively called "Heart of Sky," come down to join them. One of the three is "Thunderbolt Hurricane" (Kaqulja Juraqan), whose second name literally means "one-legged" or "one of a kind." The translation I've chosen

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here is "Hurricane" because he causes a cataclysmic rainstorm in a later passage and because his name may be the ultimate source of the word "hurricane," which came into European languages by way of Taino, a Caribbean language. The other two gods who come down from the sky are "Newborn Thunderbolt, / Sudden Thunderbolt" (Ch'ipi Kaqulja, / Raxa Kaqulja), who are named for stones that have a celestial origin. Among these are fulgurites, glassy stones that form where lightning strikes sandy soil, and meteorites, whose passage through the air makes a sound like thunder.

When the authors state that "Heart of Sky" is "the name of the icon," they are making an ironic allusion to the fact that missionaries had chosen *k'ab'awil,* a term for wood and stone icons, as the K'iche' translation for "Dios." And when the authors call attention to the fact that "there were three of them, as the Heart of Sky," they are alluding to the Trinity. But, of course, the Trinity has nothing to do with lightning, or falling stones, or constructive dialogues with feathered serpents, and the Thunderbolt threesome has nothing to do with fathers and sons or with lambs and doves. On the earthly, material level, the three Thunderbolt gods were most importantly represented by icons of the patron deities of the three major divisions of the K'iche' nation, as the authors make clear in later passages. These gods, in their tribal nature and celestial origin, if not in their plural number and material manifestations, are analogous to the patron deity of the ancient Israelites.

The dialogue among the gods who meet at the center of the sea begins with two questions. The first one is "How should the sowing be, / and the dawning?" The meanings of sowing *(chawaxoq)* and dawning *(saqiroq)* interact like the two sides of a Möbius strip. If we start from the literal meaning of sowing, the reference is to the planting of seeds in the earth. But if we follow that idea over to the other side of the strip, the sprouting of the seeds is expressed metaphorically as a "dawning." On the other hand, if we start from the literal meaning of dawning, then the reference is to the coming of morning light in the east. But if we trace that idea back over to the other side of the strip, then the evening, when the source of the light of day drops below the earth in the west, is expressed metaphorically as a "sowing."

The second question that opens the dialogue among the gods is this: "Who is to be the provider, / nurturer?" The answer turns out to be "the human work, / the human design" *(winaq tz'aq, / winaq b'it),* with twenty *(winaq)* fingers and toes. Human beings are only a concept at this point in the story, but they will come to have their own roles in the process of sowing and dawning. Among the contemporary K'iche', the head of a patrilineage "sows" a child that is still in the womb by announcing its mother's pregnancy at an earth shrine, and the child has its dawn when she "gives it light." At death, the body of a person is "sown" or "planted" in the earth, and then the bones "become light" or "white," which is expressed with the same verb *(saqirik)* as the coming of dawn. The spirit of the deceased may become a point of light, rising into the night sky as a star. These human sowings and dawnings are metaphorical on both sides, but they retain an underlying twist in their ties to the models of the sowing and "dawning" of plants and the dawning and "sowing" of celestial lights.

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After the gods reach agreement on their plan of action, their first move is to make a dry place in the midst of the sea. At the beginning of this episode, the authors make an allusion to Genesis, stating that the gods formed the earth by saying, "Earth." But they quickly add that the gods also used their *nawal,* their "genius" in the sense of their spirit familiars—and yes, Mayan gods had spirit familiars, back in the time when they also had bodies, just as humans can have spirit familiars today. The gods also made use of *puz,* the power to cut something open with a sharp instrument and reveal what is inside, as in an act of sacrifice.

When the gods went to work with their word, their genius, and their cutting edge, the earth "arose suddenly, just like a cloud, / just like a mist now forming, / unfolding." Andrés Xiloj Peruch, a contemporary K'iche' daykeeper who first read this passage during the rainy season, offered a comment: "It's just the way it is right now: there are clouds, then the clouds part, piece by piece, and now the sky is clear"—as if the mountains were there in the primordial world all along and were revealed, little by little, as the clouds parted. But Xiloj complicated this interpretation by adding, "Haven't you seen that when the water passes, a rainstorm, and then it clears, a vapor comes out from among the trees? The clouds come out from among the mountains, among the trees." This process lends a cyclical movement to the picture: the clouds come from the mountains, then conceal the mountains, then part to reveal the mountains.

As the gods continue with their work, they use cords and stakes to carry out a "fourfold siding, / fourfold cornering, / measuring" of the space between the sky and earth. In effect, they are measuring the surface of the earth in the same way that Mayans lay out cornfields today, using a cord that is twenty strides long and driving in wooden stakes at the corners. Alternatively, the gods could be laying out the plan of a cosmic house whose length, width, and height will be measured with a cord and whose corners will be marked with posts. Or they could be constructing a loom, with measured warp threads connecting the measured warp beams at both ends. At the grandest scale, as Xiloj pointed out, they are laying out a rectangle formed by four points on the horizon, the points where the sun rises and sets at the winter and summer solstices.

In several places, the authors use terms that contain two words but are pronounced as a single word. The two words have complementary meanings, and the combination creates a larger concept without hiding its original parts behind an abstraction. The term *kajulew,* which combines the terms for sky *(kaj)* and earth *(ulew),* could be translated as "world," but here I have rendered it as "sky-earth." *Chopalo,* translated as "lake-sea," combines the words for lake *(cho)* and sea *(palo),* and in the present context, it becomes a term for all the waters of the world, whether fresh or salt. *Juyub'taq'aj,* "mountain-valley," combines the words for mountain *(juyub')* and valley or plain *(taq'aj),* thus embracing all the dry land of the world. In the language of contemporary K'iche' daykeepers, "mountain-valley" is also a metaphor for the human body.

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ARE' UXE' OJER TZIJ,
WARAL K'ICHE' UB'I'.

Waral xchiqatz'ib'aj wi,
xchiqatikib'a wi ojer tzij,
utikarib'al,
uxenab'al puch ronojel xb'an pa tinamit K'iche'
ramaq' K'iche' winaq.
Are k'ut xchiqak'am wi:
uk'utunisaxik,
uq'alajob'isaxik,
utzijoxik puch
ewaxib'al,
saqirib'al rumal Tzaqol,
B'itol,
Alom,
K'ajolom, kib'i Junajpu Wuch',
Junajpu Utiw,
Saqinim Aq,
Sis,
Tepew Q'ukumatz,
Uk'ux Cho,
Uk'ux Palo,
Ajraxa Laq,
Ajraxa Tzel, chucha'xik, rachb'ixik,
rachtzijoxik ri Iyom,
Mamom,
Xpiyakok,
Xmukane, ub'i' Matzanel,
Chuqenel,
kamul Iyom,
kamul Mamom, chucha'xik pa K'iche' tzij.
Ta xkitzijoj ronojel
ruk' xkib'an chik, chi saqil k'olem,
saqil tzij.
Wa'e xchiqatz'ib'aj chi upam chik uch'ab'al Dios,
pa christianoil chik.
Xchiqelesaj rumal maja b'i chik ilb'al re Popol Wuj,
ilb'al saq petenaq ch'aqa palo
utzijoxik qamujib'al,
ilb'al saq k'aslem, chucha'xik.

K'o nab'e wujil,
ojer tz'ib'am puch,
xa ewal uwach ilol re,
b'isol re.

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THIS IS THE ROOT OF THE ANCIENT WORD, HERE IN THIS PLACE CALLED K'ICHE'.

Here we shall inscribe,
we shall implant the Ancient Word,
the potential,
the source for everything done in the citadel of K'iche',
in the nation of K'iche' people.
And this shall be our theme:
the demonstration,
revelation,
and account
of how things were put in shadow,
brought to light by the Maker,
Modeler,
Bearer,
Begetter, names of Hunahpu Possum,
Hunahpu Coyote,
Great White Peccary,
Coati,
Resplendent Plumed Serpent,
Heart of the Lake,
Heart of the Sea,
Plate Shaper,
Bowl Shaper, as they are called, also named,
also described as the Midwife,
Matchmaker,
Xpiyakok,
Xmukane, names of the Defender,
Protector,
twice a Midwife,
twice a Matchmaker, as is said in the words of K'iche'.
They accounted for everything
and did it, too, with a clear state of mind,
in clear words.
We shall write about this now amid the preaching of God,
in Christendom now.
We shall reveal it because there is no longer a way to see the Council Book,
a way to see the light from beside the sea,
the story of our shadows,
a way to see the dawn of life, as it is called.

There is the original book
and ancient writing,
but hidden is the face of the reader,
interpreter.

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Nim upe'oxik,
utzijoxik puch ta chi k'is tzuk' ronojel kajulew,
ukaj tz'uquxik,
ukaj xukutaxik,
retaxik
ukaj che'xik
umej k'a'maxik,
uyuq k'a'maxik upa kaj,
upa ulew,
kaj tzuq,
kaj xukut, chucha'xik, rumal ri Tz'aqol,
B'itol;
Uchuch,
Ukajaw k'aslem,
winaqirem:
Ab'anel,
K'uxlanel,
alay rech,
k'uxlay rech saqil amaq'el,
saqil al,
saqil k'ajol,
ajb'is,
ajna'oj chirech ronojel a ta k'ol wi kajulew,
chopalo.

ARE UTZIJOXIK WA'E:

K'a katz'ininoq,
k'a kachamamoq,
katz'inonik,
k'a kasilanik,
katolona puch upa kaj.

Wa'e k'ute nab'e tzij,
nab'e uchan:
Maja' b'i oq jun winaq,
jun chikop,
tz'ikin,
kar,
tap,
che',
ab'aj,
jul,
siwan,
k'im,
k'ichelaj.
Xa utukel kaj k'olik,
mawi q'alaj uwach ulew.
Xa utukel remanik palo upa kaj ronojel,

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It takes a long performance
and account to complete the lighting of all the sky-earth,
the fourfold siding,
fourfold cornering,
measuring,
fourfold staking,
halving the cord,
stretching the cord in the sky,
on the earth,
the four sides,
the four corners, as it is said, by the Maker,
Modeler,
Mother,
Father of life,
of humankind:
Giver of Breath,
Giver of Heart,
who give birth,
who give heart to the nations of lasting light,
to those who are born in the light,
begotten in the light;
worriers,
knowers of everything there is in the sky-earth,
lake-sea.

THIS IS THE ACCOUNT:

Now it still ripples,
now it still murmurs,
ripples,
now it still sighs, and
it is empty under the sky.

Here follow the first words,
the first eloquence:
There is not yet one person,
one animal,
bird,
fish,
crab,
tree,
stone,
hollow,
canyon,
meadow,
forest.
Only the sky alone is there,
the face of the earth is not clear.
Only the sea alone is pooled under all the sky,

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maja' b'i naki la' kamolob'ik.
K'a kotzob'ik,
jun ta kasilob'ik.
Kamul kab'an taj,
k'a kotz kab'an taj pa kaj.
Xa ma k'o wi naki la' k'olik yakalik:
xa remanik ja'
xa li'anik palo,
xa utukel remanik.
Xa ma k'o wi naki la' lo k'olik:
xa kachamanik,
katz'ininik chi q'equ'm,
chi aq'ab'.

Xa utukel ri Tz'aqol,
B'itol,
Tepew Q'ukumatz,
e Alom,
e K'ajolom k'o pa ja'.
Saqtetoj e k'o wi,
e muqutal pa q'uq',
pa raxon.
Are ub'inam wi ri Q'ukumatz.
E nimaq etamanel,
e nimaq ajna'oj chi kik'oje'ik.
Keje k'ut xax k'o wi ri kaj,
k'o wi nay puch Uk'ux Kaj.
Are' u b'i ri kab'awil, chucha'xik.

Ta xpe k'ut utzij waral,
xul kuk' ri Tepew Q'ukumatz, waral chi q'equmal,
chi aq'ab'al.
Xch'aw ruk' ri Tepew Q'ukumatz,
xecha' k'ut, ta xena'ojinik,
ta xeb'isonik,
xeriqo kib',
xkikuch kitzij,
kina'oj.
Ta xq'alaj,
ta xkik'uxlaj kib' xe' wi saq,
ta xq'alaj puch winaq,
ta xkina'ojij utz'uqik,
uwinaqirik che',
k'a'm,
utz'uquxik puch k'aslem,
winaqirem, chi q'equmal,
chi aq'ab'al,

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there is nothing whatever gathered together.
It is still at rest,
not a single thing stirs.
It is kept back,
still kept at rest under the sky.
Whatever exists is simply not there:
only the pooled water,
only the calm sea,
only it alone is pooled.
Whatever might be is simply not there:
only murmurs,
ripples in the dark,
in the night.

All alone, the Maker,
Modeler,
Resplendent Plumed Serpent,
Bearers,
Begetters are in the water.
Light glitters in the place where they stay,
covered in quetzal feathers,
in blue-green.
Thus the name, Plumed Serpent.
They are great sages,
they are great thinkers in their very being.
And of course there is the sky,
and there is also the Heart of Sky.
This is the name of the icon, as it is spoken.

And then his word came here,
he came to Resplendent Plumed Serpent, here in the blackness,
in the early dawn.
He spoke with Resplendent Plumed Serpent,
and they talked, then they thought,
then they worried,
they agreed with each other,
they joined their words,
their thoughts.
Then it was clear,
then they reached accord in the light,
and then humanity was clear,
then they conceived the growth,
the generation of trees,
of bushes,
and the growth of life,
of humankind, in the blackness,
in the early dawn,

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rumal ri Uk'ux Kaj, Juraqan ub'i:
Kaqulja Juraqan, nab'e;
ukab' k'ut, Ch'ipi Kaqulja;
rox chik, Raxa Kaqulja.
Chi e k'u oxib' ri', Uk'ux Kaj,
ta xe'ul kuk' ri Tepew Q'ukumatz,
ta xna'ojixik saq k'aslem:
—Jupa cha ta chawaxoq,
ta saqiroq puch?
Apachinaq tzuqul,
k'ool?—
—Ta chuxoq:
Kixnojin taj.
Are ri ja' chel taj,
chi jama' taj,
chi winaqir wa ulew ulaqel ta k'u rib'
chata k'ut.
Ta chawaxoq,
ta saqiroq kajulew.
Mata k'ut uq'ijilab'al,
uq'ala'ib'al ri qatz'aq,
ri qab'it,
ta winaqiroq winaq tz'aq,
winaq b'it,— xech'a k'ut.

TA XWINAQIR K'U RI ULEW KUMAL,

xa kitzij xk'oje wi uwinaqirik.
Chiwinaqir ulew,
—Ulew!— xecha.
Lib'aj chi xwinaqirik, k'eje ri xa ta sutz',
xa mayul uwinaqirik,
chi k'u pupuje'ik.
Ta xtape pa ja' ri juyub',
jusuk' nimaq juyub' xuxik.
Xa kinawal,
xa kipus xb'anataj wi una'ojixik juyub'taq'aj,
jusuk' rach winaqirik uq'isisil,
upachajil uwach.
K'eje k'ut xkikot wi ri Q'ukumatz:
—Utz mixatulik at Uk'ux Kaj, at Juraqan,
at puch Ch'ipi Kaqulja,
Raxa Kaqulja.—
—Xchutzininik qatzaq,
qab'it,— xecha' k'ut.
Nab'e k'ut xwinaqir ulew,
juyub'taq'aj,
xch'ob'och'ox ub'e ja',
xb'inije'ik k'ole je raqan xo'l taq juyub',

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all because of the Heart of Sky, named Hurricane:
Thunderbolt Hurricane, first;
then second, Newborn Thunderbolt;
and third, Sudden Thunderbolt.
So there were three of them, as the Heart of Sky,
when they came to Resplendent Plumed Serpent,
when the dawn of life was conceived:
"How should the sowing be,
and the dawning?
Who is to be the provider,
nurturer?"
"Let it be this way:
Think about it.
This water should be removed,
emptied out,
for the creation of the earth's own plate
and platform.
Then should come the sowing,
then should come the dawning of the sky-earth.
But there will be no high days,
no bright praise for our work,
our design,
until the creation of the human work,
the human design," they said.

AND THEN THE EARTH AROSE BECAUSE OF THEM,

it was simply their words that brought it forth.
For the forming of the earth,
"Earth," they said.
It arose suddenly, just like a cloud,
just like a mist now forming,
unfolding.
Then the mountains were separated from the water,
all at once the great mountains came forth.
By their genius alone,
by their cutting edge alone they carried out the conception of the mountain-valley,
whose face grew instant groves of cypress
and pine.
And so the Plumed Serpent was pleased with this:
"It is good that you came, Heart of Sky, Hurricane,
and Newborn Thunderbolt,
Sudden Thunderbolt."
"It will turn out well for our work,
our design," they said.
First to be formed was the earth,
the mountain-valley,
the channels of water were separated,
their branches wound their ways among the mountains,

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xa ch'ob'ol chik xek'oje wi ja' ta xk'utunije'ik nimaq juyub'.
K'eje k'ut uwinaqirik ulew ri
ta xwinaqirik kumal ri Uk'ux Kaj,
Uk'ux Ulew, ke'ucha'xik,
ri' k'ut e nab'e xkinojij.
Xk'olo wi ri kaj,
xk'olo nay puch ulew chi upam ja'.
K'eje k'ut uno'jixik ri ta xkinojij
ta xkib'isoj rutzinik,
ub'anatajik kumal.

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the waters were divided when the great mountains appeared.
Such was the formation of the earth
when it was brought forth by the Heart of Sky,
Heart of Earth, as they are called,
since they were the first to think of it.
The sky was set apart,
and the earth was set apart in the midst of the waters.
Such was their plan when they thought,
when they worried about the completion,
the end of their work.

After this episode, in which the dry land is created, come three episodes in which the gods attempt to create "the human work, / the human design." Their desire is for beings who will be able to walk and talk in an articulate manner, praying and making offerings to them at appropriate times and appropriate places, guided by a calendar and by an ability to recognize sacred locations in a four-sided, four-cornered world.

On their first try, the gods succeeded only in making deer, birds, and all the other animals except monkeys. When the animals were asked to speak, "they just squawked, / they just chattered, / they just howled," and so they were sent to live amid the trees and bushes. For their second try, the gods modeled the shape of a human being in mud. On just this one occasion, they made a single being instead of pairs of beings. Not only was this monad inarticulate, but it dissolved in the water, becoming the only created being without descendants. Whatever happened in the original version of this episode, the authors chose to retell the story in a way that made it a negation of Adam. For them, the idea that humanity could have originated from a single male being made of mud made no sense.

For their third try, the gods returned to making beings in pairs, this time carving puppetlike creatures from wood. The results looked human and acted human, and they even built houses, used tools, cooked meals, and kept dogs and turkeys. But they did things whenever and wherever they wanted, and without remembering who made them. The gods brought an end to their way of life by sending a hurricane. During the storm, the wooden people were crushed by their houses, struck by their tools, burnt by their pots, and attacked by their animals. Their descendants are the monkeys that swing through the forests.

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27 Blood Moon Becomes a Trickster

THE MASTERS OF CEREMONIES wait until they are more than halfway through the Popol Vuh before they tell the story of the fourth attempt to make the human work, the human design. Meanwhile, they tell a series of stories about gods who rid the earth of monsters and live the lives of flesh-and-blood beings, establishing precedents for human customs.

Xpiyakok and Xmukane, the first of all daykeepers, have two sons with the first of all calendar names, One Hunahpu and Seven Hunahpu. As Andrés Xiloj Peruch pointed out, their two day numbers stand for all thirteen numbers, because the sequence of the numbers that attach to a given day name, as that name recurs each twenty days, begins with 1 and ends with 7: 1, 8, 2, 9, 3, 10, 4, 11, 5, 12, 6, 13, and 7. One and Seven Hunahpu play ball every day, using a court on the surface of the earth. In an episode that precedes the one that unfolds here, they are summoned to play a game on the home court of opponents whose calendar names are One Death and Seven Death (Jun Kame and Wuqub' Kame), standing for all days named Death. These two characters are the principal lords of the underworld realm of Xibalba (Xib'alb'a), whose name connotes fear. In order to play ball with them, One and Seven Hunahpu must first pass a series of tests. They fail completely, and as a consequence they are sacrificed.

The bodies of the brothers are buried near the underworld ball court, at the Place of Ball Game Sacrifice, but the head of One Hunahpu is separated from his body. On the orders of One and Seven Death, it is placed in a tree near the burial place. The tree then bears fruit for the first time, and as time goes by, no one can distinguish the head from the fruit. This event marks the origin of the calabash tree *(Crescentia cujete),* which bears fruit in the shape of a human head, with a rind that is hard and thin like a skull. The inhabitants of Xibalba begin to talk about the tree, which is where the present story begins. A lord named Blood Gatherer (Kuchumakik') tells his daughter about the tree. Her name, translated here as "Blood Moon," combines the feminine or diminutive prefix *x-* with *kik',* the term for "blood," which contains a pun on *ik',* "moon." She is destined to be a moon goddess, but as the story opens, she has yet to see the surface of the earth and is yet to be seen by anyone who lives there.

When Xiloj read this story, he was struck by the scene in which Blood Moon comes face-to-face with the skull in the tree. She sees the skull spit in her hand, but when she looks in her hand, she finds no trace of saliva. The skull explains, "It's just a sign I've given you." At this point, Xiloj remarked, "Then this is a dream." The contemporary

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K'iche', especially the daykeepers, treat dreams as sources of important information. A dream in which a skull spits in the dreamer's hand would be read as a sign of something to come, even if the skull does not speak.

As dreamers, daykeepers value a state of lucidity, in which the dreamer is aware of being in a dream. When daykeepers find themselves face-to-face with another being in a dream, they pay close attention, expecting to receive a message. In her encounter with the skull, Blood Moon becomes the first of all lucid dreamers. She is so attentive that her dream becomes self-explanatory. The skull, speaking with the voice of One and Seven Hunahpu, delivers a speech on the subject of human mortality, explaining that in the future, the dead will live on through their daughters and sons. The flesh of their faces may decay, depriving them of the visible aspect of their individual identity, but the faces of their descendants will resemble their own, in both the physical and social senses. The social "faces" or identities of the living, as determined by their occupations and their inherited places in a hierarchy, will be a continuation of the "faces" of the dead.

Blood Moon returns to her home as the first of all pregnant women. The saliva (or sign) she received in her hand has generated the hero twins in her belly, Hunahpu and Xbalanque. Her pregnancy proceeds by the measure of months, as befits a moon goddess. Her father, Blood Gatherer, notices her condition when six months have passed, and the number six sets another precedent. Mayans reckoned synodic months in groups, and the most common group lasted 177 days, equal to three months of 29 days each and three of 30 days each. When Blood Moon's father accuses her of bearing a bastard, she defends herself by saying, "There is no man whose face I've known." Her statement is misleading, but it is literally true: the skull in the tree is without a recognizable face. This clever statement reveals a side of Blood Moon's character that will later cause Xmukane to call her a *k'axtok'*, a "trickster." Her counterpart in the Classic art of the lowlands is often portrayed with a rabbit that shares the moon with her (figure 69). The rabbit plays its own role as a trickster in Classic paintings of scenes from stories and in a later episode in the Popol Vuh.

Fig. 69. Moon goddess seated in a crescent moon, holding a rabbit. Detail from an incised Late Classic vase.

The literature on mythology is full of references to male trickster figures, but in Blood Moon, we have a female example. By means of trickery, she outwits the greatest authority figures a woman can face. Her first major challenge comes when her angry

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father and the other lords of Xibalba send her away to be sacrificed. Later she finds herself at the mercy of Xmukane, the ultimate ill-tempered mother-in-law, who gives her an impossible task to do.

The job of taking Blood Moon away falls to owl messengers, who are ordered to bring her heart back in a bowl. She persuades them to substitute a nodule of congealed sap for her heart. She draws the sap from a *ch'u'j kaq che',* a "cochineal croton tree" *(Croton sanguifluus),* named for the blood-red color of its sap. When the lords receive the counterfeit heart, they take it to be real, and when they burn it, they are captivated by the aroma. This event sets the precedent for their future offerings, which will consist of smoke that comes from croton sap rather than hearts and blood. But wrongdoers, including women who really do bear bastards, will be fair game for them. Even today, Blood Gatherer wants blood. In the stories Xiloj tells about him, his agents come out of Xibalba every day to search for human blood that has been spilled on the ground in violence, and they bring it back to his banquet table.

The owls show Blood Moon the way to the surface of the earth, and she goes to the place where Xmukane lives with One Monkey and One Artisan, the sons of One Hunahpu by his first wife, who is now deceased. When the authors call Xmukane the "mother" of these two, they are referring to the role she plays for them in the absence of their actual mother. At the same time, they are the only "sons" she has, because her own sons, One and Seven Hunahpu, have disappeared in the underworld.

Blood Moon attempts to console Xmukane, telling her that One and Seven Hunahpu live on in the sense that they have "made a way for the light to show itself." At one level, this statement means that their twin sons will "come to light" when Blood Moon gives birth to them, but at another level, it means that Venus will return as the morning star. It rose in the east for the first time when One and Seven Hunahpu began to play ball on the surface of the earth, setting the precedent for its future appearances on days named Junajpu. Later, when the head of One Hunahpu was placed in the tree by One and Seven Death, Venus made its first appearance as the evening star, setting the precedent for future western appearances on days named Kame, or "Death." Now, as the coming to light of Blood Moon's sons draws nearer, so does the return of the Great Star to the eastern horizon.

Xmukane sends Blood Moon to gather a net full of corn in a field that belongs to One Monkey and One Artisan, but when she gets there, she finds only a single clump of cornstalks. She asks for help from the spirit guardians of the crop, invoking them as Xtoj and Xq'anil, "Thunder Woman" and "Yellow Woman." Toj and Q'anil, or "Thunder" and "Yellow," are day names that occupy adjacent places in the sequence of twenty names, but Q'anil precedes Toj rather than following it. The reversal of their order in Blood Moon's invocation stems from her lunar nature. In the Dresden table that deals with eclipses, the sequence of events begins on days named Muluk and ends on Lamat, the Yukatek equivalents of K'iche' Toj and Q'anil.

As a result of her invocation, Blood Moon is able to bring home a full net. When Xmukane sees it, she rushes to the cornfield to see what happened there, and she finds

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the imprint of Blood Moon's net at the foot of the single clump of cornstalks. She takes this imprint as a sign that Blood Moon really is her daughter-in-law and that the children in Blood Moon's womb are her own grandsons. Her reason for reading the imprint of the net in this way is that the word for "net" is k'at, and K'at is also the name of a day that has a role in the Venus calendar. When the Great Star appears in the east on a day named Junajpu, it makes its next eastern appearance on a day named K'at. One and Seven Hunahpu have indeed made a way for the light to show itself, which will happen when their twin sons are born.

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WA CHI K'UTE UTZIJOXIK JUN Q'APOJ, UME'AL JUN AJAW, KUCHUMAKIK' UB'I'.

Are k'ut ta xuta' jun q'apoj,
ume'al jun ajaw,
Kuchumakik' ub'i' uqajaw,
Xkik' k'ut ub'i ri q'apoj.
Ta xuta k'ut utzijoxik ri uwach che',
ta chitzijox chik rumal uqajaw,
chumayjaj k'ut ta chitzijoxik:
—Ma kina'ojwila ri che' kab'ixik.
Qitzij kus uwach, kacha',
kanuta'o,— xcha' k'ut.
K'ate xb'ek xa utukel,
xopon k'ut chuxe' che' tikil,
chi Pusb'al Cha'j tikil wi.
—Jiya'? Naki pe uwach wa'e che'?
Maki pa kus chiwachin wa che'?
Ma kikam taj,
ma kisach taj la k'i ta xchinch'up junoq,— xcha' k'u ri q'apoj.
Ta xch'aw k'ut ri b'aq k'o ula xo'l che':
—Naki pa karayij chi re ri xa b'aq
ri k'olok'oxinaq chu q'ab' taq che'?— xcha' ri ujolom Jun Junajpu
ta xch'awik chi re ri q'apoj.
—Ma karayij,— xucha'xik.
—Kanurayij,— xcha' k'ut ri q'apoj.
—Utz b'a la.
Chalikib'a uloq ri awikiq'ab,
wila na,— xcha' ri b'aq.
—We,— xcha' k'u q'apoj.
Xulikib'a aq'anoq uwikiqab' chuwach b'aq.
K'ate k'ut chi pitz kab'an uchub' b'aq,
ta xpetik taqal k'ut puq'ab' q'apoj.
Ta xril k'ut upuq'ab',
jusuk' xunik'oj,
ma k'uja b'i uchub' b'aq puq'ab'.
—Xa retal mixnuya' chawe ri nuchub',
nuk'axaj.
Are ri nujolom maja b'i kachokon chi wi,
xa b'aq,
maja b'i chi uch'aq'.
Xawi k'eje ujolom we ki nim ajaw:
xa utyojil utz wi uwach.
Are k'ut ta chikamik, chuxib'ij chi rij winaq rumal ub'aqil.
K'eje k'ut xa uk'ajol k'eje ri uchub',
uk'axaj,
uk'oje'ik we uk'ajol ajaw;
we puch uk'ajol na'ol,
ajuchan.

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AND HERE IS THE ACCOUNT OF A MAIDEN, THE DAUGHTER OF A LORD NAMED BLOOD GATHERER.

And this is when a maiden heard of it,
the daughter of a lord.
Blood Gatherer is the name of her father,
and Blood Moon is the name of the maiden.
And when he heard the account of the fruit of the tree,
her father retold it,
and she was amazed at the account:
"I'm not acquainted with that tree they talk about.
Its fruit is truly sweet, they say,
so I hear," she said.
Next, she went all alone,
and arrived where the tree stood;
it stood at the Place of Ball Game Sacrifice.
"What? Well, what's the fruit of this tree?
Shouldn't this tree bear something sweet?
They won't die,
they won't be wasted if I pick one," said the maiden.
And then the bone in the fork of the tree spoke:
"Why do you want a mere bone,
a round thing in the branches of a tree?" said the head of One Hunahpu
when it spoke to the maiden.
"You don't want it," she was told.
"I do want it," said the maiden.
"Very well.
Stretch out your right hand here,
so I can see it," said the bone.
"Yes," said the maiden.
She stretched out her right hand there, in front of the bone.
And then the bone spit out its saliva,
which landed squarely in the hand of the maiden.
And then she looked in her hand,
she inspected it right away,
but the bone's saliva wasn't in her hand.
"It's just a sign I've given you, my saliva,
my spittle.
This, my head, has nothing on it—
just bone,
nothing of meat.
It's just the same with the head of a great lord:
it's just the flesh that makes his face look good.
And when he dies, people get frightened by his bones.
After that, his son is like his saliva,
his spittle,
in his being, whether it be the son of a lord
or the son of a craftsman,
an orator.

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Xmachisach wi chib'ek
chitz'aqatajik.
Mawi chupel
ma pu ma'ixel uwach ajaw,
achij
na'ol,
ajuchan.
Xaxi chikanajik ume'al,
uk'ajol.
Ta chuxoq!
K'eje mixnub'an chawe.
Kataq'an k'ut chila' chuwach ulew, mawi kakamik.
Katok pa tzij.
Ta chuxoq!— xcha' ri ujolom Jun Junajpu,
Wuqub' Junajpu,
xawi kina'oj ta xkib'ano.
Are utzij Jun Raqan,
Ch'ipi Kaqulja,
Raxa Kaqulja chi kech.

K'eje k'u utzalijik chik q'apoj chi rochoch,
k'ya pixab' xb'ix chi rech.
Jusu k'u xwinaqir ral chi upam rumal ri xa chub',
are k'ut kiwinaqirik Junajpu,
Xb'alanq'e.
Ta xopon k'ut chi rochoch ri q'apoj, xtz'aqat k'ut waqib' ik',
ta xnawachil rumal uqajaw,
ri Kuchumakik' ub'i' uqajaw.

K'ATE PUCH UNATAJIK Q'APOJ RUMAL UQAJAW, TA XIL RI RAL K'O CHIK,

ta xkikuch k'ut kina'oj konojel ajawab',
Jun Kame,
Wuqub' Kame ruk' ri Kuchumakik':
—Are ri nume'al k'o chi ral, ix ajawab'.
Xa ujoxb'al,— xcha' k'u ri Kuchumakik' ta xoponik kuk' ajawab'.
—Utzb'ala.
Chak'oto uchi' ri.
Ta ma kub'ij chi pus k'ut,
chi najt chib'epusu' wi.—
—Utz b'a la, alaq ajawab',— xcha' k'ut.
K'ate k'ut xutz'onoj chi rech ume'al:
—Apa ajchoq'e ri awal, k'o chapam at nume'al?— xcha' k'ut.
—Maja b'i wal, lal nuqajaw;
maja b'i achij, weta'm uwach,— xcha' k'ut.
—Utz b'a la.
Qitzij wi chi at joxol!
Che'k chipusu, ix ajpop achij.
Chik'ama' uloq ri uk'ux chi upam tzel,

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The father does not disappear when he passes,
when he reaches his end.
Neither dimmed
nor destroyed is the face of a lord,
a warrior,
craftsman,
orator.
Rather, he will leave his daughters,
his sons.
So be it!
This is what I have done through you.
Now go up there on the face of the earth, you will not die.
Keep the word.
So be it!" said the head of One Hunahpu,
Seven Hunahpu—
they were of one mind when they did it.
This was the word Hurricane,
Newborn Thunderbolt,
Sudden Thunderbolt had given them.

In the same way, by the time the maiden returned to her home,
she had been given many instructions.
Right away children were generated in her belly from the saliva alone,
and this was the generation of Hunahpu,
Xbalanque.
And when the maiden got home and six months had passed,
she was found out by her father,
Blood Gatherer is the name of her father.

AND AFTER THE MAIDEN WAS NOTICED BY HER FATHER, WHEN HE SAW THAT SHE WAS NOW WITH CHILD,

thoughts were shared by all the lords,
One Death,
Seven Death, together with Blood Gatherer:
"This daughter of mine is with child, lords.
It's just a bastard," Blood Gatherer said when he joined the lords.
"Very well.
Get her to open her mouth.
Then, if she doesn't tell, sacrifice her.
Go far away and sacrifice her."
"Very well, your lordships," he replied.
After that, he questioned his daughter:
"Who is responsible for the child in your belly, my daughter?" he said.
"There is no child, my father, sir;
there is no man whose face I've known," she replied.
"Very well.
It really is a bastard you carry!
Take her away for sacrifice, you Warriors of the Council.
Bring back her heart in a bowl,

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chikik'ololej ajawab' wakamik,— xe'uchax k'ut ri tukur.
E kajib' ta xeb'ek,
kitik'em ri tzel ta xeb'ek,
kich'elem ri q'apoj,
kuka'm ri saqi tok',
pusb'al re.

—Mawi chutzinik kinikamisaj, ix samajel,
rumal mawi nujoxb'al.
Ri k'o chi nupam xaqi xwinaqirik,
xere xb'e numayjaj ri ujolom Jun Junajpu, k'o chi pusb'al chaaj.
K'ek'e ta k'ut!
Mawi kipus, ix samajel!— xcha' ri q'apoj.
Ta xch'awik:
—Naki pa xchiqakoj uk'exel ri' k'ux?
Mixb'ix uloq rumal aqajaw:
'Chik'am uloq ri uk'ux.
Xchikitzololej ajawab',
xchikitzaqix taj,
xchikijunamwachij utz'aqik.
Chanim chik'ama' uloq pa tzel,
chik'olob'a qajoq uk'ux chi upam tzel.'
Ma pa mixojuchax uloq?
Naki la k'ut xchiqaya' pa tzel?
Kaqaj ta nab'ek ma ta katkamik,— xecha' k'u ri samajel.
—Utz b'a la.
Mawi kech ri k'ux, ta chuxoq,
ruk' mawi waral iwochoch chuxik,
ma k'u xa chich'ij winaq chi kamik.
K'ate qitzij iwech ri qitzij joxol.
K'ate nay pu rech Jun Kame,
Wuqub' Kame, xa kik',
xa jolomax rech.
Ta chuxoq:
Are chik'at chuwach.
Mawi are ri k'ux chik'at chuwach.
Ta chuxoq:
Chikojo ri uwach che',— cha' k'ut ri q'apoj.
Kaq k'ut uwa'l ri che' xelik,
xk'ul pa tzel.
K'ate puch xuwon rib',
k'olokik xuxik uk'exel uk'ux.
Ta yitz' chi k'ut uwa'l kaq che',
k'eje ri kik' uwa'l che' xelik uk'exel ukik'el.
Ta xuk'olo chila' ri kik' chi upam
ri uwa'l kaq che' k'eje k'u ri kik' rij xuxik,
kaqlujluj chik k'olom chi pa tzel.
Ta xq'up k'ut ri che' rumal q'apoj:
ch'u'j kaq che', chucha'xik.

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so the lords can take it in their hands this very day," the owls were told.
Four of them left,
carrying the bowl as they went,
taking the maiden by the hand,
bringing along the White Dagger,
the instrument of sacrifice.

"It wouldn't turn out well if you killed me, messengers,
because it's not a bastard.
What's in my belly generated all by itself
when I went to marvel at the head of One Hunahpu, at the Place of Ball Game Sacrifice.
So please stop!
Don't do your sacrifice, messengers," said the maiden.
Then they talked:
"What are we going to use in place of her heart?
We have been told by her father:
'Bring back her heart.
The lords will take it in their hands,
they will satisfy themselves,
they will make themselves familiar with its composition.
Hurry, bring it back in a bowl,
put her heart in the bowl.'
Isn't that what we've been told?
What shall we deliver in the bowl?
What we want above all is that you should not die," said the messengers.
"Very well.
My heart must not be theirs, so be it,
nor will your homes be here,
nor will you simply force people to die.
Hereafter, what will be truly yours will be the true bearers of bastards.
And hereafter, as for One Death,
Seven Death, only blood,
only nodules of sap will be theirs.
So be it:
These things will be burned before them.
Hearts will not be burned before them.
So be it:
use the fruit of a tree," said the maiden.
And it was red tree sap she went for,
she gathered it in the bowl.
After it congealed,
this substitute for her heart became round.
When the sap of the croton tree was tapped,
tree sap like blood became the substitute for her blood.
When she rolled the blood around inside there,
the sap of the croton tree formed a surface like blood,
glistening red and round inside the bowl.
So the tree was cut open by the maiden:
the cochineal croton tree, as it is called.

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Are k'u ri kik' xub'ina'j rumal kik' jolomax, chucha'xik.
—Chila' k'ut kixloq'ox wi,
chuwach ulew k'o iwech chuxik,— xcha' k'ut chi ke ri tukur.
—Utz b'a la, at q'apoj!
Xqab'eb'a,
qawab'a aq'anoq.
Xa qab'in apanoq;
oj na qaya'ixtaj uwa uk'exewach ak'ux chi kiwach ajawab',— xecha' k'ut ri samajel.
Ta xopon k'ut chi kiwach ajawab',
ketzelewachin konojel.
—Mawi xutzinik?— xcha' k'ut Jun Kame.
—Mixutzinik, ix ajawab'.
Wa na k'u uk'ux xe k'o pa tzel.—
—Utz b'a la, wila k'ut,— xcha' k'u ri Jun Kame,
ta xuchuyej k'u aq'anoq,
katurur rij chi komaj,
kaqlujluj rij chi kik'.
—Utz, chi lu' uwach q'aq',
chiya' chuwi q'aq',— xcha' k'ut Jun Kame.
K'ate puch xkichaq'ij chuwi q'aq',
k'ok' k'ut xkina' Xib'alb'a.
Xek'isyakataj uloq konojel,
xech'ike chuwi.
Qitzij chi kus xkina'o ri usib'el kik'.

Are k'ut e ch'ikichoj wi kanoq, ta xeb'e ri tukur,
e wab'ay rech q'apoj.
Xukiya' aq'anoq chi jul chuwi ulew,
xtzalij chi k'u qajoq ri wab'anel.
K'eje k'ut xech'akataj wi rajawal Xib'alb'a ri' rumal q'apoj,
xemoywachixik konojel.
Are k'ute k'o ri uchuch Jun B'atz',
Jun Chowen,
ta xul ri ixoq, Xkik' ub'i'.

TA XUL K'UT RI IXOQ XKIK' RUK' RI UCHUCH JUN B'ATZ', JUN CHOWEN,

xk'o loq ral chi upam,
xa sqaqi'n chik mawi keyakeyik ri Junajpu,
Xb'alanq'e kib'i'.
Ta xul k'u ri ixoq chi re ri ati't,
xcha' k'u ri ixoq chi re ri ati't:
—Mixinulik, lal chichu',
in alib' la,
in puch alk'wal la, lal chichu',— xcha' ta xok uloq ruk' ri ati't.
—Apa katpe wi uloq?
K'o chi pa ri wal,

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And she called the sap blood because it formed blood clots, so to speak.
"Now you have been blessed,
the face of the earth shall be yours," she then told the owls.
"Very well, thou maiden!
Let's go,
we'll show the way up there.
Just walk on ahead;
we have yet to deliver this duplicate of your heart to the lords," said the messengers.
And when they came before the lords,
they were all watching closely.
"Hasn't it turned out well?" said One Death.
"It has turned out well, your lordships.
So this is her heart in the bowl."
"Very well, so I'll look," said One Death,
and when he lifted it up with his fingers,
its surface was soaked with gore,
its surface glistened red with blood.
"Good, stir up the fire,
put it over the fire," said One Death.
And when they dried it over the fire,
the Xibalbans savored the aroma.
They all ended up standing here,
they leaned over it intently.
They found the smoke of the blood to be truly sweet!

And while they stayed at their cooking, the owls were on their way,
showing the maiden the way out.
They sent her up through a hole onto the earth,
and then the guides returned below.
In this way the lords of Xibalba were defeated by a maiden,
all of them were blinded.
And the place where the mother of One Monkey,
One Artisan was living
is where the woman arrived, the one named Blood Moon.

AND BLOOD MOON CAME TO THE MOTHER OF ONE MONKEY, ONE ARTISAN

when her children were still in her belly,
but it wasn't very long before the birth of Hunahpu,
Xbalanque, as they are named.
And when the woman came to the grandmother,
the woman said to the grandmother:
"I've come, my lady,
I'm your daughter-in-law
and I'm your child, my lady," she said when she came here to the grandmother.
"Where do you come from?
As for my little babies,

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ma pa xekamik chi Xib'alb'a?
E k'u ka'ib' kanoq ketal,
kitzijel puch: Jun B'atz',
Jun Chowen kib'i'.
We awila katpe wi,
¡Katel ub'ik!— xuchax ri q'apoj rumal ati't.
—Xere la qitzij wi chi in alib' la,
xk'o na re in k'o wi,
rech Jun Junajpu wa' uka'm.
E k'aslik!
Mawi e kaminaq ri Jun Junajpu,
Wuqub' Junajpu;
xa uk'utb'al rib' saq mixkib'ano, lal walib',
k'eje k'ut iwila ta chi loq uwach ri uka'm,— xucha'xik ri ati't.

Are k'ut keq'aq'al ri Jun B'atz',
Jun Chowen:
xa su,
xa b'ix kakib'ano,
xa tz'ib'anik
xa pu k'otonik kichakij chi juta q'ij,
are k'ut kub'ul wi uk'ux ri ati't.

Xcha' chi k'ut ati't:
—Xmakawaj wi at ta walib'.
Xa ajoxb'al ri k'o chapam,
at k'axtok'!
Xekam wi wal, kab'ij,— xcha' chi k'ut ri ati't.
—Qitzij ib'a re wa' kanub'ij.—
—Utz b'a la.
At walib' kanuta'o.
Jat b'a la,
jak'ama' qecha' wi chi qiwa'ej.
Ja jach'a jun chi nima k'at chipetik,
at na k'u walib' kanuta'o,— xuchax k'ut ri q'apoj.
—Utz b'a la,— xcha'k'ut.

K'ate puch ta xb'ek pa ab'ix.
K'o wi kab'ix ri Jun B'atz',
Jun Chowen.
Jokam ub'e'l kumal,
xutaqej k'ut q'apoj,
xopon puch chiri' pa ab'ix.
Xa k'u ju wi ri ab'ix,
xma k'o chi wi,
uka wi,
rox wi.
Xuwachela'm wi' uwach chi ju wi.

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didn't they die in Xibalba?
And these two remain as their sign
and their word: One Monkey,
One Artisan are their names.
Wherever you come from,
get out of here!" the maiden was told by the grandmother.
"Even so, I really am your daughter-in-law,
and I have been for some time.
What I carry belongs to One Hunahpu.
They are alive!
There was no death for One Hunahpu,
Seven Hunahpu;
they have merely made a way for the light to show itself, my mother-in-law,
as you will see when you look at the faces of what I carry," the grandmother was told.

And these are the obsessions of One Monkey,
One Artisan:
playing,
singing is all they do,
writing,
carving is all they work at, every day,
and this cheers the heart of their grandmother.

And then the grandmother said,
"I don't want you as my daughter-in-law.
It's just a bastard in your belly,
you trickster!
The children of mine who are named by you are dead," said the grandmother.
"Truly, what I say to you is so!"
"Very well!
You are my daughter-in-law, I hear you.
So get going,
get their food so they can eat.
Go pick a big net full of ripe corn ears and come back,
since you are already my daughter-in-law, as I understand you," the maiden was told.
"Very well," she replied.

After that, she went to the garden.
It was the garden of One Monkey,
One Artisan.
A path had been cleared by them,
so the maiden followed it,
and she arrived there in the garden.
But there was only one clump,
there was no other plant there,
no second
or third.
That one clump had borne its ears.

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Ta xk'is k'ut uk'ux ri q'apoj:
—Kil la in makol,
in k'asb'ol.
Apa xchink'am wi ri jun k'at echa' kab'ixik?— xcha' k'ut.
K'ate puch usik'ixik chajal echa' rumal:
—Ta tul wa uloq,
ta tul tak'aloq Xtoj,
Xq'anil,
Xkakaw,
Ix pu Tziya,
at chajal re kecha' Jun B'atz',
Jun Chowen,— xcha' ri q'apoj.
Ta xuk'am k'ut ri tzamiy,
utzamiyal uwi' jal,
xub'oq aq'anoq,
mawi xujach' ri jal,
chikaw k'ut ri jal echa' pa k'at.
Xq'axinik ri nima k'at.

Ta xpe k'ut ri q'apoj,
xa k'u chikop xeqan ri k'at.
Ta xpetik xb'ekiya' ukoq xukut ja,
k'eje ri reqan xoponik xril ri ati't.
K'ate puch ta xril ri ati't ri echa,
jun chi nima k'at:
—Apa mixpe wi ri echa awumal?
Mixe'aqalab'a wi!
We mixk'is ak'am uloq ri qab'ix?
Chib'e na wila!— xcha' ri ati't.

Ta xb'e puch,
xb'erila ri abix.
Xawi xere k'o wi ri ju wi ab'ix,
xawi k'u xere q'alaj uk'olib'al k'at chuxe'.
Anim chi k'ut xpe ri ati't,
xul chi k'ut chi rochoch,
xcha' chi k'ut chi re ri q'apoj:
—Xere wi retal ri.
Qitzij wi chi at walib'!
Chiwil chi na ab'anoj!
Ri e k'o ri wi e nawinaq chik,— xuchax k'ut q'apoj.

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So then the maiden's heart stopped:
"It looks like I'm a sinner,
I'm a debtor!
Where will I get the netful of food she asked for?" she said.
And then the guardians of food were called upon by her:
"Quick, rise up,
quick, stand up, Thunder Woman,
Yellow Woman,
Cacao Woman
and Cornmeal Woman,
keepers of the food of One Monkey,
One Artisan," said the maiden.
And then she took hold of the silk,
the bunch of silk at the top of the ear,
she pulled it straight out,
she didn't pick the ear,
and the ear reproduced itself to make food for the net.
It filled the big net.

And then the maiden came back,
but animals carried her net.
When she got back, she went to put the pack frame in the corner of the house,
so it would look to the grandmother as if she had arrived with a load.
And then, when the grandmother saw the food,
a big netful:
"Where did that food of yours come from?
You've leveled the place!
Have you brought back our whole garden?
I'm going to see!" said the grandmother.

And then she went off,
she went to look at the garden.
But the one clump was still there,
and it was clear that the net had been placed at the foot of it.
And the grandmother came back in a hurry,
and she got back home,
and she said to the maiden:
"The sign is still there.
You really are my daughter-in-law!
I'll have to keep watching what you do!
These grandchildren of mine are already showing genius," she told the maiden.

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Once Hunahpu and Xbalanque are born, their first problem is to survive the rough treatment they receive from their elder half-brothers, One Monkey and One Artisan. Like their mother, they are tricksters, and they eventually lure their brothers into climbing high up in a tree, where they maroon them and turn them into monkeys.

After getting rid of their brothers, Hunahpu and Xbalanque go far from home on their adventures. During their travels over the surface of the earth, they shoot Seven Macaw, bringing him down from his tree. His fall brings on the hurricane that reduces the wooden people to monkeys. Next, using trickery rather than physical force, they defeat Seven Macaw's sons, two giants who have the temperament of crocodiles. They once had the power to cause earthquakes and volcanic eruptions that were much more violent than those of the present-day world.

The trickster twins face the greatest test of their wits when they follow in the footsteps of their fathers, descending the road to Xibalba.

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28 The Death of Death

LIKE THEIR FATHERS before them, Hunahpu and Xbalanque are summoned to play a ball game with the lords of Xibalba. Unlike their fathers, they pass the tests that stand in the way of playing the game. Again and again they survive by outwitting their hosts, but the most important part of their deception concerns their identity. The boys never reveal the fact that they are the children of One Hunahpu and Seven Hunahpu, who suffered death at the hands of One and Seven Death. As for their mother, Blood Moon, the Xibalbans believe her to be dead as well, thanks to the artificial heart she crafted as a substitute for her own.

Before each game, Hunahpu and Xbalanque are sent to a different house of horror to spend the night. The first house is filled with impenetrable darkness; the second, with knives that want something to cut; the third, with cold drafts and falling hail; and the fourth and fifth, with hungry jaguars and killer bats. The game itself is full of dangers, and when visiting players are on the losing side, they forfeit their heads. In one game, Hunahpu's head serves as the ball, but he is able to play because Xbalanque has fitted him with an artificial head made from a squash. Xbalanque regains possession of the real head with the help of a rabbit, who lures the home team off the court by hopping like a bouncing ball.

The underworld events in the episode presented here begin with the fifth and final game. This one is not a ball game but something more like a broad-jump competition. The Xibalbans prepare a stone-lined pit for roasting the hearts of maguey plants, the first stage in making the alcoholic beverage *ki'*, the "sweet drink." They challenge Hunahpu and Xbalanque to compete with them in jumping over the fire pit. The twins know that they will be burned in this pit, so they concern themselves with the fate of their remains. They also know that the Xibalbans will consult seers before they do anything with the remains, so they conspire with the seers. There are two of them, and they "see into the middle" by looking into water. Their names, Xulu' and Pak'am (hereafter Xulu and Pacam), offer a clue as to what will happen to the remains, but the Xibalbans fail to take notice. The names are from a Ch'olan language, and together they mean something like "catfish are sown."

When Hunahpu and Xbalanque are burned in the pit, the Xibalbans follow the instructions the seers give them, grinding the bones of the twins into flour and then sprinkling the flour into a river. The boys reappear in the water after five days, a length of time that signals the transition between one solar year and another. At first, they look like catfish, having germinated from the flour "sown" in the river by the Xibal-

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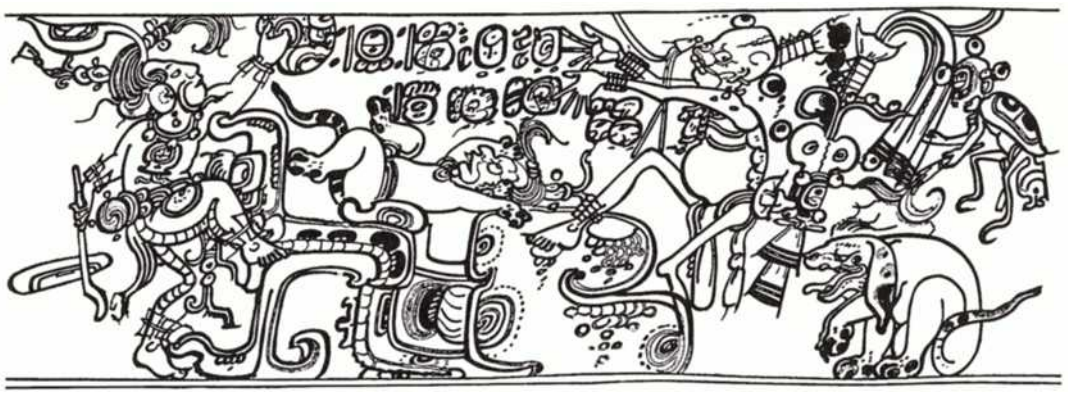

Fig. 70. Rollout view of a scene from the adventures of the Mayan hero twins, from a Late Classic drinking vessel. In disguise are One Lord (at left) and First Jaguar (on his back). To the right are a lord of Death (dancing), a dog (wagging his tail), and a firefly (above the dog).

bans, but the following day, they come out of the water as boys. Dressed in rags, they take on the role of itinerant entertainers, performing masked dances and putting on magic shows. Now their identity is doubly concealed. The Xibalbans had no idea who they were in the first place, and now they have no idea that they have returned.

When the lords of Xibalba hear about the boys' performances, they invite them to their palace to put on a show. They send the invitation through messengers, but it is not directly addressed by the senders to the receivers. Here, as elsewhere in the Popol Vuh, messengers do not speak in the voice of the first-person senders of a message when they address the recipients. Instead, they report what they heard the senders saying *about* the recipients. In the same way, when the town criers of present-day K'iche' communities deliver an announcement on behalf of the mayor, they report what they heard him saying about a matter of interest to the community rather than speaking to the community in his voice.

The show the boys put on for the lords of Xibalba is the subject of a number of Classic vase paintings, one of which is shown in figure 70. Their most famous act, according to the authors of the Popol Vuh, is one in which they take turns at sacrificing each other and then bringing each other back to life. The authors describe the sacrifice of Hunahpu by Xbalanque in detail, but the painter of the present vase has made the opposite choice, creating a scene in which Yax B'alam, or "First Jaguar," the Classic equivalent of Xbalanque, is sacrificed by Jun Ajaw, or "One Lord," the equivalent of Hunahpu.

As in other paintings of their performances, One Lord and First Jaguar are partially disguised. They have features that conceal their identity from the lords of Xibalba, but they also have features that reveal their identity to the viewers of the painting. One Lord, standing at left, is costumed as Chaak, or "Thunderstorm," but the catfish barbel on his face offers a clue to his actual identity. In his right hand he holds a lightning-striking ax, and the object in his upraised left hand represents a cloud. Directly in front of him is First Jaguar, who wears the elderly face of a Pawahtun but whose actual iden-

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tity is revealed by his infantile body and his jaguar paws and tail. He lies on top of a stone altar, ready to receive a sacrificial blow from his brother's ax, but instead of being held down, he eagerly spreads his arms wide.

The authors of the Popol Vuh describe the audience reaction to the sacrifice of Hunahpu by Xbalanque, saying that "the lords were happy, as if they were doing it themselves." The vase painter interprets the reaction to the sacrifice of First Jaguar by One Lord in the same way. To the right of the altar, a skeletal lord of Death does a joyful dance. As if he himself were performing the sacrifice, he mirrors the posture of One Lord, except that he has already brought his right arm forward. Behind him is another eager observer, a dog with both forepaws lifted and a wagging tail. If the Classic story unfolded in the same way as the one in the Popol Vuh, this dog would be the one the boys sacrificed and brought back to life at an earlier stage in their performance.

The insect that hovers above and behind the dog is a firefly, holding a torch in one hand. In the painting, he provides the lighting for the scene, which is taking place in the shadowy underworld, but if the Classic story were like the one in the Popol Vuh, he would have played a role in an earlier episode as well. When Hunahpu and Xbalanque were sent to spend the night in the house full of darkness, they were given cigars that they were told to keep lit all night without consuming them. They solved this problem by putting fireflies at the tips of the cigars, which made them appear to be burning. The next morning, they returned the cigars intact to their dismayed hosts. Thus, the firefly in the painting could be in the same position as the dancing lord of Death, not knowing that he has already had an encounter with the two entertainers.

Hunahpu and Xbalanque put on a show of great humility when they first arrive at the palace of One and Seven Death, but as their hosts become increasingly entranced by their performance, the brothers become bolder. Instead of following the protocol of a royal court, they use familiar address, as when they replace *lal ajaw,* which has the effect of "your lordship," with *at ajaw,* translated here as "thou lord." When One and Seven Death volunteer to be sacrificed and brought back to life, the boys not only use *ix,* the plural of the second-person familiar pronoun, but they also make a pun on the name Death (Kame). As if to reassure One and Seven Death that the sacrifice will do them no harm, they say, *Ma pa ix k'o kam?* "Aren't you already dead?" Considering what is about to happen to them, they are as good as dead.

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ARE K'UT WA'E KINAB'AL, KIKAMIK JUNAJPU, XB'ALANQ'E.

Are wa kinab'al,
kikamik xchiqab'ij chik.
Ta xepixab'aj k'ut,
xkib'ano ronojel k'axk'ol,
ra'il xb'an chi ke.
Mawi xekamik rumal utijob'al Xib'alb'a,
mawi xech'akatajik rumal ronojel tiyonel chikop k'o chi Xib'alb'a.

K'ate k'ut ta xkitaq chi ka'ib' nik'wachinel,
k'eje ri e ilol.
Are k'ib'i wa: Xulu',
Pakam.
E eta'manel.
—We kojz'onoxik chi we kumal rajawal Xib'alb'a
rumal ri qakamik.
Kina'oj kakinuk' rumal ri mawi mixojkamik,
ma pu mixojch'akatajik,
mixqasach kitijob'al,
ma xa chikop chok chi qe.
Are k'u retal wa chi qak'ux:
chojim ab'aj kamisab'al qe kumal.
Mixekuchu kib' ronojel Xib'alb'a.
Ma k'u qitzij ta kojkamik?
Are k'u ina'oj wa' xchiqab'ij:
We kixultz'onob'exoq kumal chi rech qakamik,
ta kojk'atoq.
Naki xchikuchaj ix Xulu',
ix Pakam. We kecha' chi we,
—Ma utz lo chiqatix ta kib'aqil pa siwan?
—We man b'a utz
xawi xere chik chik'astaj kiwach,— kixcha'.
—We ba' are utz xa chiqaxekeb'a chuwi che'?— ta kecha' chik chi we.
—Xax ma utz wi,
xawi xere chiwil chi kiwach!— kixcha'.
Ta kecha' ki k'ut chi roxmul:
—Xa b'a re rutzil:
Xa chiqatix kib'aqil pa raqan ja'.— We k'ut kixuchax chik kumal:
—Are utz b'a la kekamik!
K'ate k'u utz chijok kib'aqil chuwach ab'aj;
k'eje ri chike'x k'ajim jal;
jujunal k'u chike'ik.
K'ate k'u chitix ub'ik chi raqan ja',
chi ri qaj k'wa',
chib'e ch'uti juyub'
nima juyub',— kixcha' k'ut.

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AND HERE IS THE EPITAPH, THE DEATH OF HUNAHPU, XBALANQUE.

Here is the epitaph,
the death we shall name for them.
Just as they were instructed,
they went through all the dangers,
the troubles that were made for them.
They did not die from the tests of Xibalba,
they were not defeated by all the voracious animals that inhabit Xibalba.

After that, they summoned two who see into the middle,
similar to readers.
Here are their names: Xulu,
Pacam.
They are knowers.
"Perhaps there will be questions from the lords of Xibalba
about our death.
They are thinking about how to overcome us because we haven't died,
nor have we been defeated,
we've exhausted all their tests,
not even the animals got us.
So this is the sign, here in our hearts:
Their instrument for our death will be a stone oven.
All the Xibalbans have gathered together.
Isn't our death inevitable?
So this is the plan we shall name for you:
Perhaps you will come to be questioned by them about our death,
once we've been burned.
What will you say, dear Xulu,
dear Pacam? If they ask you:
'Wouldn't it be good if we dumped their bones in the canyon?'
'Perhaps it wouldn't be good,
since they would only come back to life again,' you will say.
'Perhaps it would be good if we just hung them up in a tree,' they'll say to you next.
'Certainly that's no good,
since you would see their faces,' you will say.
And then they'll speak for the third time:
'Well here's the only good thing:
We'll just dump their bones in the river.' If that's what they ask you next:
'This is a good death for them!
And it would also be good to grind their bones on a stone,
in the same way hard corn is refined into flour,
and refine each of them separately.
And then spill them into the river,
sprinkle them on the water's way,
among the small mountains,
great mountains,' you will say.

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Ta chik'utunisaj ri qapixab',
mixqab'ij chi we,—xecha' Xjunajpu,
Xb'alanq'e.
Ta xepixab'ik,
xketamaj kikamik.

Are kab'an ri nima chojim ab'aj,
k'eje ri chojib'al ki xkib'an Xib'alb'a,
nima'q xaq xkikojo.
K'ate k'ut xul samajel,
achb'ilay ke,
usamajel Jun Kame,
Wuqub' Kame:
—Kepetoq!
Kojb'e ta kuk' k'ajolab',
chib'etakila k'a kixqachojij,— kacha' ajaw, ix k'ajolab',—
xe'ucha'xik.
—Utz b'a la!— xecha' k'ut.
Anim xeb'ek,
xe'opon k'ut chuchi' choj.
Chiri' k'ut xerajchi'j wi chi etz'anem:
—Qach'opij wa'e ri qaki.
Kaj taq mul taj chi qaxik'aj,
chi qajujunal, ix k'ajolab',— xechax k'ut rumal Jun Kame.
—Mawi are kojimich' wi ri.
Ma pa qeta'm, qakamik, ix ajawab'?
Chiwila na!— xecha' k'ut.
Ta xkik'ulawachij kiwach,
xkirip kiq'ab' kikab'ichal,
e pu jupujuj ta xeb'ek pa choj.
Chiri' k'ut xekam wi kikab'ichal.
Kekikot chi k'ut ronojel Xib'alb'a,
taqal kiyuyub',
taqal kixulq'ab'.
—Mixeqachako!
Qitzij mawi atan xkiya' kib'!— xecha'.

K'ate k'ut kitaqik ri Xulu',
Pakam,
xkanaj wi kitzij:
Xawi xare xtz'onox ri xb'e wi kib'aqil.
Ta xeq'ijin Xib'alb'a,
xjok kib'aqil,
xb'etixoq chi raqan ja'.
Ma k'u xeb'e ta chi naj,
xa jusu xeqaj chuxe' ja',
e cha'om k'ajolab' xe'uxik.
Xawi xere kiwach xuxik,
xek'utun chi k'ut.

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Then you will have carried out our instructions,
as we have explained them to you," said little Hunahpu,
Xbalanque.
When they gave these instructions,
they already knew they would die.

This is the making of the great stone oven,
the Xibalbans made it like the places where the sweet drink is cooked,
they opened it to a great width.
After that came the messenger,
the one who would accompany them,
the messenger of One Death,
Seven Death:
" 'They must come!
We'll go with the boys,
to see the treat we've cooked up for them,' say the lords, dear boys,"
they were told.
"Very well!" they replied.
They went running,
and they arrived at the mouth of the oven.
And there they tried to force them into a game:
"Let's jump over this drink of ours.
Four times we'll fly,
one of us after the other, dear boys," they were told by One Death.
"You'll never put that one over on us.
Don't we know what our death is, dear lords?
Watch!" they said.
Then they faced each other,
they grabbed each other by the hands,
and went head first into the oven.
And there they died together.
And now all the Xibalbans were happy,
raising their shouts,
raising their cheers.
"We've really beaten them!
They didn't give up easily!" they said.

After that, they summoned Xulu,
Pacam,
who kept their word:
The bones went just where the boys had wanted them.
Once the Xibalbans had done the divination,
the bones were ground,
then spilled in the river.
But they didn't go far,
they just sank to the bottom of the water,
they became handsome boys.
They looked just the same as before,
when they reappeared.

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CHI ROB'IX K'UT XEK'UTUN CHIK, XE'IL CHI YA' RUMAL WINAQ,

e ka'ib' k'eje ri xa winaq kar xewachinik,
ta xil kiwach kumal Xib'alb'a.
Xetz'ukux k'ut chi taq ya',
xchuweqa' k'ut kek'utunoq e ka'ib' chi meb'a,
atziyaq kiwach,
atziyaq pu kij,
atziyaq k'ut kiq'u.
Mana chib'anan ta kiwach ta k'i xe'ilik rumal Xib'alb'a.
Jalan chi k'ut xkib'ano:

Xa Xajoj Pujuy,
    Xajoj Kux,
xa Ib'oy xkixajo,
xa Xtzul,
xa Ch'itik xkixaj chik.
K'ya mayjab'al xkib'an chik:
Xkiporoj ja,
k'eje ri qitzij chik'atik.
Lib'aj chi' k'ut chiwinaqir chik.
Tzatz chi Xib'alb'a chika'yik.
K'ate chikipus kib',
chikam jun chike,
chi pune na chi kaminaqil.
Nab'e chikikamisaj kib',
xawi xere lib'aj chi' k'astaj wi chi uwach.
Xa kika'y Xib'alb'a ta chi kib'ano.
Ronojel xkib'an chik
uxe'najik chik ch'akb'al kech Xib'alb'a kumal.

K'ate chi puch roponik chik
utzijel kixajoj chi xikin ajawab' Jun Kame,
                Wuqub' Kame.
Xcha' ta xkita'o:
—Naki ri e ka'ib' meb'a?
La qitzij wi chi kus?—
—Qitzij wi pu chi jeb'elik kixajowik.
Ronojel kakib'ano!— xcha' k'ut.
Kitzijoxik xoponik kuk' ajawab'.
Kus xkita'o,
ta xb'ochi k'ut kisamajel
taqol chi kepetoq.
—Chultakib'ana',
qaka'y.
Keqamayjaj taj
keqaka'yij ta puch!— kecha ajawab',—
                kixcha' chi ke,—
                xuchax ri samajel.

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AND ON THE FIFTH DAY THEY REAPPEARED, THEY WERE SEEN IN THE WATER BY THE PEOPLE,

the two of them looked like catfish
when their faces were seen by Xibalba.
And having germinated in the waters,
they appeared the day after that as two vagabonds,
with rags before,
and rags behind,
and rags all over too.
They seemed unrefined when they were examined by the Xibalbans.
They acted differently now:

It was only the Dance of the Poorwill,
the Dance of the Weasel,
only Armadillos they now danced.
Only Swallowing Swords,
only Walking on Stilts they now danced.
They performed many miracles now.
They set fire to a house,
as if it were really burning.
Suddenly it would grow back again.
Now the Xibalbans were full of admiration.
Next they would sacrifice themselves,
one of them dying for the other,
stretched out as if in death.
First they would kill themselves,
but then they would suddenly look alive again.
The Xibalbans could only admire what they did.
Everything they did now
was already the groundwork for their defeat of Xibalba.

And so then the news spread,
it came to the ears of the lords One Death,
Seven Death.
When they heard it, they said:
"Who are these two vagabonds?
Are they really such a delight?"
"Their dancing is really pretty.
They do everything!" was the reply.
An account of them had reached the lords.
It sounded delightful,
so then they entreated their messengers
to notify them that they must come.
"'"They should come for a stay,
to entertain us.
We'd wonder at them
and marvel at them!" say the lords,'
you will say,"
the messengers were told.

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Xe'opon k'ut kuk' ri xajol,
ta xcha'o k'ut kitzij ajawab' chi ke.
—Ma b'a chiqaj!
Rumal ri qitzij kojxob'ik.
Ma xa mawi kojk'ixb'ik kojok apanoq chi ajawal ja?
Rumal k'i itzel qawach.
Ma xa qi nima'q ub'aq qawach chi meb'a?
Ma xa on ril chi re xa oj xajol?
Naki ta chiqab'ij chi ke qachmeb'a?
K'o kan k'u rayij nay pu ri qaxajoj,
kakik' astaj kiwach quk'.
Ma k'eje la k'u xchiqab'an chi ke ri ajawab',
k'eje k'u mawi kaqaj wi, ix samajel,— xecha' k'ut ri Junajpu,
Xb'alanq'e.
Xelejeb'ex na kiwach.
Chuwi ra'il,
chuwi k'ax,
kaq ra'il xeb'ek.
Mawi atan xqaj b'enam.
K'ya mul xech'ijik;
xa chimachka'ij samajel chi kiwach,
k'amol ke,
ta xeb'e k'ut ruk' ajaw.

Xe'opon puch kuk' ajawab'.
Kemochochik,
chikixulela kiwach xe'oponik,
xkikemelaj kib',
chikiluq' kib',
chikipach kib',
chimayo kib',
chiatz'yaq.
Qitzij wi, chi meb'a kiwachib'al xe'oponik.

Ta xtz'onox k'ut kijuyub'al,
kamaq' puch.
Xtz'onox nay puch kichuch,
kiqajaw:
—Apa kixpe wi?— xe'ucha'xik.
—Ma b'a qeta'on, at ajaw,
mawi xqeta'maj uwach qachuch,
qaqajaw.
K'a oj chutikoq ta xekamik.— xa xecha',
mawi naki la xkib'ij.
—Utz b'a la,
chib'an ta b'a, qaka'y.
Naki chiwaj?
Iwajil chiqaya'o!— xe'ucha'xik.

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So they came to the dancers,
then spoke the words of the lords to them.
"But we don't want to!
Because we're really ashamed.
Wouldn't we just be too frightened to go inside a lordly house?
Because we'd really look bad.
Wouldn't we just be wide-eyed vagabonds?
Wouldn't we look like mere dancers to them?
What would we say to our fellow vagabonds?
There are others who also want us to dance today,
to liven things up with us.
So we can't do likewise for the lords,
and likewise is not what we want, dear messengers," so said Hunahpu,
Xbalanque.
Even so, they were prevailed upon.
Through troubles,
through torments,
they went on their tortuous way.
They didn't want to walk fast.
Many times they had to be forced;
up ahead of them, the messengers had to go back and forth,
the guides,
and so they went to the lord.

And they came to the lords.
Feigning great humility,
they bowed their heads to the ground when they arrived,
they brought themselves low,
doubled over,
flattened out,
down to the rags,
to the tatters.
They really looked like vagabonds when they arrived.

So then they were asked what their mountain was,
and their nation.
And they were also asked about their mother,
their father:
"Where do you come from?" they were asked.
"We've never known, thou lord,
we don't know the identity of our mother,
our father.
We must've been small when they died," was all they said;
they didn't give any names.
"Very well,
please entertain us, then.
What is the price?
We'll give you your price," they were told.

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—Ma b'a kaqaj!
Qitzij chi kaqaxib'ij qib'.— xecha' chik chi re ajaw.
—Mixib'ij iwib'!
Mixxob'ik!
Kixxajowoq:
Are ta nab'e chixaj ri kixpusu' ta iwib'.
Chiporoj ta k'u ri wochoch.
Chib'ana' ronojel ri iweta'm.
Kojka'y taj kaqaj.
Are uma qak'ux kixb'etaqoq rumal, ix meb'a.
Chiqaya' iwajil!— xe'uchax k'ut.

Ta xkitikib'a k'ut kib'ix,
kixajoj.
Ta xul k'ut ronojel ri Xib'alb'a,
xepulik e kayel.
Ronojel k'ut xkixajo:
xkixaj Kux,
xkixaj Pujuy,
xkixaj Ib'oy.
Xcha' k'u ajaw chi ke:
—Chipusu' ri nutz'i'!
Chik'astaj chi uwach iwumal!— xe'ucha'xik.
—We!— xecha'.
Ta xkipus tz'i',
xk'astaj chi uwach.
Qitzij k'u chi kikot ri tz'i'
ta xk'astaj uwach.
Chusaqb'isala' uje'
ta xk'astaj uwach.
Xcha' k'u ajaw chi ke:
—Chiporoj na b'a wochoch!— xe'uchax chik.
Ta xkiporoj k'ut rochoch ajaw;
e pulinaq ajawab' pa ja konojel,
mawi xek'atik.
Lib'aj chi' chik xkutzinisaj,
mana jusu sachik ri rochoch Jun Kame.
Xkimayjaj k'ut konojel ajawab'.
Xawi k'u xere kexajowik.
Nim kekikotik.
Xe'uchax chi k'ut rumal ajaw:
—Chikamisaj na k'u jun winaq!
Chipusu', ma ta k'u chikamik!— xe'uchax k'ut.
—Utzb'ala!— xecha'.
Ta xkichap k'ut jun winaq,
k'ate xkipusu',
xkipoq'oj k'u aq'anoq uk'ux ri jun winaq,
kik'olob'a k'ut chi kiwach ajawab'.

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"Well, we don't want anything!
To tell the truth, we're afraid," they told the lords.
"Don't be afraid!
Don't be ashamed!
Just dance this way:
First of all you'll dance to sacrifice yourselves.
You'll set fire to my house after that.
You'll act out all the things you know.
We want to be entertained.
This was our heart's desire in sending for you, dear vagabonds.
We'll give you your payment," they were told.

So then they began their songs,
their dances.
So then all of Xibalba arrived,
the spectators crowded the floor.
And they danced everything:
they danced the Weasel,
they danced the Poorwill,
they danced the Armadillo.
Then the lord said to them:
"Sacrifice my dog!
Bring him back to life again!" they were told.
"Very well," they said.
When they sacrificed the dog,
he then came back to life.
And that dog was really happy
when he came back to life.
Back and forth he wagged his tail
when he came back to life.
And the lord said to them,
"Well, you have yet to set my home on fire," they were told next.
So then they set fire to the home of the lord;
the house was packed with all the lords,
but they were not burned.
They quickly fixed it back again,
lest the house of One Death be consumed all at once.
And all the lords were amazed.
And they went on dancing this way.
They were really happy.
And now they were asked by the lord:
"You have yet to kill a person!
Make a sacrifice, but without death!" they were told.
"Very well," they said.
So then they took hold of a person,
then they sacrificed him,
they held up his human heart on high,
they showed its roundness to the lords.

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Xkimayjaj chi k'ut Jun Kame,
Wuqub' Kame.
Lib'aj chi' k'ut xk'astaj chi uwach ri jun winaq kumal.
Nim chi kikot uk'ux ta xk'astaj uwach,
xkimayjaj k'ut ajawab'.
—Chipusu' chi na k'u iwib'!
Chiqil taj!
Qitzij kurayij qak'ux ri ixajoj!— xecha' chi k'u ajawab'.
—Utz b'a la, at ajaw!— xecha' k'ut,
k'ate puch xkipus kib'.

Are k'u xpus ri Xjunajpu rumal Xb'alanq'e.
Jujunal k'u xperepoxik raqan,
uq'ab';
xel ujolom,
xk'ole aponoq chi naj;
xk'otix uloq uk'ux,
xch'eqe chuwach tz'alik,
keq'ab'ar k'u ri ronojel rajawal Xib'alb'a chi ka'y.
Xa k'u jun chi kaxajowilab'ik: ri Xb'alanq'e.
—Katwalijoq!— xcha' k'ut,
lib'aj chi' k'ut xk'astaj uwach.
Nim kekikotik,
xawi k'eje kekikot ajawab',
xawi are keb'anowik.
Kakikot kik'ux Jun Kame,
Wuqub' Kame,
k'eje ri are kexajowik,
kakina'o.

K'ate puch urayinik,
umalinik pu kik'ux ajawab' chi re kixajoj Xjunajpu,
Xb'alanq'e
Ta xel k'u kitzij Jun Kame,
Wuqub' Kame:
—Chib'ana' chi qe!
Kojipusu'!— xecha' k'ut.
—Junal taj kojipusu'!— xecha' k'ut Jun Kame,
Wuqub' Kame chi ke ri Xjunajpu,
Xb'alanq'e.
—Utz b'a la, chi k'astaj iwach.
Ma pa ix k'o kam?
Oj pu kikotirisaj iwe,
ix pu rajawal iwal,
ik'ajol.— xecha' k'ut chi ke ajawab'.
Are k'u nab'e xpus ri k'i ujolom ajaw:
Jun Kame ub'i'.
Rajawal Xib'alb'a.

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And now One Death,
Seven Death admired it.
And now that person was brought right back to life.
His heart was really happy when he came back to life,
and the lords were amazed.
"You have yet to sacrifice yourselves!
Let's see it!
At heart, that's the dance we really want from you," the lords said now.
"Very well, thou lord," they replied,
and then they sacrificed themselves.

And this is the sacrifice of little Hunahpu by Xbalanque.
One by one his legs,
his arms were spread wide;
his head came off,
rolled far away outside;
his heart, dug out,
was smothered in a leaf,
and all the lords of Xibalba went crazy at the sight.
So now only one of them was dancing there: Xbalanque.
"Get up!" he said,
and Hunahpu came right back to life.
The two of them were really happy at this,
and likewise the lords were happy,
as if they were doing it themselves.
The hearts of One Death,
Seven Death were as happy
as if they were the ones who were dancing,
who knew how.

And now the hearts of the lords were filled with longing,
with yearning for the dance of little Hunahpu,
Xbalanque.
So then came these words from One Death,
Seven Death:
"Do it to us!
Sacrifice us!" they said.
"Sacrifice both of us!" said One Death,
Seven Death to little Hunahpu,
Xbalanque.
"Very well, you ought to come back to life.
Aren't you already dead?
And aren't we making you happy,
along with the children,
the sons of your domain?" they told the lords now.
And the first to be sacrificed was the head lord:
the one named One Death,
the ruler of Xibalba.

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Kaminaq chi k'ut Jun Kame,
ta xchap chik Wuqub' Kame.
Mawi xk'astaj chi kiwach.
K'ate pu kelik Xib'alb'a chi kaqan,
are xkil ri ajawab' xekamik.

E xaraxoj chub'ik,
e pu xaraxoxinaq kikab'ichal
xa k'u k'ajisab'al kiwach xb'anik.
Jusuk' xukamib'ej ri jun ajaw
mana xkik'as taj chi uwach,
are k'u ri jun ajaw xelaj na,
xok na chi kiwach ri e xajol;
mawi xuk'ulu,
ma pu xuriqo:
—Toqob' nuwach!— xcha', ta xuna' rib'.

Xek'is k'u b'eq ronojel kal,
kik'ajol pa nima siwan.
Xa jun xkib'alij wi kib' pa nima xolob'achan.
Chiri' k'ut e tub'ul wi,
ta xk'ulun k'ut mawi ajilan chi sanik,
tukulij ula' ke pa siwan.
K'eje ri xeb'eyo'x uloq,
ta xe'ul k'ut,
xkixulkiya' chi kib' konojel.
Xe'ulelajoq,
xe'ul pu okoq.
K'eje k'ut kich'akatajik rajawal Xib'alb'a;
xa mayjab'al,
xa pu kijalwachib'al kib' ta xkib'ano.

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And with One Death dead,
the next to be taken was Seven Death.
They did not come back to life.
And now the Xibalbans were getting up to leave,
those who had seen the lords die.

They underwent heart sacrifice there,
and heart sacrifice was performed on the two lords
only for the purpose of destroying them.
As soon as they had killed the one lord
without bringing him back to life,
the other lord was now meek,
now tearful before the dancers;
he didn't consent,
he didn't accept it:
"Take pity on me!" he said when he realized.

And all their children,
their sons took the road to the great canyon.
In one single mass, they filled up the great abyss.
So they piled up there,
gathered together like countless ants,
tumbling down in the canyon.
It was as if they were being herded there,
and when they arrived,
they all bent low in surrender.
They became meek,
they became tearful.
Such was the defeat of the rulers of Xibalba.
The boys accomplished it only through wonders,
only through self-transformation.

With all the Xibalbans assembled before them, Hunahpu and Xbalanque reveal their names and the names of their fathers, One Hunahpu and Seven Hunahpu. They threaten to kill all the Xibalbans, but they respond to a plea for mercy by reducing their power instead. Hereafter, their only offerings will be the substitute for blood that was invented by Blood Moon, which is to say incense made from tree sap, and the only victims of their deadly tricks will be wrongdoers.

The daykeeper Andrés Xiloj Peruch added a detail that is missing from the text. When the Xibalbans "all bent low in surrender," they were permanently disabled. Today they gaze at the ground with their heads bent forward, and they cannot straighten their necks. As a result, they can hear what is overhead but they cannot see it.

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29 The Human Work, the Human Design

After completing the story of Blood Moon and her sons, Hunahpu and Xbalanque, the authors of the Popol Vuh return to the problem of the creation of human beings. The Makers and Modelers first conceived "the human work, / the human design" at the very beginning, when they raised the earth out of the primordial sea. But then, after three experiments, they came no closer to realizing their idea than making the wooden people who became monkeys. Now comes their fourth try, and this time the material they choose for the human body is yellow and white corn. Xmukane, the grandmother of Hunahpu and Xbalanque, grinds the corn nine times, making a very fine dough that becomes human flesh, and the water in which she washes her hands becomes human fat.

To give shape to the material provided by Xmukane, the gods use their genius and their cutting edge, just as they did when they brought the mountains and rivers into being. They model four beings with legs and arms and with twenty digits. Their creations turn out to have perfect vision, and when they look around, they are able to see all the way to the limits of space and time without moving from where they are.

From the beginning, the gods had wanted to create beings with whom they could enter into dialogue. They had given a language lesson to the animals they created on their first try, but the animals had responded with nothing but shrieks and howls. The mud person who came next had said nothing, and the wooden people, though they talked at first, had forgotten to speak to those who made them. In the passage presented here, the gods try to open a conversation with the people made of yellow and white corn, but this time they get more than they expected rather than less. Not only do these new people speak when spoken to, but they answer with a poetic tour-de-force. They recognize the gods as their creators by giving them "double thanks, / triple thanks," thus playing off form against meaning by making "double" and "triple" into a pair. They produce many pairs of parallel lines, which are central to Mayan poetics, but in each case, they abbreviate the wording of the second of the two lines, smartly doing more with less. On the only occasion when they fill in the full wording of parallel lines, they produce a quatrain instead of a couplet: "We speak, / we listen, / we wonder, / we move." And after all their play with form, they end their speech by addressing the gods not as "our mother, / our father," as their descendants will do when they pray, but as "our grandmother, / our grandfather." This choice of words has the effect of reducing the authority of their makers.

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On top of everything else, the first four humans declare that they have already understood everything "in the sky, / on the earth." The gods are taken aback by this performance, and somehow, despite the far-reaching awareness of their latest creations, they manage to hold a private conversation about what to do with them. They decide to "take them apart just a little," clouding their vision so that they can see only what is nearby. At the same time, they decide that humans will multiply—and, implicitly, that birth will be followed by death.

In this episode, as at the beginning of their work, the authors of the Popol Vuh tell a story whose points of contrast with Genesis are clear. As in Genesis, mortality is imposed on humans after they have been created, but not because of something they did wrong. The first four ancestors did not acquire knowledge by disobeying the gods but were rather deprived of knowledge by gods who did not wish them to come too close to a divine level of greatness.

The gods "took back their knowledge" and withdrew to a distance, and they have stayed at a distance ever since. They no longer engage in face-to-face conversations with the beings they made so perfectly and then marred. Now, instead of speaking plainly to humans, they send messages by way of signs in the sky, or by way of the ominous cries or sudden movements of animals, or in dreams that are difficult to understand, or in the enigmatic outcomes of divinations. The only way humans can ask for these messages or reply to them is to pray and make offerings. When the messages do come, the discovery of their meaning requires an art of interpretation. Such is the human condition.

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Ta xetz'onox k'ut rumal ri Ajtz'aq,
Ajb'it:
—Jucha li kik'ojey kina'o?
Ma kixmukunik?
Ma kixta'onik?
Ma utz ich'ab'al
ruk' ib'inib'al?
Kixmukuna na k'ut,
chiwila' uxe' kaj.
Ma q'alaj juyub'taq'aj kiwilo?
Chitija' na k'ut!— xe'ucha'xik.
K'ate puch xk'iskil ronojel uxe' kaj.
K'ate k'ut kik'amowanik ri chi re Tz'aqol,
B'itol:
—Qitzij wi chi kamul k'amo,
oxmul k'amo!
Mixojwinaqirik,
mi pu xojchi'nik,
xojwachinik!
Kojch'awik,
kojta'onik,
kojb'isonik,
kojsilab'ik.
Utz kaqana'o,
xqetamaj naj,
naqaj,
mi pu xqilo nim,
ch'uti'n upa kaj,
upa ulew.
K'amo k'ut chi we, mixojwinaqirik, oj tz'aq,
oj b'it!
Mixojuxik, at qati't,
at qamam!— xecha',
ta xkik'amowaj kitz'aqik,
kib'itik.
Xk'isketamaj ronojel,
xkimukuj kaj tz'uq,
kaj xukut upam kaj,
upam ulew.
Ma k'u utz xkita'o ri Ajtz'aq,
Ajb'it:
—Mawi utz ri mixkib'ij qatz'aq,
qab'it:
—Mixqetamaj ronojel nim,
ch'uti'n.— kecha'.
K'eje chi k'ut uk'amik chik kina'oj Alom,
K'ajolom:
—Jucha chik chiqab'an chi ke?

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And then they were questioned by the Builder,
and Mason:
"What do you know about your being?
Don't you look?
Don't you listen?
Isn't your speech good,
and your walk?
So you must look,
to see out under the sky.
Don't you see the mountain-plain clearly?
So try it," they were told.
And then they saw everything under the sky perfectly.
After that, they thanked the Maker,
Modeler:
"Truly now, double thanks,
triple thanks!
We've been formed,
and we've been given our mouths,
we've been given our faces!
We speak,
we listen,
we wonder,
we move.
Our knowledge is good,
we've understood what is far
and near,
and we've seen what is great
and small under the sky,
on the earth.
Thanks to you, we've become human, we are made,
we are modeled.
We have come into being, our grandmother,
our grandfather," they said,
when they gave thanks for having been made
and modeled.
They understood everything perfectly,
they sighted the four sides,
the four corners in the sky,
on the earth.
But this didn't sound good to the Builder
and Sculptor:
"What our works
and designs have said is no good:
'We have understood everything, great
and small,' they say."
And so the Bearer,
Begetter took back their knowledge:
"What should we do with them now?

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Xa ta naqaj chopon wi kimukub'al.
Xa ta sqaqi'n uwach ulew chikilo.
Mawi utz ri kakib'ij.
Ma pa xa tz'aq,
xa b'it, kib'i'?
Xa lab'e e kab'awil ke'uxi chik,
we mawi kepoq'otajik,
kek'iritajik, ta chawaxoq,
ta saqiroq,
we mawi chik'iyarik.—
—Ta chuxoq:
Xa qayojo chi sqaqi'n chik,
k'ochi karaj.
Mawi utz kaqana'o.
Xa pa xchijunamataj kib'anoj quk',
ri najt kopon wi ketamab'al,
kilon ronojel— xe'ucha'xikik rumal Uk'ux Kaj,
Juraqan,
Ch'ipi Kaqulja,
Raxa Kaqulja,
Tepew Q'ukumatz,
Alom,
K'ajolom,
Xpiyakok,
Xmukane,
Tz'aqol,
B'itol, ke'ucha'xik.
Ta xkib'an k'ut uk'oje'ik chik kitz'aq,
kib'it.
Xa k'u xwab'ax ub'aq kiwach rumal ri Uk'ux Kaj.
Xmoyik k'eje ri xuxlab'ix uwach lemo,
xmoyomob'ik ub'aq kiwach.
Xa naqaj chik xemukun wi,
xere chi q'alaj ri e k'o wi.

K'eje k'ut usachik ketamab'al
ruk' ronojel kina'ob'al e kajib' chi winaq.
Uxe' utikarib'al.

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Their vision should at least reach nearby.
They should see at least a small part of the face of the earth.
What they're saying isn't good.
Aren't they merely 'works'
and 'designs' in their very names?
Yet they'll become as great as gods,
unless they procreate,
proliferate at the sowing,
the dawning,
unless they increase."
"Let it be this way:
Now we'll take them apart just a little,
that's what we need.
What we've found out isn't good.
Their deeds would become equal to ours,
just because their knowledge reaches so far,
they see everything," so said the Heart of Sky,
Hurricane,
Newborn Thunderbolt,
Sudden Thunderbolt,
Sovereign Plumed Serpent,
Bearer,
Begetter,
Xpiyakok,
Xmukane,
Maker,
Modeler, as they are called.
And when they changed the nature of their works,
their designs,
it was enough that their eyes be marred by the Heart of Sky.
They were blinded as the face of a mirror is breathed upon,
their vision flickered.
Now they could see only what was nearby;
only what was right in front of them was clear.

In this way, their understanding was lost,
along with all the knowledge of the first four humans.
The root was implanted.

The rest of the Popol Vuh is devoted to human history. The main actors are the founders of the ruling lineages of the K'iche' kingdom and their descendants. At first, they wander in the darkness of a great forest, but eventually they and their descendants shine with fiery splendor, building citadels filled with palaces and temples and expanding the boundaries of their domain. The authors devote considerable attention to the military successes of K'iche lords, but they also describe them as going on long retreats inside temples, where they fast, let blood, and pray for their subjects.

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Like their ultimate ancestors, the first four humans, the lords of the K'iche' kingdom were able to see into distant places and times without moving from where they were. But unlike the first four humans, they could not do so just by looking out into the world around them. Rather, they overcame the limits of human vision by studying something that was right in front of them: "the original book and prior writing," the instrument for seeing that preceded the alphabetic work now known as the Popol Vuh.

At the end of the Popol Vuh, the authors bring the story into their own time by listing the names of successive lords of the K'iche' kingdom, beginning with the founders. They focus on the two highest-ranking lordships, both of which belonged to the Kaweq division of the K'iche' nation. The Ajpop, or "Councilor," was first in rank, followed by the Ajpop K'amja, or "Councilor for the Treasury," who was responsible for collecting tribute. The authors do not name all the lords who once held these titles, limiting themselves to thirteen generations. Some of the generations they omitted are accounted for by other K'iche' authors who made different choices on their way from the founding generation to their own times. To this day, thirteen generations is the ideal for prayers addressed to ancestors.

When the authors of the Popol Vuh arrive at the twelfth generation on their list, they name Three Deer and Nine Dog, commenting that "they were ruling when Tunatiuh arrived," meaning Alvarado, and adding that "they were tortured by the Castilian people." They do not mention that Three Deer and Nine Dog were burned after they were tortured. In the thirteenth place are Tekum, or "Black Butterfly," and Tepepul, who "were tributary to the Castilian people." Their reign ended when Alvarado had them hanged for sedition, but the authors say nothing about that. Finally, in fourteenth place, come names of a new kind, the names adopted by the lords who were alive when the authors did their writing. For them, the Councilor is Don Juan de Rojas, and the Councilor for the Treasury is Don Juan Cortés.

The responsibilities of the Councilor for the Treasury included the collection of tribute, and in 1557, Don Juan Cortés went all the way to Spain to reclaim tribute rights for the descendants of K'iche' lords. He continued to press his case when he returned to Guatemala in 1558, prompting a missionary to warn Philip II that "this land is new and not confirmed in the faith," and that Cortés, "son of idolatrous parents, would need to do very little to restore their ceremonies and attract their former subjects to himself." Tribute rights never were restored, but over the next thirty years, Cortés did take a considerable role in appointing and installing the leaders of various towns that had once been under K'iche' rule. The Cortés line died out by 1788, but the Rojas line still lives. Its members retained the right to hold serfs until 1801, when Spain instituted liberal reforms throughout its empire. Today, the descendants of Don Juan de Rojas plant their fields near the entrance to the ruins of the former K'iche' capital.

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30 We Saw It All, Oh My Sons

FOR MUCH of their history, the lords of the Kaqchikel and Rab'inal nations were tribute-paying allies of the lords of the K'iche' nation, and the warriors of all three nations went on campaigns together. That relationship came to an end during the early fifteenth century, when a K'iche' faction of dissatisfied veterans raised a rebel army. Instead of working to expand the outer limits of the territory controlled by the allies, the rebels expanded K'iche' territory at the expense of the allies. The Kaqchikel lords, who had been residing in a citadel not far south of the K'iche' capital, were forced to move farther away, to the southeast. They established a fully independent kingdom and built its capital at a place named Iximche', or "Corn Tree," a term for the breadnut tree *(Brosimum alicastrum)*.

During the late fifteenth century, the lords of the Xajil division of the Kaqchikel nation began recording their history according to intervals that followed a strictly vigesimal count of days. Instead of using periods of 360 and 7,200 days like those of Yucatán, they used periods of 400 and 8,000 days. The zero date for their count, rather than being a backward projection into a hypothetical era that preceded human existence, was a turning point in their own history.

Two rulers held sway at Corn Tree, both of whom held the title of Councilor, which is Ajpo (rather than Ajpop) in the Kaqchikel language. They represented two divisions of the Kaqchikel nation, Xajil and Sotz'il. The first name carries connotations of dancing, and the other, which means "of the bats," may indicate an ancient connection to Copán, whose emblem glyph had a bat's head as its main sign. Today, some Kaqchikel men wear a jacket with a bat insignia on the back.

A generation or so after the founding of Corn Tree, an internal power struggle arose among the Kaqchikels. The lord of the Tuquche' division of the nation, who envied the power of the Xajil and Sotz'il lords, staged a massive revolt on the divinatory day 11 Cane (11 Aj), corresponding to May 20, 1493, on the Julian calendar then in use in Europe. The revolt was put down the same day, which then became the zero point for the annals kept by the Xajils. Each period of 400 or 8,000 days ended on a day named Cane, but with a variable number.

Around the middle of the sixteenth century, an alphabetic version of the annals was created by Francisco Hernández Arana, the son of a Xajil lord who had survived the smallpox epidemic that preceded the Spanish invasion and lived long enough to receive the name Francisco. The alphabetic version is not a direct transcription from one

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writing system to another but is rather a record of what the keeper of the original annals would have said when performing for an audience. The author writes as if he were speaking, periodically inserting such phrases as *ix nuk'ajol,* literally "you my sons," translated here as "oh my sons." When he comes to the events to which he was an eyewitness, he uses the first-person plural, as when he writes, *Xqatz'et ronojel ri, ix nuk'ajol,* "We saw it all, oh my sons."

Henández added new entries to the annals until 1582. Later entries, ending in 1619, were added by Pakal Francisco Díaz, from another Xajil lineage. The work of these two authors forms a major part of the Annals of the Cakchiquels, which consists of copies of various Kaqchikel manuscripts made by a Franciscan friar during the seventeenth century. The friar was a trained scribe, writing in a more precise and legible hand than he would have seen in the sources he worked from. Mayans who penned alphabet documents, whether in Yucatán or Guatemala, took a more utilitarian approach to their work. They were trained in the use of the letters of the alphabet but not in alphabetic calligraphy, and unlike the friar, they were not accustomed to producing letters with serifs.

The prealphabetic Xajil annals may have resembled Aztec annals, in which each successive 365-day year is identified by the divinatory date on which it began, and in which years with notable events have pictures attached to them. But the alphabetic version of the Xajil annals includes features that are missing from Aztec annals. It often provides divinatory dates for the events within a given period, which gives the Xajil document a kinship with Calakmul vase texts and Mixtec pictorial histories. Also provided, again as in Mixtec histories, are the names of the wives of successive rulers.

Pages 53–57 of the surviving manuscript of the Xajil annals are reproduced and translated here. The first entry on these pages notes the completion of seventeen "years" since the revolt at Corn Tree, meaning seventeen periods of 400 days. The divinatory date of this completion is 12 Cane, which fell on January 1, 1512. On this same page, the entry for Eight Cane contains an error that the scribe overlooked (or introduced): "vahxaki," the word for "eight," should have been written as "vakaki," meaning "six." References to "scores of days" occur here and there in these pages, referring sometimes to the twenty equal periods into which the 400 days were divided and sometimes to the interval separating one event from another.

Several royal titles appear in the text. A military member of a royal council, whether Kaqchikel or K'iche', is called Rajpop Achi', "Warrior Councilman." Another military title is Ruq'alel Achi', "Warrior Minister." Still other titles are Q'alel K'amajay, "Minister of the Reception House," belonging to a lord whose duties would have included the collection of tribute, and Ajaw Atzij Winaq, literally "Lord Speaker Person," translated here as "Lord Herald."

The author makes several references to a long war with the K'eche' Winaq, or "Forest People," meaning the K'iche'. The conflict is already under way at the beginning of the excerpt and then continues, intermittently, for eleven 400-day years until it "cools."

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A truce with the Forest People would have taken effect during the year ending on Thirteen Cane (on the first page of the excerpt), when they and all the other members of the Wuqu' Winaq, or "Seven Nations," sent representatives to participate in a Poqob', or "Pole Dance," at Corn Tree. The dance was performed on top of a *kaqjay,* or "red house," which is to say a pyramid.

The twenty-fifth year of 400 days, ending on One Cane, ran from September 2, 1519, through October 5, 1520. Preceding and following the subtitle that announces this year (on the second page of the excerpt) is a long and macabre description of the onslaught of smallpox. The reference to two "grandfathers" who died of the pox as "Diego" and "Juan" is anachronistic. These names were likely interpolated by someone who was confused about the sequence of events, perhaps the scribe who produced the present manuscript.

The author was a child when the smallpox epidemic took place. He seems particularly amazed by the fact that the death of his paternal grandfather, Ajaw Jun Iq', or "Lord One Wind," was followed only two days later by the death of his grandfather's eldest son, Rajpop Achi' B'alam, "Warrior Councilor Jaguar." Lord One Wind held the title of Councilor for the Xajils and thus was one of the two rulers of the Kaqchikel kingdom, and Warrior Councilor Jaguar was his heir apparent. He had two other sons by his first wife, Xoq'ajaw Chuuy Tz'ut, "Lady Turkey Corn Tassel." When she died, he married Xoq'ajaw Xq'eqk'uch Xtz'ikinajay, or "Lady Black Vulture of the House of Birds." Along with this union would have come an alliance between the Xajils, a division of the Kaqchikel nation, and the House of Birds, a division of the Tz'utujil nation. The two nations were separated (as they still are) by Lake Atitlán, with the Kaqchikels to the north and the Tz'utujils to the south. The present-day town corresponding to the House of Birds is San Pedro de la Laguna.

Lord One Wind's death from smallpox, coupled with the death of his heir apparent, created a crisis of succession. A one-year interregnum ensued, during which a lord named Beleje' K'at, or "Nine Net," acted as Councilor for the Xajils, though his proper position was that of the second-ranking lord, Councilor for the Treasury. After that year, Tz'i'an, Lord One Wind's fourth son and the first born by Lady Black Vulture, was chosen to succeed him as the legitimate Councilor for the Xajils. Tz'i'an, later named Francisco, was the father of Francisco Hernández Arana, the author who initiated the alphabetic version of the Xajil annals.

The entry for the twenty-sixth year, at the bottom of the third page of the excerpt and the top of the fourth, concerns the troubles of the House of Birds and another Tz'utujil division called Cypress House. First came a revolt, then an attack by the Sotz'il and Tuquche' divisions of the Kaqchikel nation. The Tz'utujil lords came to Corn Tree to ask for help, presumably from the Xajils.

The invasion by the "Castilian people" *(Kastilan winaq)* came during the ninth year of the second score of 400-day periods, which began after the completion of the previous year on Five Cane, corresponding to January 18, 1524. Pedro de Alvarado, the

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"lord" of the invaders, is identified by the Nahuatl name he had received in Mexico, Tunatiuh, which can be translated as "Sun" but can also mean "he who goes along getting hot." He is also called *awilantaro,* the Kaqchikel version of "el adelantado," a Spanish epithet meaning "he who goes in front." His first victory over the Forest People takes place on the Pacific piedmont at Xe Pit, Xe Tulul, "Under the Guanacaste, Under the Sapote," named after two kinds of fruit trees. His account of his expedition is vague on the subject of dates, but the Xajil document notes that this battle took place on the divinatory date One Yellow (Jun Q'anil). Of the two occurrences of this date within the 400-day period in question, the one that fits the general timing of Tunatiuh's expedition fell on February 22, 1524.

Tunatiuh's second defeat of the Forest People takes place in the highlands at a place whose name full name is Xelajuj Kej, or "Under Ten Deer," referring to its position at the foot of a mountain named for the divinatory day Ten Deer (the name is miswritten as "xelahub" in the manuscript). The author remarks that the invaders were unknown "in the time when wood and stone had their days," meaning the pre-Christian era during which days on the divinatory calendar were set aside for rituals that took place before icons made of *che' ab'aj,* "wood and stone." Missionaries adopted *che' ab'aj* as a term for "ídolos."

The next stop on Tunatiuh's itinerary is the citadel of Q'umarka'j, or "Old Camp," where he is met by the two highest-ranking lords of the Forest People. He submits them to torture and burns them on the day Four Net (Kaji' K'at), corresponding to March 9, 1524. Then he sends a message to the Kaqchikel lords, demanding that they provide warriors for his continuing campaign against the Forest People. They comply, presumably hoping that they have found a new ally in their conflict with their greatest enemy.

The Castilians arrive in Corn Tree on One Hunahpu (Jun Junajpu), April 14, 1524. The author reports that they "seemed like *k'ab'owil* to the lords" and to himself. The terms *k'ab'owil* and *k'ab'awil* (the K'iche' equivalent) have long been translated as "dioses" or "gods," but this is a missionary choice of words, repeated in Western writings down to the present day. When early K'iche' and Kaqchikel writers use these terms in descriptions of their own religious practices, they refer to icons of the patron deities of royal lineages. They never use them to refer to other divinities, nor do they use them as generic terms for "gods." The icons in question were elaborately costumed and ornamented, much like the images of patron saints in Mayan communities today. This fact explains why Tunatiuh and his close associates, richly clad for their appearance before the lords of Corn Tree, "seemed like icons." They were perceived not as "gods" but rather as walking, talking statues.

As a guest of the Kaqchikel lords, Tunatiuh spends his first night in Tzupam Jay, "Skull Rack House." This would have been adjacent to the outdoor rack on which the skulls of sacrificed prisoners of war were kept in rows, facing outward from the horizontal wooden rods on which they were impaled. Tunatiuh has a frightening dream in

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which Kaqchikel warriors approach him, and he takes this to mean that his hosts are planning to make war on him. They deny such a plot, suggesting that he has been visited by the warriors because he saw their skulls. Their interpretation must have been guided, in part, by the fact that the dream occurred on the night of One Junajpu. According to present-day diviners, persons who appear to dreamers on days named Junajpu are spirits of the dead.

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ochi cab lahuh ah. xel ruvuk lauha rubanic yuhuh.

ochi belehe ah. xelchic vah xak lauha yuhuh.

℄ Chupam chiga hunaoh xaygo chicop. xche chelut, quazari evte chioxi caoh xaygo ohar patinamit chi y xim chee, kitzih tixibin chi chicop.

℄ Gavo vinah oh ga quaygo xche chelut, Ok xaigo chiga çag: chi cay ye xaygo patinamit kitzih quaxibin chi çag xaygo ohar.

℄ Xarubeleh vinah chic oh xgat chi y xim chee, chicahi camay xyaar tinamit chixae. tinmani ahauh hun ye kamama, tinga ha gha haya, tinemani katata kamama oh xgat tinamit xkagat rono hal ri y xnugahol.

ochi vah xaki ah. xel beleh lauha yuhuh.

℄ Chupam gahuna oh x cam gu che vinah paçogil ya cumag mama giy nimah achiha xuyaai, oh xquiban labal chiri.

℄ Humul chiga xayaar gu che vinah xiquin chipohoh, pamuk cha xeocvi gu che vinah cuma. giy nimah rah pop achij, rusalal achi xuyaai chiri, giy gai ghutik camie xquiban tzah ta le cha xoc pe cuma y mama.

ochioxi ah gaxel hu may rucamic tukuchee ruba-

nic yuhuh.

Hagn chioxlahuh ah xel chichuna

℄ Chupam huna xigo chic poliob chuvi cah hay ruma ahauh lahuh noh, chi vah xahi tinel xlasabex gak, kitzih chinima tasal xquiban chic ahaua chiri, xul ronohal vukamae, hun ye lahuh noh xabano, hegntnn quabano labalri y mama, rah pop achi balam, rah pop achi y sich, rusalal achi gatu.

xel

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- **Twelve Cane marked seventeen years since the act of revolt.**

- **Nine Cane then marked eighteen years since the revolt.**

¶ During this year birds passed through, doves came out of the woods, and on Three Set, the doves passed through the town of Corn Tree, the birds were truly terrifying. _____

¶ In the fifth score of days, after the doves came out of the woods, locusts passed through: on Two Wind they passed through the town, the locusts were truly terrifying long ago. _____

¶ In the ninth score of days Corn Tree burned, on Four Death the town was consumed by fire. Our grandfather Lord One Wind was not there, but on the other side of the river; our fathers and grandfathers were not there when the town burned, but we saw it all, oh my sons. _____

- **Eight [Six] Cane marked nineteen years since the revolt.**

¶ During this year Forest People were killed on Bat River by your grandfathers; many great men gave themselves up when they made war there. _____

¶ Again, Forest People were devastated; when Hidden Tree was entered at the corner of the colonnade by the Forest People, many of the great men of their council, along with the Warrior Councilman, gave themselves up there, and many of lesser rank died; many prisoners were taken and brought in by your grandfathers. _____

- **Three Cane marked a score of years since the death of the Tuquches who rose in revolt.**

And then Thirteen Cane marked another year.

¶ During the year the Pole Dance was celebrated on the pyramid by Lord Ten Thought, on Eight Yellow the two parts of the fortress were joined together; the lords made a truly glorious display there, all the seven nations arrived; One Wind and Ten Thought scattered fire; your grandfathers, Warrior Councilman Jaguar, Warrior Councilman Iq'ich, along with Warrior Minister Net, were making war. _____

Marking

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oxelqaruca ba chilahuh ah yuhuh.

℄ Chupam chiqahuna xecam chic qachavinak cuma katata kama
ma, chirec xquibanvi chigotoh, chizaçibal cokolahay, xuqulva
chih ri caqhab chi chay rugin qachevinak, haok xuyaxi qayaxon
qik ruqahol ahauh apop tzih, qiyqanimak achiha xuyaxi, qua
raqa xeçasaxvi ymamaxi yxnuqahol, qiynauipe talechexoc
pe chucohol rinimak labal mixkabijh can. ———

o chivukuh xelroxa ucamay yuhuh.

o chicahi ah xel chic ucahayuhuh.

℄ Chupam qnroohuna, vae okixtiquex yauabil yxnuqahol, nabey
xyabix ohb, Ratam xyauabix chiqaquiq, sanachuluh, kitzih
tixibin chi camic xigo oher. haok xcam ahauh vakaki ahmak,
xaqnhalachic matipe nimaçekun, nima asapaqui vi katata
kamaxna pakavi qa yxnuqahol okxyabix qhae. ———

o chihunah xel humay voa yuhuh. okxyabix qhae.

℄ Vae chupam huna xyauabix vi qhae, haok xeqih chicamic katata
kamaxna diego Juan. chivoonh qnxoc chivilabal panatneat, cu
ma kamama, Hagnoh xtiquex yauabil qhae. kitzih tixibin chi
camic xpepaxuvi vinak mani yabim vizi quereri xqholvinak —
℄ Xcavinak oktitiquex yauabil toh xecam katata kamama, chi
cablahuh camay xcam ahauh hun yç yxiquin mama ———
℄ Xaqnxucabih xcamchic katata rah pop achibalam ri ymaxnayx
nuqahol. xaqnhunam xecam ymama rugin rutata kitun tichu-
vin tiqnyin vinak chicamic, Tokxecam katata kamama xxxba
tzak chiel ghakap vinak chiçivan, xaçij. xquch, xtiochic vi-
nak, tixibin chicamic xacamiçan ymama, herach camic ruqa-
hol ahauh rugin ruchaç runimal, Quera qa xoh canah vi can chi

me

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- **Marking the [twenty-]second year since the revolt was Ten Cane.**

¶ During this year Forest People were again killed by our fathers, our grandfathers, who did it with lightning cuts and strikes; two divisions of warriors met the Forest People, and then Yaxon K'iq, the son of Lord Councilor Sweatbath, gave himself up, and many other great men gave themselves up, and so your grandfathers achieved fiery splendor, oh my sons; many prisoners came in throughout the great war of which we have been speaking. _____

- **Seven Cane marked the third in the second score since the revolt.**

- **Four Cane then marked [twenty-]four years since the revolt.**

¶ During the [twenty-]fifth year, that was when the illness began, oh my sons; first came the coughing sickness, then the illness with a bloody nose and dark yellow urine; the death that passed through long ago was truly terrible. And so Lord Six Sinner died, and little by little a great darkness, a great night, came over our fathers, our grandfathers, oh my sons, when they were sickened by the pox. _____

- **One Cane marked a score and five since the revolt. Time of the pox.**

¶ During this year, they were sickened by the pox, and so death brought an end to our fathers, our grandfathers, Diego, Juan. On Five Cane our grandfathers entered into war with Panatacat, even though the illness of the pox had begun. The death that came over the people was truly terrible, since the people could not rid themselves of the illness.

¶ It was two score days after the illness began that our father, our grandfather died, on Twelve Death, Lord One Wind died, your great-grandfather._____

¶ And only two days later our father, Warrior Councilman Jaguar, your grandfather, oh my sons, also died. Your grandfather died together with his father; there must have been a stench, a stink from all the dead people; when our fathers and grandfathers died, half the people ended up falling into the canyons, then dogs and vultures just devoured the people, the death was terrible; once your grandfather was dead, the lord's son and his younger and elder brothers also died, and so we were left behind as

or-

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mabail ri yx nugnhol, gnoh ok ghutik gnhola, ok xoh canahcan honohel. —— Rupoyibal alaxic ——

Qui bi ymamavae xerugnholah ahauh.

¶ Rah pop achi balam rubi nabey rugnhol ahauh hun yx, hakitun tixsax chi qui vach ahaua ok xpenima camic ghac. ——

¶ ah mak rubi rucam al, haxugnhol can ri Donpo solis 11 tohin gnxox al, mani retalri hegnxecam rugin ahauh rie oxi katata ——

¶ Haga katata franco rah pop achi gian rucah al. —

¶ balam roo al mani gnretal ri. ——

¶ ah gnlam hunah pu ruvakak al, hegnxecolotah chic ri heoxi katata ruma ghac. gnoh ok ga ghutik honohel cuginok xohcanah, xkagit gazanohel ri yauabil yxnugnhol, hagnri rubi katit nabey rixhayil ahauh hun yx, chuy gut rubi xoxohauh heoxi xecalah, Hari katata, hagnri rutata Donpo solis manigaxugnhol rij tohin, xcam gari xoxohauh chuuy gut, xoc chipe xoxohauh xekaguch xgi quinahay. haquita rah pop achi gian balam xae cay ral. ——

¶ Gavovinak ok gn quecam ahaua hun yx lahuh noh, ok xechap chic ahava cahi y mox belehe gat, chi hun can xechap xagnhun chioc ribelehe gat xcolotah, xagnkayon chic oh aquala mani hun chic katata xcolotah, gne ok ghutik rigian balam, ri kioh retal ahauh hun yx, Quaregn xahauar vi belehe gat rij, xahuna salel gumahay chioc xghasrahauarem, maquiga xrah raho ahauh ahih vinak bagnhol. roquic chiahauarem ribelehe gat hatah xocchiaharem ri katata rah pop achi gian xraho ahauh ahih vinak bagnhol quarega roquic chia ha varem ri. ——

Xauign chupam ruvaka vae.

¶ Gahuvinak ok gnque chap ahaua ok xban yuhuh chinh gi quinahay chi-

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orphans, oh my sons, and this was when we were small boys, when all of us were left this way. _____ The damage to the lineage. _____

- **The names of ancestors who were the sons of lords.**

¶ Warrior Councilman Jaguar is the name of the eldest son of Lord One Wind, who was next in line for glory before the lords when the great death of the pox arrived. _____

¶ Ajmaq is the name of the second son, and his son is Don Pedro Solís./Tojin is the third son, who had no descendant when he died with the lord. Three of our fathers died. ____

¶ And our father Francisco, Warrior Councilman Tz'i'an, is the fourth son. _____

¶ Jaguar is the fifth son, and left no descendant. _____

¶ Messenger Hunahpu is the sixth son, and these three fathers of ours were spared from the pox. And we were all small when we were left together, we saw all the illness, oh my sons; and this is the name of our grandmother, the first wife of Lord One Wind: Turkey Corn Tassel is the name of the lady, who gave birth to three sons, and they are our father, and the father of Don Pedro Solís, and the one who had no sons, Tojin; and when the Lady Turkey Corn Tassel died, Lady Black Vulture of the House of Birds arrived, who was the mother of Warrior Councilman Tz'i'an and of Jaguar, her only two children. _____

¶ And in the fifth score of days after the lords One Wind and Ten Thought had both died, Four Lefthanded and Nine Net took the lordship, they took it on One Snake, but the only one who actually ruled was Nine Net, who was spared; and we were all alone then, we children; not one of our fathers was spared, and Tz'i'an and Jaguar were also small, all of us who descended from Lord One Wind, and so Nine Net came to rule, but for just one year as Minister of the Reception House, since it was said that the Lord Herald B'ak'ajol did not want him to rule. Nine Net entered into lordship, but the Lord Herald B'ak'ajol wanted our father Warrior Councilman Tz'i'an to enter the lordship instead, and so he entered his lordship. _____

- **And now this is during the [twenty-]sixth year.**

¶ One score days after they took the lordship there was a revolt against the House of Birds, on

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chi lahuh quah xban xeul coloel qui ahaua ah gi quinahay gi çi hay chi y xim chee ruma yuhuh, xul quiy ncoel nchiha. ———

¶ Xagn ruenblah xcam chic rmac gutu hila, ruma çogil tukuchee chi-hulahuh y moc, xcy aar gutu hila chi camic, xcy aar ah gi quinahay, conohel tzah chi tzalecha chi cana, quereqa xit punk ixibin chica-mic xuban gutu hile, xka hinamit xepoyom ———

Cani qa xeholih ka ahaua tzpapul ah gi quinahay gi çi hay chi-co choch. ———

¶ Tokxeboko tah chiqapa ah xecaka abah ronohel, xulcolo chie lxij cak chiqual tzah chigutu hile xelpa ohar patinamit, hachiqrah xquibam labal chizih ah gi quinahay, ah pavacal, xrah cachgul chijh chic cuma xagn xboy chijx nchiha ruma ah pauacal. ——

¶ Chi beleha bag, gnxban camic chuvi laham abah, pachi tulul mani gn ni mah nchi ha xemah. xaki ruyon vinah, beleha gat. cahi y mox xebano. ———

O chihulahuh ah. xel humay vaka yuhuh.

¶ mix kagih can Vae huna xeyaar vi hatata kamama ruma camic qbac.
¶ Chupam huna ok xoh gule rugin y tza y x nugnkol, xhunabizoh que cam y mama chicablahuh toh xoh gano y xok. ———

O chi vah xakiah xel ru vuka yuhuh.

¶ Chupam huna xorotah vilabal gachee garuhulauha xorotah labal ga chaa. ———

O chi voo ah xel humay vah xaka.

Culibal cashlan vinak xetulul vae.

¶ Vagnta chupam huna ok ki xaul cashlan vinak xcavinakok

ru-

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on Ten Deer they did it; the lords of the House of Birds and Cypress House came to seek aid at Corn Tree because of the revolt, they came to recruit warriors. _____

¶ And just twelve days later Tz'utujil people were killed by the Sotz'ils and Tuquche' on Eleven Lefthanded, the Tz'utujils were done to death, the people of the House of Birds were devastated, a crowd of prisoners was taken, and so, fearing death, the Tz'utujils handed over jade and metal; the town of Xepoyom was brought down. _____ Right away, Lord Tepepul of the House of Birds and the lord of Cypress House went back down to their homes. _____

¶ When all the people of Under Red Rock were uprooted, they came to seek the aid of the Kaqchikels; many of the Tz'utujils came to the town long ago, wanting to make war against the people of the House of Birds and Six Place, wanting to make an alliance because of warriors who were subverted by the people of Six Place. _____

¶ On Nine Monkey, death was brought upon the banner stone at Sapote Place; none of the great warriors were left. The men of Nine Net and Four Lefthanded did it by themselves. _____

- **Eleven Cane marked a score and six years since the revolt.**

¶ It had been one year since our fathers and grandfathers were devastated by the death pox.

¶ During the year we married your mother, oh my sons, when it was one year since your grandfathers had died; on Twelve Thunder we took a wife. _____

- **Eight Cane marked the [twenty-]seventh year since the revolt.**

¶ During the year the war with the Forest People cooled down, in its eleventh year the Forest war cooled down. _____

- **Five Cane marked a score and eight years.**
- **The arrival of the Castilian People at Under the Sapote.**

¶ It was during the year after this that the Castilian people arrived; it was the ninth year of the

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rubeleha, ok xeul castilan vinak xepit xetulul, chihun tanel xcam ge-
chevinak chiri ruma castilan vinak, Tunatiuh avilan taro rubi. cahaual
ri kix kaqan ronohel amaq, mahaok tetmax viquivach, gatahinok
tisihalox chee, abah. ———

¶ Xul chiqa xelahub, xeyaar chic gechevinak chicamic chiri, tok xbo-
kotah chi gnel gechevinak ronohel gulelaay richin castilan vinak,
ohix yaar chic gechevinak chuvachpe xelahub. ———

¶ Tok xul ga patinamit tumax caah, cani gnx gul cuma ahaua ahpop,
ah pop gmahay, canixya patan ruma gechevinak xaqa canixe
oc ahaua paghigh ruma tunatiuh. ———

¶ Chicahi gat gxeperox ahaua ahpop. ahpop gmahay ruma tunatiuh,
maquiygovinak ruqux tunatiuh chilabal. // cani gnxpe ruqamahel
tunatiuh cuqin ahaua, takol richin achiha, tipeul zachihilal ahpo-
caqil ahpoxahil, tucamiqam gechevinak, xcharuqamahel tunatiuh
chi que ahaua. cani gnx takexruhiah tunatiuh, ok xbeqa Vomuqh
achiha camiqay richin gecha vinak, xaqa ruyon ahtinamit xbe ma
quixcaho achiha conohel chique ahaua, xaqnox mul xbe achiha,
xoc patan ruma gechevinak, oh ga xoh ba gamo richin tunatiuh yx
nuqahol. ———

Haok kixul chiyxim chevae

Haqa chihun hunah pu, tokixul castilan vinak patinamit chiyxim-
chee, tunatiuh rubi cahaual, cani gnxbe gul el tunatiuh cumaaha-
va belehegat. Cahiy mox, vh ga ruqux tunatiuh chique ahaua tokix
xul patinamit, manilabal xatiquicot tunatiuh ok kixul chiyxim
chee, Quereqatokxul castilan vinak ri Oher yxnuqahol, kitzih-
ixibin ok xeul, manie tzamvi quivach, hegabouil xequina ahaua.
xkamaqa oh ytata. oh kixoh qato culic chiyximchee chupamhupam
hay xvaxvi tinatiuh chucatih gnxvachiq ahauh, tixibin chiachiha
xul ruqin paruvaram xerutah qa ahaua, Nak ruma xtiban labal-
vuqin gopetanbanbanchive xcha. maquian quera xazumal giyaachi-
hja caminak vaua hagami xaqgat vnepahul govi quinighal xecha a-
haua quera qatok xoc paro choch ahauh ghicbalri. ———

cani

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of the second score when the Castilian people arrived at Under the Guanacaste, Under the Sapote; on One Yellow, Forest People were killed there by Castilian people. Tunatiuh Adelantado was the name of their lord, who brought down all the nations; they were of unknown identity in the time when wood and stone had their days.

¶ And when he arrived at Under Ten, the Forest People were devastated, all the Forest People who were drawn out to meet the Castilian people died there, the Forest People were devastated in front of unfortunate Under Ten.

¶ And as soon as he arrived at the citadel of Old Camp, he was met by the lords Councilor and Councilor of the Reception House, then tribute was paid by the Forest People, but then the lords were submitted to torture by Tunatiuh.

¶ On Four Net, the lords Councilor and Councilor of the Reception House were burned by Tunatiuh; in war, there was no mercy for anyone in the heart of Tunatiuh. / And then a messenger from Tunatiuh came to the lords, sent to demand warriors: "Let the warriors of the Councilor for the Sotz'ils and the Councilor for the Xajils come here to kill Forest People," the messenger of Tunatiuh said to the lords. Immediately the word of Tunatiuh was carried out, and five times eighty warriors went to kill the Forest People, since only people from the town went; he did not ask the lords for all the warriors, and the warriors went only three times to extract tribute from the Forest People, and we ourselves went to collect it for Tunatiuh, oh my sons.

• How he then came here to Corn Tree

And it was on One Hunahpu that the Castilian people arrived at Corn Tree, with their lord named Tunatiuh, and Tunatiuh went straight to meet the lords Nine Net and Four Left-handed, and Tunatiuh was of good heart toward the lords when he arrived at the citadel, there was no war, Tunatiuh was simply happy when he arrived at Corn Tree, and this is how the Castilian people arrived long ago, oh my sons; they were truly frightening when they arrived, their identity was unknown and they seemed like icons to the lords. And so they seemed to us, your fathers. We actually saw them when they came to Corn Tree; Tunatiuh slept in Skull Rack House until the next day, and that lord dreamed of being frightened by warriors who came to him in his sleep, and he sent for the lords: "For what reason would you make war on me? What am I doing to you?" he said. "Not for any reason; this happened because many warriors have died here, and you saw them impaled on the rack," said the lords; then he entered the home of Lord Planter.

then

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As the story continues in the home of Ajaw Ch'ikb'al, or "Lord Planter," Tunatiuh offers the Kaqchikel lords help against their enemies. He then carries out a series of attacks against their neighbors, beginning with the Tz'utujils, but he then lets on that he expects a reward. When he returns to Corn Tree, he demands *q'ana puwaq,* "yellow metal":

> He wanted them to give him metal by the jarful—even their drinking vessels, even their crowns. When he received nothing, Tunatiuh became angry at the lords. He said, "For what reason have you failed to hand over your metal to me? If the metal of the all nations fails to come to you here, then I will burn you, I will torture you," so the lords were told. Then Tunatiuh set a price of three times four hundred pesos in yellow metal. The lords tried to have this cut down, they cried out to him, but Tunatiuh would have none of this. He simply said, "Bring the metal! You have five days to hand it over. If you fail to hand it over, you will understand my heart," the lords were told.

After the Kaqchikel lords have paid half the price, they decide to break free of Tunatiuh by abandoning their capital at Corn Tree. He immediately makes war on them, but they keep up their resistance to Spanish domination for the next six years.

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31 The Count of Days

AMONG THE ALPHABETIC WORKS produced in the Guatemalan highlands during the colonial period is a K'iche' manuscript that not only records information from a prealphabetic work but also follows the original format. Because most of its pages are organized in a way that bears a direct resemblance to pages in the Dresden and Madrid codices, it has been named the K'iche' Codex. It was written in 1721–22 and was subsequently confiscated by priests in Xela, who found it in the possession of a K'iche' choirmaster who had been jailed for practicing as a traditional healer. He escaped before they could question him about his manuscript.

The K'iche' Codex has two sections, the first of which opens with these words: *Wa'e chol poal q'ij, masewal q'ij, qojcha chi rech,* "Here is the sequence of the tally of days, the indigenous days, as we speak of them." There follows a description of five consecutive K'iche' years of 365 days each, beginning during the Gregorian year 1722 and ending during 1727. The divisions of these years, consisting of 18 periods of 20 days each and a final period of 5 days, are correlated with the days of the divinatory calendar, the days of the week, and the months of the Gregorian year. Figure 71 shows the first seven days in the account, with the Mayan part of the information highlighted in red. The first entry, with its orthography updated and its abbreviations undone, begins with this sentence: *9 Kej k'ut mixeqan 20 q'ij Nab'e Mam,* "9 Deer, then, has brought the 20 days of First Grandfather." The lord of the day 9 Deer, as the bearer of the new year, is the current holder of the title of First Grandfather, which also serves as the

Fig. 71. The first seven days from an account of a Mayan 365-day year that began on the divinatory day 9 Deer are in red; the corresponding days from the Julian calendar are in black. From the K'iche' Codex.

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name of the first 20-day period of the year. The asterisk that marks this line, together with the underlining of the names of the day and the period, is repeated for every subsequent line in which the current year-bearing day name occurs. Asterisks also mark each line in which 13 occurs as a day number, and the number itself is marked with wavy underlining, as here. Together, these devices allow the reader to keep track of divinatory intervals of both 20 and 13 days, while at the same time following the progress of the year.

To the right of the information about K'iche' time reckoning, in the column bordered by vertical lines, are dominical letters for calculating the positions of days of the week in the Christian calendar. *A* always stands for the day corresponding to January 1, which fell on a Thursday in 1722, and the letters *b* through *g* stand for the following days. Thus the *d* at the top of the column stands for Sunday, the day of the week corresponding to 9 Deer. To the right of *d* are the corresponding Gregorian month name and day number, May 3.

This section of the K'iche' Codex incorporates an accurate and systematic account of the K'iche' versions of the 365-day year and its relationship to the 260-day calendar, but the format, which is that of an annotated list, belongs to the traditions of alphabetic writing. The lines are filled in like entries in a ledger, with dots in the empty spaces. A very different treatment is evident in the second section of the codex, whose spatial organization has precedents in prealphabetic codices. This section bears the title Ajilab'al Q'ij, "Count of Days," and consists of almanacs in which a set of five dates, evenly spaced at intervals of 52 days among the 260 days of the divinatory calendar, is accompanied by auguries. There are two complete accounts of all 52 possible combinations of five evenly spaced days. The first set of almanacs ends with a note added by its author on December 6, 1722, and the second set includes a reference to an astronomical event that took place on June 19, 1721.

Figure 72 presents an example of an almanac from the first set (at lower right) along with examples of analogous passages from the Mixtec book known as the Borgia Codex (at left) and from the Madrid Codex (at upper right). Each almanac lists five dates (highlighted in red) in a column, but the Borgia list reads from bottom to top rather than top to bottom. The specification of the day number, which is the same for all five day names in this kind of almanac, is handled in three different ways. In the Borgia example, the number is one, but instead of being written, it is understood from the fact that the column shown here occupies the first position in a group of thirteen columns. In the Madrid example, the number is six, written with a dot and bar at the top of the column of names, and the K'iche' number is one, written by placing the numeral "1" (here looking more like "I") in front of each name.

In the Borgia example the augury is indicated by the pictures at the top and bottom of the column of five dates. In contrast, the Madrid and K'iche' auguries are placed to the right of the dates, where they are rendered with a combination of text and pictures in the one case and with text alone in the other. The Mixtec and K'iche' auguries directly concern the listed dates, but the three auguries in the Madrid example are sepa-

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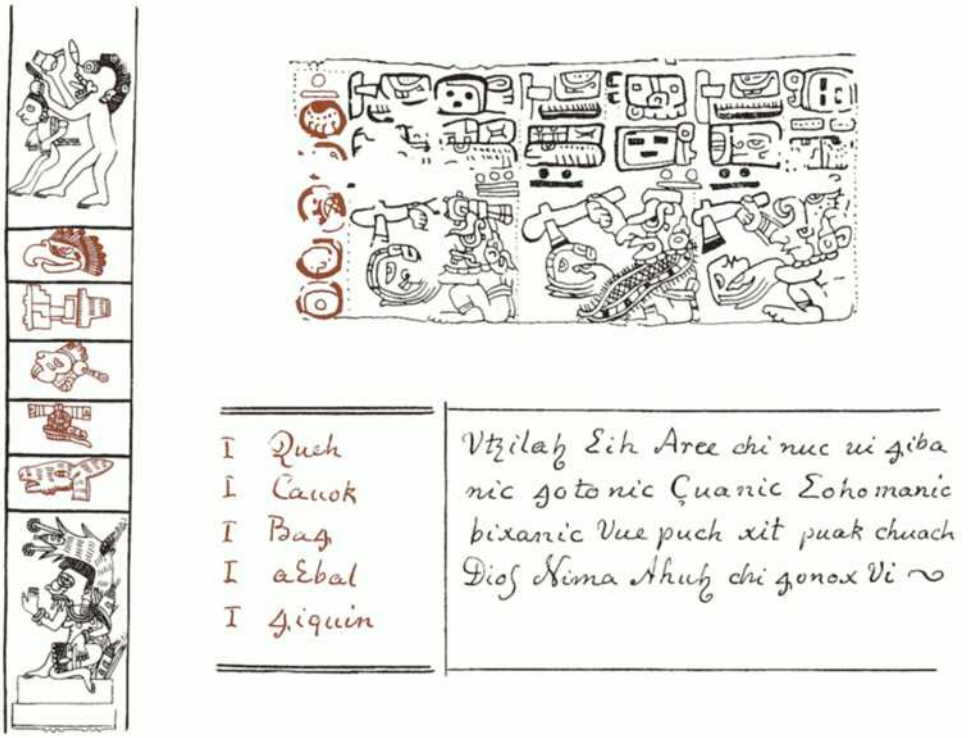

Fig. 72. Groups of five divinatory days spaced fifty-two days apart, from the Borgia (left), Madrid (upper right), and K'iche' (lower right) codices. The day names are highlighted in red; the pictures and texts in black give the corresponding auguries.

rated from the list by intervals that place them at later dates (as in the Dresden lunar and Thunderstorm almanacs we saw in chapters 16 and 18).

Both the Dresden and Madrid codices have numerous five-day almanacs, but they neither follow one another in a systematic temporal scheme, nor do they exhaust all 52 possible combinations of five evenly spaced days. The Borgia Codex, in contrast, arranges columns of five days like the one in figure 72 so as to produce a consecutive series of days if one reads across them while staying in the same row. Reading all five rows across all of the fifty-two columns produces a complete series of 260 days. In the K'iche' Codex, 260 days are accounted for by 52 five-day almanacs like the one shown in the same figure. They are arranged four to a page on a total of thirteen pages. A consecutive reading of the days is possible, but the reader must follow a different route to achieve it. The almanacs on a given page occupy four different registers, as they do in figure 73 (at right). The day 3 Tribute (3 Toj), which comes first in the almanac on the first register of this page, is followed by the day that comes first in the almanac on the second register, which is 4 Dog (4 Tz'i'). Next come 5 Monkey (5 B'atz') and 6 Tooth (6 E'), followed by the dates listed first in the almanacs on subsequent pages. A reader wishing to continue a consecutive reading after reaching the last page would then return to the first page and begin looking for the days that come second in each almanac, and so forth.

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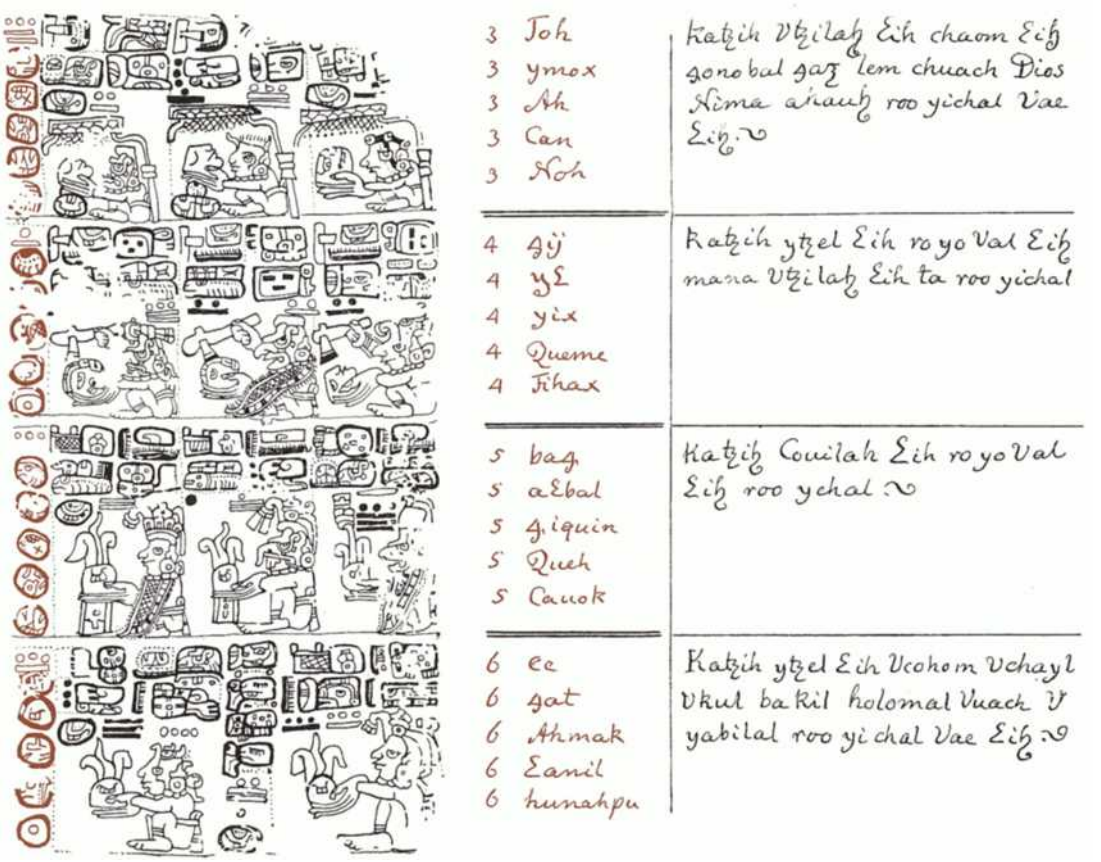

Figure 73. Groups of five divinatory days spaced fifty-two days apart, arranged in four groups to a page in the Madrid (left) and K'iche' (right) codices. The day names are highlighted in red; the pictures and texts in black give the corresponding auguries. Note the similarity of proportions in the spaces devoted to auguries.

Some of the Madrid pages are like the K'iche' pages in being divided into four registers, as shown in figure 73 (left). The proportions of the spaces devoted to auguries are similar on the pages in the figure, but the spaces devoted to dates on the K'iche' page (at right) have been widened to accommodate alphabetic writing. The height of the Madrid registers is about an eighth of an inch greater than that of the K'iche' registers (the illustration shows the Madrid page at a smaller scale), but the registers on Dresden pages that are divided into four parts are equal in height to the K'iche' registers (two inches). Figure 74 shows registers from these two codices at the same scale. The similar proportions of the Madrid and K'iche' spaces devoted to auguries, together with identical heights of the Dresden and K'iche' registers, suggest that the K'iche' Codex, or an alphabetic manuscript that preceded it, was written side by side with a nonalphabetic original. The first alphabetic version could have served as an aid to readers with an incomplete understanding of the original text and pictures. Copies of that version could have served as substitutes for the original, and, as time went by, revised versions could have been created by writers who had never seen the original.

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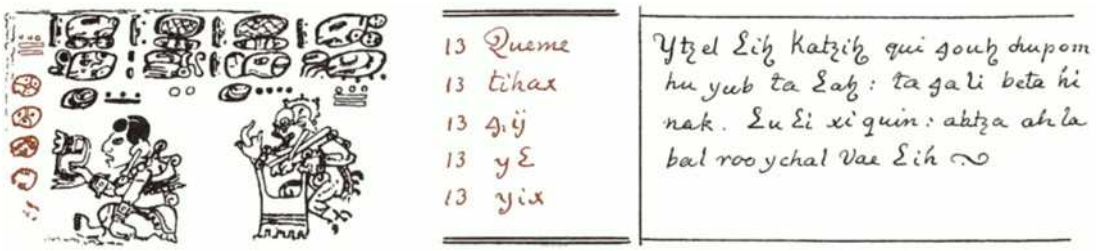
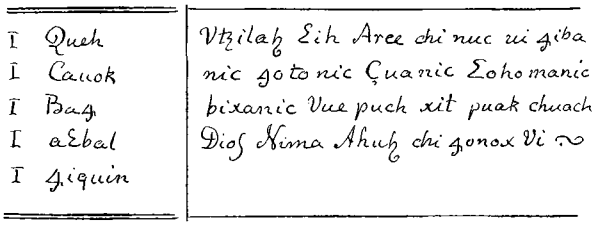


Fig. 74. Groups of five divinatory days spaced fifty-two days apart, from the Dresden (left) and K'iche' (right) codices, shown to the same scale (the original height of each is two inches). The day names are highlighted in red; the pictures and texts in black give the corresponding auguries.

The first of the two series of almanacs in the K'iche' Codex includes Christian content that could have been introduced by the choirmaster from whom the manuscript was confiscated or by the writers of previous versions. Here is an example of an almanac with content of this kind, followed by a translation:



1	Deer	Good days. These are for the practice of
1	Rain	writing, carving, flute playing, drumming,
1	Monkey	singing, and also for asking for jade and
1	Foredawn	metal before God the Great Lord. ~
1	Bird	

The positive outlook for the arts in this almanac comes from the day 1 Monkey (1 B'atz'), which occupies the middle position in the prefatory list. As we saw in chapter 27, twin brothers named One Monkey and One Artisan (Jun B'atz' and Jun Chowen) were divine practitioners of the plastic and performing arts and were prayed to by human practitioners. In the almanac, their place has been taken by "God the Great Lord," but the day 1 Monkey remains as a trace of their existence.

On the next page is an illustration of a full page of almanacs from the K'iche' Codex, followed by a translation. In the second and third of these almanacs, as in the one just presented, one day in the list of five seems to be the source of the corresponding augury. In the second almanac, the day in question is the first one, 11 Dog (11 Tz'i'). Contemporary K'iche' daykeepers associate days named Dog with indecision or lack of direction, which is consistent with the ambivalence of the augury given here. In the third almanac, the key day is the middle one, 12 Bird (12 Tz'ikin). Daykeepers asso-

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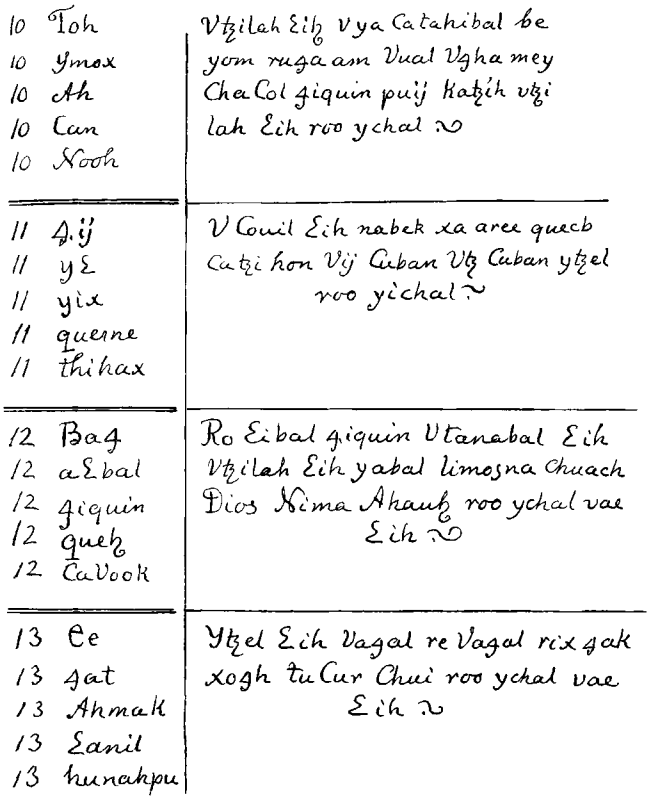

10	Tribute	Good days for boosting trade, for
10	Lefthanded	bearing a staff of office. Birds alight
10	Canestalk	and kick their feet. Truly good days,
10	Snake	all five of them. ~
10	Thought	
11	Dog	Strong days. But they speak of two
11	Wind	things: someone does good, does evil,
11	Jaguar	on all five of them. ~
11	Death	
11	Knife	
12	Monkey	The cries of birds. Restful days,
12	Foredawn	good days for giving alms before God
12	Bird	the Great Lord, all five of these
12	Deer	days. ~
12	Rain	
13	Tooth	Bad days. The teeth, the claws of the
13	Net	horned owl are set on all five of these
13	Sinner	days. ~
13	Yellow	
13	Marksman	

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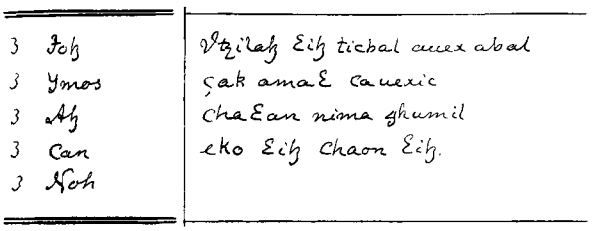
ciate days named Bird with the act of crying or calling out in prayer, and birds themselves are said to be praying when they call out at dawn. In the almanac, the cries of birds become a metaphor for the prayers of humans.

In the fourth almanac on this same page, the augury derives in part from the day number. When the horned owl appears in Dresden almanacs, it has this same number as part of its name (13 Kan Kuy). Throughout the K'iche' Codex, days numbered 13 always have a bad (or at best ambivalent) augury, whether or not an owl is mentioned.

The second series of almanacs in the K'iche' Codex is formatted in the same way as the first series, with four almanacs on each of thirteen pages, but the writing is in a different hand. In the first series, the opening and closing dates are 1 Lefthanded and 13 Marksman (1 Imox and 13 Junajpu), but in the second series, they are 1 Yellow and 13 Deer (1 Q'anil and 13 Kej), which define a period that begins and ends thirteen days earlier on the divinatory calendar. The two series assign generally similar auguries to particular sets of five dates, though the wording of the auguries is never identical. The day named Ix in the first series is named B'alam in the second, but both names translate as "Jaguar" and both continue in use today, with some daykeepers preferring one name and some the other. The Spanish words that occur in the first series, such as "Dios" and "limosna" (both of which are present in the third of the almanacs on the opposite page), are absent from the second, as are any other references to Christian concerns.

The most striking feature of the second series of almanacs is that one of them includes a reference to an astronomical event that can be dated in historical time. Here is the almanac in question, together with a translation:



3	Toj	Utz'laj Ech tichal cuex abal
3	Ymos	çak amaE caquix
3	Aq	chaEan nima ghumil
3	Can	eko Ech chaon Ech.
3	Noh	

3	Tribute	Good days for planting, sowing.
3	Lefthanded	Dawn comes for whatever is sown.
3	Canestalk	The Great Star rises,
3	Snake	it brings the day, a beautiful day.
3	Thought	

The Great Star (Nima Ch'umil) is the planet Venus, here in its role as the morning star. When the divinatory date 3 Tribute (3 Toj) coincided with June 19, 1721, Venus was two days past conjunction with the sun, and whether or not it actually became visible in the eastern sky on that day, it would have appeared within the next couple of days. All five of the day names listed for this almanac are canonical ones for eastern rises of the Great Star, but 3 Tribute is the only combination of number and name that comes

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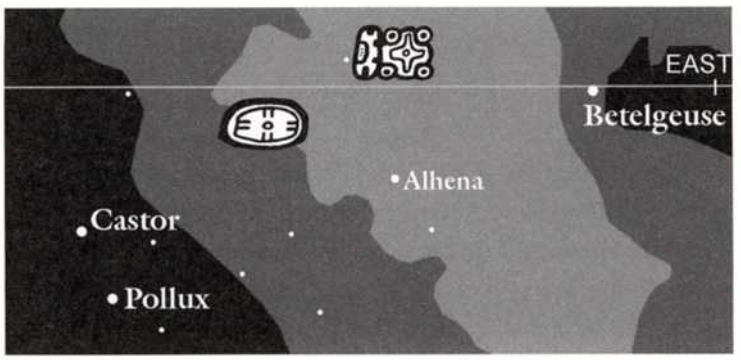

Map 19. The Great Star just above the horizon and the sun and Castor and Pollux just below it, on the morning of June 19, 1721, in the latitude of the Guatemalan highlands.

close to being on target for a rise in the general vicinity of 1722–27, the Gregorian years that receive explicit mention in the K'iche' Codex.

The five day names in this almanac are the K'iche' equivalents of the five names the Aztecs and Mixtecs assigned to eastern rises of Venus, each of which runs a day later than the names that seem to play a similar role in the Dresden Venus table. The reason for the difference may be that the Dresden dates were meant to mark the end of the period of invisibility that precedes the first eastern rise rather than the rise itself. If so, the difference would be consistent with a lowland Mayan tendency to focus on dates that mark the completion of periods, in contrast with an Aztec, Mixtec, and highland Mayan tendency to focus on beginning dates.

The pages that deal with Venus in the surviving prealphabetic codices, whether Mexican or Mayan, focus on war and death rather than planting and sowing, but the present almanac suggests that there were alternative ways to interpret Venus events. The K'iche' term for the Great Star in its morning role is *eqo q'ij,* in which *eqo* literally means that it carries something on its back, namely *q'ij,* "day" or "sun." This terminology puts the Great Star in a position like that of the moon in the Dresden lunar almanacs, where Moon Woman carries a burden on her back (see chapter 16), rather than in the position it occupies in the Dresden Venus table, where it becomes a weapon in the hands of warriors. Map 19 shows the location of the Great Star as it rose above the eastern horizon (the horizontal line) on 3 Tribute, June 19, 1721, with the sun close behind. On this occasion, the Great Star was in the same position, relative to Castor and Pollux, as Moon Woman in the Dresden almanac, when her burden was a pair of ears of corn and the augury was for plentiful food and drink. If the Great Star was reckoned as an alternative carrier of such a burden, this would help explain why "dawn comes for whatever is sown" in the K'iche' almanac. In effect, this almanac is giving us an agricultural view of the Great Star rather than a military view.

Because the reappearances of Venus as the morning star take close to a century to repeat a particular divinatory date, it is clear that the second series of almanacs in the

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K'iche' Codex was not meant to apply, in every detail, to all future periods lasting 260 days. Some of the features of the first series may have had a limited application in historical time as well. The second series and perhaps the first were not verbatim copies of older almanacs that had become frozen in time but were updated to fit the times of their users.

Despite the fact that the almanacs in the K'iche' Codex were written when the alphabet had been in use among Mayans for nearly two centuries, and despite the evidence that the content of the second set was revised as late as 1721, they bear a closer physical and conceptual resemblance to the almanacs in the Dresden and Madrid codices than do any other alphabetic documents produced during the colonial period, whether in the lowlands or in the highlands. They constitute the clearest evidence that Mayans of the Guatemalan highlands once possessed books that were similar to the surviving codices from Yucatán.

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32 Man of Rabinal

BEFORE THE SPANISH INVASION, the ruling houses of Mesoamerican kingdoms sponsored public dramatic productions that commemorated major historical events. The oldest direct evidence of Mayan dramas of this kind has been found at Dos Pilas, in two seventh-century inscriptions on the risers of a stone stairway. The earlier of the two texts concerns an attack on Tikal that drove its ruler into exile, followed by a retaliatory attack on Dos Pilas. The later text records the performance of a dance at Dos Pilas that dramatized the two earlier occurrences.

The dialogue in Mesoamerican theater was sung back and forth by two choruses, or by a single chorus that sang all the parts, while the actors danced. The early missionaries acted quickly to replace indigenous theater with productions modeled on the vernacular theater tradition of medieval Europe. In these new plays, the dialogue was spoken by the characters, and though the performances had interludes of dancing, the music was purely instrumental. Plots drew from biblical stories, the lives of saints, or the triumph of Spanish Christians over Moorish Muslims. The dialogue was scripted, and nearly all of it was in rhymed and metered Spanish verse. Local actors, whether or not they knew much Spanish, memorized their parts by repeating the lines the director of a play read aloud to them.

In the Mayan highlands, one of the most popular scripted plays to emerge during the early colonial period ran contrary to the purposes of the missionary program. It had an all-Mayan cast of characters speaking all-Mayan dialogue, and it dramatized the capture and sacrifice of a prisoner of war in a world where Europeans had no role. Mayans had never used their own writing system to dictate, word for word, what performers should say, but for this play, they created scripts using alphabetic writing. They probably took the words from the songs that choruses would have sung in earlier times. The dance music was played on Mayan instruments.

Spanish authorities, who saw the portrayal of a world without Europeans as subversive, made numerous attempts to suppress this Mayan play in numerous towns, starting in 1593 and continuing until 1770. The only town where it continues to be performed today is Rabinal, where the Achi dialect of K'iche' is spoken. The Rabinal version has two titles: Xajoj Tun, or "Dance of the Trumpet," which is the name by which some of the colonial versions were known, and Rab'inal Achi, or "Man of Rabinal." The music is provided by two long trumpets, which were once wooden but are now brass, and by a slit drum that produces three tones. The drum, like its ancient predecessors, is played with a pair of rubber-tipped sticks. Here is the cast of characters:

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Kaweq K'eche Winaq, "Kaweq of the Forest People," a warrior who was once in the service of the lord of the K'iche' kingdom but became a renegade who raised his own army. Masked.

Rab'inal Achi, "Man of Rabinal," also called Uq'alel Achi, "Man of Glory," a warrior in the service of Lord Five Thunder. Masked.

Ajaw Job' Toj, "Lord Five Thunder," the ruler of places named Chakachib' and Samanib', "Walkers" and "Workers," and of nations named Kawuq and Rab'inal. Masked.

Xoq'ajaw, "Lady," the wife of Lord Five Thunder. Veiled.

Uchuch Q'uq', Uchuch Raxom, "Mother of Quetzal Feathers, Mother of Glistening Green," the unmarried daughter of Lord Five Thunder and Lady. Veiled.

Achi Mun, Ixoq Mun, "Man Slave, Woman Slave," in the service of Lord Five Thunder. Masked as a man but dressed as a woman.

Kot and B'alam, "Eagle" and "Jaguar," guards of the boundaries of Lord Five Thunder's court and kingdom. Veiled.

The actors are accompanied by a K'amol B'e, or "Road Guide," a priest-shaman who prepares the way for their performance by offering incense and prayers to the spirits of the individuals portrayed in the play. To do so, he goes to the ruins of Lord Five Thunder's citadel, which are on a mountaintop that overlooks the present-day town of Rabinal.

Man of Rabinal, Kaweq of the Forest People, and Lord Five Thunder each carry an ax in one hand and a small round shield in the other, thereby resembling the participants in a dance depicted in Classic murals and carvings of the lowlands. Shown together in figure 75 are Kaweq (at left), as he appeared in a 1999 performance, and a seventh-century lord of Palenque (at right). The ax in the hand of the Palenque lord has an ax head mounted in the forehead of the carved head at its tip, which is that of a god whose Classic name is K'awiil, translated in previous chapters as "Scepter."

The script currently in use in Rabinal dates from 1913. It is the latest in a series of versions reaching back into the colonial past. The text is highly versified, but as usual, it is written in a prose format (see figure 76 for an excerpt). All of the previous versions except one were in the form of manuscripts that have long since been discarded or lost. The exception is a text that was printed in 1862 and used until 1913. Each copyist in the line of transmission that preceded the printed version would have made revisions, and the copyist who worked from the printed version made changes as well.

When a text like this one undergoes a long-term process involving memorization by performers and editorial revision by copyists, it is subject to a process of crystallization whereby its verse structure becomes increasingly regular, making it easier to memorize. There is ample evidence that the canonical versions of the Homeric texts are the end products of a lengthy process of this kind. In the case of Rabinal Achi, crystallization has produced a text whose parallel verse is more regular than that of any

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Fig. 75. Photo of Kaweq of the Forest People as he appeared in the 1999 production of the Rabinal Achi dance-drama (left) and a stucco relief of a lord of Palenque that dates from the seventh century (right).

other lengthy work in the entire corpus of Mayan literature, whether written in the Mayan script or in the alphabet. The last step in this process takes place during an actual performance, when the actors make small revisions that reflect their sense of the structure of the text.

The actors learn more than the words of the script from the person who teaches them their parts. He trains them to speak slowly and loudly, without fading at the ends of their lines, so that their words can be heard in an outdoor space. He also teaches them to make deliberate pauses to set off lines that are parallel except for a partial change of their wording. If the first of two lines is introduced by a phrase that is not repeated, it is framed by pauses as well, making for a total of three distinct lines. Here is

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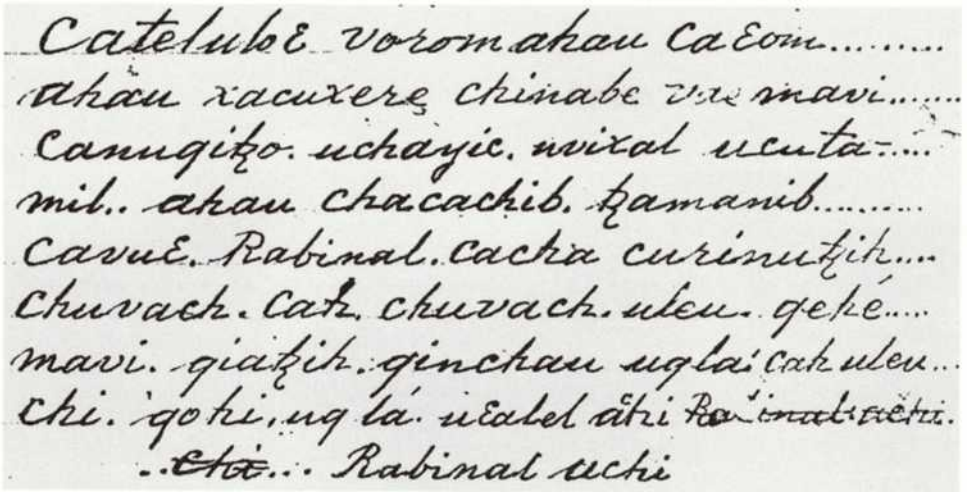

Fig. 76. The opening speech of the Rabinal Achi dance-drama as it appears in the 1913 version of the script.

an example, with the internal pauses marked by slashes: *kacha k'u ri nu tzij / chuwach Kaj / chuwach Ulew,* "so say my words / before Sky / before Earth."

Kaweq opens the dialogue by addressing a threat to Lord Five Thunder, though he is actually speaking to Man of Rabinal. This lord has earned the privilege of wearing an ornament made of precious stone in the pierced septum of his nose, and Kaweq is being respectful when he describes him as "pierced" and "fitted with gems." When Kaweq speaks of "chopping through" Five Thunder's "root" and "trunk," he is proposing not only to kill him but to fell the tree of his entire lineage as well.

When Kaweq and Rabinal respond to each other's speeches, they begin by quoting or paraphrasing what they have just heard, and only then do they offer a reply. Both of them invoke "Sky" and "Earth" each time they speak, which is their way of addressing Mayan gods without naming them. During the colonial period, saying the names in public would have been a dangerous thing to do.

When Rabinal asks Kaweq where his mountain and valley are, he wants him to identify his place of birth and his lineage. When Kaweq refuses to answer, Rabinal insults him by suggesting that he was "born of clouds / born of mist," meaning that he is the kind of person who doesn't know who his parents are. When Kaweq does provide an answer, he goes no further than naming the lord he served before he became a rebel.

The excerpt that follows consists of the first six speeches in the play, three delivered by Kaweq and three by Man of Rabinal. Each of the lines is followed by a pause. An indented line is intoned in a somewhat lower voice than the preceding line, with a return to a higher voice when a new line begins at the left-hand margin.

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After a trumpeted fanfare, the entire cast dances counterclockwise around the four sides of the stage before Kaweq begins speaking. Kaweq and Rabinal pace up and down on opposite sides of an invisible line whenever one of them is speaking to the other.

U nab'emul kach'aw
KAWEQ K'ECHE WINAQ:

Katel uloq, worom ajaw
k'aqom ajaw
xa k'u xere
qi chinab'e wa'e
mawi kanuk'iso
u ch'ayik
u wixal
u kutamil
Ajaw Chakachib'
Ajaw Samanib'
Kawuq Rab'inal
kacha k'u ri nu tzij
chuwach Kaj
chuwach Ulew.
Keje mawi k'ia tzij
kinch'aw uk' la.
Kajulew chik'oje uk' la
u Q'alel Achi
Rab'inal Achi.

KAWEQ OF THE FOREST PEOPLE
speaks for the first time:

Come on out, lord who's been pierced
lord who's been fitted with gems
however that may be
let me take the lead
since I'm not finished
chopping through
the root
the trunk
of that Lord of Walkers
Lord of Workers
Cawuks and Rabinals
so say my words
before Sky
before Earth
since I haven't many words
to say to you, sir.
May Sky and Earth be with you, sir
Man of Glory
Man of Rabinal.

Fanfare. Kaweq and Rabinal turn their backs to each other and then dance around the stage with the rest of the cast before resuming their dialogue.

U nab'emul kach'aw
RAB'INAL ACHI:

Yeja!
Oyew achi
Kaweq K'eche Winaq:
La kacha ri a tzij
chuwach Kaj
chuwach Ulew?
"Katel uloq, worom ajaw
k'aqom ajaw
xa k'u xere
chinab'e wa'e
mawi kanuk'iso
u ch'ayik
u wixal
u kutamil

MAN OF RABINAL
speaks for the first time:

Listen!
Brave man
Kaweq of the Forest People:
Is this what your words say
before Sky
before Earth?
"Come on out, lord who's been pierced
lord who's been fitted with gems
however that may be
let me take the lead
since I'm not finished
chopping through
the root
the trunk

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Ajaw Chakachib'
Ajaw Samanib'
Kawuq Rab'inal."
La kacha ri a tzij
kita wi b'a Kaj
kita wi b'a Ulew?
Mi xkatyawik
chupam ral nu ch'ab'
chupam ral nu pokob'
ruk' nu yakim ikaj
ruk' nu chinku
nu k'alq'ab'
nu saqkab'
nu salmet
ruk' nu kowil
wachijilal
keje ta china
mata china
ta mi xchatintzaqamaj
chirech nu saqki' k'a'm
nu saqki' kolo
kacha k'u ri nu tzij
chuwach chi Kaj
chuwach Ulew.
Kajulew ta chik'oje awuk'
oyew achi
kanab', teleche' winaq.

of that Lord of Walkers
Lord of Workers
Cawuks and Rabinals."
Is that what your words say
in the hearing of Sky
in the hearing of Earth?
You delivered them
in range of my weapon
in range of my shield
and my upraised ax blade
and my snail-shell bracelet
my armband
my white paint
my gourd of tobacco
and my strength
my manhood
so whether you see it coming
or it happens without any warning
I shall catch you
with my henequen rope
my henequen cord
so say my words
before Sky
before Earth.
May Sky and Earth be with you
brave man
prisoner, captive.

Fanfare. Kaweq and Rabinal turn their backs to each other and then dance around the stage with the rest of the cast. At the end of the dance, Rabinal lassos Kaweq, holding on to his end of the rope but allowing several feet of slack.

U kamul kach'aw
RAB'INAL ACHI:

Yeja!
Oyew achi
kanab', teleche' winaq:
La qi k'amo chire chi Kaj
chirech Ulew?
Qi mi xatuya Kaj?
Mi xatuya Ulew?
Ta mi xatzaq k'ut chupam ral nu ch'ab'
chupam ral nu pokob'
ruk' nu yakim wit
nu yakim ikaj

MAN OF RABINAL
speaks for the second time:

Listen!
Brave man
prisoner, captive:
Should thanks be given to Sky
to Earth?
Has Sky really given you up?
Has Earth given you up?
Now you're under the power of my weapon
under the power of my shield
and my upraised ax handle
my upraised ax blade

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nu chinku
nu k'alq'ab'
nu saqkab'
nu salmet.
Katcha ta k'ut:
Awiri a juyub'al?
Awiri a taq'ajal?
Awiri at b'osinaq wi
tzala juyub'
tzala taq'aj?
Ma at on ral sutz'?
Ma at on ral mayul?
Ma at on oqotajinaq uloq
chuwach ch'ay
chuwach lab'al?
Kacha k'u ri nu tzij
chuwach Kaj
chuwach Ulew
keje mawi k'ia tzij
kojtzijon awuk'.
Kajulew chik'oje awuk'
kanab', teleche' winaq.

my snail-shell bracelet
my armband
my white paint
my gourd of tobacco.
Speak now:
Where is your mountain?
Where is your valley?
Where did you blossom
on the slope of a mountain
on the floor of a valley?
Weren't you born of clouds?
Weren't you born of mist?
Aren't you on the run
in the face of violence
in the face of war?
So say my words
before Sky
before Earth
since we haven't many words
to speak with you.
May Sky and Earth be with you
prisoner, captive.

Fanfare. They turn their backs to each other, then turn back to resume the dialogue.

U kamul kach'aw
KAWEQ K'ECHE WINAQ:

Eja!
Aqaroq Kaj!
Aqaroq Ulew!
Qi pa tzij kab'i'j la?
Toq'ob' wachinaq
u wach tzij chib'ixtaj la
chuwach Kaj
chuwach Ulew
chi nu chi', chi nu wach.
In oyew
in achi
kacha k'u ri tzij la.
"La apare at anomajinaq wi uloq
chuwach ch'ay
chuwach lab'al?"
kacha ri tzij la.
La in k'o oyew?
La in k'o achi?

KAWEQ OF THE FOREST PEOPLE
speaks for the second time:

Listen!
Alas, O Sky!
Alas, O Earth!
What are these words you speak, sir?
The words you speak
are hurtful right on their face, sir
before Sky
before Earth
in my teeth, in my face.
I am brave
I am a man
so say your words, sir.
"What place did you flee
in the face of violence
in the face of war?"
so say your words, sir.
Am I brave?
Am I a man?

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Xata la ri alawi in anomajinaq uloq
chuwach ch'ay
chuwach lab'al?
Xawi kacha na k'u ri tzij la.
"Chajikib'a na u wach
a juyub'al
a taq'ajal,"
kacha ri tzij la.
La in k'o oyew?
La in k'o achi?
K'u ri ta xchinjikib'a ta k'ut u wach
nu juyub'al
nu taq'ajal?
Mana q'alaj in b'osinaq wi
tzala juyub'
tzala taq'aj?
Xa in ral sutz'
xa in ral mayul.
Julacha xchinjikib'a
nu juyub'al
nu taq'ajal?
Karaj, xa xchik'o kan Kaj
xchik'o kan Ulew!
Kacha k'u ri nu tzij
chuwach Kaj
chuwach Ulew.
Keje mawi k'ia tzij
kojtzijoyaj uk' la
u Q'alel Achi
Rab'inal Achi.
Kajulew chik'oje uk' la.

Would a man of valor just run away
in the face of violence
in the face of war?
Yet this is what your words say, sir.
"Now reveal the face
of your mountain
your valley,"
so say your words, sir.
Am I brave?
Am I a man?
Yet I should reveal the face
of my mountain
my valley?
Isn't it clear that I blossomed
on the slope of a mountain
on the floor of a valley?
I'm merely born of clouds
I'm merely born of mist.
Why should I reveal
my mountain
my valley?
Better that Sky be left behind
Earth be left behind!
So say my words
before Sky
before Earth
since we haven't many words
to speak with you, sir
Man of Glory
Man of Rabinal.
May Sky and Earth be with you, sir.

Fanfare. They turn their backs to each other, then turn back to resume the dialogue.

U roxmul kach'aw
RAB'INAL ACHI:

Ye'ja!
Oyew achi
kanab', teleche' winaq:
La kacha na k'u ri a tzij
chuwach Kaj
chuwach Ulew?
"La in k'o oyew?
La in k'o achi?

MAN OF RABINAL
speaks for the third time:

Listen!
Brave man
prisoner, captive:
Is this what your words now say
before Sky
before Earth?
"Am I brave?
Am I a man?

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K'u ri we xchinjikib'a
nu juyub'al
nu taq'ajal?
Mana q'alaj in b'osinaq wi
tzala juyub'
tzala taq'aj?
Xa in ral sutz'
xa in ral mayul,"
mapa kacha ri a tzij.
We b'a mawi xchajikib'a
u wach ri a juyub'al
uwach ri a taq'ajal
ta karaj Kaj
ta karaj Ulew
xa at wajim
xa at perajim
katnuwokisaj
chuwach wajawal
chuwach nu winaqil
chupam u nimal tz'aq
chupam u nimal k'oxtun
kacha k'u ri nu tzij
chuwach Kaj
chuwach Ulew
keje Kajulew chik'oje awuk'
kanab', teleche' winaq.

And yet I should reveal
my mountain
my valley?
Isn't it clear that I blossomed
on the slope of a mountain
on the floor of a valley?
I'm merely born of clouds
I'm merely born of mist,"
isn't that what your words say?
Very well, if you refuse to reveal
the face of your mountain
the face of your valley
then Sky willing
Earth willing
you'll just shout
you'll just shriek
when I take you in
before my lord
before my liege
inside his great fortress
inside his great walls
so say my words
before Sky
before Earth
and may Sky and Earth be with you
prisoner, captive.

Fanfare. They turn their backs to each other, then turn back to resume the dialogue.

U roxmul kach'aw
KAWEQ K'ECHE WINAQ:

KAWEQ OF THE FOREST PEOPLE
speaks for the third time:

Eja!
Aqaroq Kaj!
Aqaroq Ulew!
La kacha k'u ri tzij la
chuwach Kaj
chuwach Ulew?
Alata k'u k'o wi ri xchirokib'ej
ri xchireleb'ej
ri tzij, ri u ch'alinik
ri mi xkojtzijoyaj uk' la
chuwach Kaj
chuwach Ulew?
"Are b'a xchireleb'ej
are xchuqajib'ej

Listen!
Alas, O Sky!
Alas, O Earth!
Is this what your words say
before Sky
before Earth?
Could there be something out of place
something wide of the mark
about the words, the phrases
that we've been speaking to you, sir
before Sky
before Earth?
"Well, they will be wide of the mark
they will be spoken in vain

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rumal xchajikib'a
xchaq'alajisaj
u wach a juyub'al
u wach a taq'ajal.
We mawi xchaq'alajisaj
ta karaj Kaj
ta karaj Ulew
xa at wajim
xa at perajim
xchatnuk'oj
chuwach wajawal, nu winaqil."
Kacha k'u ri tzij la
chuwach Kaj
chuwach Ulew.
Karaj, at Kaj
karaj, at Ulew
ri b'a la xchinjikib'a k'ut
u wach nu juyub'al
u wach nu taq'ajal
ri ix tapich'olon tz'ikin.
In royewalal
in rachijilal
ri ajaw rech yaki Kunen
ri yaki Chajul:
la' Ajaw B'alam Achi
B'alam K'iche
la' juqutaj
qajinaq wi raqanib'al sutz' mayul
chi nu juyub'al
chi nu taq'ajal.
Alata k'u k'o wi ri xchuqajib'ej
alata k'u k'o wi ri xchireleb'ej
wa' tzij, wa' u ch'alinik
ri mi xojtzijon uk' la
chuwach Kaj
chuwach Ulew?
Keje Kajulew chi k'oje uk' la
u Q'alel Achi
Rab'inal Achi.

until you reveal
until you make clear
the face of your mountain
the face of your valley.
If you refuse to make it clear
then Sky willing
Earth willing
you'll just shout
you'll just shriek
when I present you
to my lord, my liege."
So say your words, sir
before Sky
before Earth.
If you are willing, Sky
if you are willing, Earth
then I shall indeed reveal
the face of the mountain
the face of the valley
of this little house wren.
I am the brave
I am the man
of the lord of foreign Cunén
foreign Chajul:
that Lord Jaguar Man
Jaguar K'iche'
the quick one
just a drop of water from clouds and mist
fallen on my mountain
on my valley.
Could there be something out of place
something wide of the mark
about the words, the phrases
that we've spoken to you, sir
before Sky
before Earth?
And may Sky and Earth be with you, sir
Man of Glory
Man of Rabinal.

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At this point, Man of Rabinal realizes that Kaweq of the Forest People is a former comrade who once came to the aid of Lord Five Thunder but later became an enemy. He says, "What a terrible joke you're someone I ought to help out. / What a terrible joke you're my elder brother. / What a terrible joke you're my younger brother." As the two continue their dialogue, Rabinal accuses Kaweq of various attacks against the Rabinal kingdom and against the person of Lord Five Thunder, and Kaweq confesses to each transgression. By way of explaining himself, he points out that he was never given land in exchange for his services to Lord Five Thunder. Man of Rabinal then reminds him that he made a costly mistake when he was sent among enemies of the Rabinal kingdom as a spy. He failed to observe that they were ready to make war, which resulted in Rabinal losses.

After this discussion, Man of Rabinal goes to the court of Lord Five Thunder to report that he has captured Kaweq. In the course of pondering Kaweq's fate, Five Thunder remarks, "He could become a father- or son-in-law / a brother-in-law." He is making an ironic reference to the fact that if Kaweq had remained an ally, he might be coming to the royal court to marry the Mother of Quetzal Feathers, Lord Five Thunder's daughter. Instead, he will be brought in as a prisoner of war. Among Mayans, the relationships between royal lineages were such that they married one another's daughters and sisters when they were at peace and sacrificed one another's brothers and sons when they were at war.

When Kaweq is brought before Lord Five Thunder, he is again questioned about his bloody misdeeds, and again he admits to all of them. At the end of the play, his actions will cost him his head, but first he is granted a series of last wishes, among them a dance with Lord Five Thunder's daughter. When he receives his last drink, it is served in a type of vessel for which Rabinal is famous, a carved calabash. He holds the calabash up in front of him (figure 77) and wonders whether his sons or grandsons might remember him when they drink from such a vessel, asking, "Could this be / the skull of my grandfather? / Could this be / the skull of my father?" Here he is alluding to the Popol Vuh story of One Hunahpu, whose head became the first calabash. Implicitly, he is constructing an allegory in which his sons or

Fig. 77. Kaweq of the Forest People contemplating a calabash drinking vessel, wondering whether it could be the skull of his grandfather or father. From the 1999 production of the Rabinal Achi dance-drama.

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grandsons take the role of the sons of One Hunahpu, who go down to the underworld realm of Xibalba to avenge the death of their father. Lord Five Thunder, as a character in this allegory, would suffer the same fate as One and Seven Death. He would be put to death, and the kingdom he left behind would lose its former glory.

In the art and inscriptions of the Classic period, decapitation is the main method for ending the lives of prisoners of war. The play reminds us that these prisoners, who are routinely referred to as "sacrifice victims" in the literature on Mayans, were the deadly enemies of their captors. Moreover, the play reveals that "sacrifices" were preceded by a judicial process. In other words, a sacrifice was also an execution.

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EPILOGUE

Nearly everything Mayans wrote in their own languages during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth exists only in manuscripts, hidden away in the archives of governments and parishes, in museums and libraries, and in Mayan households. There is no lack of researchers who center their work on documents, but most of them place a greater value on earlier works.

The first person to carry out systematic research on Mayan literature was Juan Pío Pérez, himself a Mayan. He was born in Yucatán in 1798 and lived until 1859. Beginning around 1835, he began to seek out manuscripts in various parts of the peninsula, collecting some and copying others. His main purpose, as he stated it, was to understand the ancient method of computing time and to record the predictions made by ancient priests for the 7,200-day periods known as scores of stones. Among his finds was the Chilam Balam book of Maní, which was illustrated with signs for the twenty day names of the divinatory calendar (see pages 248–49) and bar-and-dot numerals. He combined information from this book and other sources in a major work that later became known as the Codex Pérez. His work has never been published except in English and Spanish translations.

In 1847, Mayans in the eastern part of Yucatán rose in revolt against non-Mayan landowners and the Mexican government, and they resisted repeated efforts to pacify them until 1901. The leaders of the revolt produced letters and proclamations, mostly written in Yukatek, in which they explained the reasons for the revolt and recorded ongoing events. These works were disseminated by handwritten copies, the only medium available to the Mayan community. Several hundred letters are preserved in archives, but only a few have been published.

In 1850, a religious movement emerged among the rebels, centered in the northern part of what is now the Mexican state of Quintana Roo. At the entrance to a cave, a wooden cross began to speak, and the place became known as Chan Santa Cruz. Through a medium named Juan de la Cruz, the words of the Holy Cross took the form of a series of letters telling the rebels what actions they should take. Today the Holy Cross resides in a chapel a short distance north of the cave in the village of X-Cacal, which was founded by the rebels.

Copies of the letters of Juan de la Cruz survive in a library in Mérida and in the keeping of the official scribes of the chapel in X-Cacal. The scribes have combined their copies with other documents to create the equivalent of a sacred book, although unlike the Bible, it has remained open to additions. The scribes expanded its contents as recently

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as 1957, and they may have made further additions since then. At an annual public ceremony that continues today, two scribes take turns reading the entire text aloud, improvising on its lines as they go. Perhaps the two carved figures that have been interpreted as an orator and a scribe at Palenque (see chapter 14) were meant to show them taking their turns in a dialogue rather than making separate statements.

Scripts for dance-dramas continued to be produced during the nineteenth century, but most of these were copies or revisions of older scripts in which the dialogue was largely or entirely in Spanish. An exception is a K'iche' version of a Spanish script titled *Baile de Toros,* in which the characters are vaqueros. The translator, a native of the town of Cantel, dropped the rhyme and meter of the original and recast some passages in parallel lines.

Verbal arts of the kind transmitted by voice and by ear would have been a resource for Mayan writers from the beginning of their long history, but the surviving texts in the Mayan script tend to be highly condensed rather than expansive, offering only brief passages that sound like direct quotations from oral sources. The project of documenting performances by means of verbatim transcriptions is a nineteenth-century invention of Western academia. In the world where Mayan languages are spoken, this project got off to a slow start. Between 1890 and 1960, ethnographers, linguists, and folklorists produced scores of book-length collections of texts and translations of spoken arts in the indigenous languages of North America, but Mayan languages were represented only by short collections or single items, scattered in journals, pamphlets, anthologies, and the appendices of books.

Nearly all major publications dealing with Mayan oral performances date from 1980 onward, by which time the researchers included native speakers of the relevant languages. Most of these works follow a traditional prose format, but the Ixil oratory published by Paul G. Townsend, Te'c Cham, and Po'x Ich' under the title *Ritual Rhetoric from Cotzal,* together with the Tzotzil narratives and oratory published by Gary Gossen in *Four Creations: An Epic Story of the Chiapas Mayas,* are presented entirely in lines that follow the patterns of parallel verse. *Incantations by Mayan Women,* a collection focused on Tzotzil oratory, has been published in a similar format by Ámbar Past, Xun Okotz, and Xpetra Ernándes. K'iche' oratory has been treated as verse by Florentino Pedro Ajpacaja Túm in *Tz'onob'al tziij / Discurso ceremonial k'ichee',* and by Bert Janssens and others in *Ri ch'ab'al ke ri qati'qamaam: El rezo de nuestros antepasados en Rabinal.*

Most texts and translations that follow a lined format reflect the tendency of researchers to proceed visually, looking for structure in sequences of words that have already been transcribed. In contrast, the lines in the narratives and oratory published by Allan F. Burns in *An Epoch of Miracles: Oral Literature of the Yucatec Maya* are determined by ear rather than by eye. He followed the alternations of sound and silence in the recorded voices of the performers. He also took note of other phenomena that disappear in standard transcriptions and translations, such as the use of increased loudness or precise pronunciation to focus attention on particular words.

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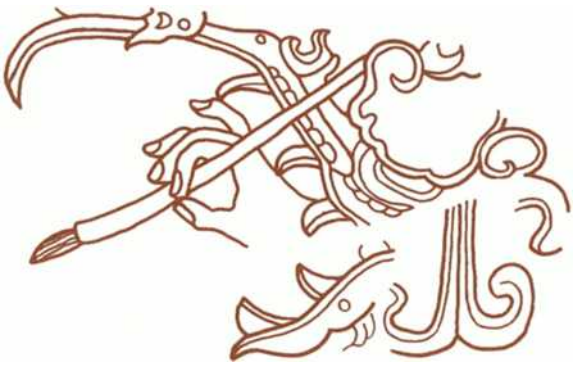
In some of the dance-dramas performed in Mayan towns, the dialogue is produced without the use of a script. Most of these productions are comedies in which the actors speak the local Mayan language, combining stock lines with improvisations. Carroll Edward Mace has published texts and translations of full-length comedic performances from the town of Rabinal, most recently in *Los Negritos de Rabinal y el Juego del Tun*. Among these comedies are parodies of Rabinal Achi, the scripted tragedy presented in chapter 32.



For Mayan authors writing in their own languages, direct access to the world of print publication was slow in coming. A tentative entrance into this world was provided by the monthly literary magazine *Yikal maya than/Revista de literatura Maya,* published in Mérida from 1939 to 1955. It was bilingual, as its names suggest, and the first of the two names (*Yik'al maya t'an* in present-day orthography) has a double meaning: "wealth of the Maya language" and "poet of the Maya language," meaning Yukatek Maya. Except for this magazine, it was not until the 1980s, with the coming of a Mayan cultural renaissance, that Mayan-language writers gained sustained access to print media. In 1986, the Asociación de Escritores Mayances de Guatemala founded the magazine *Chatwalijoq,* published in Quetzaltenango. In 1991, the Unidad de Escritores Mayas–Zoques founded *Takj otskjilal,* published in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas. During this same period, Mayan writers began to publish books.

In 1987, Linda Schele and other specialists in the ancient Mayan script began to offer workshops to speakers of Mayan languages. The workshop Schele founded in Antigua, Guatemala, continues today, and other workshops are offered in such places as Tizimín, Yucatán. Cholsamaj, a Mayan publishing house in Guatemala City, produces books that express page numbers in bars and dots and present publication dates in the form of long-count inscriptions. Also printed in Guatemala are appointment books in which each double-page spread, instead of spanning a week or a month, covers twenty days from the divinatory calendar, starting with the current year-bearing day name.

An author whose early work anticipates the Mayan renaissance is Luis Enrique Sam Colop. In 1978 and 1979, he published two volumes of poetry, written in K'iche' with Spanish translations: *Versos sin refugio* and *La copa y la raíz.* Since 1996, he has been

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writing a column, in both Spanish and K'iche', for *La Prensa Libre,* Guatemala's largest daily. In the late 1980s, another Guatemalan newspaper, *Siglo XXI,* published a bilingual supplement written by members of the Academia de las Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala, but the editors dropped it after a year and a half.

Among the leading authors of the Mayan renaissance is Victor Montejo, who has transformed a story from Jakaltek oral tradition into an epic poem in his book *El Q'anil: Man of Lightning.* Gaspar Pedro González, a speaker of Q'anjob'al, has written the first novel in a Mayan language, *Sbeybal jun naq maya qanjobal.* The Tzotzil collective Sna Jtz'ibajom, "House of the Writer," has written, produced, and published a series of plays. Isabel Juárez Espinosa, a speaker of Tzeltal, and Petrona de la Cruz, a speaker of Tzotzil, have become Mexico's first indigenous women playwrights. The poet Humberto Ak'abal, who writes in facing-page K'iche' and Spanish, has achieved an international reputation. He is the recipient of Italian and Swiss literary prizes, and his reading tours have taken him to various countries in Latin America and Europe, and to Japan and the United States as well.

As an end to this epilogue and an opening into a future whose shapes can only be glimpsed, I offer one of Ak'abal's poems with an English translation. The title is "Koyopa'," meaning heat lightning.

K'o jujun mul	There are times
ri kaj kuxij rib'	when the sky becomes frightened
rumal sib'alaj q'eq'umal.	by so much darkness.
Jun koyopa'	Lightning
kel chirij ri sutz', xa are kurilo	lights up the clouds, it wants to see
we uj k'o chiri' ikim.	if we are still here, below.
Are kurilo	Then comes the revelation—
uj k'o chiri'	here we are,
xa are kak'ub'i qak'ux	pleased in our hearts
qeta'm chi ri kaj	to know that the sky
k'o jela' chikaj.	is still there in the sky.

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NOTES

Introduction

The earliest evidence of English literature is in vellum manuscripts of the late tenth or early eleventh century, and the earliest work that appears in them is a hymn by the poet Caedmon, who lived in the seventh century. The Old World version of papermaking originated in China and was first brought to Europe in the twelfth century by Arabs, via the Strait of Gibraltar; it did not cross the English Channel until the fifteenth century (Von Hagen 1944: 13). I describe the New World version of the art in chapter 14.

Tatiana Proskouriakoff was the first to demonstrate the historical content of Mayan inscriptions, beginning in 1960; her papers on this subject are gathered in Proskouriakoff 1993. Texts whose subjects include historical events at Palenque, some of which I discuss in chapters 5 through 7, include frequent departures from strict chronological order. The same thing happens in alphabetic Mayan texts from the colonial period and in present-day oral narratives in Mayan languages (B. Tedlock and D. Tedlock 1985). In the most ambitious published account of ancient Mayan history (Martin and Grube 2008), events in the lives of rulers are reorganized in linear chronologies, and the corresponding astronomical events recede into the background. For a consideration of Mayan concepts of history, see D. Stuart 2005b.

The period during which the Mayan script and the alphabet were both in use in the lowlands is discussed in chapter 20.

The existence of parallel verse in alphabetic Nahuatl texts was first pointed out by Garibay (1953, vol. 1: 19, 65–67). In the case of Mayan alphabetic works, translations of passages from the Chilam Balam books and the Popol Vuh were first broken into lines of verse by Miguel León-Portilla (1961). Complete texts and translations of the Popol Vuh and two of the Chilam Balam books were subsequently published in a verse format by Munro S. Edmonson (1971, 1982, 1986). Unlike León-Portilla, he treated these texts as if they were composed entirely of couplets, even in cases where actual parallels in phrasing or meaning were absent. Other Mayanists began to follow his lead, even treating the subject and predicate of a clause as a couplet where necessary. In response, I demonstrated the existence of triplets, quatrains, and unparalleled introductory and transitional phrases in both written and spoken discourse in various Mayan languages (D. Tedlock 1983: ch. 8). For more on the nature of parallel verse and its implications for the theory and practice of translation, see D. Tedlock 1998.

There is abundant evidence that women were among the writers and readers of the Mayan script, though statements that all scribes were male continued to appear in the writings of Mayanists until recently (see D. Stuart 2001: 51 for an example). For examples of literate women, see Schele 1997 (43), Coe and Kerr 1997 (94–99), and chapters 1 and 14 in this book.

For more on the missionary reaction to Mayan books, see chapter 20. George Stuart (1992) and Michael D. Coe (1992) have written detailed accounts of the history of the decipherment of

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the Mayan script, and the works of many of the contributors to decipherment are anthologized in Houston, Mazariegos, and Stuart 2001. The first chapter in Coe's book includes an account of the decipherment of the cuneiform and Egyptian scripts and the realization of the importance of the phonetic dimension of the Chinese script. Coe classifies the Mayan script as "logographic," contrasting it with "syllabic" and "alphabetic" systems, but this label obscures the fact that many of its spellings are partly or entirely syllabic (see chapter 1 in this book).

Mayanists (including myself) have long been in the habit of using the terms *hieroglyph* and *hieroglyphic* with reference to the Mayan script, but I have chosen not to use them in this book. At its Greek root, *hieroglyph* means "sacred carving," and its original application was to a particular form of the Egyptian script that was carved on stone surfaces but was not used in books. Some Mayan texts were no doubt sacred, but others were incorporated in decorative art or took the form of graffiti, and we have indirect evidence that they also served as records of tribute payments. Some Mayan texts were carved, but it is likely that most writing was brushed or penned on paper. Further, the use of the term *hieroglyphic* for Mayan writing has the effect of aligning it with Egyptian writing and obscuring its similarities to other composite scripts.

As Matthew Restall has pointed out, many Western authors have cited the possession of alphabetic writing as a factor distinguishing "civilized" people from "barbarians" since the Middle Ages (2003: 90–92). When they compare writing systems, their accounts are nearly always pervaded by what Jacques Derrida describes as a "graphic monogenetism that transforms all differences into divergences or delays, accidents, or deviations" along an evolutionary path whose only destination is the alphabet. He sees in this slant "the most original and powerful ethnocentrism, in the process of imposing itself upon the world" (Derrida 1976: 91). Scholars have variously disposed of the problem of the Mayan script by asserting that it could not possibly be a true writing system (Gelb 1952: 61), by claiming that it was in need of "supplementary oral description" (Diringer 1962: 102), by stating that Mayans used "knotted cords" and thus confusing them with Incas (Goody 1977: 82–83), or by shifting the focus of attention to the undeciphered Zapotec script (Goody 1987: 18–28). Geoffrey Sampson has a more balanced attitude toward differences among writing systems, but even he gets rid of the Mayan script, stating flatly (and thirty years out of date) that it is "not yet deciphered" (1985: 46). Faced with the fact of decipherment, Tzvetan Todorov resorts to a last-ditch tactic, conceding that Mayans possessed "the *rudiments* of phonetic writing" (1984: 80, emphasis mine). Walter Mignolo (2000) gives a place to Mesoamerican writing systems in his revisionist picture of the place of the Americas on the global stage, but he focuses on Aztec and Mixtec pictorial histories and omits all mention of the Mayan writing system.

The narrowing of the field of inquiry in the process of decipherment is stated quite clearly by Yuri Knorosov, the primary decipherer of the Mayan script. He sets aside the work of scholars who had been able to discover some of the meanings in Mayan texts without knowing what the original Mayan words were, then goes on to define decipherment as "the beginning of an exact phonetic reading of words written in hieroglyphic form. As a result of decipherment, the study of texts becomes a branch of philology," by which he means linguistics (1958: 287). In some of the linguistic publications of contemporary Mayanists, illustrations of texts in the Mayan script are completely excluded in favor of alphabetic transcriptions; for examples, see chapters 5, 6, and 10 in Wichmann 2004. In effect, the absence of original texts serves as evidence of purity in the pursuit of narrowly defined linguistic goals. A different kind of narrowness is evident in the contributions to Mayan decipherment selected by Houston, Mazariegos, and Stuart (2001), who exclude (for example) the work of Josserand (1991) on the structure of discourse in Mayan texts.

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In formulating my statement about the absence of illustrations in literary anthologies and textbooks, I have benefited from discussions with Benjamin Bedard and Benjamin Friedlander. Two notable exceptions to what might be called the monographism of such books are *Technicians of the Sacred,* edited by Jerome Rothenberg (1968), whose contents include texts in pictorial sign systems from various parts of the world; and *The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature,* edited by Marc Shell and Werner Sollors (2000), in which the Arabic and Chinese scripts are represented among the texts facing the translations.

1 Learning to Read

In this and later chapters, I have avoided the term *glyph* (a shortened form of *hieroglyph*) with reference to the signs of the Mayan script. I use the term *character* for the signs or clusters of signs that occupy separate squares in the grid that underlies Mayan texts, and the term *sign* for the individual syllabic or logographic units that go into the composition of characters. Unlike *glyph* and *hieroglyph*, with their Egyptian connotations, *character* can be applied to the symbols or marks of any writing system (including the roman alphabet and computer codes).

For more detailed presentations of the Mayan script than the one I give here, see Harris and Stearns 1997, Coe and Van Stone 2001, and Montgomery 2002a. Shorter but useful descriptions include those of Lounsbury (1989b), Houston (1989), and Macri and Looper (2003: 21–40). On the grammar of Mayan texts, see Schele 1982, V. R. Bricker 1986, and Wichmann 2004. For dictionaries organized according to alphabetic transcriptions of the corresponding Ch'olan or Yukatekan syllables or words and indexed by their English and Spanish glosses, see Montgomery 2002b, Mathews and Brío 2006, and Montgomery and Helmke 2007. For a catalog of signs organized according to their visual features and indexed by alphabetic transcriptions and English glosses, see Macri and Looper 2003.

The fullest discussion of the 260-day divinatory calendar among Mayans in general and the K'iche' in particular is that of B. Tedlock (1992a: chs. 4–5). The best source on the names given to the twenty days in various Mayan languages is Thompson 1960 (69–89); Kaufman's work (1989) is heavily reliant on Thompson. On the early evidence for the divinatory calendar among the Zapotecs, see Marcus 1980. An example of Guatemalan appointment books following the K'iche' calendar is *Calendario Maya Jun Lajuj Iq'* (1997). The question of the origins of the 260-day, 365-day, and long-count calendars is explored in Rice 2007.

For more on graffiti at Tikal and elsewhere, see chapter 11. The trefoil device under the day signs may once have served as a numeral classifier, in which case it would have been suffixed to the term for the day number. It is similar to one of the syllabic signs for *ma,* and it is suggestive that in Yukatek, the classifier that indicates the number of times an event occurs is *-mal* (Tozzer 1921: 291). For a different interpretation, see Macri and Looper 2003 (28–29).

In this chapter and elsewhere, I give retrospective Gregorian equivalents rather than Julian dates for Mayan dates (except where indicated), because Julian dates are less accurate in indicating the time of year. In calculating the Gregorian dates, I follow V. R. Bricker and H. M. Bricker (1986: 54) in using 584,283, the correlation constant known as GMT (Goodman-Thompson-Martinez) and favored by Thompson (1960: 310), rather than 584,285, the number advocated by Lounsbury (1983). The GMT number fits the ethnohistorical and ethnographic evidence better, as is well known, and it also makes for a better fit between the dates in the Dresden Venus table and actual astronomical events (see D. Tedlock and B. Tedlock 2003: 20 n. 8). Since 1983,

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publications by archaeologists have followed Lounsbury, with the notable exceptions of Sharer and Traxler 2006 (114) and Rice 2007 (xiv).

It has long been customary to use Yukatek day names when referring to divinatory dates in inscriptions, but in fact the primary language of Classic inscriptions is an eastern Ch'olan language similar to modern-day Ch'orti' (Houston, Robertson, and Stuart 2000). Yukatekan names diverge more widely from the likely candidates for Classic Ch'olan day names than do K'ichean names. K'ichean/Ch'olan matches include Kej/Chij (versus Yukatekan Manik'), Tz'i'/Tz'i' (versus Ok), B'atz'/B'atz' (versus Chuwen), Aj/Aj (versus B'en), and Tz'ikin/Tz'ikin (versus Men).

The interpretations of the *k'ahk, b'uutz'* character and the second member of the *utz'ib', yal way* pair of characters are mine. For further examples of characters that embrace pairs of words or phrases, see Knowlton 2002.

The passage that identifies a woman as the author of an inscription was first reported by Michael Closs (1992). The four characters I present here are followed by another four that are more difficult to read but clearly elaborate on her identity, including her connection to jaguars. Closs interpreted this later passage as referring to her husband, but the profiled heads in two of the characters are marked as female.

The excerpt from the Dresden Codex is from an almanac that is reproduced and translated in full on pages 195–97.

2 Early Mayan Writing

On Monument 3 at San José Mogote and other early Zapotec texts, see Marcus 1980. On Monument 1 at El Portón, see Sharer and Sedat 1987 (359–62 and pls. 18.1–18.3) and 1989; the interpretation of the inscription is mine. For more on the early text from San Bartolo, see Saturno, Stuart, and Beltrán 2006. The text from Stela 10 at Kaminaljuyu is from a much larger carving that is dominated by figurative art, illustrated in full in Sharer and Traxler 2006 (fig. 6.7). The particular alignment between the 260-day and 365-day calendars that produced the calendar-round date in this text is rare; the only other example known to me occurs in one of the inscriptions in the Naj Tunich cave (see Type V in table 2 in MacLeod and Stone 1995: 161). For more on the ornament from Pomona, see Hammond 1987 and Justeson, Norman, and Hammond 1988. On Stela 1 at El Baúl and Stela 5 at Tak'alik Ab'aj, see Coe 2005 (68) and Sharer and Traxler 2006 (238–39, 248). The interpretation of the figure on the stela at El Baúl is mine.

3 The Skilled Observer from Maxam

On the history and monuments of Maxam (Naranjo), see Schele and Freidel 1990 (174–95) and Martin and Grube 2008 (68–83). In the case of the vessel signed by Ajmaxam, my translation and interpretation of the inscription starts from the epigraphic work of D. Stuart (1989: 156) and MacLeod and Reents-Budet (1994: 128–29). In the case of the Vase of the Seven Gods, my interpretation of the rim text is informed by the work of MacLeod and Reents-Budet (1994), and my transcription of the caption takes the work of Schele (1992: 127) as its starting point. I have arrived at different meanings for some of the signs transcribed in these sources, and I have suggested transcriptions for some of the signs they passed over.

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For a long time, Mayanists interpreted the *aj-* prefix in Classic texts as specifically male, rendering it as "he of" or as a masculine agentive, so that Ajmaxam supposedly meant "he of Maxam," *ajtz'ib'* meant "he who writes" or "paints," and so forth. Rosemary Joyce (2000: 64–65) offers a critique of this practice that puts it in the larger context of gender bias in archaeology. Sarah Jackson and David Stuart (2001: 222) have made the definitive argument that the *aj-* prefix is better understood as "person of" or as a genderless agentive. In some Classic texts, *aj-* is preceded by *ix,* specifying that the reference is to a woman, but that does not mean that all other occurrences refer to males. In colonial Yukatek, *aj-* occurs in such terms as *ajalansaj,* "midwife," and in contemporary Ch'orti', it occurs in such terms as *ajk'op ch'urkab',* "midwife." Neither of these terms is preceded by *ix.*

Ajmaxam's parents, like other high-ranking royal persons of the Classic period, are identified by titles whose prefixes include the sign for *ch'uh.* In Ch'olan languages, words built on the stem *ch'uh-* include those with such meanings as "drip," "sprinkle," and "deposit," and the rows of beads or dots that run down the length of this sign represent drops of liquid or small objects falling on an altar. The prefix normally combines *ch'uh* with a second sign, most commonly the logograph for *k'an,* meaning "yellow" or "ripe," with extended meanings that include corn kernels, gemstones, and valuable shells. *Ch'uh k'an* means that the bearer of the title sprinkles or sows an offering that will bring ripeness and riches. In the title of Ajmaxam's mother, the *k'an* sign is written within the outline of an inverted jar, and the jar is positioned so that the drops of the *ch'uh* sign fall from its mouth.

The phrase *ch'uh k'an* is actually the second half of a couplet, as is revealed by some versions of the prefixes on the pair of characters that identifies the rulers of Yaxchilán (see page 97). The *ch'uh* that prefixes the first character is combined with *yax,* and the second *ch'uh* is combined with the more common *k'an.* The meaning of *yax,* "green" or "fresh," complements the "yellow" or "ripe" of *k'an.* The cognate K'iche' terms, *rax* and *q'an,* are combined with the idea of sprinkling in this passage from a prayer in the Popol Vuh: *chatz'iloj,/chamak'ij uloq/araxal,/aq'anal,* "Spread the stain,/sprinkle the drops/of your greenness,/your yellowness" (D. Tedlock 1996: 193, 330). According to Andrés Xiloj, who was the ritual head of a contemporary K'iche' patrilineage, the reference is to the sowing and harvesting of crops and the begetting and bearing of children.

Clearly, the Classic couplet *ch'uh yax,/ch'uh k'an* is taken from the liturgical language of what Mayanists call a "scattering" or "sowing" ritual. The performer sprinkles or pours an offering on a low altar. The offering falls from the open hands of a male or from the mouth of a jar held by a female, and the offering is represented by an expanded version of the *ch'uh* sign, as in the cases of Stelas 1, 3, and 6 at Yaxchilán and Lintel 2 at La Pasadita (Tate 1992: figs. 21e, 88a, 124b, 38b). The cascading drops of this sign are often accompanied by falling logographs for *yax* and *k'an,* and sometimes by other signs that may stand for such objects as shells and shiny pieces of stone. In title prefixes that include *ch'uh,* signs that resemble shells are the most frequent alternative to the *k'an* sign, and they sometimes take the form of a sign that can be read as *ul,* which is reported as a term for snail shells in Yukatek (see page 45). Another alternative is a sign that can be read as *lah,* meaning "all" or "everything" (see page 44).

All over greater Mesoamerica, including the U.S. Southwest, there were and still are fertility rituals that involve the casting of small or fragmented objects of value on shrines, including precious stones and shells. At Teotihuacan, greenstone, obsidian, and shell objects were scattered over the graves of sacrifices (Sugiyama 2000: 129). Among the Pueblos of the Southwest, hand-

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fuls of cornmeal mixed with crushed turquoise, coral, and shell are sprinkled on altars and earth shrines, and those who make such offerings ask for abundant crops and children.

It seems clear enough that when *ch'uh* occurs in royal titles, it refers to the religious practices of the persons who hold such titles. Contrary to what some have argued, it does not give them the status of gods. Such an interpretation requires treating the *yax, k'an,* and shell signs as if they were integral parts of the logograph for *ch'uh,* without offering an explanation for the variation. The meaning of *ch'uh* is then derived from Ch'ol and Yukatek nouns and adjectives that have to do with spirits and deities (see Schele and Grube 1997 [46–49] for the full line of reasoning). In the process, the connection to religious practices is lost.

In the dedication of the Vase of the Seven Gods, the phrase *tzi te'el kakaw* has been taken to mean "tree-fresh cacao," but *tzi* can also mean "new," and in various Mayan languages, the addition of *-el* to the word for "tree" creates a term meaning "grove" or "orchard." Thus, "new grove of cacao trees" is a straightforward translation for the phrase as a whole, and it fits the context of a drinking vessel made for a child for whom the grove was planted.

The reading of the final character in the caption as *Ek'ich Ajaw* is based on its relationship to the better-known character for *K'inich Ajaw* in the rim text. The two characters are essentially the same except at the back of the profiled head, where the former has the sign for *ek'* in place of the *k'in* sign in the latter.

The triangular hearthstone constellation has become a standard feature of the understanding of Classic Mayan cosmogenesis, but it would be unknown were it not for its role in the astronomy of the contemporary K'iche, as first reported by B. Tedlock (1985: 86). Matthew Looper passed on this ethnographic information to Linda Schele, who incorporated it in her interpretation of the character that reads *Yax Ox Tunal,* or "First Three Stone Place," on Stela C at Quiriguá and in the text on the tablet in the Temple of the Cross at Palenque (Schele 1992; see also Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993 [65–69]). The Quiriguá and Palenque texts are presented in chapters 4 and 5. In the present chapter, I extend the hearthstone interpretation to the arrangement of the bundles depicted on the Vase of the Seven Gods.

4 From the Time of Gods to the Time of Lords

On the history and monuments of Quiriguá, see Sharer 1990, Martin and Grube 2008 (214–25), and Looper 2003; for Copán, see Schele and Freidel 1990 (ch. 8), Fash 1991, Schele and Mathews 1998 (ch. 4), Martin and Grube 2008 (190–213), and Stuart 2005b.

In suggesting *pop ajaw, ajpo,* and *ajpop* as alternative readings for the two-part sign that is currently read exclusively as *ajaw* by epigraphers, I follow Lounsbury, whose revised argument (1989b) for these alternatives has been ignored. The code-cracking method that guides epigraphic work rests on the assumption that an internally self-consistent code lies behind Mayan texts in general, and the goal of the method is to reduce texts to unambiguous alphabetic transcriptions. This approach has been productive as far as it goes, but it obscures the possibility that a given sign or group of signs might have had different readings at different times and places, or (depending on the sophistication of the reader) at the same time and place. Among other things, it has led to the subordination of the highly visible bat image to the spelled-out bird name in discussions of the Copán emblem.

On Kaminaljuyu and its relationship to Teotihuacan, see Fash and Fash 2000 (435–50) and Sharer and Traxler 2006 (195, 282, 288–93). On the Teotihuacan version of the Plumed Serpent,

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the dragon whose Mayan name is Snake (or Scepter) of Eighteen Bodies, see Martin 2001 (104–7). The bodies of centipedes of the genus *Scolopendra,* which are common in Mesoamerica, have eighteen segments between the head and tail.

For more on the role of Copán in K'iche' and Kaqchikel history and its status as a Tulan, or "Place of Cattails," see D. Tedlock 1989, 1993a (12–15, 236–37), and 1996 (45–46). My 1989 identification of Copán as a Place of Cattails, based on highland alphabetic texts, has since been confirmed by evidence from Copán itself, both archaeological (Fash and Fash 2000: 451–56) and epigraphic (D. Stuart 2000: 490–506). For the passage in the Annals of the Kaqchikels about the four-directional cities named Tulan and the one whose emblem was a bat, see Recinos and Goetz 1953 (44–55) and Maxwell and Hill 2006 (6–33). The cosmological implications of the group of four emblems on Copán Stela A were first pointed out by Marcus (1986: 11–22).

The bat is described as the *tz'apih'al,* or "covering," of the entrance to Tulan in the extant text of the Annals, a puzzling statement that may have resulted from a colonial copyist's attempt to make sense of *chapb'al,* which refers to an "instrument for taking hold of a lordship" (Varea 1929). On the brown-backed solitaire *(Myadestes obscurus)* and its song, see Davis 1972 (174) and D. Tedlock 1993a (13–14, 237). On the 400-day Kaqchikel periods that ended on days named Aj, see chapter 30 in this book.

My translation and interpretation of Stela C at Quiriguá are based, in part, on the epigraphic work of Schele (in Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993: fig. 2.5) and Matthew Looper (2003: ch. 5 and 226–28). The readings of the ISIGs, the argument for the double meaning for the sign that takes the form of a slit drum, and the readings of the signs for *uk'aliy,* Ik'an Chak Chan, and *ch'a chan* are mine, as is the interpretation of differences in the treatment of "zero." In my interpretation of *tun* signs, I am at variance with the recent epigraphic practice of reading all *tun* signs in long-count dates as *haab',* which resulted from the discovery that a few of them may have been read that way at particular times and places. The generalization of this reading is another example of the distortions that result from the code-cracking approach. It is a particularly odd example, because the Chilam Balam books consistently treat *tun* and *haab'* as terms for two distinct time periods, respectively 360 and 365 days long.

The picture of the Orion turtle with stones on its back is from page 71a of the Madrid Codex. For the Chilam Balam passage referring to the turtle stars, see Roys 1954 (54). On the location of the Mayan scorpion constellation, see D. Tedlock and B. Tedlock 2003 (8–10); the interpretation of these stars as a centipede is discussed in chapter 5, as is the tree in the Milky Way. For more on the Jaguar and Stingray paddlers, see Schele in Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993 (89–95).

The case for 7.6.0.0.0 as the historical (as opposed to mythic) base date for the invention of the long count, which rests partly on the length of the interval described by that date, is made by Justeson (1988); the description of the actual movements of the Milky Way tree and Orion on that date is mine.

5 Cormorant and Her Three Sons

On the history and monuments of Palenque, see Schele and Freidel 1990 (ch. 6), Robertson 1991, Schele 1992, Schele and Mathews 1998 (ch. 3), Martin and Grube 2008 (154–75), and D. Stuart 2005a.

I interpret Tokotan, or "Cloudy Center," as a name for Palenque itself, but others have treated it as the name of an unknown location occupied by the members of the B'akha', or

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"Egret," dynasty before they arrived at Palenque. The same sources that reserve the name Tokotan for a separate place (such as Martin and Grube 2008: 157) give Palenque the name that Stuart and Houston (1994: 30–31) read as Lakam Ha' and translated as "Big Water." They assume that the name refers to the Río Otulúm, which flows past the temples of the Cross Group, but the problems with their interpretation begin with the fact that this river is not big. Further, though *lakam* means "big" in Yukatek, similar forms in Ch'ol have a different meaning. *Lak* refers to a long object that has been grasped, and *lakal* refers to a long object that has been put in place (Aulie and Aulie 1978). From this information, it would seem that in Classic references to stelas, ***lakam tun*** does not mean "big stone" but rather "sited (or positioned) long (or tall) stone." By the same reasoning, ***lakam ha'*** means that a "long water," meaning a river, has been positioned, which is to say channeled. The phrase ***lakam ha' cha'an ch'een,*** which occurs in the temple texts that are the subjects of chapters 6 and 7, simply means "the long water channeled by the cave," and whether or not it is a proper place name, it is a crystal-clear description of the aqueduct that once carried the Río Otulúm past the group of three temples. On the other side of the space occupied by the temples is ***yemal K'uk' Lakam Witz,*** here translated as "the landslide of Quetzal Ridge." ***Emal*** (prefixed with the possessive pronoun *y-*) is rendered as "landslide" on the basis of Ch'ol *ejmel.* The modification of ***witz,*** or "mountain," by ***lakam,*** making this feature into something lengthy that has been "positioned," may refer to the fact that the top of the slope that rises behind the temples was modified for the construction of buildings.

In this chapter and in chapters 6 and 7, my translation and interpretation of the texts in the three Cross Group temples draw partly on the work of Linda Schele, which is presented in Schele and Freidel 1990 (237–61) but developed with more attention to the text itself in Schele 1992. However, I depart from Schele in reading the name of the lord who commissioned these temples as K'inich Chan (rather than Kan) B'ahlam. In the name of one of his predecessors, the logograph for "snake" is prefixed with the syllable *ka-,* indicating that it should be given a Yukatekan pronunciation *(kan)* rather than a Ch'olan one *(chan),* but no such pronunciation is ever indicated for his own name. Another difference is that I follow later sources in reading the name of the goddess in the temple texts, along with one of the names of K'inich Chan B'alam's paternal grandmother (otherwise known as Sak K'uk'), as Muwan Mat. David Stuart (2005a: 81, 180–83) argues that the divine Muwan Mat might have been male but proposes to leave the question open by calling her the "Triad Progenitor" (though the term *progenitor* has a masculine etymology). Martin and Grube (2008: 161), citing Stuart, take the male gender of the divine Muwan Mat to be a proven fact. Stuart's interpretation requires him to ignore a passage that clearly describes her as a na', or "mother" (see the fourth row in the second column on page 72), and to reread various other instances of the same sign as referring to a male maize deity. It also requires him to ignore the fact that the human Muwan Mat is a grandmother. Martin and Grube dispose of this problem by arguing that the human Muwan Mat must be someone other than K'inich Chan B'alam's grandmother.

I agree with Stuart's reading of the bird head in the character for Muwan Mat as that of a cormorant, but I disagree with his suggestion that this head is the same as the one in the Palenque emblem (Stuart 2005a: 21–22). Taking into account the fact that compound terms for biological species are common in Mayan languages, I read the literal meaning of *muwan mat* as "hawk duck." This makes perfect sense as a term for the cormorant, which combines the character of an ordinary duck with that of a bird of prey. A cormorant "stoops" from a position above water instead of above the ground.

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The divine Cormorant is *uxyajul na'*, "3 times a mother," in my reading, and the "children" in question are the deities whom Mayanists often refer to as "the Palenque triad." When Floyd Lounsbury discovered the triple conjunction of Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn that marked the dedication of the three temples of the Cross Group (1989a: 248), it was soon suggested that the three planets corresponded to the members of the triad (Schele and Freidel 1990: 256). The interpretation of the temple texts that I offer here is the first to connect each and every member of the triad to a specific planet.

In the Temple of the Sixth Sky (or Cross), the featured planet is Mars, and the deity whose full name I translate as "Corn Silk at the Tip of a Single Ear" is often referred to as "GI" in the Mayanist literature. The sidereal locations I suggest for "Sixth Sky House" and "8th House of Corn Silk" are based on their positions in the sequence of thirteen zodiacal signs on pages 23–24 of the Paris Codex, as numbered chronologically rather than in the staggered order in which they are presented. For more on the identification of Mayan constellations lying on or near the path of the sun, moon, and planets, see D. Tedlock and B. Tedlock 2003 and 2007 (134–49).

When the texts of the Cross Group mention the "birth" of a member of the triad, I take them to mean the eastern rise of a planet after a period of invisibility. When they mention a "delay" in the movement of a member of the triad, or that he "turned around," I take them to refer to a time when the corresponding planet appears to cease its motion relative to the fixed stars, after which it moves in the opposite direction. A third kind of event, which always comes after a turnaround, is an arrival at *matawil*. This is generally taken to be a mythological placename (see Stuart and Houston 1994: 73–77), but I interpret it as a term for the period of invisibility of a planet, prior to its eastern reappearance. In Ch'orti', *ma tajwil* simply means "not encountered" or "out of reach." Only when a member of the triad has reached this state does Cormorant go into action as a "mother," performing a penitential sacrifice of blood and thus, in my interpretation, making it possible for one of her children to be reborn, or to reappear on the eastern horizon. In effect, the "births" of these planetary deities are always rebirths, taking their places in a repeating series of events. The inscriptions do not purport to tell the story of the first birth, first turnaround, or first arrival at invisibility of a given planet but rather call attention to examples of these three kinds of events, separated from one another by multiples of planetary periods.

In the case of Mars, the planet of Corn Silk, no birth is mentioned. The initial event in Corn Silk's narrative, as I noted in the present chapter, is a turnaround, and the second, though it has been misinterpreted by Lounsbury (1985: 45–46) and others as his "birth," is quite the opposite. He "arrived at invisibility" and "touched the earth," which is to say that Mars was last seen low on the western horizon when it disappeared from the sky after a long period of visibility. For each of the other two members of the triad, a "birth" is described, but it takes place prior to a turnaround, which is followed in turn by an arrival at invisibility.

A consistent interpretation of the astronomical language of the Palenque inscriptions removes the need to imagine that they imply the existence of two deities sharing the same name as GI (Corn Silk). The case for a GI senior and a GI junior, as made by Lounsbury (1980), was accepted by Linda Schele and many others, including (for a time) myself (D. Tedlock 1992a). Lounsbury based his argument on the mistaken notion that the GI participating in the "turnaround" must be older than the GI he thought was "born" on the occasion described here as a disappearance. He found a birth date for the senior GI by producing an unusual reading of the first two sentences in the second double column of the text of the Temple of the Sixth Sky (see

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page 71). Each of the two sentences includes an interval (or distance) number, and as I read them now, both intervals are meant to be counted forward from the events to which they are anchored. The first number is 8.5.0 (as expressed in long-count terms) and is measured from a "birth" I take to be that of Cormorant, who is named at the end of the previous sentence. The addition of this number to the date of her birth, which occurred on 12.19.13.4.0 of the previous era, leads to the date 1.9.0 in the present era. The second interval number is 1.9.2, and because it is measured from the hearthstone event that ended the previous era, it constitutes a long-count date in itself, only two days different from 1.9.0. Lounsbury, in contrast, interpreted the birth in the first sentence as that of a deity other than Cormorant—or "Lady Beastie," as she was called at the time—and he reached a date for that birth by counting the 8.5.0 interval backward from her birth, even though he counted forward in the case of the 1.9.2 interval that comes in the next sentence. He gave his hypothetical deity the same name as the GI who "turned around" in the second sentence, and in this way he created a mate for Cormorant who was older than she and who served as the father for his junior GI. In fact, her mate, if she can be said to have one, would be the instrument she uses to draw her own blood.

My interpretation of this passage has the advantage of being far simpler than Lounsbury's. It is consistent in the directionality of the interval numbers, bringing them within two days of reaching the same date, and it does not require the introduction of an actor other than the ones who are actually mentioned.

The "white paper" *(sak huun)* of the Cross Group texts is usually taken to be a headdress, but I interpret it as a paper marked with the sacrificial bloodstains of Cormorant and the human members of the Egret dynasty. At Yaxchilán, Lady Shark Fin is depicted staining paper with the cord she runs through her tongue (see chapter 8).

6 Temple of the Sun-Eyed Shield

The god named here as K'inich Ajaw Pakal, or "Sun-Eyed Lord of the Shield," is often referred to in the Mayanist literature as "GIII of the Palenque triad." For the Popol Vuh story about a house full of bones and a hero who loses his head, see D. Tedlock 1996 (124–26). In that story, Junajpu rather than Little Jaguar Sun loses his head, but in the vase painting illustrated in figure 73, the person about to lose his head is the Classic equivalent of Little Jaguar Sun.

The word I render as "delay in the movement" is *puluy,* which Stuart and Houston (see Houston 1996: 137) translate as "burn." My interpretation, which fits the astronomical context, is based on the Yukatek expression *pulul pul k'in,* which means to delay or postpone something day by day (Barrera-Vásquez 1980). *Puluy* is used with reference to Sun-Eyed Lord of the Shield (Jupiter) in the present temple and to Young Mirror Scepter (Saturn) in the Temple of the Tree of Ripe Corn (in the next chapter), but is not used with reference to Corn Silk (Mars) in the Temple of the Sixth Sky (in chapter 5). Jupiter and Saturn both appeared to be stationary at the time of the dedication of the three temples, but Mars had been in forward motion for more than a month.

7 Temple of the Tree of Yellow Corn

The god whose name I read as Ch'ok Nehn K'awiil and translate as "Young Mirror Scepter" is often referred to in the Mayanist literature as GII or God K. For a detailed description of his

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attributes, see Taube 1992 (69–79); for a discussion of his manifestation as a scepter in the Classic lowlands, in the ethnohistorical sources of the highlands, and in the continuing performance of the highland dance-drama Rabinal Achi, see D. Tedlock 2003 (130–35).

Pictures of deer being lassoed or trapped with a rope attached to a scorpion's tail are on pages 44, 48, and 80 of the Madrid Codex.

The god named here as Akan is more widely known in the literature as God A′; see Taube 1992 (14–17) for a description of his attributes and Grube 2001 for more on Mayan uses of alcohol and other psychoactive substances. The text does not make explicit reference to Akan's relationship to the planet Venus, but on the occasion in the story, Venus was in the sidereal location that is identified as his in the Dresden Venus table. The epithet Nichaj, "Destroyer," is affixed to the right side of the character that names him, in the eleventh row of the right-hand column in the text on page 96.

8 Lady Shark Fin and the Evening Star

On the history and monuments of Yaxchilán, see Schele and Freidel 1990 (ch. 7), Tate 1992, McAnany and Plank 2001, and Martin and Grube 2008 (116–37). My translation and interpretation of the text presented in this chapter (on Lintel 25 from Temple 23) draw, in part, on the work of Tate (1992: 276) and Zender (2004: 207). For the context of the passage quoted from the Rabinal Achi dance-drama, see D. Tedlock 2003 (42).

The god Itzamnaaj is also known in the Mayanist literature as God D; see Taube 1992 (31–41) for a description of his attributes. Also see Taube for more on Ix Ajaw Nah, or "Lady of the House," also known as Goddess I (64–69). On her sidereal location and her role in the Dresden Codex and Ritual of the Bacabs, see D. Tedlock and B. Tedlock 2003 (17–19) and pages 192, 211 here. On the dragon named Serpent of Eighteen Bodies, see chapter 4 and the notes to that chapter.

This chapter's interpretation of the séance performed by Lady Shark Fin is the first to pay serious attention to the roles of Venus and the moon. The figure that emerges from the mouth of the dragon offers a rare glimpse of a Classic deity armed with the power of Venus. He holds a spear, whereas his Postclassic counterparts in the Dresden Venus table wield spear-throwers.

There is good evidence that the English word *shark,* as a term for a fish, originates from Mayan *xok* (see T. Jones 1985).

9 The Rattlesnakes of the City of Three Stones

On the history and monuments of Calakmul, see Martin and Grube 2008 (100–115). My interpretation of the Calakmul place-names differs from that of Stuart and Houston (1994: 28–29). My translation of the dynastic vase text draws on the epigraphic work of Martin (1997). A ceramic vessel found in a tomb at Río Azul not only had the word *kakaw* written on it but contained the residue of a chocolate beverage (D. Stuart 1988).

10 Drawing and Designing with Words

For an international anthology of concrete poetry, see Mary Ellen Solt 1969. The epigraphy, translations, and interpretations in this chapter are mine. There is indirect evidence that the ob-

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servance of scores of stones in groups of thirteen may have begun much earlier than the Late Classic (see Rice 2007: 44–45, 184–86).

11 Graffiti

On the history and monuments of Tikal, see Schele and Freidel 1990 (chs. 4–5), Harrison 1999, and Martin and Grube 2008 (24–53). On those of Dos Pilas, see Schele and Freidel 1990 (179–86), Houston 1993, and Martin and Grube 2008 (54–67). On the site of Comalcalco, see Coe 2005 (139). The major work on the Naj Tunich cave is that of Andrea Stone (1995).

For more examples of the graffiti of Tikal, see Trik and Kampen 1983. For examples of Native North American games involving a path divided into forty spaces, see Culin 1992 (87–95, 121–24, 190–93, 221–22) and D. Tedlock 1992c. The epigraphic interpretations of graffiti from Tikal and Comalcalco are mine. In the case of Naj Tunich, my discussion of dates and my translation of a text draw on the epigraphic work of MacLeod and Stone (1995). Michael Coe (1989a) was the first to establish the equivalence between the twin heroes of the Classic lowlands, Jun Ajaw and Yax B'alam, and Junajpu and Xb'alanq'e, the highland twins whose story is told in the Popol Vuh.

12 The Question of the Beginning and End of Time

On the history and monuments of Cobá and Yaxuna, see Suhler at al. 2004 and Sharer and Traxler 2006 (554–58). For the Popol Vuh passage that describes a causeway, see D. Tedlock 1996 (158, 301). My interpretation of the numbers above the level of scores of stones is different from that of Freidel, Schele, and Parker (1995: 61–63), who assume that the value of the sixth place is twenty times that of the fifth place, the value of the seventh place is twenty times that of the sixth, and so on upward through the places, and who assume that places higher than the fifth continue beyond the hearthstone event. I assume that the values of the fifth and higher places top out at 13 (as written) rather than 20, and that the long count starts over again from zero after the hearthstone event that ended the previous era. For a list of long-count dates in the Dresden Codex, see Thompson 1972 (21–22).

On stars that mark the coming of a new score of stones in the books of Chilam Balam, see Roys 1954 (39, 49–50) and D. Tedlock and B. Tedlock 2003 (12 and fig. 10). For more on Lady of the House and her home in Virgo, see chapter 8 in this book and the notes for that chapter; the source for her epithets is Roys 1965 (38, 143). On the thirteen signs of the Mayan zodiac, which are laid out on pages 23–24 of the Paris Codex, see Kelley 1976 (45–50), Schele and Grube 1997 (213–15), and B. Tedlock 1999b (46–54).

13 The Mouth of the Well of the Itza

On the transition from the Classic to the Postclassic in the lowlands, see Chase and Chase 2004. On the history and monuments of Chichén Itzá, see Piña Chan 1980, Schele and Freidel 1990 (ch. 9), Schele and Mathews 1998 (ch. 6), Suhler et al. 2004, and Sharer and Traxler 2006: (558–92). Grube and Stuart (1987: 810) were the first to recognize the Cocom family name in the inscriptions there. On Mayapán, see Sharer and Traxler 2006 (592–604).

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As an alternative name for Chichén Itzá, Wuk Yab'nal, meaning "Seven Bushes," appears in the Chilam Balam book from Chumayel (Roys 1967: 132–33). For Landa's description of his visit to Chichén Itzá, see Pagden 1975 (132–34). On the pilgrimage of K'iche' and Kaqchikel lords to a place that was probably Chichén Itzá and on the piercing of their noses while they were there, see D. Tedlock 1993a (245), 1996 (51), and 2003 (136–39). On the priesthood whose seat rotated among various towns in Yucatán until long after the Spanish invasion, see Edmonson 1986 (11, 41–46). The full story of the last independent Mayan kingdoms in the Petén is told by Grant D. Jones (1998).

The linguistic analysis of the signs for *k'ahk* or *k'ak', chan* or *kan,* and *ajaw* is mine. The full text illustrated and translated in this chapter is from Lintel 1 of the Temple of the Four Lintels at Chichén Itzá; my translation draws on the epigraphic work of Schele and Krochock, as presented by Schele and Freidel (1990: 358–59) and Krochock (1991). For examples of other texts at Chichén Itzá, including the other three lintels of this temple, see Krochock 1989. On the B'olon ti K'u Ajawob' and their celestial counterparts, see Roys 1967 (94–106).

14 Writing on the Pages of Books

For a facsimile of the Grolier Codex, see Coe 1973; on its astronomical content, see Carlson 1983 and D. Tedlock and B. Tedlock 2003 (13–14). The best facsimiles of the Dresden Codex are in Thompson 1972, accompanied by a lengthy commentary, and *Kumatzim Wuj, Jun* (1998). See Deckert and Anders 1975 on the history of representations of this codex, and Coe 1992 (77–79) on the possibility that Cortés included it in the royal fifth. For the best available facsimile of the Madrid Codex, see *Kumatzim Wuj, Ka'i'* (2008). The probable place of origin of this codex, which has a fragment of a colonial papal bull pasted to one of its pages, has been traced by Chuchiak (2004). For a full presentation of the Paris Codex, see Love 1994; in the margins and other available spaces in its pages are some alphabetically written notes in a colonial hand (G. Jones 1994). Highly accurate line drawings of all the pages in the Dresden, Paris, and Madrid codices appear in Villacorta and Villacorta 1977. On the language of the Dresden Codex, see Wald 2004.

On the paper manufactured in Mesoamerica, see Von Hagen 1944. The titles, characteristics, patron deities, practices, and equipment of scribes are presented in detail in Coe and Kerr 1997 (chs. 3–4). The interpretation of the conch shells in the hands of the monkeys is mine, as is the interpretation of the scrambled *1 yax, 1 k'an* text and the hand gestures of the pupil who understands the error. Justin Kerr was the first to read the *tataab'* character written on this same vase. The interpretation of *ch'uh* as meaning "to look after" or "care for" when prefixed with *aj-* is based on numerous verbs and nouns in Ch'olan languages; the equivalent Yukatek stem is *k'ul,* as distinct from *k'uul,* which carries a sense of sacredness or spirituality.

Scores of stones are the subject of page 60 in the Dresden Codex and pages 1–12 in the Paris Codex (see Love 1994: ch. 3). I present examples of Dresden almanacs in which the 260-day divinatory calendar is the only measure of time in chapter 15 of this book; Dresden lunar almanacs are the subject of chapter 16, and the Dresden Venus table is presented in chapter 17. The Dresden pages that deal with seasonal matters have been analyzed by V. R. Bricker and H. M. Bricker (1986). For interpretations of the zodiacal almanac in the Paris Codex, see Kelley 1976 (45–50), Schele in Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993 (fig. 2.33), B. Tedlock 1999b (46–54), and D. Tedlock

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and B. Tedlock 2003 (9–13); all of these sources are in agreement on the basic reading method for this almanac.

For the sixteenth-century testimony about a book containing family history, see Tozzer 1941 (9n44). For the passage in the Popol Vuh that accounts for the succession of K'iche' lords, see D. Tedlock 1996 (194–97). The best-known example of a central Mexican tribute list is in the Codex Mendoza (Berdan and Anawalt 1997: folios 17v–55r). For more on the Codex Bodley and other Mixtec books containing pictorial narratives, see Boone 2000 (ch. 5). The large decayed book found at Copán was in the tomb of a scribe (Burial XXXVII-4), where it had been placed on the right side of his head; near his feet were ten paint pots (Fash 1991: 106–11 and fig. 65). For a presentation of all four sides of the Birth Vase, see Taube 1994.

On the two-stage interpretation of oratory among the Kuna, see Sherzer 1990.

15 Signs of the Times

On this chapter's reading of the names of the moon goddess, see D. Tedlock and B. Tedlock 2007 (123–24). The practices of present-day calendar diviners in highland Guatemala are detailed in B. Tedlock 1992a (chs. 5–7). The almanacs I discuss in this chapter are from pages 2a, 4c–10c, and 8b–9b of the Dresden Codex. The translations draw, in part, on the epigraphic work of Schele and Grube (1997: 81–86, 91, 96–99, 104).

For more on the gods named in this chapter, see the entries in Taube 1992 corresponding to the letters by which they are known in the Mayanist literature: One Lord or Lord Vulture (S), Moonlight Woman (I), Water Lily Serpent or Wind Quetzal Serpent (H), Thunderstorm (B), Pawahtun (N), Split Down the Middle (Q), Lord of Day or Sun (G), "the sower of clouds" (C), "the god who cuts off his own head" (R), Akan (A'), "the god of merchants" (L), Fire Scepter (K), True Magician (D), Corn (E), Death (A). On the Great Jaguar, see the entry for God G; for "the one who picks all the fruit," see the discussion of the central Mexican blindfolded god on pp. 111–12. Moonlight Woman is the principal figure in chapter 16 in the present book; the story of her K'iche' counterpart, Blood Moon, is told in chapter 27.

16 Moon Woman Meets the Stars

The almanacs presented in this chapter are from pages 16b–17b, 18c–19c, 16c–17c, and 21c–22c of the Dresden Codex. The translations of the first, second, and fourth almanacs draw, in part, on the epigraphic work of Schele and Grube (1997: 122, 126, 130). On the Corn god who is called "the two-day sign" in a Chilam Balam book, see Roys 1954 (37, 47). On the story of Seven Macaw, his correspondence to the stars of the Big Dipper, and his counterpart in Yucatán, see D. Tedlock 1996 (34, 77–81, 240–41); on the position of the Big Dipper among the stars whose rises mark the divisions of the dry season among the contemporary K'iche', see B. Tedlock 1992a (182).

17 The Power of the Great Star

The Venus table and its preface occupy six consecutive pages in the Dresden Codex, but they are numbered 24 and 46–50 because of a past error in matching the two strips of paper that com-

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pose the book. The excerpts in this chapter are from the five pages of the table itself. For detailed discussions of the astronomy encoded in these pages, see Thompson 1972 (62–67), Lounsbury 1978 (776–89) and 1983, and Aveni 2001 (184–96). On the reinterpretation of Venus as a source of power that passes from one deity to another rather than as a deity in itself, and on the sidereal positions of Venus, see D. Tedlock and B. Tedlock 2003 (6, 20).

In reading the character that names the deity in figure 53 as Ek'el B'akab', or "Black Actor," I follow the leads offered by the black color of its profiled head and by the *b'a* prefix, which I take to be the first syllable in B'akab'. Four deities share the name B'akab' (usually rendered as "Bacab" in the literature), one for each direction, and the color black makes the present B'akab' the western one. The patron of merchants otherwise known as God L has strong associations with the west (Taube 1992: 85), and Thompson suggested long ago (1970: 250) that this deity might be a B'akab', at least when he is represented with a black face. As to the staff that God L holds in front of him and the load he carries on his back when he travels, each of the four B'akab' figures pictured in the Dresden Codex (pp. 25a–28a) holds a similar staff and carries a similar load.

For evidence that Mayan terms for two of the four directions can mean "up" and "down" instead of "north" and "south," see V. R. Bricker (1983), whose argument is supported by B. Tedlock (1992a: 173–78). On the Mixtec goddess named 8 Grass, see Furst 1978 (90–91). On the gamekeeper named Sip or 7 Sip, see Thompson 1960 (108). The presence of Nahuatl names for gods in the Venus table was pointed out by Whittaker (1986) and put into an iconographic context by Taube and Bade (1991).

On the role of Venus in the Popol Vuh story that confronts heroes named for the days 1 and 7 Junajpu with villains named for the days 1 and 7 Kame, see D. Tedlock 1996 (37, 206–7). For further evidence of Mayan interpretations of Venus that differ from the Mexican and Dresden accounts, see chapter 31 in this book.

18 Thunderstorm

On the Dresden table dealing with eclipses, see Lounsbury 1978 (789–804), Justeson 1989 (83–85), H. M. Bricker and V. R. Bricker 1983, and Aveni 2001 (173–84); on the Mars almanac, see V. R. Bricker and H. M. Bricker 1986 and Aveni 2001 (196–200).

The three Chaak, or "Thunderstorm," almanacs presented in this chapter are on the Dresden pages traditionally reckoned as 29c–39c in the Mayanist literature, but when the pages are reckoned consecutively from page 1, the actual numbers are 62–72. The translations draw, in part, on the epigraphic work of Schele and Grube (1997: 222–29). On the relationship between the second almanac and the periodicity of Mercury, see V. R. Bricker 1988. The Ch'a Chaak ceremony is described by Redfield and Villa Rojas (1934: 138–43), Thompson (1970: 260–62), and Freidel in Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993 (29–58).

19 Diagrams of the Days

The circular diagram of scores of stones in the Chilam Balam book of Chumayel is illustrated in Roys 1967 (fig. 28). Elsewhere in the Chumayel book are circular diagrams of the sun revolving around the earth (fig. 7), and two diagrams demonstrating the causes of eclipses (figs. 8–9), all of European origin. Also present is a circular map of Yucatán, divided into four equal quarters

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(fig. 27), that was clearly inspired by the medieval European map that divides the world into three continents, with Europe and Africa occupying a quarter-circle each and Asia filling the remaining half-circle. On the turtle inscribed with thirteen Ajaw signs, see Taube 1988.

20 The Alphabet Arrives in the Lowlands

On the early encounters between the Mayans of Yucatán and Spaniards, see V. R. Bricker 1981 (13–21) and Sharer and Traxler 2006 (758–63). For a Mayan account of the arrival of smallpox, see chapter 21 in this book. The story of Hernández de Córdoba's encounter with Mayan fishermen is told by Diego de Landa (Tozzer 1941: 4). On the possibility that Cortés included the Dresden Codex in his first shipment of treasure back to Spain, see Coe 1989b.

For a survey of early European accounts of Mayan writing and books, see Thompson 1972 (3–6). Diego de Landa's account has been edited and translated by Tozzer (1941: 169–70) and Pagden (1975: 124–26). Tozzer (1941: 44–46n219) seems to be the original source of the idea, repeated over and over in the subsequent literature, that Landa's source for information on the Mayan script was Gaspar Antonio Chi, though he admits that Landa never mentions Chi. Ironically, the long footnote in which Tozzer promotes Chi runs below his translation of the passage in which Landa praises Nachi (Juan) Cocom for his knowledge of "native matters" and says that Cocom showed him a book in the Mayan script (see Tozzer 1941: 43–46). The section of the Madrid Codex that deals with deer hunting runs from page 39 through page 49; the page illustrated in this chapter is 42.

The credit for demonstrating that the Mayan signs Landa took to be an alphabet actually stand for syllables belongs to Yuri Knorosov (see Knorosov 1958: 287–89 and Coe 1992: 148). In retelling the story of Landa's misunderstanding of these and other signs, I have been inspired by Linda Schele's oral version, which she often included in her lectures at the Maya Hieroglyphic Workshops at the University of Texas at Austin.

On Landa's Inquisition in Yucatán and its aftermath, see Clendinnen 1987. On the testimony regarding the alleged sacrifice of girls at Sotutá, see Scholes and Adams 1938 (I: 71–129) and Tozzer (1941: 116n533). On the alleged sacrifices of Christian children by Jews in Spain and the nature of testimony taken under torture, see D. Tedlock 1993b.

The story of Andrés de Avendaño and the Itza kingdom at Nojpeten is told by Grant D. Jones (1998).

21 The Books of Chilam Balam

On alphabetically literate choirmasters, or *maestros cantores,* in colonial Yucatán, see Collins 1977. The Chilam Balam books that have been translated into English are those of Chumayel (Roys 1967 and Edmonson 1986); Maní (Craine and Reindorp 1979); Tizimín (Makenson 1951 and Edmonson 1982), part of which had been previously translated by Roys (1954); and Kaua (V. R. Bricker and Miram 2002). Edmonson reorganized the contents of the Chumayel and Tizimín books to conform to a linear chronology. For a Spanish translation based on parallel passages in several Chilam Balam books, see Barrera-Vásquez and Rendón 1948. A magical diagram of the kind that is common in European grimoires appears on page 56 of the Chumayel manuscript. For additional examples of the day signs from the Maní book, see Craine and Reindorp 1979 (92–117).

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In the Chumayel manuscript, the five chronicles that are organized according to scores of stones occupy pages 71–100. The interpretation of the relationship between the "folds" of the scores of stones *(k'atuns)* and the folds in an actual mat, together with the interpretation of the complicated passage that dates the death of Napot Xiu, is mine. For more on Napot Xiu, see Tozzer 1941 (54–55n270). Juan Josef Hoil's note about a hurricane, along with further notes about an epidemic and drought in 1781–82, are on page 81 of the Chumayel manuscript.

For other examples of early alphabetic works by Mayan authors in Yucatán, see the texts and translations in V. R. Bricker 1981 (185–317), the translations in Restall 1998 and Restall, Sousa, and Terraciano 2005, and chapter 24 in the present book.

22 Understanding the Language of Suyua

On the location of a place named Suyua (or a place whose names included Suyua), see D. Tedlock 1993a (12–15, 236–37) and 1996 (45–46, 211–12). Holtun Suyua is mentioned on pages 10 and 77 of the Chumayel manuscript.

23 Song of the Birth of the Twenty Days

For other references to the prophet Napuctun in the Chumayel book, see Roys 1967 (164–65). On the use of sound plays by contemporary K'iche' daykeepers, see B. Tedlock 1982 and 1992a (ch. 5); on the K'iche' burning of offerings at sixty-five-day intervals, see B. Tedlock 1992a (192–95).

24 Conversations with Madness

Full texts and translations of the Ritual of the Bacabs have been published by Roys (1965) and Arzápalo Marín (1987); the latter source includes a concordance. For more on the Milky Way and the Great Rift, see chapters 5, 8, and 16 in the present book. On the day Four Lord, see chapters 3–5 and 12. On the Popol Vuh episodes involving Seven Macaw's eye and the birds at the entrance to the underworld, see D. Tedlock 1996 (80 and 116). On Classic Mayan bloodletting rituals, see chapter 4 in Schele and Miller 1986. For more on the medicinal plants mentioned in the alphabetic manuscripts of Yucatán, see Roys 1976.

25 The Alphabet Arrives in the Highlands

For more on Alvarado's invasion of the Guatemalan highlands, see V. R. Bricker 1981 (29–35), Carmack 1981 (143–47), D. Tedlock 1993a (102–108, 245–46) and 2003 (187–88), and Sharer and Traxler 2006 (763–66). On Alvarado's use of torture, see D. Tedlock 1993b. In previous writings, I have followed others in my interpretation of the name Q'umarka'j, translating it as "Rotten Cane," but a reconsideration of the textual evidence points to "Old Camp" as a more accurate rendition (see D. Tedlock 2003: 301–302).

On the subject of brocade as a medium for *tz'ib'*, "writing" or "design," see Schevill 1985 and B. Tedlock and D. Tedlock 1985. On the Spanish suppression of highland Mayan performing arts, see D. Tedlock 2003 (188–89, 199–201). For the history of the alphabetic version of the Popol Vuh and the identification of the Masters of Ceremonies as its authors, see D. Tedlock 1996 (25–30, 56–57). The role of orators at Mayan wedding banquets is traced back to the Classic

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period in D. Tedlock 2002. For examples of contemporary K'iche' speeches at such banquets, see Sam Colop 1994 (113–137, 205–11) and Ajpacajá Túm 2001.

For a facsimile of the complete Popol Vuh manuscript, see Ximénez 1973; for the first transcription of the K'iche' text, see Brasseur de Bourbourg 1861. See chapters 27–28 of the present book for Popol Vuh episodes in which the characters resemble the figures in Classic vase paintings; for their full story, ranging from the episode involving Seven Macaw to the one in which the twin heroes attempt to revive 7 Junajpu, see parts 2 and 3 of D. Tedlock 1996. When the daykeeper Andrés Xiloj Peruch read through the latter episode with me, he immediately recognized it as the origin story for the veneration of the dead on days named Junajpu (D. Tedlock 1996: 286).

For the Popol Vuh account of the founding and development of the K'iche kingdom, see parts 4 and 5 of D. Tedlock 1996. On the Ch'olan words connected with the pilgrimage of the founders, see pages 45–46 and 297 in the same source; on the Yukatek and Nahuatl words that figure in the pilgrimage of their successors, see pages 51 and 316. Places named Tula or Tulan and the importance of cattails are also discussed in chapters 4, 13, 21, and 22 of the present book. On Aztec and Mixtec pictorial histories, see Boone 2000.

On the divinatory and astronomical aspects of the alphabetic Popol Vuh and its predecessor, see D. Tedlock 1996 (29, 192, 205–9). For the references to divinatory almanacs in the Annals of the Cakchiquels, see the translation of Recinos and Goetz (1953: 48–50), which erroneously states that "calendars" were part of the tribute payments made by the highland visitors to Tulan, and that of Maxwell and Hill (2006: 16, 21), which correctly states that calendars were given to the visitors. See Ximénez 1967 (11) on the divinatory book he collected.

26 A Way to See the Dawn of Life

On the forms of verse in Mayan texts, see the notes to the introduction and these additional sources: Gossen 1974 for Tzotzil; Townsend, Te' Cham, and Po'x Ich' 1980 for Ixil; D. Tedlock 1987, 1998, and 2003 (ch. 4) and Sam Colop 1994 for K'iche'; Maxwell and Hill 2006 (25–45) for Kaqchikel; and Hanks 1989 for Yukatek. On prosimetric texts, see various contributions in Harris and Reichl 1997.

The K'iche' text in this chapter follows the critical edition of the Popol Vuh text published by Sam Colop (1999: 21–26), except for disagreements about a few words. Where the line divisions differ from those in his text, they reflect changes he made in his Spanish translation (2008). My English translation of these passages differs from the version I published in 1996. In addition to changing the lines to match those of Sam Colop, I have revised my wording and phrasing in various ways.

My first step in translating the Popol Vuh was to work through the text with contemporary speakers of K'iche', notably Andrés Xiloj Peruch, a daykeeper and the ceremonial head of his lineage in Momostenango. During our work together, he made the comments I quote in this and the next two chapters, and throughout the notes to my translation.

For the passage in which the gods make their first three attempts to create human beings, see D. Tedlock 1996 (66–73). For more on Western commentators who have misread the authors of the Popol Vuh, treating them as passive recipients of Christian "influence" rather than as active observers of ideological differences, see chapter 11 in D. Tedlock 1983.

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On Juraqan and the word *hurricane,* and on the existence of a hurricane deity with a similar name and similar characteristics in the Caribbean and the Guianas, see Lehman-Nitsche 1924–25 and D. Tedlock 1996 (223–24). On fulgurites, see pp. 224–25 in the latter source.

27 Blood Moon Becomes a Trickster

For the story of the encounter between One and Seven Hunahpu and One and Seven Death, see D. Tedlock 1996 (91–98). On K'iche' and other Mayan practices that relate to dreams and their interpretation, see B. Tedlock 1981 and 1992c. For a general description of "lucid" dreaming, see LaBerge 1985; on lucidity in Native North American dreaming practices, see D. Tedlock 1999b. For the Popol Vuh episode involving a rabbit, see D. Tedlock 1996 (128–29). On the divinatory day names that play key roles in the Dresden eclipse table, see Lounsbury 1978 (796).

The K'iche' text in this chapter follows the critical edition of the Popol Vuh text published by Sam Colop (1999: 67–74).

28 The Death of Death

For the episodes in the story of Hunahpu and Xbalanque that come between the story of their mother and the episode told in this chapter, see D. Tedlock 1996 (104–29). On the names Xulu' and Pak'am, see pp. 130–31 in the same source.

Past interpretations of the vase painting in which the disguised Jun Ajaw is about to decapitate the disguised Yax B'alam have been distorted by an inappropriate application of code-cracking methodology, whose aim is to produce unambiguous transcriptions of texts, to an iconographic problem. Because the ax-wielding figure has characteristics belonging to a Chaak, or "Thunderstorm," deity rather than to Jun Ajaw, and because the figure with jaguar features has an infantile body and a face that are not usually associated with Yax B'alam, they were identified as personages other than Jun Ajaw and Yax B'alam (Schele and Freidel 1990: 408, 411; Taube 1992: 24, caption for fig. 8b). The fact that the painting depicts a dramatic performance in which these two persons are *actors* was ignored, as was the obvious possibility that they might be *impersonating* deities other than themselves.

The K'iche' text in this chapter follows the critical edition of the Popol Vuh text published by Sam Colop (1999: 106–13).

29 The Human Work, the Human Design

For the Popol Vuh passage that comes between the one presented in chapter 28 and the one presented here, see D. Tedlock 1996 (138–47). For the story of the founding and development of the K'iche' kingdom, all the way to the 1550s, see pages 44–56 and 148–98 in the same source and chapter 5 in Carmack 1981. The story of Don Juan Cortés and his journey to Spain is told by Carrasco (1967). On the later history of the Rojas and Cortés lineages, see Carmack 1981 (321, 362).

In addition to the Popol Vuh, another major work by K'iche' authors of the early colonial period is the Title of the Lords of Totonicapán; see Carmack and Mondloch 1983a for the K'iche' text and a Spanish translation; the Chonay and Goetz version (1953) is an English trans-

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lation of a Spanish translation. Texts and translations of other, shorter works have been published by Recinos (1957: chs. 1 and 3), Carmack (1973: 273–345), and Carmack and Mondloch (1983b).

The K'iche' text in this chapter follows the critical edition of the Popol Vuh text published by Sam Colop (1999: 123–25).

30 We Saw It All, Oh My Sons

For a transcription of the text of the Annals of the Kaqchikels that stays close to the manuscript, see Brinton 1885; for a critical edition that modernizes the orthography, emends the text, and adds material omitted by Brinton, see Maxwell and Hill 2006. Recinos and Goetz (1953) improved on Brinton's English translation, but even their translation is much less reliable than the one that accompanies the Maxwell and Hill text. On the history and character of the manuscript itself and the question of authorship, see pp. 13–17 in Maxwell and Hill.

I use Julian dates in this chapter rather than the retrospective Gregorian dates of other chapters, because the Mayan dates in the Annals of the Kaqchikels overlap with the period in which the Julian calendar was in use in Guatemala. On the structure of Aztec annals, see chapter 8 in Boone 2000.

The breakup of the alliance of the K'iche', Kaqchikel, and Rab'inal lords and their nations is described in D. Tedlock 2003 (180–85). On the evidence for a Kaqchikel connection with Copán, see chapter 4 (and the notes to that chapter) in the present book. On the Poqob', or "Pole Dance," see D. Tedlock 2003: 133–35.

See D. Tedlock 1999a and Restall 2003 (108–20) for critiques of the notion that the natives of the New World took Europeans to be gods. From the very start, this notion was largely a product of the European imagination. Over time, it acquired the status of an unexamined European belief, and it still lingers in retellings of early contacts with peoples of color in general.

For the Kaqchikel text of the translated passage about Alvarado's demand for gold, see Brinton 1885 (par. 148) and Maxwell and Hill 2006 (265–66). Texts and translations of other, shorter works by Kaqchikel authors of the early colonial period have been published by Recinos (1957: chs. 4 and 5) and Maxwell and Hill (2006: 581–691).

31 The Count of Days

The K'iche' Codex is known from a full-scale handwritten facsimile made by Karl Berendt, who saw the original manuscript (now missing) in the library of the Museo Nacional de Guatemala in 1877 (see Calendario de los Indios de Guatemala in the bibliography). The resemblance of this document to a Mayan codex was first noted by La Farge (1947: 180–81), who referred to it as the Quiché Codex in his correspondence. B. Tedlock (1999a: 197–204) was the first to call it by that name in print (with the spelling changed to K'iche'), and she showed that the eastern rise of Venus mentioned in one of its almanacs can be dated to the period in which it was written. Edmonson (1997: 113–53) published a transcription of the text and a translation in which he abandoned the original organization of the almanacs, compiling the information they contain in a format of his own design. On the auguries assigned to days by contemporary K'iche' daykeepers, see chapter 5 in B. Tedlock 1992a.

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On references to dancing in Classic inscriptions, see Grube 1992; Stephen Houston (personal communication) is the source of the interpretation of a stairway text at Dos Pilas as referring to a dance-drama. On the changes early missionaries brought to Mesoamerican theater and their attempts to suppress plays dealing with prisoners of war, see D. Tedlock 2003 (ch. 3).

Among all the plays that were scripted during the colonial period, Rabinal Achi is the only one in which all of the dialogue is in a Mayan language, but there is at least one other play that includes a substantial amount of Mayan dialogue. It is known as *Baile de Cortés* in Spanish and *Saqik'oxol* (White Sparkstriker) in K'iche', and it tells the story of the Spanish conquest of Mexico (Edmonson 1997: 3–80). The Spanish characters speak Spanish, and the Indian characters speak K'iche'.

The K'iche' text of the Rabinal (or Rab'inal) Achi dance-drama was first published by Brasseur de Bourbourg (1862), who took it down in dictation but was apparently allowed to look at the manuscript from which it was read to him. The 1913 manuscript, an excerpt from which appears in figure 76 in this chapter, was published in full by Breton in 1994. Contrary to statements made by Breton (1994: 30–37), it was based on Brasseur's printed text (D. Tedlock 2003: 214–20). The only published translations made directly from the K'iche' text of the drama are the French versions of Brasseur (1862) and Breton (1994), together with my own English version (D. Tedlock 2003). My version is the only one that takes into account sound and video recordings of actual performances.

On the crystallization of poetic form in Homeric texts, see Nagy 1996 (108–9, 143, 145). For more on the oral delivery of lines in Rabinal performances, see D. Tedlock 2003 (223–39).

For the story of the first calabash, see D. Tedlock 1996 (97–99); see chapter 28 of the present book for the final episode in the story of the defeat of One and Seven Death.

Epilogue

On Pío Pérez and his work, see Thompson 1962 (29) and Craine and Reindorp 1979 (xv–xvi). The Codex Pérez is the only source for the surviving parts of the Chilam Balam book of Maní, including the examples of divinatory day names in the Mayan script that are illustrated in chapter 21. A copy of the manuscript of the entire codex is in the library of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania. Pérez provided a Spanish translation of an excerpt from this work to John Lloyd Stephens, who published it as an appendix to his *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan* (1843). The complete English translation by Craine and Reindorp (1979) is based on the Spanish translation by Solís Alcalá (1949) rather than the original text.

Some of the letters written during the Cast War of Yucatán, including a long one titled "The Proclamation of Juan de la Cruz," have been published in text and translation by V. R. Bricker (1981: ch. 8, app. A). The contemporary oral recitation from a document at the shrine of X-Cacal is described by Burns (1983: 22–23). He identifies the document in question as a Chilam Balam book, which is not literally true, but as Bricker (1981: 105) has pointed out, it does have the structure of such a book.

For the K'iche' script of the *Baile de Toros,* together with the Spanish script on which it was based and an English translation of the K'iche' version, see Edmonson 1997: 81–112.

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Book-length transcriptions and translations of oral performances in Mayan languages have been published in a prose format for Ch'orti' (Fought 1972), K'iche' (Weisshaar and Hostnig 1995a, 1995b), Tz'utujil (Tz'utujiil Tinaamitaal 1998), Yukatek (Dzul Poot 1985–86; Góngora Pacheco 1993), Itzaj (Hofling 1991), Q'anjob'al (Say 1992; Peñalosa 1995, 1996; Juan 1996), Tojolabal (Aguilar Gómez, Aguilar Méndez, and Méndez Vázquez 2001), and Tzotzil (Laughlin 1977). Another prose collection embraces all three of the languages spoken in the towns around Lake Atitlán: Kaqchikel, Tz'utujil, and K'iche' (Petrich and Ochoa García 2003). A Tzotzil volume published by Laughlin (1980) has some sections in prose and others in verse. Collections that follow a verse format throughout are those of Gossen (1974, 2002) and Past, Okotz, and Ernándes (2005) for Tzotzil; Townsend, Te'c Cham, and Po'x Ich' (1980) for Ixil; and Ajpacajá Túm (2001) and Janssens et al. (2004) for K'iche'. A performance-based format is followed in the Yukatek collection of Burns (1983) and in excerpts from K'iche' discourse published by D. Tedlock (1983: 226–27; 1987). For dialogues from Rabinal plays without scripts, spoken in the Achi dialect of K'iche', see Mace 1970 and 2007, and Hutcheson 2003.

Luis Enrique Sam Colop was the first Guatemalan Mayan author to publish volumes of poetry written in both a Mayan language (K'iche') and Spanish (1978, 1979). The K'iche' texts for the Popol Vuh passages in chapters 26–29 of this book are from his *Popol Wuj: Versión poética k'iche'* (1999), which is now available in his own Spanish translation (2008). Online access to his newspaper column, titled *Ucha'xik* and available at www. prensalibre.com, includes the most recent column and those from the four years previous to that.

For a detailed account of the ongoing Mayan renaissance, see Victor Montejo 2005. His epic poem (Montejo 2001) is accompanied by his own Spanish translation and an English translation by Wallace Kaufman. Gaspar Pedro González published his Q'anjob'al novel in the same volume with his own Spanish version, titled *La otra cara* (1996). Luis de Lión, with a Kaqchikel background, may have been the first Mayan to publish a novel, but he wrote it in Spanish alone. Titled *El tiempo principia in Xibalbá,* it appeared in 1985, a year after he was kidnapped and murdered by the Guatemalan army (his name has turned up in a military diary).

A selection of short prose works by authors writing in Maya (Yukatek), Chontal, Tzotzil, Tzeltal, and Tojolabal has been gathered by Montemayor and Frischmann (2004: chs. 1–10). For examples of the plays written and produced by the Tzotzil collective, see Obra Colectiva 1996, Laughlin 1995, and Montemayor and Frischmann 2007 (ch. 3). Examples of the work of playwrights Espinosa and de la Cruz, accompanied by Spanish and English translations, appear in Montemayor and Frischmann 2007 (chs. 4–5), along with other plays written in Yukatek Maya (chs. 1–2).

Humberto Ak'abal's numerous books of poetry include *Ajyuq'/El animalero* (1990), the source of the poem quoted at the end of the epilogue; selections from five of his books are in *Ajkem tzij/Tejedor de palabras* (1996). The English translations of his poems by Miguel Rivera and Robert Bly (Ak'abal 1999) are based on his Spanish rather than his K'iche' versions. For examples of poems by authors writing in Yukatek Maya and Tzotzil, see Montemayor and Frischmann 2005 (chs. 9–11).

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The hearth is measured. From the east side of Quiriguá Stela C. 54

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Lady of Split Place was born. From the sanctuary of the Temple of the Sixth Sky at Palenque. 70–75

Sun-Eyed Snake Jaguar was taken inside the temple. From the sanctuary of the Temple of the Sun-Eyed Shield at Palenque. 77

Sun-Eyed Lord of the Shield was born. From the sanctuary of Temple of the Sun-Eyed Shield at Palenque. 82–85

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Forty-eight bats. Painting on a drinking vessel from the Alta Verapaz. 114–15

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He cuts his own umbilical cord. From the Dresden Codex. 169–70

The power in the hands of Water Lily Serpent. From the Dresden Codex. 175–81

They put their heads together. From the Dresden Codex. 184–85

Thunderstorm is the burden of Moon Woman. From the Dresden Codex. 188–89

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