

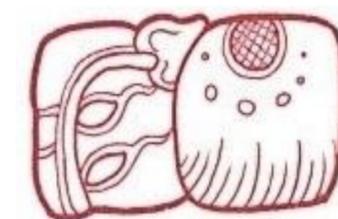
**P a l e n q u e**



**V**



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



**V**

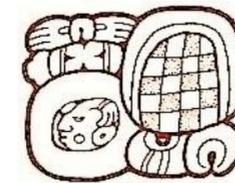
# Palenque Divine Triad



**God.I**



**God.II**



**God.III**

**God.I** reside in the **Temple of the Cross**. Its name remains uncertain, but he was the chief member of the Triad, and like the two others, was born within a close time frame, in the mythical world of **Matwiil**. His shrine is the tallest, and symbolically significant. An aquatic deity, he was associated with the East and the rising of the primordial sea, as well as the celestial deity. His mythic birth took place on **21 October 2360BC**.

**God.II** is **Unen K'awill** or “*infant K'awill*”, the last born of the Triad (God.K), resides in the **Temple of the Foliated Cross**. **K'awill** is God.K, the deity of lightning and rain that links him to **Cha'ak**, God.B and the Central Mexican **Tlaloc**. More specifically however, he is a manifestation of the vegetal world and sprouting life, as well as master of ancestry and royal power (Annex.2). His mythic birth took place on **8 November 2360BC**.

**God.III** is a specific aspect of **K'inich Ajaw**, the Sun deity that resides in the **Temple of the Sun**. It is believed to represent the Warrior Sun, or Dark Sun of the night tied closely to **Xibalba**, the underworld. Its mythic birth is recorded on **25 October 2360BC**. The three births took place within a three weeks time span of each other. They are not recorded together anywhere but in **Palenque** by **Pakal's** son and successor, **K'inich' K'an Balam'** (reigned 684-702), **K'uhul B'aakal Ahau**, “*Sacred Lord of B'aakal*” (*Ahau* is attached to the title of a Lord; the name translate as “*He of the Powerful Voice*”). Miller and Taube pointedly state of the Triad gods that “*It might even be best to consider them triplets for, according to the texts, these gods were all born in 2360BC, over a three week period*” (1993:129-130). We do not know why, the last born **God.II**, is second in the Triad.

What were the purposes of the “gods” in each temple, associated with the Lord of the realm? The answers on the tablets, or panels, in the sanctuaries of each temple, are complementary to each other. The main thrust of the mythological descriptions on the tablets revolve around three powerful dual forces, corner stones to the kingdom's survival: **I**-incontrovertible transmission of power to **K'inich' K'an Balam'** by his ancestors in the **Temple of the Cross**; **II**-pleas to the deities of the dual productive-destructive powers of nature for daily sustenance and survival in the **Temple of the Foliated Cross**; **III**-military power to defend, assert and expand the kingdom's survival in the **Temple of the Sun**.

It is important at this time to establish the significance of the word “*god*”, for no god as defined in modern terminology existed at the time. “*Gods*” will appear during the middle to late Post-Classic. The terminology commonly used is due to both the Spanish calling human figures carved on stone or painted on ceramics as “*dioses*” that literally translate as “*gods*”. The qualifier found in most books is still used by archaeologists of recent times. The adjective is used for convenience, often in parenthesis as it is here, rather than for the actual description of an entity that did not exist in Pre-Classic and Classic times. It may be confusing of course, because actual gods will come on the scene during the Post-Classic.

Before “*gods*” was ancestor worship grounded in the remote past of hunter-gatherers. The Pre-Classic and Classic Maya phases, with deification of nature at large and that of their communal leaders in peace, war and beliefs, pre-dated the arrival of gods born in central and western Mexico during the Post-Classic; these gods migrated to the Yucatán peninsula, probably with the Toltecs.

The Triad “*gods*” were “numbered” **I** to **III** by archaeologist Henrich Berlin, who identified them as “*gods*” in 1963, and numbered them for lack of recorded references of their names in the glyph corpus. All three are found individually in other Maya cities, but only at **Palenque** do they appear together as the **Triad** patron deities of the city.

# Map of the Cross Group Complex

Edwin L. Barnhart PhD, PMP-Palenque Mapping Project, 2000:12

The three temples of the **Triad** in the **Cross Group** are built on mounds, relatively close to each other, East of the **Otolum** river-canal, set in a triangular pattern.

The **Temple of the Cross** is at the apex of the triangle, and faces the source of the Otolum, followed, in clockwise fashion, by the **Temple of the Foliated Cross** and the **Temple of the Sun**.

The order of precedence of each temple underline their complementary function within the group's complex, as conceived by **Pakal's** eldest son and successor, **K'inich Kan B'ahlam.II** (Annex.1).

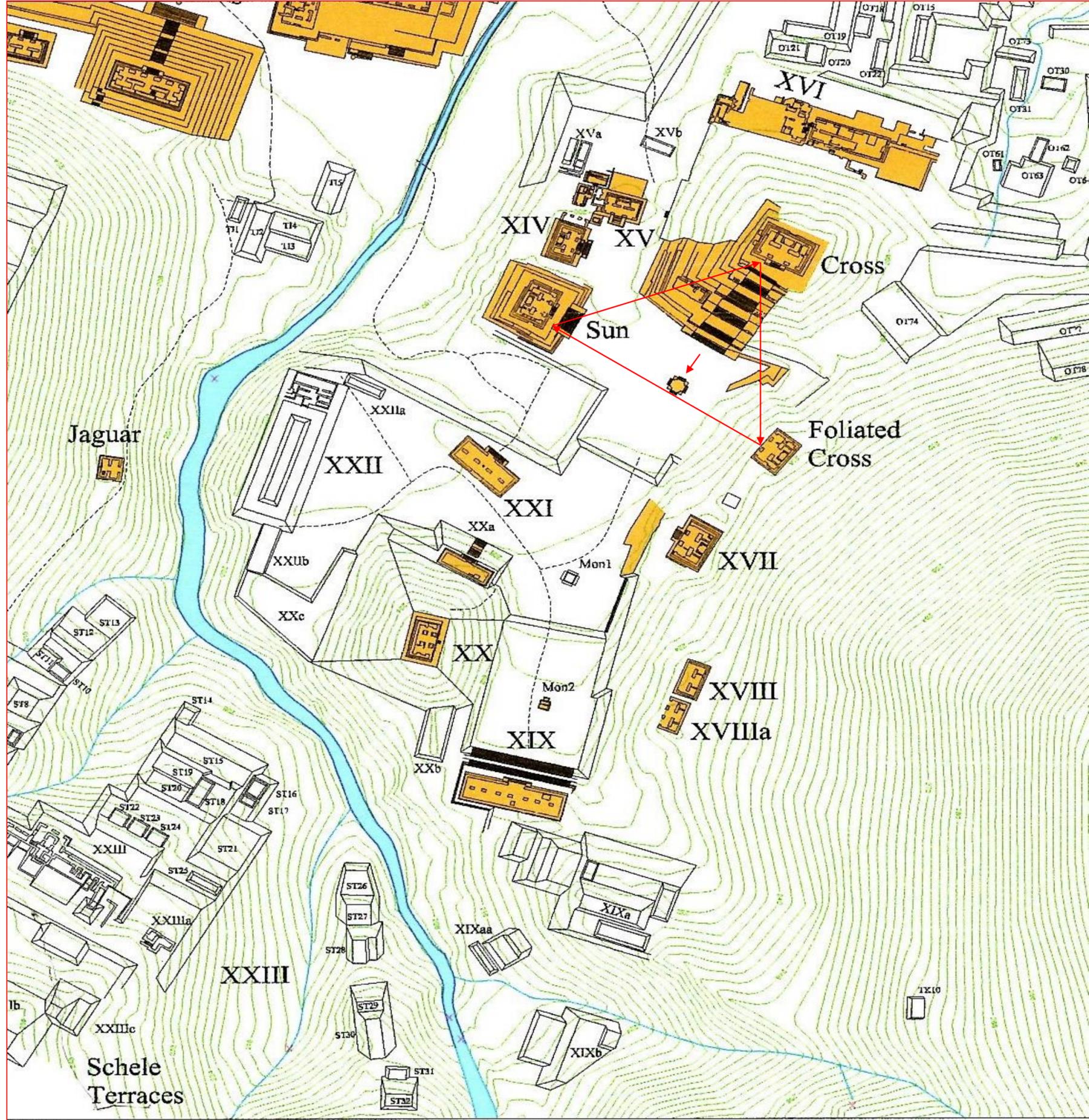
The triangular arrangement of the Cross Group is no coincidence, as are all symbolic representations of cultures. The births of the gods, within a few days from each other, is no less significant as a religious triad. The date of the current Creation era most often found in the ancient Maya record is August 13, 3114BC, the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> *Ba'ktun* (13.0.0.0.4 – 4-Ajaw, 8-Kumk'u) – *Ba'ktun* refers to the 400 years cycle.

“The three temples not only record the events that culminated in the Creation of the world, but they replicate these event in their arrangement, their imagery, and their ritual function. Inside two of these temples are exquisitely carved visions of the World Tree that centered the cosmos at the moment of Creation” (Freidel, Shele, Parker, 1993:145).

The Cross Group indicate, as for the Aztecs, rituals for the renewal of collective and home fires. The fire that started the 4<sup>th</sup> Creation, was set by **Itzamna** the paramount god, at the beginning of time.

**Itzamna** set the three sacred stones in the heavens in the **Orion Constellation** and the fire burning in the center of the stars' triangle, the **Orion Nebula Cluster** (M42) – (Annex.5), represented by the small radial pyramid at the center of the **Cross Group** plaza.

The author is grateful to Dr. Edwin L. Barnhart permission to use his research in support of this project – see Annex.1 in Palenque.I.



## Cross Group Palenque Chiapas, Mexico

**Legend**

consolidated architecture	perennial	 0 10 20 30 40 50 Meters Contour Interval of Two Meters
unexcavated architecture	seasonal	
modern architecture	cascades	
road	springs	
footpath		

**Palenque, the Cross Group.** Left > Right: **Temple of the Cross, Temple of the Foliated Cross** and back of the **Temple of the Sun.**

The **Yemal K'uk Lakam Witz** – *Great Mountain of the Descending Quetzal*, today called *El Mirador* hill, towers over the group in the background.

The Temples are homes to each of the gods of **Palenque's Divine Triad**. **Lakam-Ha'**, as it was called in the past, means **Big Rivers** in Yucatec in reference to the numerous streams coming down the mountain's slopes. However, it most probably is a reference to the Primordial Sea that covered the world before the Creation, witness the abundance of sea fossils found in the limestone of local mountains.



The three temples not only record the events that culminated in the creation of the world, but “*they replicate these events in their arrangement, their imagery and their ritual functions. Inside two of the temples are exquisitely carved visions of the World Tree that centered the cosmos at the time of Creation*” (Shele, 1993:145). Other triadic groups of deities appear in the record at other Maya kingdoms, such as at Tikal and Naranjo, but the individual members vary from place to place. In all cases “*together they represent a tri-partite conception of the world space and royal power*” (Stuart, 2008:194).

In two of the triadic temple, the ***Tree of Life*** is central to the theme of the power of ancestral inheritance and that of nature; the third is dedicated to the proof of the ascendants’ legacy to the elected Lord, and its heaven given right to wage war. L>R **Temple of the Sun, Temple XIV and Group.V**; the **Temple of the Inscriptions** and the **Palace** with its tower, are in the background.





The **Tree of Life** in **Maya** mythology, the sacred *wakah chan*, is the **Ceiba** (*Ceiba pentandra*), the **Yaxchè**. It is believed that the tree's roots sink deep into the underworld, while its branches are ladders to the heavens; the tree is perceived literally, as a Pillar of the Sky.

Trees and the vegetal world, are perceived as life forms and proof of immortality. Their sap is the blood of life that draws its power from deep in the heart of the earth. Each season, the cycle of life repeat itself, a witness to the unending cycle of life and death.

The depiction of the **Tree of Life** is found in many cultures of the Old and New Worlds. As a rule they are large long life trees representative of local flora, such as the **Baobab** in Africa, the **Oak** in Europe or the **Sequoia** in North America, among others. The **Olive Tree** and its fruits are central to cultures of the Mediterranean basin, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Persia, Greece and Rome for its longevity and provider of food and medicine, a witness to the power of life. Other trees and plants grown for daily sustenance, medication and rituals, were essentials in the pantheon of many beliefs and religions.

Worship of the vegetal or plant world, and of trees in particular, rest on the irrevocable proof of life's perpetuity and eternal return. Great trees, under various descriptions and types in belief systems, are perceived to stand the test of time far better than lives in the animal world. Except for the snake, that is as prevalent a symbol as the tree in prehistoric and historic beliefs record.

It is in fact, the sap of trees and plants the ancient Mayas called the **Itz** that is venerated. Migration of elemental beliefs from the Eurasian continent to the Americas need not here be stressed further for their great antiquity, given similar symbols in belief systems in Old and New World cultures. It does not mean however, that actual contact took place through time, but underline the fact that human perception of their environment and deification of nature and the heavens, is universal through time and space.

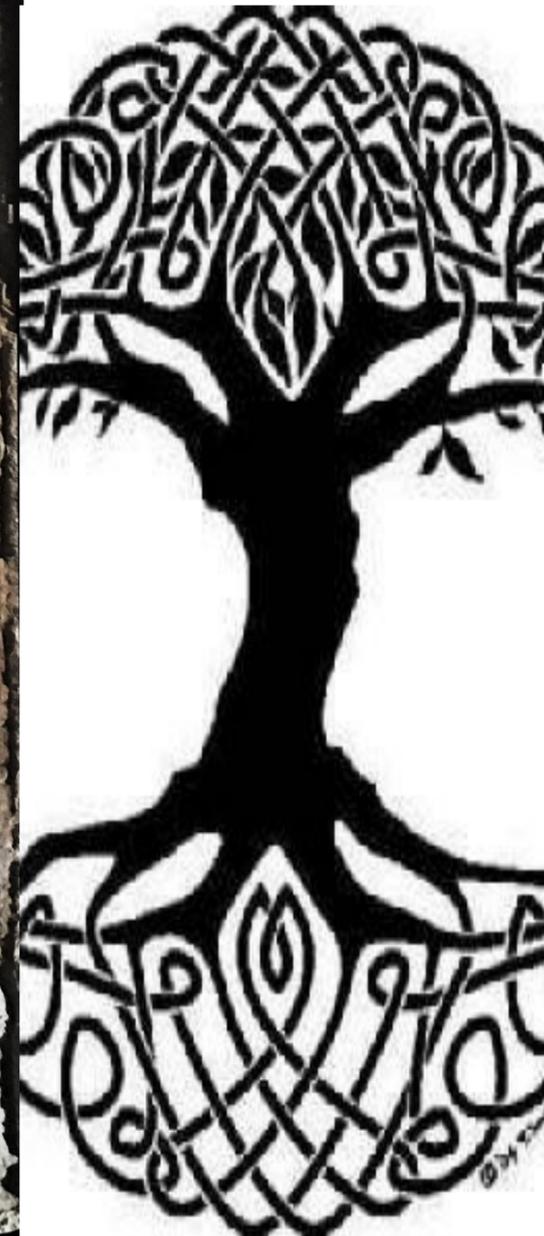
The tree's omni-presence in worldwide beliefs, pre-historic and historic, is not grounded in particular beliefs, because its powerful symbolic significance, transcends culture (Annex.6).

**Itz**, the **Cosmic Sap**, is essential in understanding the core belief and **Maya** concept of what we call the “soul” of animate and inanimate worldly manifestations. **Itz** is omni-present in all life forms, from the blood of mammals or any other life form on the land, in the air or water; it is the everlasting companion of the green sap of the vegetal world. The commonality lies in the fact that no life forms, whatever its aspect, can live without it. Given its central importance in life, **itz** permeates all symbols and rituals, because it is perceived as the very essence of life itself. **Itz** is a universal aspect called by many names in other parts of the world, but its perception as central to life is likewise universal (Annex.6).

For humans, **Itz** is believed to carry the essence of **chu’lel**, or **chul** in Yucatec, the soul. The shedding of blood through human sacrifice and bloodletting auto sacrifice is the price paid to carry **itz**, mixed into the blood of the supplicant, to the deities, “gods” and ancestors in the *Otherworld*. **Lintel.2** from **La Pasadita** in Guatemala’s Peten shows **Bird Jaguar** of **Yaxchilán** bloodletting, shedding his blood/**chu’lel** from his wrists on dry bark paper in the square basket at his feet. The bark paper, together with *pom*, or copal nodules, mixed with flower petals will then be burned, the smoke of the fire believed to carry the pleas and demands for assistance from the deities and ancestors in the *Otherworld*. A similar bloodletting ceremony by **Lady Xoc**, in the presence of her husband, **King Shield Jaguar** is shown on Lintel.24 at **Yaxchilan** (Annex.3).

For the Maya of the Classic period (250-950), and before, what was spilled was not blood as such but the carrier of the **itz** substance, the actual essence of the “**Tree of Life**”. The word “tree” in this context is to be understood as a metaphor.

Photo: Lintel.2, Limestone, Late Classic 766AD from La Pasadita, Peten, Guatemala, Plate.76 in *Blood of Kings*, 1986:208, Rijksmuseum voor Volkerkunde, Leiden, Holland  
 Drawing: Ian Graham, Lintel.2 detailed above, Plate.76 in *Blood of Kings*, 1986:196 – Modern Representation of the Tree of Life (middle).



## The Tree on Pakal's Sarcophagus' Lid

<< L – Brundage and Meinke 1981, Lid “minus” Pakal  
Unaltered Sarcophagus' Lid – R >>

**Pakal** sarcophagus' lid was detailed in Palenque. II. It is of interest, for the purpose of the meaning of the *Tree of Life* engraved on the sarcophagus' lid to revisit the previous description. Let's therefore focus on the tree, central in the depiction, removing Pakal's figure, for better understanding (left).

The lid is oriented North-South; South is at the top of the lid, where **Pakal's** head lies in the sarcophagus below. South is “associated with the concept of the nadir and the Sun at midnight” (Milbrath, 1999:15).

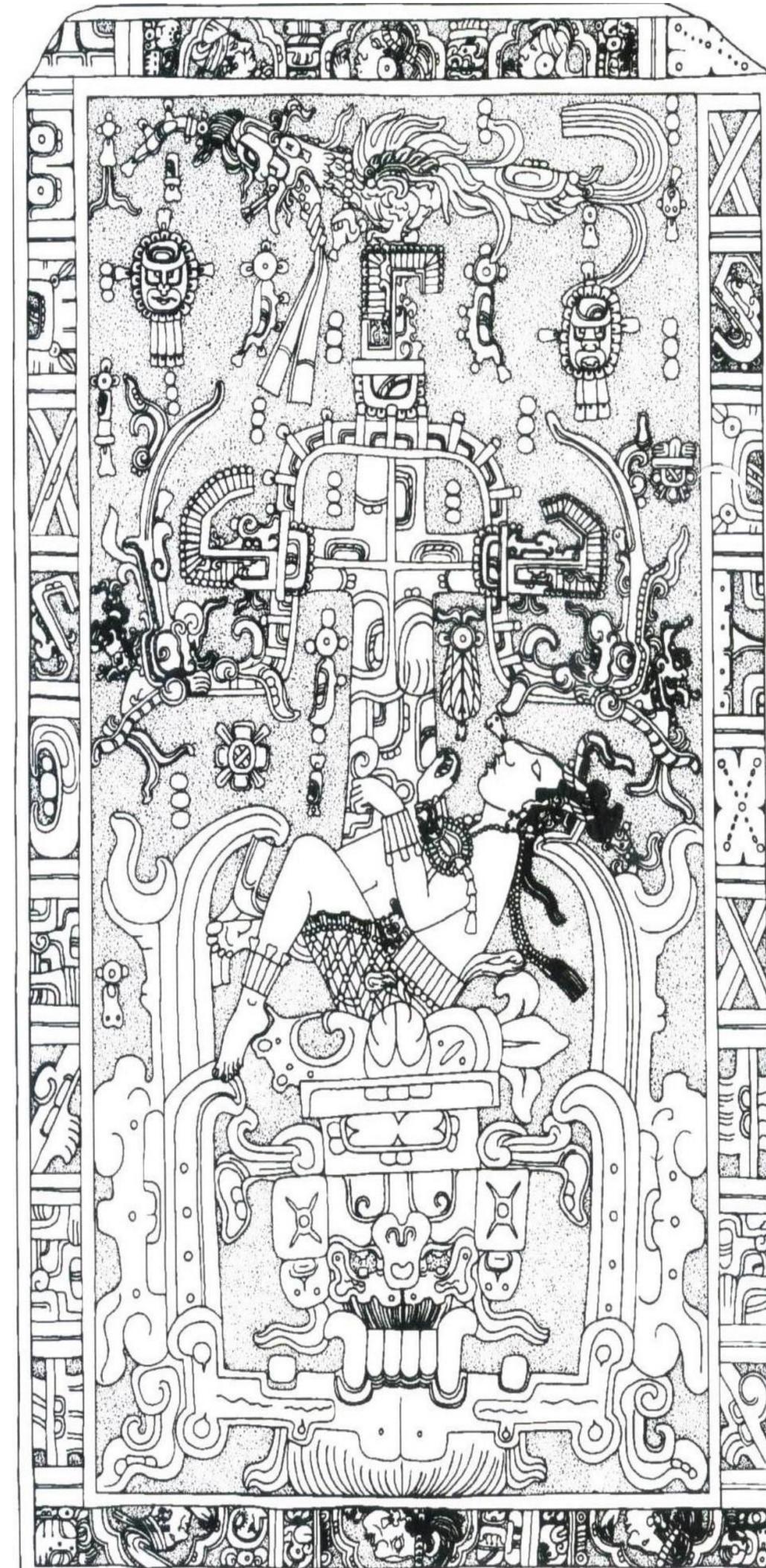
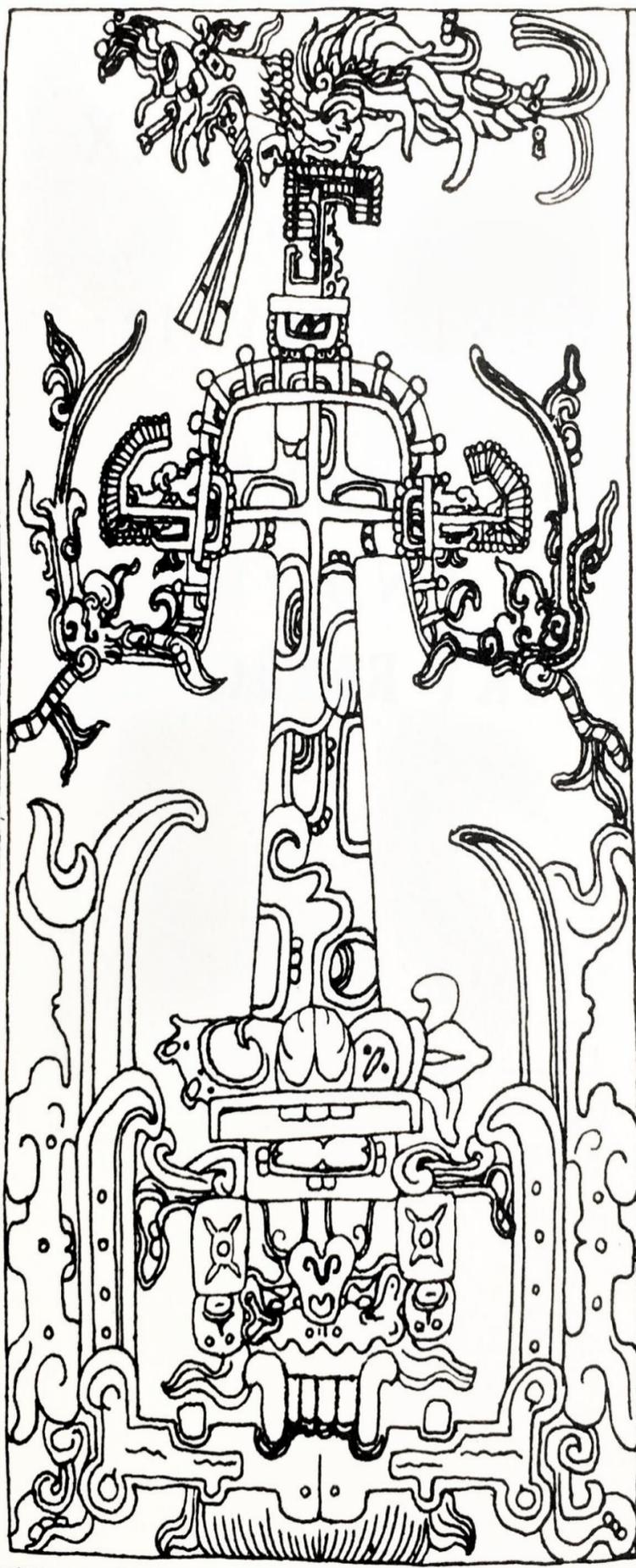
From its nadir, the Sun will rise again in its endless cycle through light and darkness. South is associated with the color yellow and that of the yellow maize (corn), one of the four traditional colors of Maya mythology.

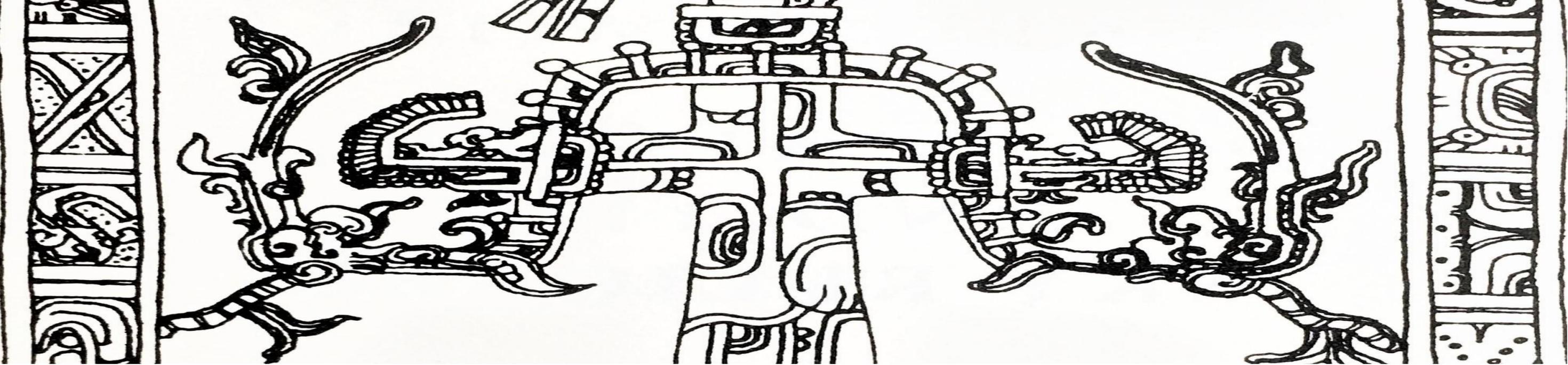
**Pakal** is “heading” South toward the center of the **K'an Cross**, a common symbol of the **Milky Way's** ecliptic, identified by the double-headed serpent straddling as a wave, the horizontal East-West arm of the cross.

*The cross in the sky formed by the Milky Way and the ecliptic stretches out in all four directions. The place where they meet is the center of the universe... The Maya Milky Way is the path to the Otherworld* (Edwin L. Barnhart, 2003:7).

The author's opinion (in Palenque. II), is that **Pakal** is not “falling” down to **Xibalba**, the **Underworld**, he is rising up from it toward eternal life and the **Otherworld**.

The head of the lid points South not West the path to **Xibalba**, the road of all mortals. A god to be does not follow that road.





**Pakal Sarcophagus Lid** – The serpent like celestial band, weaves over the cross with maws wide open at both ends, and a **K'awiil** figure emerging from each side. The trunk of the tree is associated with the celestial **Tree of Life**, portal of the *Otherworld*. It is the Milky Way's ecliptic that in the tropics crosses directly overhead and occupies the zenith position in the sky; the celestial counter part of the great sacred tree.

In the **Temple of the Inscriptions'** crypt there are ancestors and deities of the earth but no "god" representation on the sarcophagus, the lid or the walls. The lid carved motifs refer to the earth, the vegetal kingdom or plant world and **Pakal** himself. The Earth Monster or dragon, is shown at the base of the **Wakah Chan** the "sacred tree precious", but again, it is not a god.





**Plethora of Deities and Ancestors** – Ceramic Effigy Censer, Maya Late Classic. Representation of the Jaguar God of the Underworld standing in the background. On his face are the attribute of the Sun, as the band around the eyes twisted between the eyebrows show. The bottom figure seems to be that of the Young Sun emerging from the darkness, witness the head of a bat cave, but could also be that of an ancestor.

Comitán, *Museo Regional de Chiapas*, Tuxtla Gutierrez  
Photo, Raul Velasquez in *Maya*, 1998:617/F.390

God as the name is commonly understood, did not exist before the Post-Classic (1200-1521). From the Pre-Classic and before to the end of the Classic period (900-1100), there were no gods, but a plethora of deities.

It is therefore rather confusing when studying the Classic period since all sacred deities had different names and each multiple attributes that changed through time and gender. For the Maya, then and now, there are no static deities or beings, all is subject to movement and change.

As Mercedes de la Garza pertinently points out, *“Deities or “gods” may be at the same time, celestial and terrestrial, benevolent and malevolent. They may be patron of the energy of life and that of death. They can also span the four corners of the universe and be one and several at the same time, that is pluralize themselves into four or more numbers. In Yucatán “god” Oxlahuntiku “Thirteen Deity” is also Bolontiku, “Nine Deity” of the underworld”*

*“This result in highly diverse visual representations of each one of the “gods” or deities which, pooled with the different artistic styles of each region, makes the study of Maya “gods” quite difficult”* (1998:235).

Nevertheless, in spite of their numbers, deities may be identified through constant symbolic elements, evident in all regions of the Maya area and all periods.

Representations of *“gods”* and deities on stone or painted on ceramics, are not always what they seem to be. For the Pre-Classic and Classic phases, even though there are depiction of deities, ancestors are more often shown than personified deities.



**The Milky Way** over **Tongaki Moais** with the Large and Small Magellanic Clouds.

**Rapa Nui**, Easter Island

Photo, Wally Pacholka @astropics.com

The conception of the **Milky Way** in ancient thought and its celestial association with the **Wakah Chan**, the **Tree of Life**, is undeniable. This perception by the Mayas and other cultures of the Americas, is in fact recognized as an extension of the terrestrial world tree in the heavens.

Historically, the search for symbolisms attached to the Milky Way, the Sun, Moon, the Pleiades, stars and planets are, together with the “*gods*” or deities of rain, water and the vegetable/plant world, found in cultures far back in time, everywhere in the world.

As noted above, there were no “*gods*” during the Maya Pre-Classic and Classic times. Why then for most cultures, such a “need” to link the world at large with something higher than themselves? The answer is fear. The fear of being at the whim of a nature people could not possibly understand, that was perceived as hostile. So they created metaphors, i.e. deities believed to control those unseen and enigmatic forces to help damper their anxiety to feed and survive another day. Fear of the uncontrollable forces of nature was magnified further in the dark of night.

Such an anxiety drove people to assign powers to nature and the world around and above to make sense of them in human terms, and set a clear boundary between nature and culture; that is between an untamed world and the human world for survival.

Ancient minds created deities to come to terms with the observable repetition of seasons and cycles of celestial bodies, essentials to the predictability of the food supply. Predictability relieves fear, since observation of natural events was not about their repetition, but about their eventual irregularity that may then translate into the return of fear.

*“The role of astronomy in agriculture, politics and religion exemplifies the Maya penchant for interweaving nature, human society and the divine. The night sky, with its infinite population of souls, gods and monsters, expressed the bonds between earth and the many levels of the cosmos”* (Edwin L. Barnhart, Christopher Powell and Carol Karasik, 2005:1)



Gods and Ancestors believed to be on the other side of life, were contacted through ceremonies, penance and rituals, culminating in crossing the portal of time. The portal shown above is at **Chicannà**, (600-800), Rio Bec area, Yucatàn. **Structure.II**, represent a mythological gateway, similar to that of many world cultures. It is understood as a transition between two perceived worlds, integral to the architecture of beliefs. When one steps through a portal, with corresponding ritual, penance and invocation to the gods and deities, it is one's *ch'ulel* or soul that steps into another aspect of life. Passing through the portal must not to be mistaken with death, for that it is not, but to an intangible world. Hence the representation above of the **Earth Monster's** maw or dragon, as the gateway to another side of spiritual life, as the threshold to the *Otherworld*.

*Ch'ulel*, as seen in Palenque.4, is eternal, and applies to humans only. For the **Zinacantecos** *ch'ulel* has the same roots as *ch'ul* or *k'ul*, a word used by ancient Maya scribes to describe "holiness" and "divinity". The second type of soul according to the **Tzotzil** Maya is called *chanul*, derived from the word for animal. This perception may also be related to the word *kanul* that means, in some **Yucatec** Maya communities of Quintana Roo, human alter ego, the "*supernatural guardian*" or "*protector*", from the animal world (in Palenque.IV).

The structure of the mythologies in **Mesoamerica** are no different than those from other parts of the world. The whirlwind of deities, “*gods*”, mythic life forms and ancestors are grounded in their history that change and adapt to meet community socio-economic, technological and scientific development, and concurrent challenges through time. Ultimately the function of beliefs, religions and their cohort of rituals, invocations and prayers, rest on the anxiety of tomorrow, whether it be the following day or the last before eternity.

**Palenque**, as were other great Maya cities, was home to a highly developed community that left in stone, stucco and ceramics, the legacy of beliefs of their origin in a long lost past, that show an unbreakable link with ancestors, and the mythic figures of the *Underworld*. The perceived interface between two worlds, visible and invisible and of a portal to life beyond life, were then central to the apprehension of their world, as it still is today in most traditional Maya communities. So let’s now visit the three **Palenque** portals.



**Daniel Montuy Ponce** (1925-2005), Maya mythology (1994 partial mural above). The mural may be seen at the Fiesta Inn Cencali in Villahermosa, Edo. Tabasco, Mexico.

**Palenque - Lakamha'** – The power center of the city is a secular-religious architectural complex, with the **Cross Group** and its three temples set in a triangular pattern, the seat of the city's **Divine Triad**: the **Temple of the Cross**, the **Temple of the Foliated Cross** and the **Temple of the Sun** (background, left>right); the **Palace** (foreground) and the **Temple of the Inscriptions**, (right), are in close proximity to the Group.  
Photo credit George Steinmetz / Corbis in *Fideicomiso Historia de las Americas, Palenque-Lakamha'*, 2012





**God.I**



**Temple of the Cross**



The **Temple of the Cross** entrance (L) faces South and the water source of the **Otolum** river, while the **Temple of the Foliated Cross** (R) opens toward the West, while the **Temple of the Sun** faces East. The low square platform (center), with four sets of stairs, is the focal point of the **Cross Group** complex. The so called “panels” aka tablets, are three large engraved limestone slabs, standing upright, found in each of the *pib na’ah* or sanctuary of each of the three temples. Their inscriptions relate and re-affirm the history and ancestry of **Palenque’s** Lords, and their close connection with the “*gods*” of the **Divine Triad**.

The “*gods*” of the **Triad** are individually significant in the mythology of creation. They were also believed to be the forebears of the **Palenque** Lords themselves, underlined by the references made to ancestors of the kingship line on the temple panels (Annex.7, 8 & 9). The three engraved limestone slabs are set side by side, on the back wall of each sanctuary, the *pib na’ah*. The temples were however, compelling statements about the ideology of **Maya** kingship, all centered on **Pakal’s** son and inheritor, **K’inich Kan B’ahlam’.**II and the deified acknowledgement of his royal legitimacy. Beyond ancestral history that anchored the ancient city descendants’ rights to rule, the **Cross Group** temples are powerful symbols of the abode of “*gods*” and ancestors associated with cosmic space and movement, on earth and in the heavens.





The **Milky Way** is oriented in a north-south direction and also forms a cross with the elliptical path of the Sun, called the **K'an Cross**, and correlate to a well known symbol in Classic Maya iconography and writing (Freidel et al., 1993:94, and Brundage, 1981 in Barnhart, 2003).

The **Maya** Creation story on the tablets of the **Temple of the Cross** is best told by Linda Shele, that explains the symbolism attached to the **Cross Group** complex and the heavens at night. *"Today the heart of heaven would be the North Star, Polaris, but in Maya times, the north pivot of the sky fell in a dark area. This black void was the heart of heaven. The "turning" motion described is the movement of the constellations around it. The standing up of the axis mundi not only lifted the sky from its lying-down form position on the earth but it imparted motion to the star fields. This motion was the beginning of time and space, for it is through the movement of the stars, the Milky Way, and the planets that we humans calculate the passage of time" ... "First Father, "One-Maize-Revealed" had raised the Wakah-Chan, the World Tree so that its crown stood in the north sky. And finally, he had given circular motion to the sky, setting the constellations into their dance through the night"* (1993:74-75).

As in other ancient Maya cities such as **Copàn**, **Tikal** and **Uaxactun**, the **Wakah-Chan** or *Tree of Life* is a theme central to the iconography and narratives of two worlds. It is explicit in **Palenque** on the panels of the **pib na'ah**, the sanctuaries in the temples of **Cross Group** complex, as well on the lid of **Pakal** sarcophagus in the **Temple of the Inscriptions**. The celestial *pib na'ah* is believed to be the "home" of the Maya, located within the **Orion Constellation** (Annex.5).

The centrality of the **Tree of Life** and the *K'an Cross* in the heavens, is representative of a constant interaction between two worlds, that is between life and death, at the root of the belief in the eternal return.

(Photo courtesy Attila Kun @[exposureguide.com](https://www.exposureguide.com))

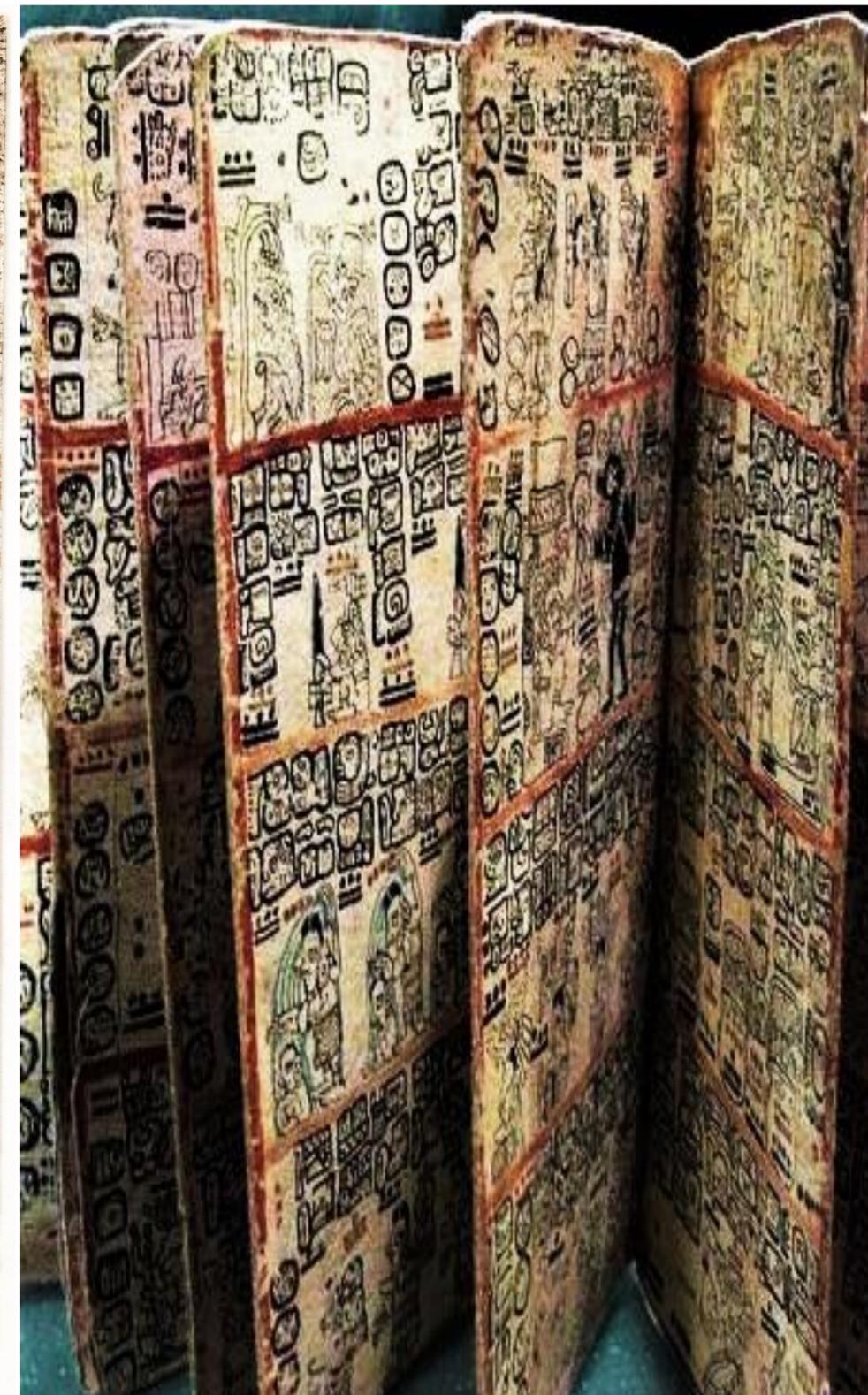
The **Temple of the Cross** is the “anchor” of the **Cross Group**, not only because it houses “god” **G.I** but because it is the pillar that plainly describes the chain of inheritance of power from mythic times through the course of history. The panel in its sanctuary establishes the line of descent from the earliest ascendants of the dynasty to the time of **K’inich Kan B’ahlam’.**II. The two other temples of the Group would have no significance without setting up the fundamental reasons for the existence of the **Triad** complex.

The Group was perceived as the home of the three “gods” that together, were the forces that harnessed, through periodic rituals and sacrifices, their benevolence and that of ancestors, for the survival of the community. The location of the Group, close to the source of the **Otolum** river, was not casual nor merely practical, but central and complementary to the mythological significance of the **Triad** complex.



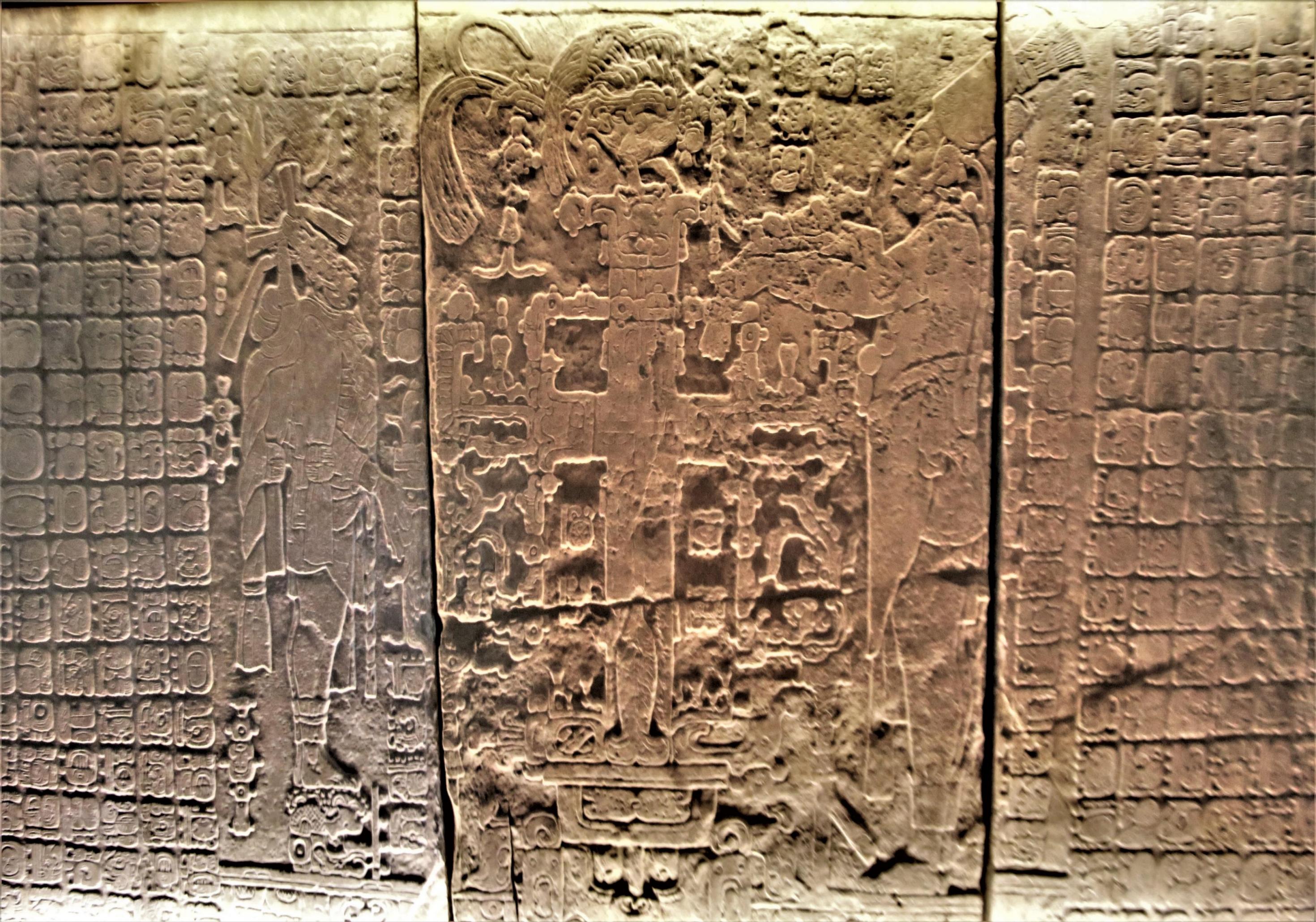
In each temple, in a room at the back of the sanctuary is built a *pib na'ah*. Each structure is similar in size and shape in the three temples. Furthermore, their other commonality is a panel made up of three large vertical limestone slabs set at the sanctuaries' back, their *inner sanctum*. Each section of the triple panels, also referred to as "tablets", is elaborately shaped and engraved, and describe the specific aspects related to the purpose of each sanctuary. They seemed to be identical but they are not; they describe themes particular to each temple and its related mythical history. The panels are similar in concept to painted traditional Maya codices (aka codex), or folding books and like codices, carry the message or story specific to each one of the gods and significance of each temple.

The "paper" of codices was made from the inner bark of trees, such as the fig tree (*Ficus glabrata*). The most common name for this type of paper was called *huun* in Maya and *amate* in Nahuatl. The bark paper strips were soft and pliant following their wet process; they then were dried and cut in equal width and length; and later covered on both sides, with a fine white coat of lime gesso. The strips were then folded carefully of equal width; the total length of the codex was subject to specific needs. Each fold created two pages on opposite sides of the document. Once folded complex scenes and glyphs were drawn and painted on each side, recording rituals, deities, calendars, mythology, flora, fauna, celestial events, trade and other events in the lives of communities.

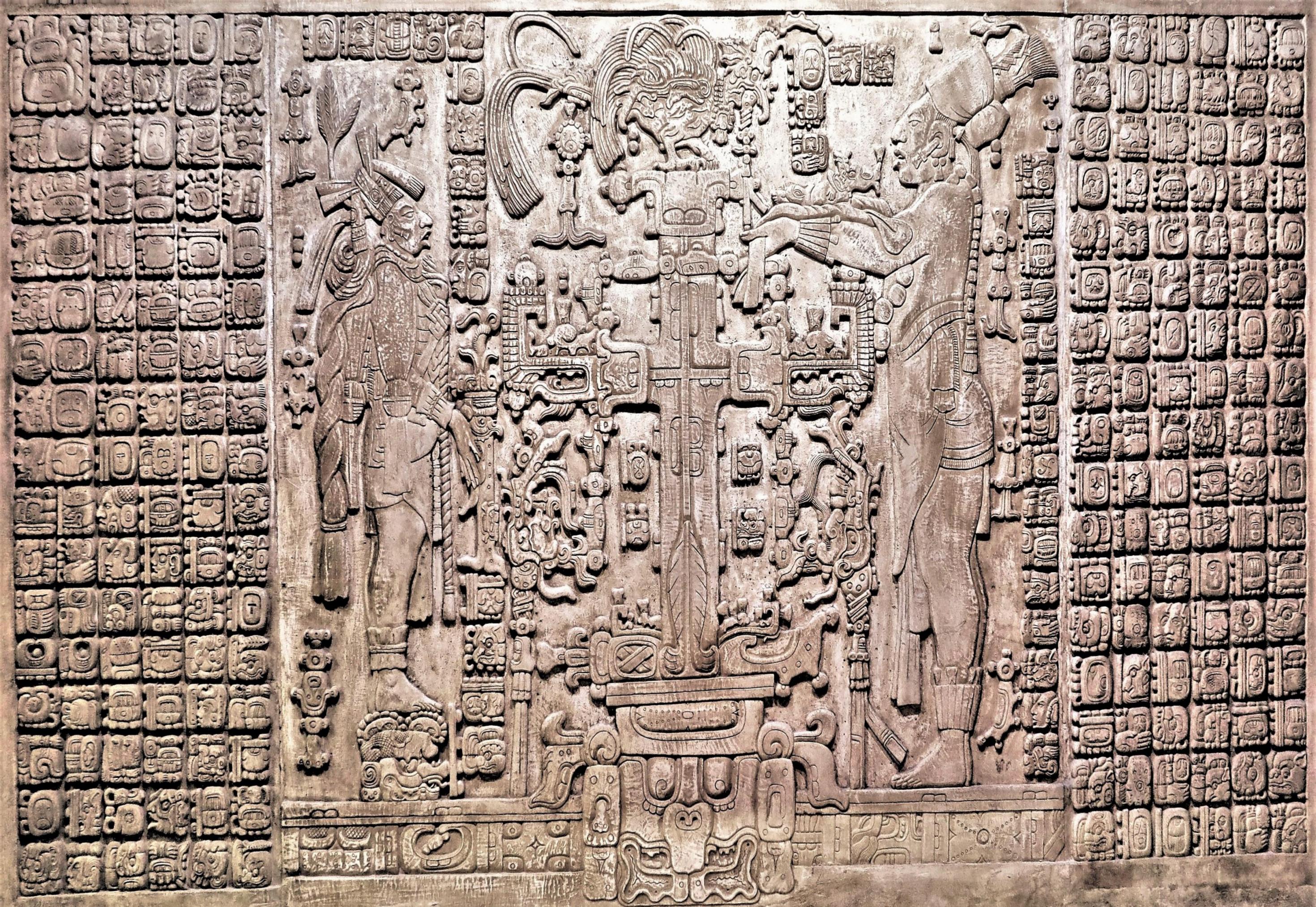


The **Temple of the Cross *pib na'ah***, like the ones in the other two temples, was built as a permanent portal, that could be opened when necessary by ritual. They were the *inner sanctum*, portals to the *Otherworld* also called *kunil* or "*bewitching place*". These little "houses" were where *Itz* materialized that allowed human sacrificial offerings through bloodletting, to be exchanged with the cosmic sap, the *Itz* of the vegetable kingdom or plant world. Their elaborate iconography, now much ruined, "*are marked by the Great Cosmic Bird, Itzam Yeh hovering above their entrance*" (Freidel, 1993:222), that is also found on the *pib' na'ah* panel in the **Temple of the Foliated Cross**, and at the head of the lid, on **Pakal's sarcophagus**.





Temple of the Cross original panel at the MNA-Museo Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico, DF



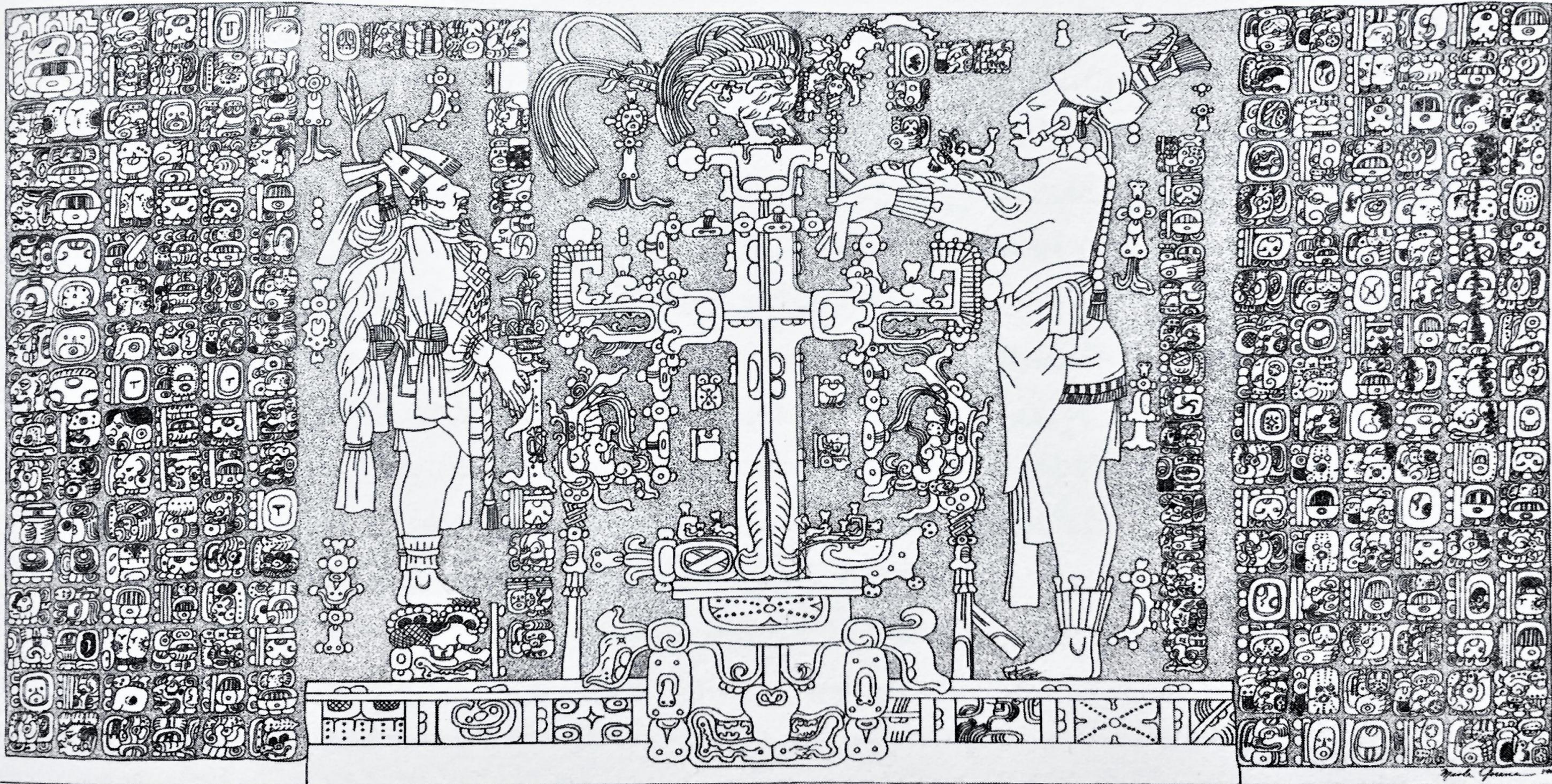
Temple of the Cross – Sanctuary panel reproduction, by Octavio Sanchez Torres – Annex.15, in cooperation with Merle Greene Robertson, 1970s – Annex.14

The sanctuary panel copious iconography in the **Temple of the Cross** is similar to that of **Pakal's** lid on his sarcophagus in the **Temple of the Inscriptions**.

The central motif, at both locations, is the **Waka-Chan**, the **Tree of Life**, the “solar re-birth and ancestral authority of rulership” (Stuart, 2008:194). It also is perceived as the *axis mundi* at the center of the world. The qualifier “*Tree of Life*” is meant for all life: mineral, land and water borne life, as well as those of the plants and animal worlds. For the later it is purported to carry the **Itz**, the Cosmic blood of humans, animals and the sap of plant life.

**K'inich Kan Bahlam** is shown, as on the other two tablets of the **Cross Group**, at the time of his crowning (right). He will assume the throne, at the age of 48, in a ceremony in **House.E** of the Palace, on January 6, 684. He built the three temples to the gods of sustenance of the realm but specifically for “*his own deified authority...the temples are dedicated respectively to ancestors, agriculture and warfare*” (Stuart,2008:194). Placed on the East side of the tablet, where the Sun rises, he holds a figure emblematic of dynastic power, one of **G.II** an aspect of **K'awiil** (Annex.2).

At left is his father **K'inich Janahab' Pakal**, witness to the accession to lordship of his eldest son, with the same mortuary dress shown on the other two temple panels. “*From his right hand he holds the Celestial Nocturnal Dragon, from which blood pours out, an allusion to bloodletting. He stands on a symbol of the “Otherworld” where he now reside*” (M. de la Garza, G. Bernal R., M. Cuevas. G. 2012:154-155). Placed on the West side of the tablet, it clearly indicates its filiation with the *Otherworld*. The glyph tablets on each side of the panel, are detailed in Annex.8. Original Drawing from Merle Green Robertson in David & George Stuart, 2008:197/F63



**Temple of the Cross** – The Sanctuary Door Jamb Panels show **K'inich Kan B'ahlam** at Left (West) and **God.L** at Right (East).

The **Palenque** Lord position personify the legendary **U Kokan Kan**, the transition between the mythic era and historic time. He wears an elaborate garment representative of his high status, holding in his right hand the head of the **Celestial Nocturnal Dragon** or **Cuadripartite Monster**, from which cascade a torrent of water. On his belt hung a glyph chain with the **yax** (water) glyph tied up to the god **yopat** standing behind the Lord, facing away from him. Note the *quincunx* or *cuadripartite* glyph, the **Ol** on **yopat** upper shoulder with the left arm of the deity through its center. "*Ol was the word for "in the center of" and "heart", but not in the sense of an organ but as in "heart of something"* (Freidel, 1993:215). Its headdress shows a **K'awiil** and a heron with a fish in its beak, typical symbol of power.

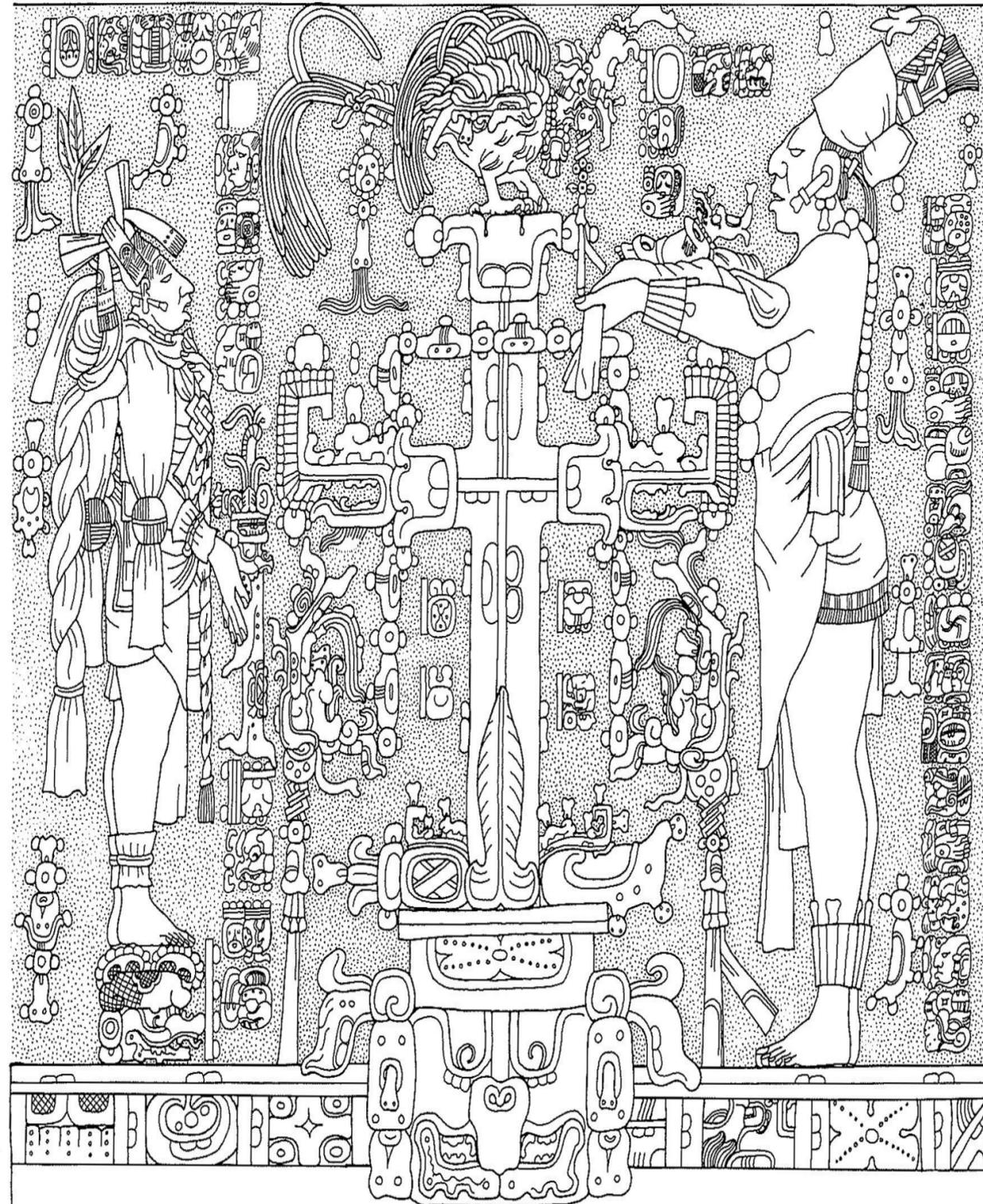
**God.L** on the right jamb is the underworld deity with its particular **Muwaan** owl headdress of feathers and leaves, related to a cormorant bird. He is as always, shown smoking a large cigar, "*alluding here to shamanic practices when shamans and lords smoke tobacco mixed with hallucinogenic plants for their rituals of initiation to other levels of reality, to seek assistance in their tasks in this world from deities and ancestors alike*" (M de la Garza, G. Bernal R., M. Cuevas G. 2012:158-159).

The geometry of the jambs, and application in construction and art, is presented in Annex.13, by Dr. Christopher Powell (Annex.12).

Drawing by Linda Schele in P.A.R.I. *2da Mesa Redonda de Palenque*, 1976:F.6; drawn by Annie Hunter from Maudslay's casts and photographs.



Sanctuary West Jamb



Sanctuary East Jamb



Maya architecture and the techniques used by expert engineers and master masons were remarkable in their days. Again the Maya **K'iche'** sacred book, the **Popol Vuh** is the historical reference in the use of a cord to measure and set the bearing walls of structures, their openings and stucco decorations, as well as measure a *milpa*, to briefly mentioned few applications. In his translation of the sacred book, Dennis Tedlock, record the ancients saying that “*the fourfold siding, fourfold cornering, measuring, fourfold staking, halving the cord, stretching the cord, the four sides, the four corners...*” (1985:72)

Construction projects were as a rule, preceded by ceremonies, as everything else of importance, where incense and prayers were addressed to “*gods*” and ancestors. What the ancients tell us through the centuries, is that everything was based on the simple tools of a cord and a straight rod, and the basic geometry of a circle and an equidistant square; after all, a rectangle is “*a long square*” or merely an extension of the square. Fray Diego de Landa recorded such a ceremony he literally translates as “*to be born anew*”, a term used for rituals from adolescence to manhood, or for the description of a new creation.

The **Temple of the Cross** roof comb is much ruined, together with the front of the sanctuary that collapsed. Structures, notably temples, supported roof combs, built of a mosaic of limestone slabs, covered with stucco, that rested on walls below within the structure, for weight dissipation. The roof combs added height to the building; in general, their profile was trapezoidal with the top of each part of the comb resting on the other at the top for self support.

The significance of the roof comb rested in its power projection of both deities and the lords of the kingdom, the later often represented amid commonly accepted religious and traditional symbols. It was above all, the graphic projection of power of the crown and “religion”, since the submission to both was a pre-requisite to the common good of the community, as was the bonding of its social segments.



The **Otolum** aqueduct (below) runs South to North, on the eastern side of the **Palace** from its source located at the base of **Yemal K'uk' Lakam Witz'** the "*big hill of the descending quetzal*", today called *El Mirador* (the lookout). It is probable that this particular segment of the river was made as a canal, the river natural stream bed may have been walled to contain its flow during rainy seasons. Moreover, it may have been channeled on purpose to clearly separate the secular part of the city of the sacred part with the **Cross Group**. In the **Maya** ancient description of the city's location is that of its ancient name, **Lakamha'**, the "*place of big water*". The **Temple of the Cross** sanctuary is facing South directly toward the source of the **Otolum**. The association with a source of water is significant in the belief structure of this ancient world, for it is associated with **Xibalba**, the *Underworld*, the place of death, resurrection and unending flow of life.





**God.II**



**Temple of the Foliated Cross**

The long history that societies attached to archetypes and symbols of the Sun, Moon, stars and planets are, together with the deities of storms, water and the vegetal kingdom or plants world, are fundamental paradigms of cultures. They are representatives of human created deities of nature's unseen forces, in both their beneficent and destructive powers. There is no exception to the rule of daily sustenance, driven by the capacity of the plant kingdom to renew itself season after season. Rain's *Itz* is believed to be the cosmic sap, the blessed rain sent by the "gods" through the portal of the *Otherworld*; nature's eternal return in all of its formidable power. Photo, 435mag.com



## The Moon

Photo, Stéphane Godin, pinterest.com

Master of the vegetal kingdom for its interaction with water and the sap of plants that, like the blood of all life forms, ebb and flow in harmony with its phases.

For their timeless recurrence, the pendulum of time that are the Moon, together with the daily course of the Sun, were the first celestial bodies to be recognized as predictable forces, enshrined in the pantheon of ancient faiths in the power of nature.

Predominant in belief structure are simplicity and perpetual repetition, such as the Sun and its day-night phase. It was then believed that the Sun continued its course at night below the horizon; the Moon with four phases was perceived as being closer to nature with corresponding alternances. Predictability is at the root of the awakening of man's place in nature, upon which were built the basic architecture of its essential beliefs.

Through time and cultures, the craters on the Moon were made to integrate local beliefs and creeds; two main streams are found in most cultures. It is commonly seen as integral to nature but, once seized by culture was used to underline its own tenets. For the Maya and most other cultures, the full Moon shows a rabbit, as can be seen here. The rabbit ears are at top right, with its oval face beneath, left, followed by the body (in Palenque.II/Annex.4)

Monotheist religions often display the Moon with the face of a man, the arbitrary mark and stamp of culture over nature preeminence.

The apparent incompatibility between nature and culture lies in the fact that culture demands absolute command over nature. On the other hand for ancient or traditional beliefs of yesteryears and today, nature is preminent and stands above culture. Today's ceremonies and rituals, as in Palenque.IV, are witness to the persistent intimate association with nature.



## Flanged Ceramic Censers, as "Trees of Life"

Photo, Marco Antonio Pacheco, Raices in Arqueologia Mexicana 44:54

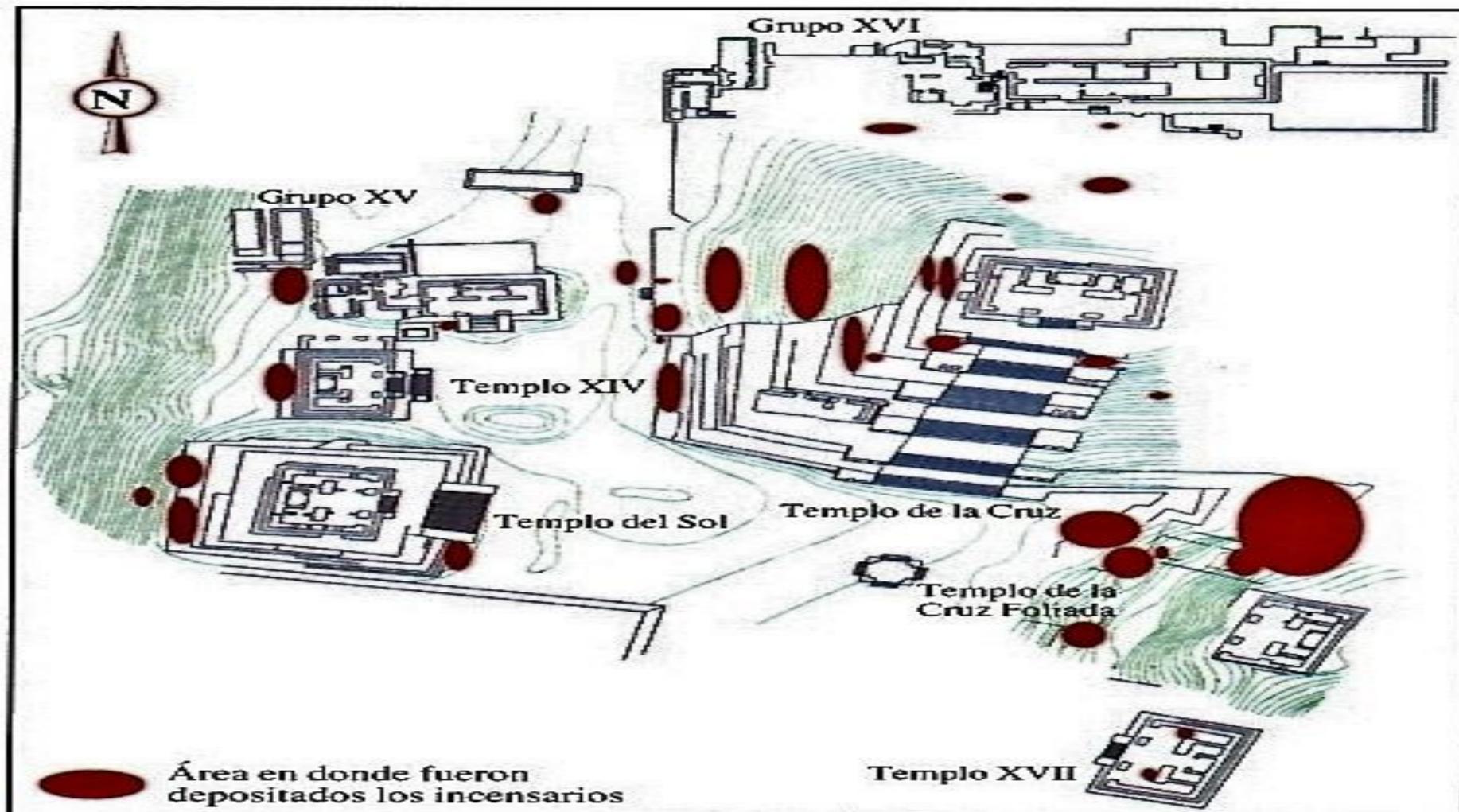
Over 200 flanged censers have been found on the slopes of the three temple of the **Cross Group**, **Temple XIV** and **Group XV**, as shown on map below (oval dark red dots); many more are still buried.

They are referred to as "*composite censers*", since they are made of two parts. The conical urn, shown at the top of the censer (right), was not integral to the censer. In the urn, offerings, primarily copal nodules, resins and blood stained bark paper from bloodletting were put into it then set afire. With the lid removed and offerings burning, the smoke of the smoldering material was believed to rise to the deities and carry the pleas and demands of supplicant.

Filiation to *Ik'*, the deity of wind and breath is identified with the two round concave "cups" on each temple of the figure, with half volutes indicating the wind spinning movement. *Ik'* is the carrier of life, the first and last breath specifically for humans, as well as that of wind, storms and the clouds, purveyors of rain, the heavenly *Itz*.

With some exceptions, all were painted red the predominant color, as well as blue-green, green and black. On the map of the **Cross Group** complex below, as well as **Temple XIV** and **Group XV**, red oval signs indicate where most of the censers were found on the slopes of the mounds of each temple. The largest number, significantly, was found around the base of the **Temple of the Foliated Cross**.

Map drawn by Arnolando Gonzalez C. and Seth Muñoz – *Proyecto Palenque*, in *Arqueologia Mexicana* 45:55.



## Censers as “Cosmic Trees”

Flanged censers are “*cosmic trees*”, that Lopez Austin calls the “*path of the gods*”. They are also referred to as *ux-p’uluut k’ub* or **god censers**, related to the **Ceiba** (*yaxhá*), the sacred tree of the **Maya**. The hollow cavity that runs vertically on the back of the censor, is ritually related to the path of the sap from the roots to the leaves of the **Ceiba** (Cueva and Bernal), or from the dwelling of the deities below, through the world of humans and that of ancestors and deities above.

The function of elaborate flanged ceramic censers was to burn copal incense nodules, substitute for maize (corn) kernels, fragrant leaves or flowers. Together with bark papers, on which were drops of an individual blood from a bloodletting. But pleas did not always require bloodletting in ritual to appeal to the *Otherworld*.

The incense’s smoke carried the supplicant appeal and prayers to the invisible forces, deities and ancestors in the *Otherworld*, for help in their lives’ daily struggle. The censor at left was found in **Group.V** and is believed to probably be the representation of **Tzak’-bu’ Ajaw**, the wife of **K’inich Janahab’ Pakal** (Palenque.III).

Through the censor-cosmic tree, individuals and communities joined the sacred rituals that fed the substances most appreciated by the gods: maize, copal incense and blood shed through sacrifice. Bloodletting is not to be understood as a gift of life to benevolent deities but the *Itz* transfer of the very substance of life, from one world to another. For penance to appease malevolent deities, censers were not used, since they required very different rituals specific to both the deity and penance.

Censers’ “lives” were based on 20-year *K’atun* cycles at the end of which ceremonies took place to honor the life of intercession of the censor with gods and deities. The “old” censor was then consigned in a “support” position to another that was ceremonially received as a “new birth”.

The old censor remained “active” jointly with the new for about ten years, or half a *K’atun*, the half-life of its successor, before being ceremonially buried. At that time, public bloodletting by the Lord of the realm, high members of the priesthood and the nobility took place, symbolically recreating the binary regeneration of nature, and the endless cycle of life and death.



The **Temple of the Foliated Cross** owes its name for its dedication to the vegetal kingdom, shown in its richly engraved limestone panel at the back of its *pib na'ah* or shrine, in the back of the sanctuary.

Half of the building still stands after the collapse of its frontal part. The two trapezoidal “openings” on the second floor at each side of the building’s entrance, indicate material removed by Maya engineers, to lighten up the weight of the structure. A testimony to their awareness of the potential instability of the hill on which the structure was built, at the foot of the slope of the “*great mountain of the descending quetzal*”.

Water runoffs may have been a factor to the weakening of the foundations, and the collapse of the front of the structure and its roof comb. The temple entrance faces West and the setting Sun, that reflect the rhythm of nature. The symbolism attached to the temple differs from those of the two others in the **Cross Group**. Emphasis is given here to water, agriculture and the primordial sea. “*The roof-comb once bore large stucco shells with the hieroglyphs of Matwiil, a place mentioned in Palenque’s mythological texts, in association with the birth of the Triad gods, and that of the dynasty itself*” (Stuart, 2008:200).



The *pib na'ah*, similar to the other two temples, is the heart and portal of the sanctuary inside the **Temple of the Foliated Cross** with its elaborately carved panels at the back of the altar. The portal, "also known as *Ek'-Way* (Black-Transformer), allowed the human *Itz* of sacrificial offerings to be exchanged with the cosmic sap, the *Itz* of the "Otherworld" (Freidel, 1993:222). The sanctuary, as for the others, was not directly accessible from the outside when the structure was whole, at that time there was an anteroom to receive worshipers. The altar within the sanctuary was then only accessed by high priests and nobility of the realm, and visiting lords, when hermetic rituals took place.



Temple of the Foliated Cross – the *pib na'ah* panels.





Temple of the Foliated Cross *pib na'ah* central panel reproduction, by Octavio Sanchez Torres – Annex.15, in cooperation with Merle Green Robertson, 1970s – Annex.14

The panel shows **K'inich Khan Balam** again as Lord of the realm at left, holding the **K'awil**, (G.II), standing on the sacred mountain of sustenance, **Yaxhal Witz'nal**, from which billows the leaves of maize plants.

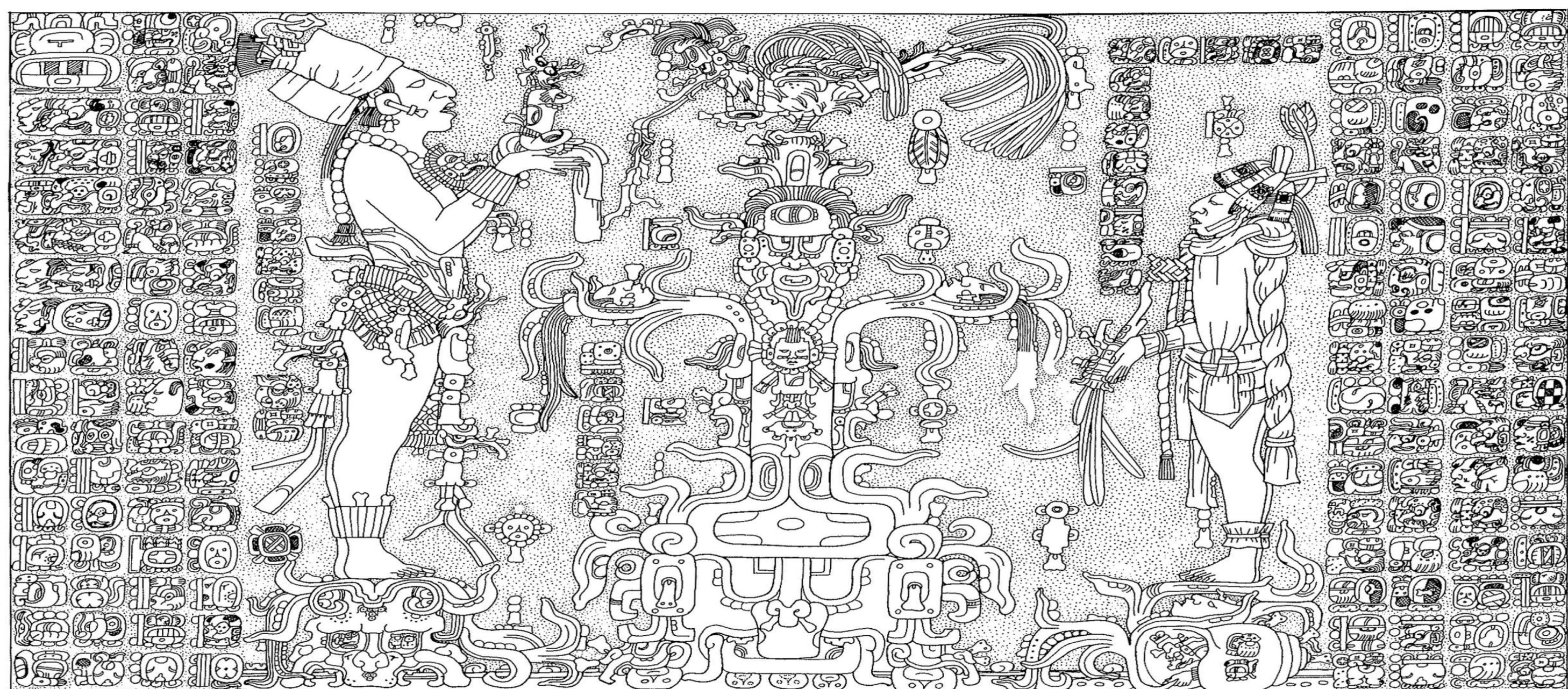
*“The icon corresponds to an important symbol that the ancient Maya called the **K'an Nah Ixiimte'**, the “precious sea maize plant” (Stuart, 2008:200). It is the stalk of sustenance, the power of life itself, of agricultural growth and procreation from precious water. “**K'awil (G.II)**, is the custodian of this theme, combining the ideas of fertility and rainmaking through lightning” (Stuart, 2008:209).*

The temple depicts the *First-True-Mountain* that held the maize that was used to mold humans flesh from maize dough during the last Creation, and the shell that opens to the *Otherworld*. The cross motif is again central to the theme, as it still is today with the Green Cross in the Yucatàn – Annex.15

At right is his father **K'inich Janaab' Pakal** with the same mortuary dress shown on the tablets of the other two temples, holding the *Perforator God*, instrument for bloodletting in his left hand *“that nurtures life out of death”* (Shele, 1993:283).

The focus of the panel is the dynamic cruciform shape of a maize plant, where are shown human heads replacing maize cobs. The heads have their eyes closed and the **Ik'** symbol of exhalation of the soul on the tip of the nose, that shows that they were decapitated, a ritual done to fertilize fields with blood identified as vital force, the human **Itz**. At the lower segment of societies, male ejaculation in the field answered the same function; a ritual practiced up to recent time. *The tree emerges from the primordial waters represented by the mask at the bottom of the tree with eyes similar to the glyphs of the Sun god that may be read **K'an Nahb' Ixiim Te**, “Precious Lake of the Maize Plant” (Stuart, 2006:140 in Garza, Bernal, Cuevas, 2012:161).*

The central theme is the re-birth of **Hunal Ye'** *“the Maize God and the regeneration of humanity from maize and water”* (Freidel, 1993:145). The glyph tablets on each side of the panel, are detailed in Annex.9. Drawing by Linda Schele in P.A.R.I. *2da Mesa Redonda de Palenque*, 1976:F.10



**Maize** is literally the Maya "**Tree of Life**", also referred as the **Na-Te-'K'an** because it is the base of the people's daily sustenance. Moreover, it also is the mythological substance from which gods fashioned man from maize dough (**Popol Vuh**, 3<sup>ra</sup> Naración – Verses 544>553, Lines 2740>2790 – Fray Francisco Ximénez, 1701(?)).

The cross at the center of the sanctuary panel, is that of a maize stalk with the face of God.C. It shows corn cobs as human heads with maize leaves and silk, as the maize substance of humans. In the mind of traditional and ancient people, there is no separation between beliefs attached to the continuum of life, that is, of any form of life. **Itz** is shown here to flow from plants to humans, as made from the same substance. The life of farmers, and that of maize unending seasonal renewal, is grounded in the incontrovertible interplay between human survival and their environment. For the sake of people's lives, deities and gods demand the red blood of sacrifice, while the plant world provide its green blood, its sap.

Temple of the Foliated Cross Partial Tablet Reproduction (L), Octavio Sanchez Torres, 1970s – Annex.15



## Hunal Ye', the Maize "God"

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

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

Its 3<sup>rd</sup> *Naración* – Verses 544>553, Lines 2740>2790 (Ximenez, 1714), tells how the gods made humans from yellow and white corn dough. Preceding verses describe the discovery of maize and three prior attempts by the gods to create man from other earthly material, but failed.

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

The deity's headdress shows a young corn maize cob and its silk. The head is surrounded by foliage, underlining the young, green maize. He was called **Hun' Ixim** or "*One Maize*" on a glyph of the Late Classic Period. He may be **Yum Ka'ax** the *Lord of the Harvest*, so called at the time of Conquest in the Yucatàn (Spinden, 1943:103).

On the tablet of the **Temple of the Cross**, **Hunal Ye'** is described as "*First Father*" born in **Matwiil** the mythical world, on June 16, 3122BC. His birth is connected with the Creation day August 13, 3114BC (Shele, 1993:69). He assumed "*the status of a deity in 2325BC, well after the arrival of the Triad*" (Stuart, 2008:211). The translation of the text however, is still incomplete.

**Maya** nobility's blood offerings through bloodletting, set the Lord of the realm as the maize progenitor, giving bounty to all, while living and beyond death. When he raises from **Xibalba** the underworld, he will live again as **Hunal Ye'** thus ensuring bountiful maize crops for his community. The cycle of life and maize is thus mythologically intimately linked, from planting to harvesting to life sustaining, grounded in past traditions from untold generations' up to our days.

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

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This ceramic offering plate depicts a Classic period scene of the resurrection of **Hun Hunapuh**, the *Popol Vuh* Hero Twins' father (center). Plates are frequently found in graves, placed upside down, covering the face of the deceased. The hole may then be the "door" through which *chu'lel*, the soul, could escape. In 1992, Nicolai Grube realized that the crack in the turtle carapace representing the earth, shows **Hun Hunapu** emerging from the *kan* sign, the earth monster or dragon at the base of the *First-Tree-Precious* on the **Tablet of the Foliated Cross**, as the maize sprouts with renewed life.

Through this crack the sons, **Hunapu** (L) and **Xbalanque** (R), help their father **Hun Hunapu**, identified as the sacred maize god **Hunal Ye'**, to sprout from the earth and live again. "This engendering of the father by the sons is the great central mystery of Maya religion" (Freidel-Schele-Parker 1993:281).

Museo Maya de Cancùn, Cancùn, Quintana Roo

There are no celestial symbolism in the **Temple of the Foliated Cross**. The focus of Classic artisans depicted the World Tree as a luxuriant maize plant heavy with ripe ears of corn, often shown in personified form as the face of the Maize God. At **Palenque** and **Copán**, eighth century scribes called this maize tree the **Na-Te'-K'an**, "*First-Tree-Precious*" (Freidel, 1993:53). In 1954 INAH archaeologist Miguel Angel Fernandez excavated the hill around the base of the temple, and found a large number of ceramic incense burners, buried with their faces turned to the West, toward sunset.



In the **Plaza of the Cross Group** a **K'atun** square platform, with four sets of stairs, that symbolizes the four-sided universe of Maya cosmology, is the focal point of the Group. It is a platform archaeologists call "*a radial pyramid, designed to replicate the four-sided structure of the world*" (Stuart, 2008:193). The platform, is not unique to **Palenque**, and is found in several other sites such as at **Tikal** and **Chichen Itzà**. Stuart and others hypothesize that the platform was perhaps used in ceremonial activities such the celebration of **K'atuns**, 20-year cycles.

It may also have been used for "*voladores*" ceremonies (Annex.4), since there seems to be some evidence of the fact on the panels that this may have been the case. The life-death symbolism of the ceremony reflect the dependence of society against the anxiety and uncertainty of seasonal nature, that may spin out of control at any time; as were the men hanging on a rope tied up to a 100 feet high pole, spinning while defying death.



The **Temple of the Foliated Cross**, is arguably the most important of the **Triad**. The **Temple of the Cross** is dedicated to the transmission of power through rights received from deities and ancestors, while the **Temple of the Sun** is dedicated to the power of war and control of the state, the shield against its enemies; either however, are not dedicated to the deities that were believed to control nature.

The greatest disruptor of culture is seldom consecutive to a change of leadership, nor is it because of war and destruction. In any case, the impact is limited in time and space to the particular event that, even in extreme circumstances such as the destruction of a city, can be rebuilt by survivors. Uncontrollable events brought about by nature are generally more widespread and durable since they can, and did historically. Spanning generations they are major contributors to the collapse of societies.



Natural upheavals therefore, constitute the single most serious causes for long term deterioration of cultural identity and communities' instability. It is no less true in our times of great scientific and technological achievements. Havoc brought about by drought, floods, earthquakes or hurricanes, take a heavy toll on communities. The same natural events over a thousand years ago, would have rendered the most prepared societies impotent in a single blow, and wreck them to a point of no return.

That is why the **Temple of the Foliated Cross**, in the opinion of the author, is the most important temple of the **Triad** dedicated to maintain, through pleas and rituals, obtain the benevolence of deities to ward off malevolent influences, and keep the precarious balance between nature and culture.

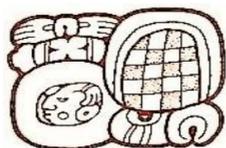


**Group.V** in the foreground, **Temple of the Cross** (L) west side, and **Temple of the Foliated Cross** (R)





**God.III**



**Temple of the Sun**

Competition between major kingdom was crucial to the development of Maya states. Warfare played a critical role in defining Maya polities, their organization, and the extent of their power, beginning in the Pre-Classic and increasingly during the Classic period. Warfare was aimed at expanding resources, labor and prestige, all of which reinforced the stratification of society and centralized political authority. Furthermore, the goal of warfare was the taking of captives as a mark of prestige for the victorious ruler.

Defeat and capture of elite military leaders or priest were a mark of prominence, and were often sacrificed to Waxaklahun'Ubah Kan (the *War Serpent*), while non-elite warriors were used as slave labor. Post-Classic accounts relate that common captives may have been used as servants in households or were sometimes adopted by families for a son lost in battle.

Battles for polity capitals were bloody, and many deaths occurred on both sides. The defeated capital of a large polity was pillaged, its monuments and patron gods "thrown down", and its buildings burned, such as at **Dos Pilas** and **Piedras Negras**, witness the charred and devastated palace at **Aguateca**, and at **Palenque**, twice, on April 23, 599 and again on April 7, 611 (in Palenque.I).



**Temple of the Sun** – The *pib na'ah* and its panels is the heart and portal of the sanctuary; as for the two others, access to the portal was restricted to persons of the nobility and high priests. Exceptionally in this temple, where admitted *sahals*, high ranking military leaders for their bravery in battles and contribution to the state in the capture of cities. From the *pib na'ah*, Lords and priests appealed to **K'in Balam**, the *Sun Jaguar* to support their men in battle, and the promise of sacrifice of enemies. It is here that the high priests conjured the gods of war in closely guarded rituals, since here only will the Lord of the realm commit not only his body but his very soul to **Wahaxklahun'Ubah Kan**, the *War Serpent*.

At that time through elaborate hermetic rituals, ancestors were called in support of the **Palenque** Lord, one of their own, because they will also have to fight with the ancestors and deities of the enemy in the *Underworld* while the battle unfold in this world. Even in critical military affairs such as on the battlefield, the unavoidable duality of this binary world, played a key role in the outcome of survival or defeat of the polity or kingdom.



Temple of the Sun – the *pib na'ah* panel.





Temple of the Foliated Cross *pib na'ah* panel reproduction, by Octavio Sanchez Torres – Annex.15, in cooperation with Merle Green Robertson, 1970s – Annex.14

The panel in the **Temple of the Sun** displays a “sun shield” symbol of war, the **t’ok’ pakal** or “*flint and shield*”, the first word refers to the obsidian blade at the tip of each lance, while the second refers to a short shield carried on the forearm by a warrior. The **tok’ pakal** signifies “*the duty of sacred warfare*” (Stuart, 2008:209). The anthropo-zoomorphic face on the shield depicts a being of two worlds in transition to the dark side of war, companions of the *Underworld*.

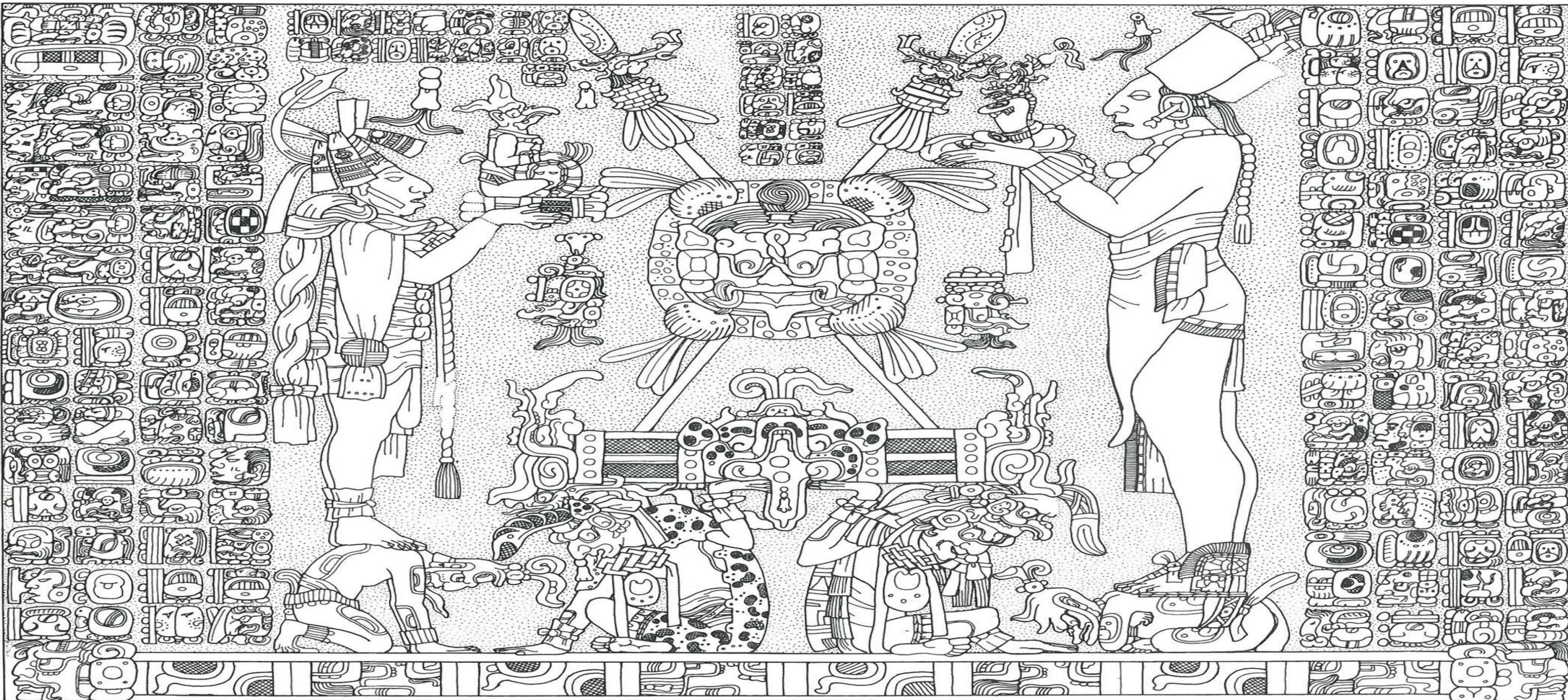
The shield is crossed, at its back, by two lances with sharp obsidian blades, resting on a rectangular crossbar with open mouth serpent heads shown on each side, a representation of the celestial ecliptic. At the center of the crossbar is a jaguar with its mouth wide open, a symbol of **Ahau’ K’in**, the Sun (Annex.11), but most probably that of **K’in Balam** (the *Sun Jaguar*). The crossbar that rest on the back of two ancient deities represent **God.L** with a volute in their eyes and toothless mouths; on their necks they wear the sign **pohp’** (power) with spondylus shells.

It is recorded that **God.L** governed the world before its creation and reorganization on 13.00.00.00, 4-Ajaw, 8-Kumk’u (September 8, 3114BC).

**K’inich Kan B’ahlam’** (right) wears a simple garment made of a fine fabric; in his hands is a small statue of the **K’awiiil**, deity that recognize the bearer’s right to dynastic power. He stands on the back of a man with a zoomorphic head that shows on his body the glyph **ahau’** or Lord, that means “*He of the Powerful Voice*”; a possible war captive. The offer of **K’awiiil** means that the “*god*” acknowledges and validate the transmission of power.

At left is his father **K’inich Janahab’ Pakal** with the same mortuary dress shown on the other two panels. He holds in his hands a small throne on which seats a little statue of a man with a bird’s head that seems to be related to war, since it holds a small shield. He stands on the back of another man that, like the former, may be a war captive. The glyph tablets on each side of the panel, are detailed in Annex.10.

Drawing by Linda Schele in P.A.R.I. *2da Mesa Redonda de Palenque*, 1976:F.12



The **Black Jaguar** war shield, behind which are the two lances, precisely depicts the attributes of **K'in Balam** (the *Sun Jaguar*), the Dark Sun during his travel through the underworld; it is **G.III** itself. From remote antiquity to our days, the Sun was first among successive other gods and deities, worshiped as the *Tree of Life*. The Sun face, at the center of the panel, is identified with the band around the eyes, triple twisted between the eyebrows, the unmistakable attribute of **K'in Ahau'**, our closest star – Annex.11.

The triangular tongue is that of a shark tooth, a link to the primordial seas; feline teeth stick out from the corner of the mouth, and jaguar ears are attributes it shares with the *“Rowing God”* seen on ceramic censers. The volutes in the eyes are complement of the Dark Sun, while the tuft of hair on top of the head, underline the place of capture of an enemy. Through time and cultures the head was the prize possession of warriors, because it was perceived as the seat of the personality, identified as the human Sun. Until recently in remote traditional communities, the skull of ancestors were likewise kept for both reverence and participation in periodic family rituals, while those of enemies were kept “captive”.

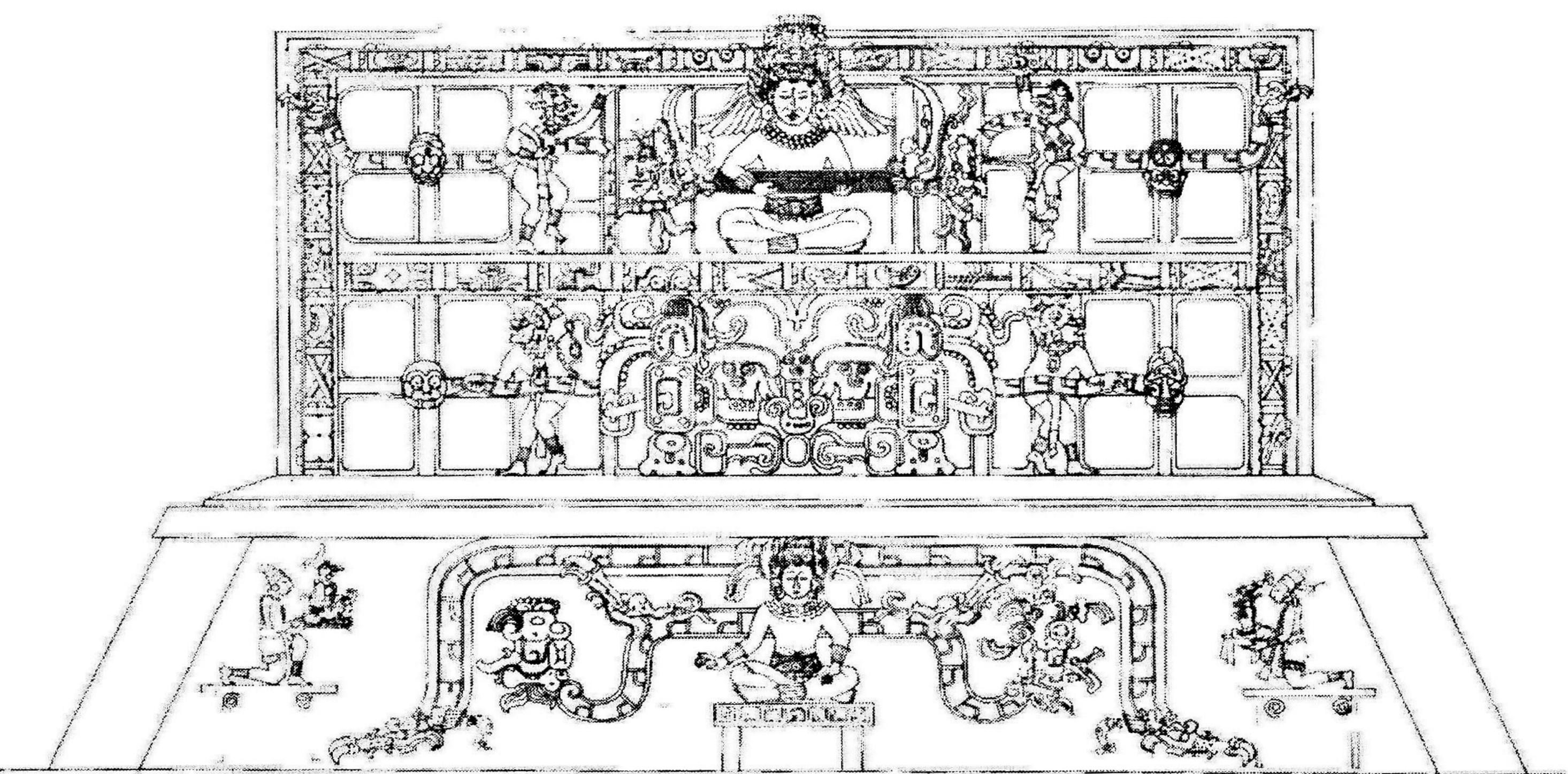
The depiction of *“the war shield explains the origin and nature of war in the Maya view”*. On each side are the two glyphs' *Otherworld* locations: the *“Seven-Black-Yellow”* (left), and the *“Nine”* location (right). *“These glyphs, along with the old gods who hold up the bone (Ba'akal) throne, tell us that the power of war comes from the Otherworld* (Freidel, 1993:305-307).

The greatest achievement on the field of battle was for soldiers to capture an enemy alive, holding him by the hair, for later sacrifice. This custom is seen carved on stelas and lintels, or painted on ceramics throughout the Classic period of leading cultures of the Americas from Mayas to Incas through Aztecs. It is also found in the Near East such as, among others, on King Narmer palette in Egypt (3150-2190BC) (Annex.7).



Unlike the other two temples, the **Temple of the Sun**, G.III's abode, is relatively intact; it still kept most of its roof comb that others have lost to time. Roof combs are built over the main supporting walls inside the building, and are generally made of two openwork panels to lighten their load over the structure. They are set in a trapezoidal shape with their apex in contact for self support. As a rule, roof combs were covered with stucco and painted. They displayed mythological figures as well as representations of the ruler to establish a direct filiation with gods and ancestors, proclaiming the Lord of the realm absolute right to rule.





At the lower level of the frieze on the roof comb of the **Temple of the Sun**, Merle Green Robertson identified the small seated stucco figure as **Kinich Kan B'ahlam'** in the guise of **God.K**. He is seated on a throne in the company of two kneeling figures holding what appears to be the Jester God/**Tok Pakal** and God.K. The frieze, surrounded by sky bands, displays a double-headed serpent bar, a "vision serpent", the Milky Way's ecliptic and celestial **Tree of Life**. *"The upper level displays a seated figure on a Kawak or Earth Monster, perhaps an implicit reference to the sun setting over the mountain behind the temple"* (Milbrath, 2004). Four *Bacabs* support the celestial **Waka Chan**, the **Tree of Life**.

Above all however, the roof comb is a projection of power of the Lord of the kingdom, and the acknowledgement of gods and dynastic ancestors of the realm absolute power for the purpose of war. Linda Schele pertinently point out that *"Maya kings and their noble vassals put not only their bodies but also their souls in jeopardy every time they clashed. It is no exaggeration to say that they lived for those moments of truth, those trials of the strength of their spirits. Every major political activity in their lives, from the dedication of every public text and building of royal and community importance, required the capture and sacrifice of rival peers. Only in this way could the proper rituals of sanctification be fulfilled, the gods nourished, and the portals of communication opened between the human and the divine"*. (Schele, 1993:317).

Roof Comb Reconstruction Drawing by Merle Green Robertson, (1991:47-48 – Annex.14), in Barnhart, Powell and Karasik, (2005:16).



**Waxaklahun'Ubah Kan** (the *War Serpent*), **No'Balam Chak'** (the *War Jaguar*), and **K'in Balam** (the *Sun Jaguar*), presided over war and sacrifice for all Maya kings, not only at **Palenque**, but at all major polities. They were specially dangerous on the battlefield where the decisive battles were also fought on the supernatural plane, where opposing parties would be attempting to train their destructive supernatural powers on the enemy by means of powerful talismans. Capture of large colorful plumed battle standards bearing the effigies of patron deities and war gods, carried onto the battlefield as sacred protectors of opposing armies, was a major trophy for the victor. The loss of a major standard signified the defeat of the war god-deity of the opponent, and that the gods of war were no longer allies, they had turned their back and shall never return; defeat was certain.

**Daniel Montuy Ponce** (1925-2005), mastered this view of **Maya** mythology, in his remarkable 1994 mural (partial above).

The complete mural may be seen at the Fiesta Inn Cencali, Villahermosa, Edo. Tabasco, Mexico



**G.III's** home on the West side of the **Cross Group** plaza, faces East towards the sunrise, when the first rays of the Sun, above the **Yemal K'uk Lakam Witz** – the “*Great Mountain of the Descending Quetzal*”, reaches deep inside the **pib na'ah** to bless another day. Observations of sunlight penetration in the temple is of particular significance as recorded at sunrise by E. Barnhart, Ch. Powell, A. Mendez and C. Karasik. At sunrise light “*floods the temple at a direct perpendicular angle, illuminates the room to the south of the sanctuary, and reaches the entrance to the inner sanctuary*” (2005:19). In their conclusions, the archaeologists pertinently state “*in the text and iconography of the Temple of the Sun, Kinich Kan B'ahlam aligned himself with gods G.I and G.III. His affinities were marked by hierophanies in the heavens and on earth. The mathematical and astronomical precision seen in the architecture replicated the “cosmic principles of hierarchical order” that formed the basis of religious thought* (Aveni, 1986:8). *Linking the cosmos to earthly events was a powerful affirmation of the divine in a place and time*” (2005:36).



**Temple XIV** is located immediately north of the **Temple of the Sun** (L). **K'inich Kan Joy Chitam** was 57 when he was enthroned as **B'aakal Ajaw**. Data on his first years are few; we know however, that his first task was building **Temple XIV**, that was completed in 705, next to **Temple XV**, the funerary temple of his brother **K'inich Kan B'ahlam'**.

In **Temple XIV**, next to the **Temple of the Sun**, the scene on the panel at the back of the sanctuary shows **T'zak-bu Ajaw**, mother of **K'inich Kan B'ahlam'**, as the personified manifestation of **Ixik' Uhn'** the "*Lady of the Moon*". The text on each side of the figures indicate that **k'an Kawil**, or "*reception of the Kawil*" was an act signifying the enthronement of Lords. Receiving the **Kawil** or *maniqui scepter*, was understood as the blessing of the "*Lady of the Moon*" herself. For the Mayas, in a state of dream or induced ecstasy time collided, that is "*the past and future are simultaneous, they literally coexist in the present.*" "*There is then no discrepancy in the perception of present day and mythical events, understood as taking place by the living*" (de la Garza, 2012).

All Maya communities of the Classic "worshipped" similar deities and "*gods*". Founding figures such as **Itzamna** and **Hunal Ye'** were common to most. Later, the multiplication of gods, goddesses and deities varied through time and were often distinct to a community. They may have had similar aspects but with multiple particulars attached to each group or location. Ancestor worship on the other hand is essentially family specific, a link that history's disruptions could not break; it is still common in Maya and other traditional communities of the Americas and beyond today (in Palenque.IV).





**Palenque**'s identity as a city was grounded in its identification with the **Triad** of the Maya creation, housed together in the **Cross Group** complex. The unique stance of this city is unmatched anywhere else during the Classic, since only at Palenque where together the unified powers of the three "*gods*" of creation.

An important factor in understanding the Triad however, is the fact that the three temple-sanctuaries' doors open toward a common plaza whose access must have been restricted to higher segments of society. It was probably open to the population at specific community events, such as equinoxes or other ceremonies and rituals, that needed the participation of the people to re-affirm the powers of this world and that of the "*gods*".

In final analysis, the powers of the crown and that of the Triad gods were immovably set in the themes of death, time and the legitimation of social order.



# Annex & Bibliography





## Annex – 1

### **K'inich Kan Bahlam II**

May 20, 635 – February 16, 702

**K'uhul B'aakal Ajaw**

Accession date: January 7, 684

Born on May 20, 635, the first son of **K'inich Janahb' Pakal.II** and **Ix Tz'ak-bu Ajaw**, will be followed by two brothers, **Kan Joy Chitam** on November 2, 644 and **Tiwol Chan Mat** on March 14, 648. **Kan Bahlam** stucco mask was found in Temple XIV.

On January 7, 684 **Kan Bahlam** received the **sak'hun'** from his father, the head gear worn by **K'uhul' B'aakal Ajaw**, *Sacred Lord of the B'aakal* kingdom, and from his mother the flint battle ax and the **to'k-pakal**, war shield; he was 47 years old.

That same day, his brother **K'an Joy Chitam** is named *b'aah chok*, or heir to the throne.

**Tonina** was always a political and military problem for **Lakam-ha'**. **K'inich Kan Bahlam.II** defeated and occupied the enemy city on September 9, 687. This victory did not last.

On July 3, 690, he completed the construction and dedication of the mausoleum of his father, the **Temple of the Inscriptions**.

**Kan Bahlam** consecrated the **Temple of the Cross**, the **Temple of the Foliated Cross** and **Temple of the Sun**, dedicated to the Triad gods **G.I**, **G.II** and **G.III** respectively, on January 7, 692. Dedication of a stone censer took place on June 15, 692, to honor **Ix Aj Pay K'aba'** a woman high priest of the Divine Triad.

The scene on **Temple XVII** aka **Temple of the Warriors'** tablet depicts the capture of **B'olon Yooj Ch'ok Aj-x** a noble allied with **Tonina**, on 14 January 695. The tablet also record the conquest of that city in 687 by **Palenque**.

On February 16, 702 **K'inich K'an Bahlam.II** passed away.

His brother, **K'inich Kan Joy Chitam.II** becomes *Sacred Lord of the B'aakal* kingdom on May 30, 702.

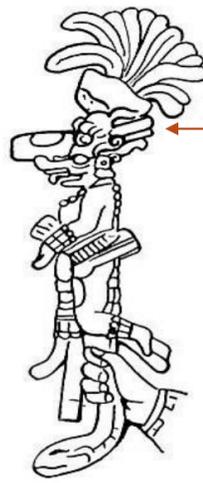
In the endless cycle of wars with **Tonina**, on August 26, 711, **K'inich Kan Joy Chitam.II** is captured and held prisoner in that city. He was released on November 9, 718.

## A n n e x - 2

### God.II (God.K) – Unen-K'awiil

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

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



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

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

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

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

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





**Annex – 3**  
**Structure 23, Lintel 24 – Yaxchilan, Chiapas**

Late Classic 725AD

Original Limestone Lintel at The British Museum, London, UK

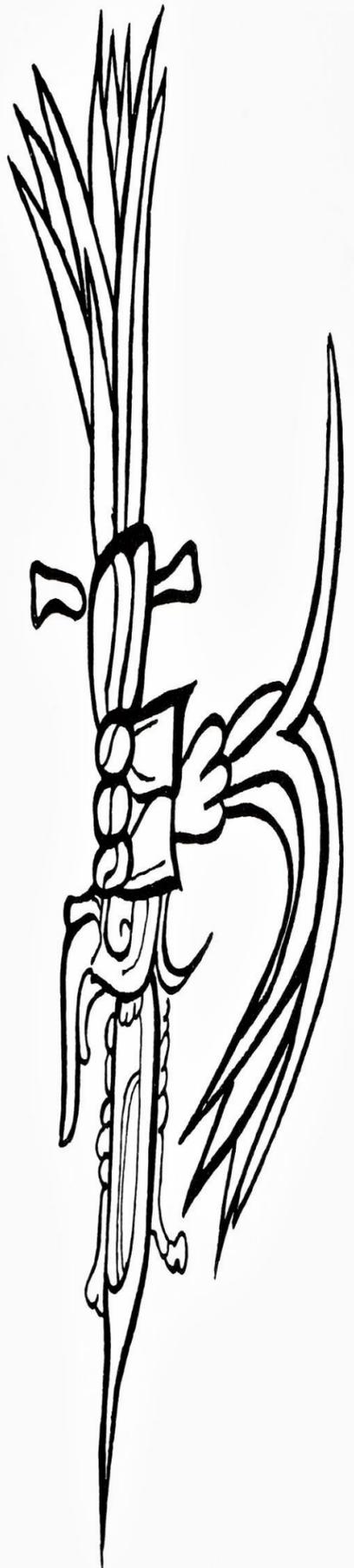
Mesoamerican gods demanded human blood sacrifice. The implement used was the **Perforator God**, a finely pointed awl or lancet made of obsidian, animal bone (jaguar or deer), but preferably stingray spine, set into a jade handle, used in auto-sacrifice and public blood letting ceremonies.

Its important feature is the triple knot – symbol of blood letting – mounted on top of the forehead of a zoomorphic head from whose mouth the awl emerges. Long feathers are set from the top and side of the knots. The stingray spine symbolizes the substance and characteristics of the Primordial Sea.

**Lintel 24** on Structure 23 depicts the scene of bloodletting by **Lady Xoc** on 28 October 729, celebrating the birth of a son to the 62 year old **King Shield Jaguar**. He holds a torch, indicating that the ritual took place at night. **Lady Xoc** is the king's principal wife; she pulls a thorn-lined rope through her tongue, to sanctify the birth of a younger wife's child, who will become king **Bird Jaguar**, after 10 years of competition with rivals, who may have been **Lady Xoc's** offspring.

A small spines studded rope, in this case, was use for **Lady Xoc** blood letting ceremony. The blood from her sacrifice, will fall into the basket at her knees, that contains bark paper, that will be burned together with the rope. It was believed that the smoke would then carry her pleas and supplications to the gods and her ancestors.

For auto-sacrifice, the **Maya** choose part of their body that bleeds freely and held special meaning, without inflicting long lasting or crippling damage. Those were the penis for men (most probably the foreskin), and the tongue for both men and women; even though any place of the body could be used in line with the demands of a particular god or deity.



## A n n e x - 4

### **Voladores de Papantla, Veracruz, Mexico**

Photo, matadornetwork.com

The tradition of the *Voladores* or “Flying Men” of Papantla, is a tradition from Precolumbian times when a devastating drought brought famine to the region. The community leaders then thought that an unusual ceremony, since the others failed, would bring the attention of the gods and deities to their plight, and bring rain.

They cut, cleaned and brought very a tall straight tree trunk and “dressed” it ceremonially. Then five adult men danced around it pleading to **Xipe-Totec** god of agriculture and the Spring to bring rain, pointing to the four cardinal points, dressed like colorful birds to call for Xipe-Totec’s attention. They then climbed up to the top of the pole, one man for each of the four cardinal points. The fifth man (the *caporal*), remains on top of the pole as the fifth “cardinal” point for the *Tree of Life* (below). The *caporal* plays a flute to replicate the songs of birds, and a small drum for the voices of the gods.

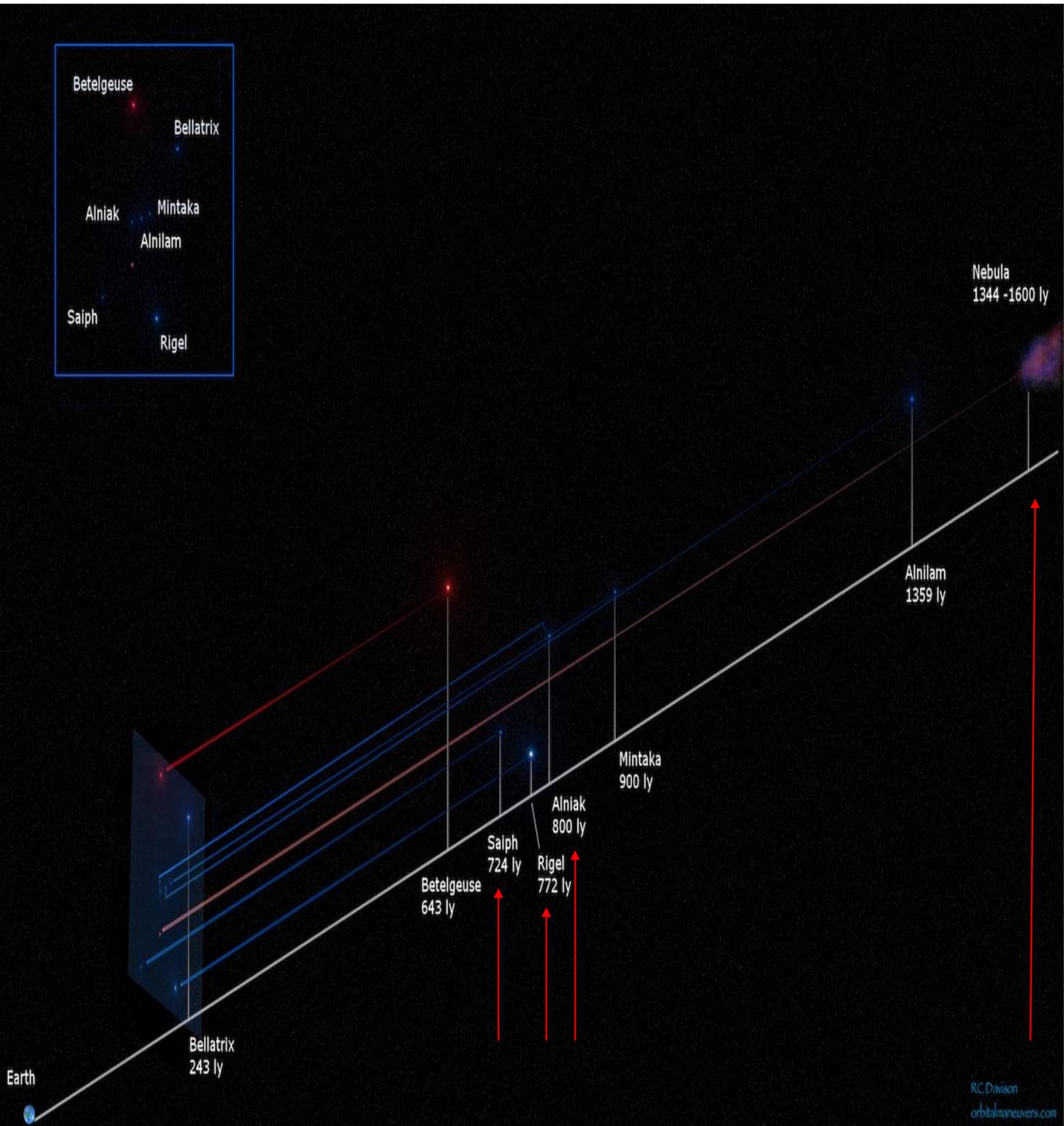


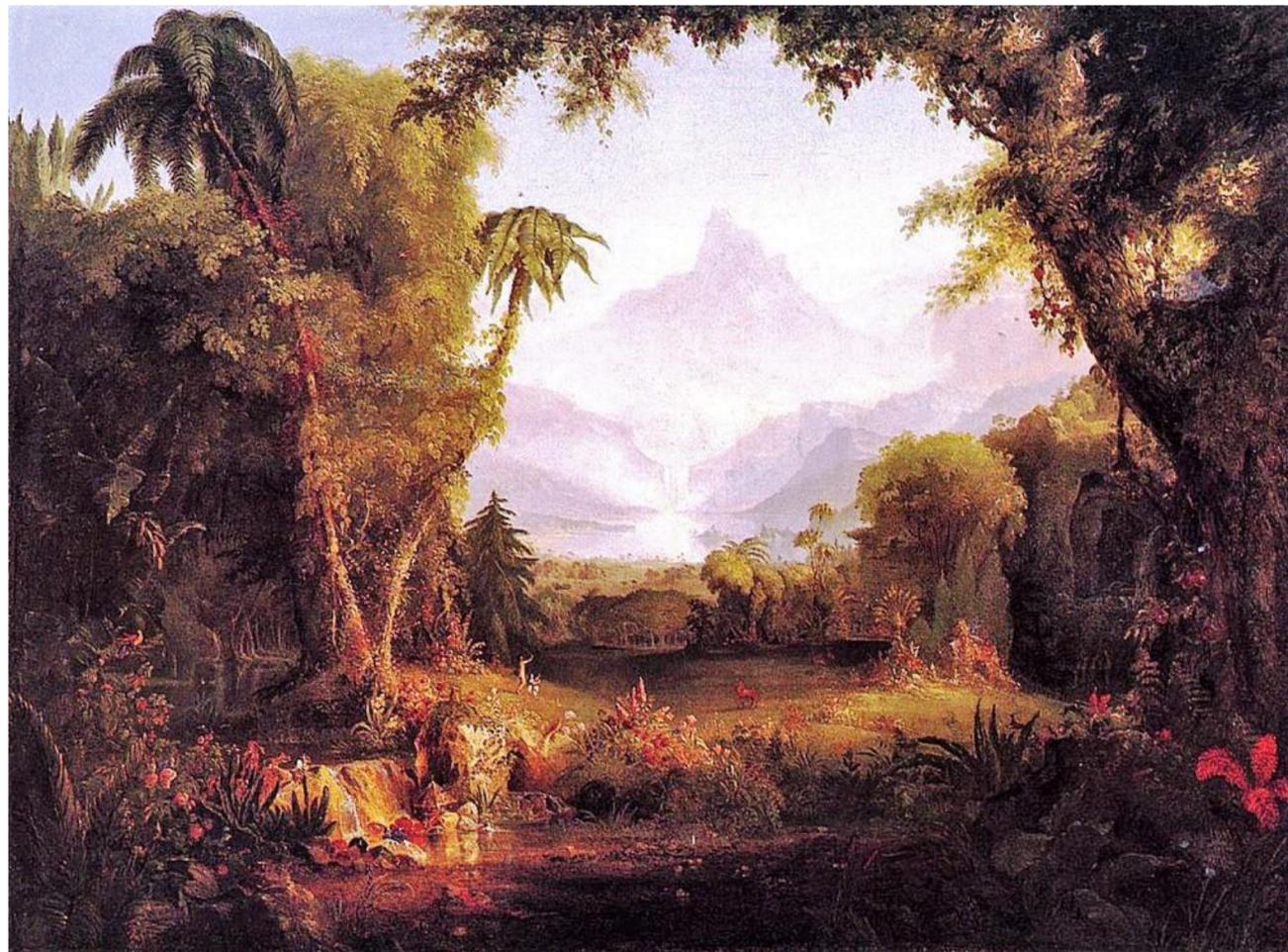
The four men, tied up at the waist, then drop down unraveling the rope that tie them to the pole, while spinning and pointing to the four cardinal directions. They circle exactly 52 times around the pole ( $13 \times 4 = 52$ ), that correlate to the *New Fire* 52 years cycle of the Mesoamerican calendar.

**Annex – 5 – Orion Constellation** – Its “belt” is made up of the stars **Alnitak** (Zeta), **Alnilam** (Epsilon) and **Mintaka** (Delta). They are referred to as “**Las Tres Marias**” in Latin America, and by other names in other cultures and languages.

The **3-heartstones** of creation of the **Popol Vuh**, are believed to have been set by the gods within the triangle of the stars: **Alnitak** (Zeta Orionis), **Rigel** (Beta Orionis) and **Saiph** (Kappa Orionis). The **Orion Nebula Cluster M42** (arrow at center of triangle), in Maya mythology is referred to as the **Cosmic Hearth**, the fire lighted by the gods on *13.0.0.0.4 - 4.Ahaw 8.Kum'ku* or 13 August 3114BC. Today, for the Maya K'iche' “...these three stars are said to be the three hearthstones of the typical kitchen fireplace arranged to form a triangle, and the cloudy area they enclose is the Great Nebula, is said to be the smoke from the fire” (Tedlock, 1985:261). Beside the Sun, the Moon, Venus and the Pleiades as in other ancient cultures, the most venerated planet is Venus. “Constellations and star patterns, such as **Orion**, the **Pleiades** and other celestial bodies in our solar system and beyond, are derived as much from cultural tradition as from visual perception” (Aveni 1980:30, Urton 1978a). The Constellation viewed in perspective, at left, shows the relatively close distances of 25-50+ light years (ly) between the three “Heartstone” stars; the Great Nebula M42 is over 700 ly. from furthest Alnitak, its mass however, is much larger.

Constellation and star names are based on German astronomer Johann Bayer’s (1572-1625) *Uranometria Omnium Asterismorum*, ca. 1603





Top, Left to Right: Moslem Prayer Rug with the Tree of Life – The Garden of Eden, by Cole Thomas, 1828 – The Ashai Vat, Immortal Banyan Tree, India

**Annex-6 – Trees of Life Past and Present**

Photos: wikipedia.org and pinterest.com

Bottom, Left to Right: Zainab Vaharani the Assyrian Tree of Life – The Tree of Life in Modern Art – Ibexes and the Tree of Life, Near East





**Annex – 7**

**Egypt: King Narmer Palette (right), 3150-2950BC**

**Maya: Bonampak, Lintel Room.3 (left), 800-850AD**

**Moche: Battle Scene, (top), EIP 200BC-600AD**

**Aztec: Tizoc Stone (bottom), 1450-1480AD**



## A n n e x - 8

The glyph panels of the **Temple of the Cross, K'inich Kan B'ahlam'** list the biography of a mythic male progenitor, referred to differently by epigraphers, but generally called **Ixiim Muwaan Mat**. The tablets tell the story of its mythical birth date as January 2, 3120BC, that took place before the reorganization of the world by the "gods" on September 8, 3114BC. That date is connected to that of First Father **Hunal Ye'**, the Maize God – *13.00.00.00.00, 4-Ajaw, 8-Kumk'u*.

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, 3112BC, 8 years old **Ixiim Muwaan Mat** had his first bloodletting ceremony, initiating the sacrificial rite of giving blood, the *may(iij)*, also referred as *Itz*, to appeal to the gods.

On March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 3112BC, **God.I** (G.I) came from the heavens and returned to the celestial "House of the *Wak'Chan' Ajaw of the North*", that is the natural mound on which was built the **Temple of the Cross**, conceived as an *axis mundi*, or center of the world.

**G.I** seems to have come down to the land of **Matwiil**, the terrestrial world, to get the sacred *may(iij)*, that **Ixiim Muwaan Mat** had offered two days before. The record however is not clear, since it seems, following the glyph record, that the sacrifice took place 751 years later, on November 10, 2360BC. It also seems that **G.I**, the celestial "god" **Unen-Kawiil** may have appeared earlier and returned a second time since he is referred to as "Creation in the Darkness" of **Ixiim Muwaan Mat**. The ritual incantation "Creation in Darkness", is common in Maya texts; it underlines invocations and ceremonial sacrifices to propitiate the sacred.

In the sixth section of the Tablets, **K'inich Kan B'ahlam'** notes the birth of **Ahkal Ichiw U Kokan Kan**, "Serpent of the Ray Spine", that became the first *K'uhul B'aakal / Matwiil* Lord on April 6, 967BC; he was then 26 years old, and was not a mythic figure, but fully human. The word *kokan* or "ray spine" in his name, underline his devotion to ceremonial bloodletting. The first occurred for the consecration of the Triad gods on January 7, 692. The historic founder of the **Palenque** dynasty is registered in Section.8 of the Tablet with the birth of **K'uk' B'ahlam.I** that took place on March 30, 397. For unknown reasons he was not assigned the title of *K'uhul B'aakal Ajaw* or *Sacred Lord of B'aakal* or of *Matwiil*, but to that of **Tok Than**, the first settlement of the **Palenque** dynasty (in Palenque.I).

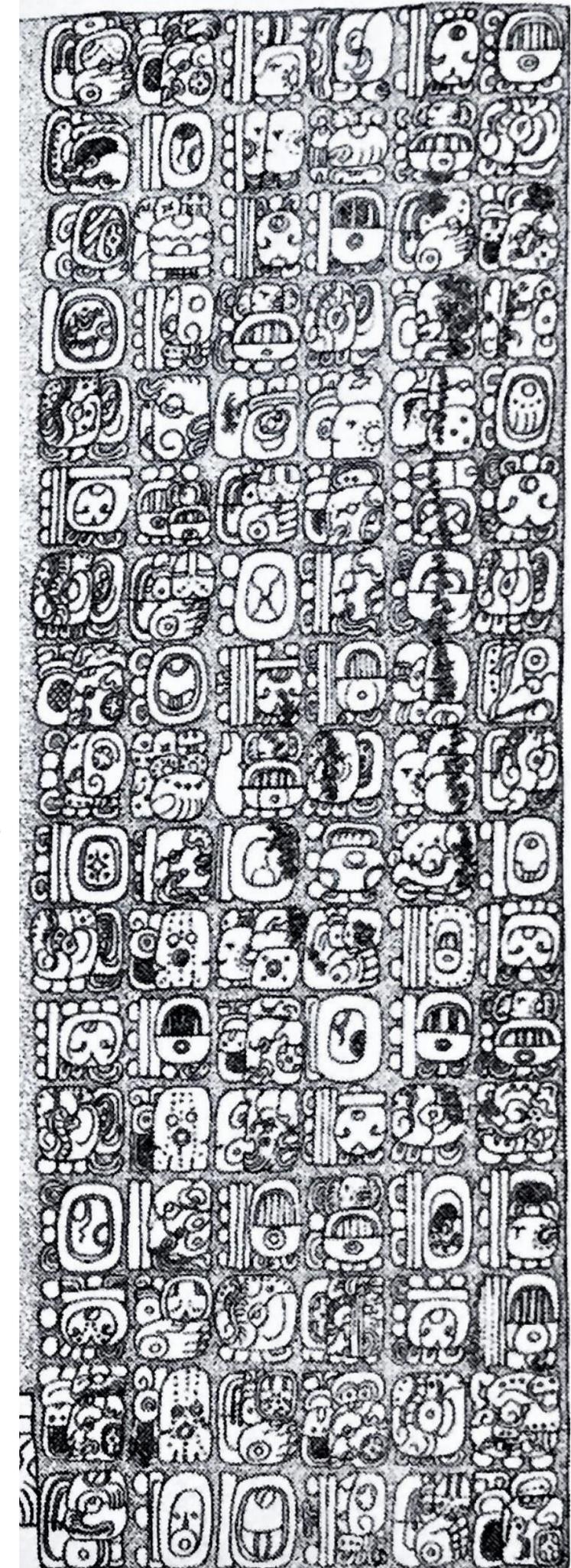
The tablets record the successive **Palenque** Lords, **K'inich Kan B'ahlam'** ascendants in the line of power, to underline the dynastic regeneration through a long line of descent.

The identification of the lines of descent, for both humans and "gods", is central in the panels' narrative, from the Lords of the realm to the "gods" of the Divine Triad; that is from **G.I**, the celestial "god", to **G.II** *Unen-Kawiil* the divine terrestrial, and **G.III** "god" of the underworld

References unless otherwise noted in text, courtesy Mercedes de la Garza, Guillermo Bernal Romero and Martha Cuevas Garcia in *Fideicomiso Historia de las Americas*, 2012:149



Left Glyph Panel



Right Glyph Panel

## Annex-9

The glyph panels of the **Temple of the Foliated Cross**, is representative of the human world; that of earth, land, caves and mountains, as well as lives in rivers and the sea but, above all, that of the vegetal kingdom and, at the core of this last world: **Maize** (corn), the mythical substance and daily sustenance of mankind.

The temple represents the intermediate initiation process between the “*gods*” of the heavens (**G.I**) and of the underworld (**G.III**) .

The first section of the panels relate the arrival of the third creation of the mythic **Ixiim Muwaan Mat**, “*god*” **Ch’ok Unen-K’awiiil** or “*Young Baby-K’awiiil*” (**G.II**), born on November 28, 2360BC.

The panels record the mythological role played by **Ixiim Muwaan Mat**, of bringing about the three deities, governing the three levels of the cosmos, to **Matwiil**, the sacred land of the Cross Group. Once the deities were “*housed*” in the three temples, was celebrated the second *bak’tun* of the era (400 years cycle), an event that took place on March 9, 2325BC.

At that time, **Ixiim Muaan Mat** conjured “*his god*” **Unen-K’awiiil** with three ceremonies to celebrate the “*god’s*” birth in the “*Mountain of the New Creation*”, the “*Shell of the Sweet and Pure Fragrance of Maize*” and the “*House of the Yellow Stalks Ripe Maize*”.

The Cross Group complex was the consecrated space where periodically were renewed through rituals, the regeneration and rebirth of the “*gods*”, nature, human kind and the cosmos. The relation of the birth of “*gods*” was therefore closely associated with the history of the renewal of mankind and that of nature.

The following sections of the panels transfer the theme from mythic to historic time. They underline the importance of the lighting of the ceramic god-censers, and the ceremony of the “*House of the Quetzal with a Sun Face*” that took place on July 20 and 21<sup>st</sup>, 690.

Then, Section.5 record the birth (May 20, 635), and enthronement of **K’inich Kan B’ahlam’** on January 7, 684 (Bernal, 2011:Cap.3).

References unless otherwise noted in text, courtesy Mercedes de la Garza, Guillermo Bernal Romero and Martha Cuevas Garcia in *Fideicomiso Historia de las Americas*, 2012:159

Left Glyph Panel

Right Glyph Panel

## Annex-10

The glyph panels in the **Temple of the Sun**, record the birth of “god” **G.III**, the “*Black Jaguar of the Underworld*”, that arrived in this temple on November 14, 2360BC. **G.III** was **Ixiim Muwaan Mat** second “*Creation in Darkness*” that arrived at **Matwiil** four days after **G.I**. Two names are recorded for **G.III**, the first is **K’inich Taaj Wahyib’** that translates as the “*Alternate Torch of the Sun*”, that personified our star during its transit through the underworld at night. The torch was believed to keep the Sun’s power in the world of darkness. The Sun was also called **K’in Than B’olay** the “*Feline B’olay with the Sun Breast*” (Grube and Nahm, 1994:687-688), a metaphor for its connotation with the black jaguar of the underworld.

Need be remembered that it was **God.L** that governed the world before the creation of historic times, and the most recent reorganization of the cosmos that took place on September 8, 3114BC, *13.00.00.00.00, 4-Ahau, 8-Kumk’u*.

The second section of the panel returns, metaphorically, to **G.III**’s birth, “*the arrival at Matwiil of the being created by Ixim Muwaan Mat, Kuhul Matwiil Ajaw*”, or “*Sacred Lord of Matwiil*”.

The third section of the tablets move the narrative forward to historic times and the making, literally the “*cooking*”, of the “*gods*” censers on July 20, 690. Reference is made here to the lighting of the **chitin** the “*oven for ceramics*”, referred at a later date as the **why-ib’**, the “*transformer*” or “*remodeler*”

In the fifth section of the panels, **K’inich Kan B’ahlam’** move the historical scene of the kingdom to the time of **K’an Joy Chitam.I** (490-565), where he refers to the tying up of the **ook-te’el** that may translate as the “*upright post (?)*” on November 19, 496, when he was then six years old. The text mentions that the event took place at **Tok Than**, the ancient seat of the **Ba’akal** Kingdom.

On June 14, 641, the **ook-te’el** ceremony was repeated, for the fifth time, by **K’inich Kan B’ahlam’** when, like his ancestor, he was six years old (DOB 20May635). The ceremony was for a solar deity referred to as **Yik’in (?) K’in** the “*Sun God of Dusk*”; the text however, does not provide more details about this ceremony, but do stress that “*it took place in the presence of G.I, Unen-K’awil*” most probably a representation as an incense burner of the deity.

References unless otherwise noted in text, courtesy Mercedes de la Garza, Guillermo Bernal Romero and Martha Cuevas Garcia in *Fideicomiso Historia de las Americas*, 2012:149

Left Glyph Panel

Right Glyph Panel



### A n n e x . 11

For all cultures, the star of our solar system was the foremost god, since it was perceived to be the original seed of life; without it there could be **No Life**. Sunrise and Sunset unaltered by phases such as those of the Moon and other celestial bodies, made it the ultimate **Tree of Life**, that transcends cultures. Since the dawn of humanity, the alternances of the Sun and Moon in the heavens, masters of nature's cycles, were deified and woven into cultures and their art. Their unfailing cyclical return, aligned with natural or man made landmarks were carefully observed, since they were pointers to the sowing-harvesting cycles.

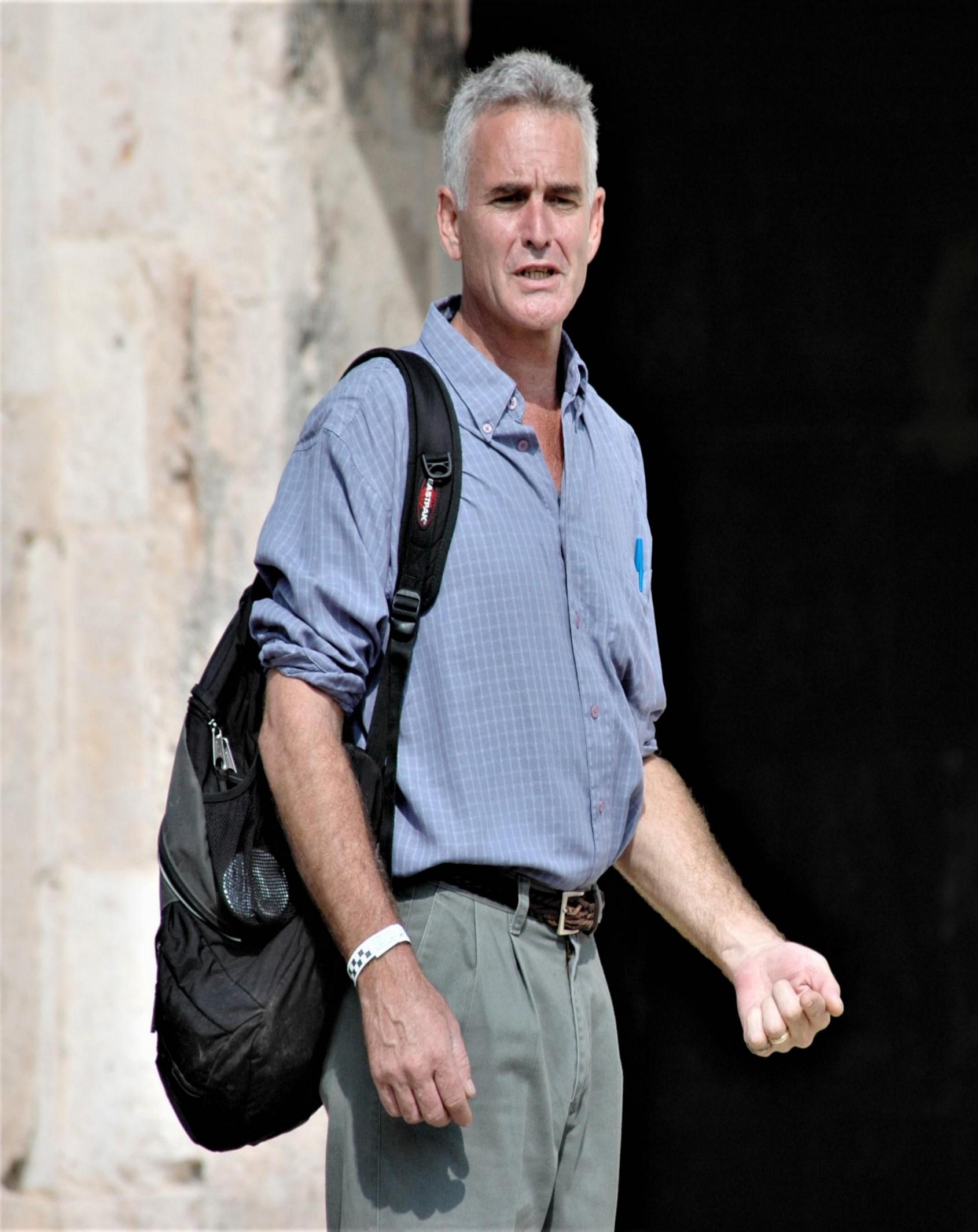
In equatorial latitudes, the Sun midday position was one of the oldest elemental observation with the simple use of a gnomon, or wood pole that set at a selected place and time in the course of the year, such as solstices or equinoxes, that would then not cast a shadow when the Sun was at its zenith.

The singularity claimed by human groups over others mostly proceed from this observation. It is based on the fact that when no shadow was cast by the Sun at that location, it meant that it was unique and so were the people and their deities at that location alone.

Since it was not known to be duplicated anywhere else, the conviction in the distinctiveness of a group was established through tradition as a fact, as was their exclusive claim to uniqueness. This belief is at the root of conflicts because it was sanctioned through generations in myths and beliefs set forth by community leaders for the survival of their people, grounded in a coherent apprehension at their time, of a dual visible and hidden universe.

Sun and Moon where the first celestial bodies to be deified, more were added to the pantheon of cultures at later times such as Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Orion and the Pleiades among others; but no heavenly body, or earthly feature, will ever surpass the unique mythological and cultural power of the Sun.

Photo, Daniel Ferreira @ [www.500px.com](http://www.500px.com)



## Annex – 12 Christopher Powell

Ph.D, University of Texas at Austin, Institute of American Studies, 2010. Field Director of the **PGC-Proyecto Grupo de Las Cruces**, Palenque 1997-2000

Excavated the tomb of **Copàn's** lineage founder, K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo', 1995

An archaeologist with 20 years in the field, Powell has worked all over the Maya world, both in the ruins and with the modern Maya people. After a decade of contract and research archaeology in the United States, Powell shifted his focus to Mesoamerica. From 1993 to 1996 he worked at Copan, Honduras with the University of Pennsylvania where he excavated the richly decorated tomb of Copan's lineage founder, Yax K'uk' Mo, the tomb of his queen, and the tomb of a sacrificial burial of a Tlaloc style warrior. His work at Copan is featured in the December 1997 issue of National Geographic Magazine.

In 1996 he began working at Palenque, first as field director for the Pre-Columbian Art Research Institute's *PGC-Proyecto Grupo de Las Cruces*, and later as a supervisor for INAH (*Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia*). He was field director during the 1999 season when the PGC excavated Temple XIX and the finely carved throne of Akal Mo Nhab.III, one of Palenque's final kings. Powell's 1998 University of Texas at Austin thesis entitled *A New View on Maya Astronomy* presented groundbreaking evidence regarding Maya calendrics and how they are mathematically based on multiple astronomical cycles.

His Ph.D. dissertation, *The Shapes of Sacred Space*, presents his revolutionary new theories regarding Maya geometry and explains how the Maya, both ancient and modern, incorporate the proportions of nature in their art and architecture. The Maya Exploration Center, Austin, TX ([www.mayaexploration.org](http://www.mayaexploration.org)) is proud to support his ongoing research.

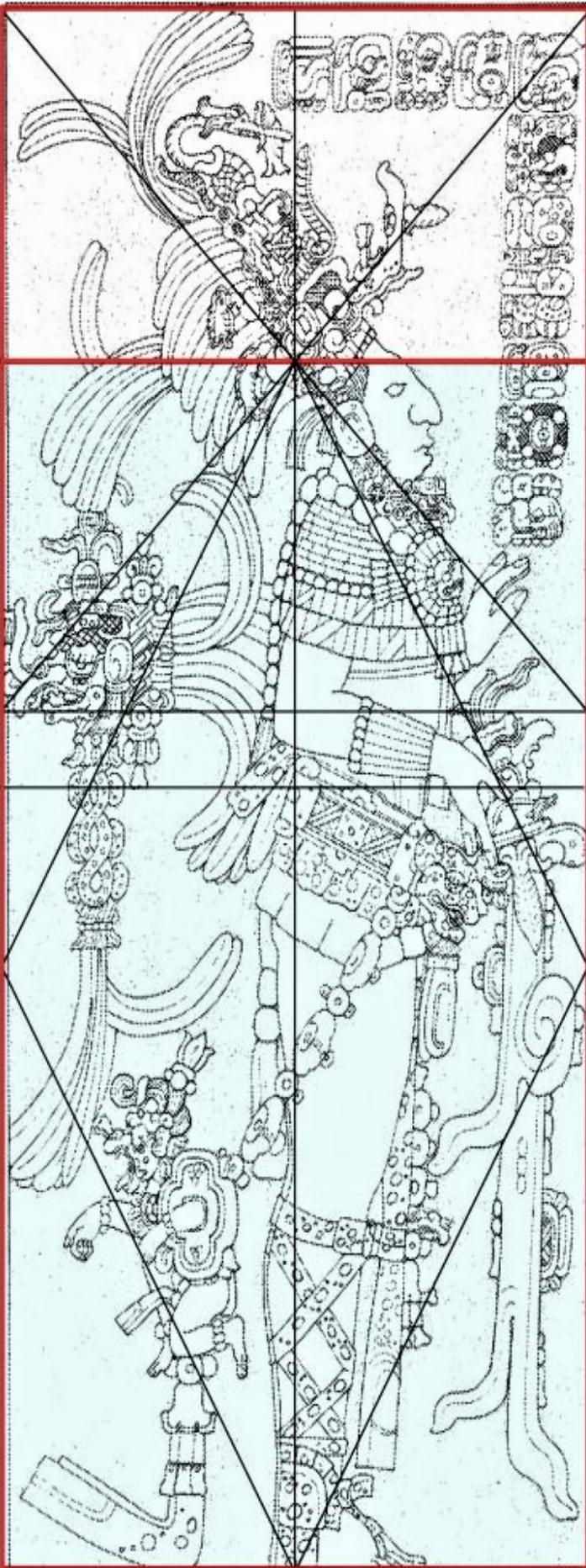
The author is grateful to Dr. Powell for his permission to use his research papers in support of this project.

## Annex – 14 – Temple of the Cross, East and West Jambs

Drawings and Quotations with Permission, from Dr. Christopher Powell's Ph.D Dissertation Titled:

*"The Shapes of Sacred Space: A Proposed System of Geometry Used to Lay Out and Design Maya Art and Architecture and Some Implications Concerning Maya Cosmology"*.

The University of Texas at Austin, May 201 - Temple of the Cross, Sanctuary East jamb (L) and West jamb (R) – from by L. Schele in P.A.R.I. 2da Mesa Redonda de Palenque, 1976



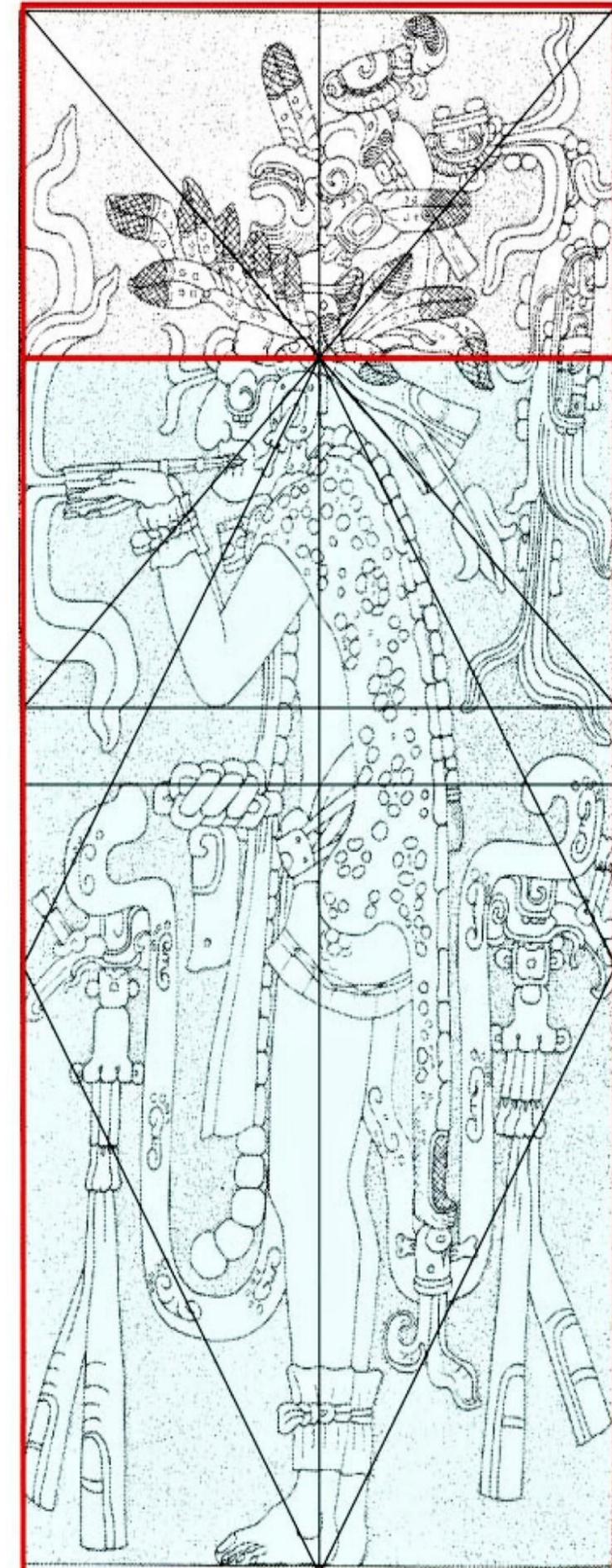
The thorough analysis of the Maya use of geometry is based on no less exhaustive field investigations, in **Palenque** and at other locations. In 1999 Dr. Powell (Annex.10), was field director for the Pre-Columbian Art Research Institute's *PGC-Proyecto Grupo de Las Cruces*, at Palenque; and later a supervisor for INAH (*Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia*). His investigations in structures and the techniques used at the time, such as temple and residential complex, advanced our knowledge of the use of sacred space.

The measurement systems and tools, used in the past in the New and Old World, are similar for the simple reason that there are no two options to reach a measuring system that stands the test of time. Furthermore, in spite of the limited scientific and technological means available in ancient times, the fundamentals of architecture were used, from building structures to simple implements. The author remarkable 475 pages dissertation with diagrams, describe his approach as follows:

*"My methodology for defining, evaluating, and presenting Maya geometry and how it is expressed in the layout and design of Maya artifacts is simple. I begin with ethnographical investigations (Chapter 6) that clearly demonstrate how the Maya use geometry today to lay out and design their vernacular houses and altars. I explain in the Introduction, and show graphically in Chapter 5 (Figure 1), how the repeated proportions used by the Maya today form a coherent and interrelated set of rectangular proportions; that is, beginning with a square, the length of each succeeding rectangle is equal to the diagonal of the preceding one. I discuss the phi and Pythagorean 3,4,5 rectangles as well, and their relationships to this basic set of rectangular proportions"*.

*"The shapes of flowers and shells; the human form; the cardinal directions and the square Maya world; Maya concepts of time (circular calendars); their place in the universe (astronomical observation circles); the architecture of their physical environment (the shapes of their houses, milpas, and temples); and their works of art all share the proportions inherent in three simple geometrical forms — the equilateral triangle, the square, and the pentagon. These three regular polygons, with their square root of two, square root of three, and phi rectangular expressions, provide an underlying structure that unites the Maya cosmos"*.

The universe of the Maya environment and observation of heavenly bodies were, and as mentioned before still are, fundamentals in their daily lives, belief structure, and the characters of gods, deities and ancestors.



## A n n e x - 13

**Merle Green Robertson, Ph.D 1913-2011**

Stelae 16 at Dos Pilas, Guatemala, 1971

Photo Archive Merle Greene Robertson  
in *Arqueologia Mexicana* 45:62

A born talented artist, master of water color painter, writer and photographer, she left us an outstanding legacy of Maya carvings on stelae and monuments.

She developed on her own, the remarkable rubbing technique on rice paper to duplicate monumental carvings from more than 100 archaeological sites in Mesoamerica. During her career spanning four decades, she made over 4000 rubbings 2000 monuments.

In many cases, the details of the carvings we have today were preserved thanks to her work. A number have been lost to looters, or slowly erased by the environment. Without her rubbings, we would have a harder time understanding Maya history.

Her technique was borrowed from the ancient Chinese, but she further developed it and refined two methods of ink on rice paper for her rubbings. The selection for each method, type of ink and paper, was subject to the type of reproduction and the environment.

She is better known for her work at Palenque, a site she truly loved. She was, with other Mayanists the driver of the renowned *Palenque Roundtable*, that brings together every other year, professionals and scholars from around the world at Palenque.

Born in the small town of Miles City, Montana in 1913, she earned her Master Degree in Fine Arts at the University of Guanajuato, where she studied painting, photography and mural painting. Before setting her sight on Palenque. She also worked on the Tikal Project with the University of Pennsylvania.

Tatiana died on August 30, 1985. Thirteen years after her death, her ashes were buried at the foot of the stairs of Group.B, the great Maya Classic period site of Piedras Negras, Guatemala.



## A n n e x - 15

**Octabio Sanchez Torres** is a consummate artist who, from 1977 to 1979, with the help of **Merle Green Robertson** (Annex.9), and her precise copies of stelae and wall tablets, was able to reproduce those of the **Group of the Cross** with great accuracy. The difference with the originals, is their size, that by law must be either slightly smaller or larger, to ensure that they are only duplicates of originals.

The material used is a mix of marble, finely crushed limestone and white cement. In line with the original design, the flat unworked slab is first carved along the vertical and horizontal lines of the pattern of glyphs and figures, to a depth of a few centimeters. Actual carving of glyphs and figures then take place, a painstaking work that takes several weeks, carefully following the paper designs supplied by archaeologists, and Merle's help when in doubt.

Between carving sessions, the slab was covered with a wet blanket, since it could not be left to harden or carving would no longer be possible. Once completed, after about 3 months for the panels of the **Temple of the Sun** below, the work received a coat of extremely fine original mix, then left to dry and harden for about 2 months. Since the late 1970s, no more work of such complexity has been done again.





## Annex – 16

The article at right was published in the **Institute of Maya Studies** the *IMS Explorer* newsletter, Volume 47, Issue 2, February 2019.

It was forwarded to the *IMS Explorer* editor by Elaine Schele via **Academia.edu**.

The original article was published in **The Yucatàn Times'** website on July 27, 2018.

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<http://www.instituteofmayastudies.org>



Even today, the green crosses (some dressed in huipils) can be seen in many locals across the Yucatan Peninsula. Images courtesy of: [cultura colectiva.com](http://cultura colectiva.com)

## What do the Mysterious Green Crosses in the Houses of Yucatan Mean?

Anyone who has made a road trip along the Yucatan Peninsula and in general of the entire Maya region in southeast Mexico, surely will have noticed that in the gardens and orchards of many houses there is always at least one green cross, sometimes these crosses are “dressed” with a *hipil* (or *huipil*).

For those who do not know much about Maya culture, it will not look like anything more than some kind of ornament or something related to the patron saint of the region. However, those who are familiar with the history of the Yucatan, know that this type of cross is a symbol of rebellion and identity for many people across the peninsula.

Between 1847 and 1901 during the so-called Caste War, this type of cross was used as a kind of oracle or banner by the indigenous groups that worked in the henequen haciendas, who were fed up with the bad treatment that was imposed on them by their patrons, whom in fact they called “masters” (as if they were slaves).

The hacienda owners not only forced them to work long hours, but they also used to impose their ideological and religious beliefs on these Maya workers; and due to this constant mistreatment, the indigenous people decided to rise up.

### A symbol of resistance

When the first Spanish explorers arrived in the lands inhabited by the Maya, they found that

they already showed an incredible attachment to the cross; however, what they believed to be a kind of proto-Christianity was rather just a part of a spiritual system that has to do with the creation of the Universe, according to Maya cosmogony.

What the conquerors believed was somehow a manifestation of Christianity in the New World, was nothing more than a representation of the Ceiba tree, which was considered the axis and center of the Universe by the ancient Maya.

The Franciscan monks who came to the peninsula around the year 1546 were well aware of the cult to the Ceiba tree in other communities of Mesoamerica; and that’s how they saw this as a perfect tool for the so-called “evangelization”; that was rather an ideological and religious conquest.

If one pays attention when entering any church of colonial times – especially those that were built as centers of evangelization – none has an atrial cross in which the image of the crucified Jesus is portrayed. This has to do directly with the intention of not confusing the natives who, when seeing a man dying on the cross, would possibly associate this image with the human sacrifices they used to carry out, believing that this was a normal practice for other religions throughout the world.

Many Maya who were convinced by the Spaniards that praying to Christ was practically the same thing as raising their prayers to the Ceiba



*In the Caste War, when the indigenous people of the entire Maya region decided to take up arms against their oppressors, they adopted the green cross as a symbol of their resistance; for many were direct descendants of those who, in order not to forget their roots, decided to adopt the cult of the cross. In this way the message was clear: “they tried to conquer us, but we are still alive and fighting”.* (Mural of the Caste War, Municipal Council Building, Valladolid.)

tree. However, there were also some more cunning, who followed the Christian imposition, although their prayers and thoughts during the religious events, were still dedicated to the Ceiba tree.

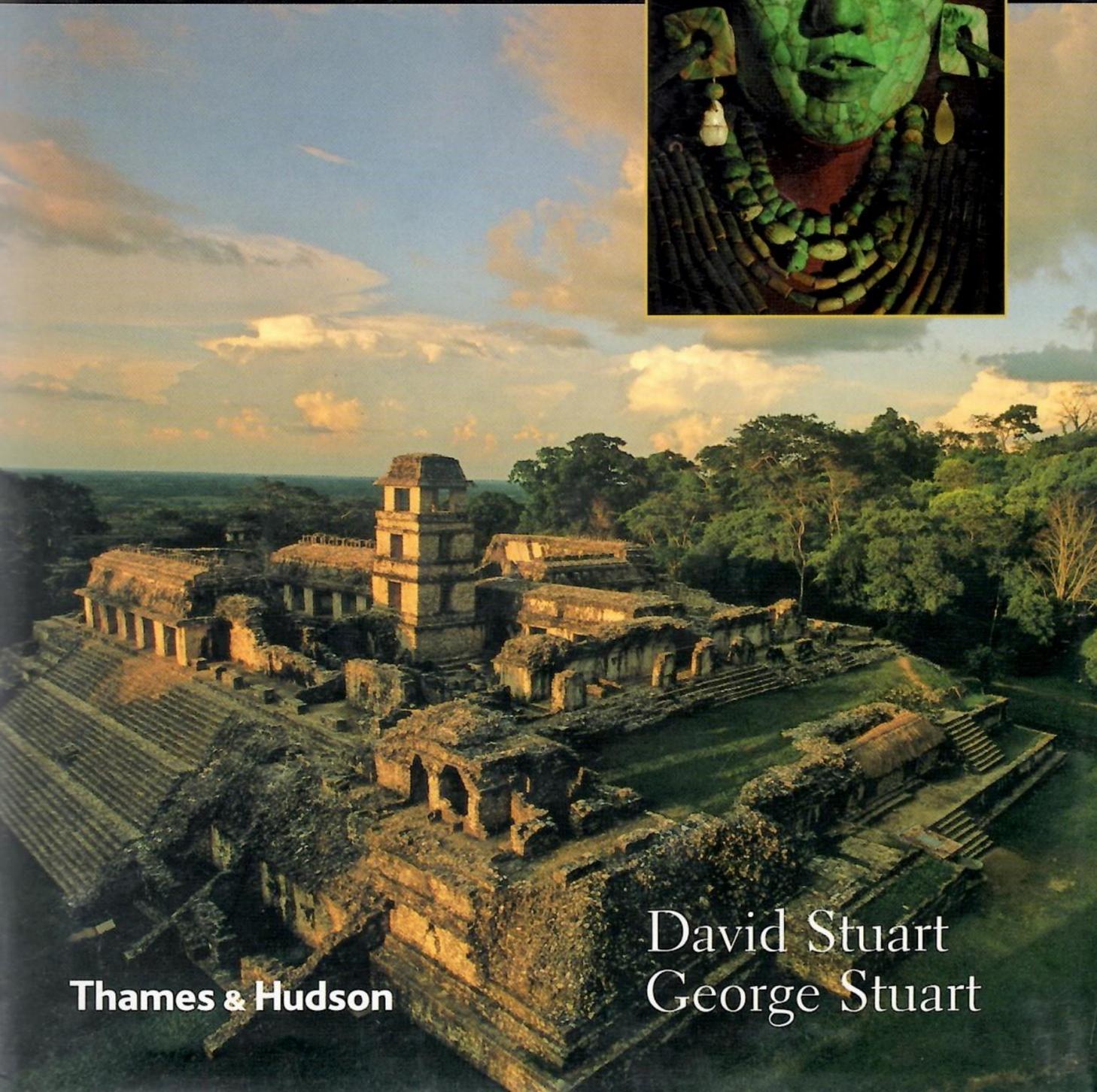
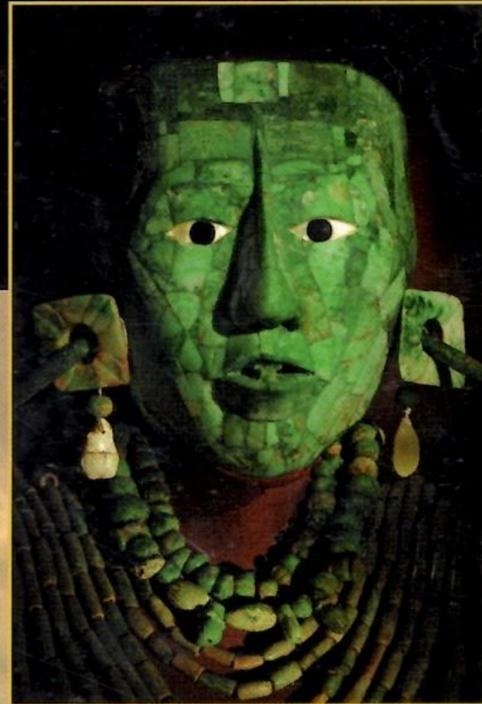
Even today, the crosses can be seen all over Southeast Mexico, as a constant signal of struggle on the part of the indigenous peoples of our country.

In some Zapatista regions of Chiapas, the green cross has been adopted as a symbol of resistance to what they call “the threat of Capitalism”. In fact, there are those who affirm that this cross serves as a way to unite the indigenous communities throughout the nation, since its use has allowed the voice of these people to really be heard. 🗿

Source: From an article released on the *Yucatan Times* website on 7/27/2018, at: <http://www.theyucantimes.com/2018/07/what-do-the-mysterious-green-crosses-in-the-houses-of-yucatan-mean/> Submitted by Elaine Schele on [academia.edu](http://academia.edu)

# PALENQUE

Eternal City of  
the Maya



David Stuart  
George Stuart

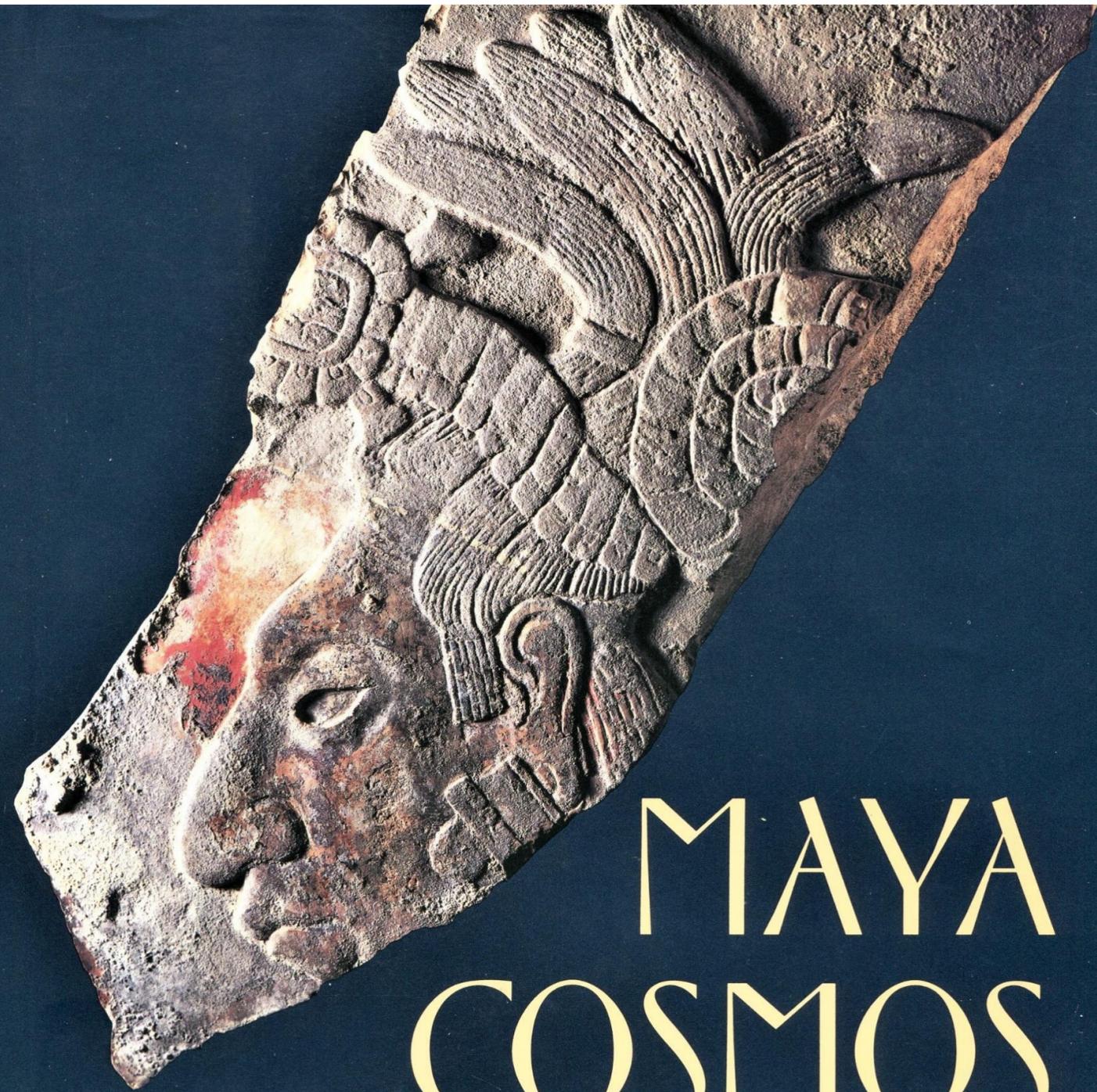
Thames & Hudson

**David Stuart**, Schele Professor of Ancient Mesoamerican Art and Writing at the University of Texas, Austin. Specializes in the decipherment of Maya hieroglyphic texts, where his achievement has brought him international renown. At eighteen, he became the youngest ever to receive a prestigious MacArthur Prize Fellowship for his work in helping to “break the Maya code”. **George Stuart**, David’s father, is president of the Boundary End Archaeology Research Center in North Carolina, and has devoted more than fifty years to the study of the Maya people, both ancient and living. For much of that time he served the National Geographic society as staff archaeologist.



David Freidel, Linda Schele and Joy Parker (below left to right)

Photo, Barbara Kerr on *Maya Cosmos* book cover.



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