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A Study of the Religious Worldview and Ceremonial Life of the Inhabitants of Palenque and Yaxchilan

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A Thesis in the Field of Anthropology in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master of Liberal Arts Degree

Harvard University

Extension School

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Abstract

This thesis examines the religious worldview and ceremonial life of the ancient inhabitants of the classic Maya sites of Palenque and Yaxchilan through a comparison of Lacandon Maya oral history and the hieroglyphic information available at the sites themselves. While other important Mayan oral histories have been available in written form since the Colonial Period in the 17th and 18th centuries, the *Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel* and the *Popol Vuh* of the Quiche Maya of Guatemala, as well as the *Annals of the Cakchiquels* are for the most part considered to be written in poetic fashion and therefore can sometimes be difficult to work within a historical framework. Lacandon Oral lineage is unique in that it is historical prose and not written in a poetic fashion. Consequently, it can be used within a historically dated time frame, like the one provided by the modern deciphering of Mayan hieroglyphs, which have successfully matched ancient Maya calendar dates with the Julian and Gregorian calendar systems.

In support of my research, I utilize data from the Lacandon Maya Oral History as told by the Elders, K'in Paniagua, Chan K'in Viejo, Mateo Viejo, and Don Antonio of Naja and Lacanja, Chiapas, Mexico. I also include information gained by the previous Lacandon Maya oral history studies of Alfred Tozzer and Roberto Bruce. I will compare the oral history with the substantial corpus available via the major breakthroughs of the past forty years in the study of the hieroglyphic texts of Palenque and Yaxchilan.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to My Mother Yolanda who supported me in every way, every day during my decades in the Selva Lacandona. To Linda Schele who opened so many doors with her brilliance. To Roberto Bruce, whose work and presence among the Lacandon opened the path for my own work with the Maya. To Dr Nicholas Poole Carter who removed the blinders from my eyes and opened my mind to the world of Mayan Glyphs. To Chan K'in Viejo, Mateo Viejo, Don Antonio, K'in Paniagua, and Chan Kin Pedro of the Lacandon Maya and Thomas Pela of the Hopi Sun Clan, all of them are my perfect teachers. Thank You to each and every one of you.

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Introduction



Mateo Viejo, Chan K'in Viejo, Don Antonio in Naja, 1980s

I will focus on three concepts that have great meaning to the Lacandon People of today and that are also represented in hieroglyphic form by the ancient inhabitants of the Classic Maya sites of Palenque and Yaxchilan. Huun, Tzak, and Pat.

The first concept is based on the word HUUN. Michael Coe translates HUUN as headdress or bark paper.(Coe and Van Stone 2001:163) The Lacandon people still make the HUUN headdress from the "akhun che" or amate tree bark even today. According to David Stuart "*huun* also exists as a specific term for the amate.tree, from which paper is traditionally made in Mesoamerica"(Stuart 2013:123). The Huun ceremonial head band is seen being worn various times in Palenque as well as being represented in glyphic form on the Tablets of the Cross Group in Palenque. On the Temple of the Foliated Cross tablet in Palenque we observe the ceremonial offering of the HUUN in the stone carving of Kan Balam as well as read about the offering itself in the glyphic evidence. The main way that the Lacandon make their offerings to the gods is a clay vessel called a "god pot", which has a face with an overhanging bottom lip, where food and drink offerings may be placed. Each of the thirteen Lacandon gods receives his own unique pot from which to eat and drink the offerings that are made during ritualistic activities. The god pots are renewed from time to time, such as Solar eclipses and other pertinent dates for the Maya. When new god pots are made they are given life and the old ones are taken to a cave, which also houses the bones of the ancestors as well as their ancient god pots, where they are put to rest.

Lacandon god pots



The Lacandon perform a ritual in which the god pots are offered the Chak Huun as a form of payment for healing an illness. The Chak Huun is tied on to the god pot as the Lacandon pray for the healing of illness. On the TFC Tablet , Kan Balam holds a small effigy of Sak-Hunal, that he offers as payment, with a Sak-Huun tied around his head , apparently representing a moment of “nawaj”, or adorning of an effigy.

Joanne Baron uses the term “nawaj”, (which translates as “adorning”), in reference to the ceremonial dressing of the effigy.(Baron 2016:62) This ritual is something that the Lacandon still do today.

The second concept is known as “Tzak”, a term which deals with the calling of a supernatural being from another reality into this world in order to ask for its help. The Classic Maya seem to be expressing a ritual in which they are trying to trap or keep such entities in clay effigies which were in turn treated as living beings. The TZAK, also known as the “fish in hand " glyph has been thought to allude to such a practice. There have been some intellectual comparisons of the catching and keeping of a slippery fish to that of trapping an elusive supernatural entity. The Lacandon have a ceremony where

they make new "god pots" which are brought to life or perhaps imbued with life through a series of gifts that are seen as supernatural payment to the entities.

The third concept which I will focus on deals with a part of the preparation of the ancient Tzak ritual. Mainly the glyph PAT and its association with the actual creation of the clay vessels and effigies which would house the beings called forth in the Tzak or conjuring rituals. The Classic Maya appear to have formed the clay and cooked it ritually in the Cross Group of Palenque. There have been insightful points made about the similarity between the glyphs that read "chi-ti-ni-li" on the Foliated Cross Tablet and the Yukatek word for kiln, kitin.(Houston 1996:137). The Classic Maya of Palenque phrase " I pul-uy u chittin-il ux luut kuh" recorded on the limestone walls of the Cross Group appears to refer to the making or cooking of "three gods". Also on the Foliated Cross Tablet we see the phrase "patlaj" which Joanne Baron "translates as "gods were made" (Baron 2013:61) The Lacandon still say "In PAT ka'at",("I create the clay")when making the clay god pots for their most important Triad of gods.

The Huun, Tzak,and Pat combined ritually in the ancient world of the Classic Maya as well as in the contemporary world of the Lacandon Maya , open doors to subtle and surreal worlds that the Maya believe are homes to entities that are capable of great deeds as well as great wrath. The universality of Maya religion is evident here. The Lacandon are thought to have been in Chiapas, Yucatan, and beyond. Their language and customs seems to bear evidence of travel and contact with other groups in Mesomerica. While their language is certainly influenced by Yucatec Maya, it also contains clues of other past influences. For instance, the Lacandon call their underworld, "Mictlan", which is a Nahuatl term for a nine leveled underworld where the Dead might go after their

physical Earthly experience had expired. The Lacandon believe that Mictlan is a nine tiered underworld where the *pixan*, or spirit of the Dead travels to be judged and sent to live with Kisin or SukunYum, depending on their deeds while incarnated on Earth as Hach Winik,(True People). Those that live in Mictlan are known as the Bolon Tiku. These beliefs, as well as the term Mictlan are indeed a reflection of the Nahuatl belief in a nine leveled underworld named Mictlan.

The Lacandon are able to recognize the rituals depicted upon the stelae and lintels of places like Yaxchilan and Palenque, both places are considered the home of the gods for the Lacandon. When they see the limestone engraving in Yaxchilan of *Chok*, scattering of precious substances as an offering, being performed by a ruler of Yaxchilan, they relate it to the scattering of Balche that the Lacandon perform as a ritual offering of gratitude as well as a type of payment for services rendered. The Lacandon also talk about paying the gods when they feed them Balche and tamales along with cigars and atole. Although the term *Chok* is still in use today among the modern Chol Maya of Palenque, the Lacandon say *U sak u Ho* "we offer you this Balche" to HachakYum,

SukunYum, and Akyantho as they scatter droplets of Balche onto the extended lower lip .



Lacandon god pot and Xate leaf



Mateo Viejo feeding the gods Balche

They do not touch the offering with their fingers, rather they use a folded Xate leaf as a receptacle for the Balche that is being given to the god pots so that the Lacandon deities can drink Balche and therefore enter into the same space and time as the Lacandon Elders who are opening doors to other worlds with their ritualistic actions of chanting invitations and gratitude feeding the gods with tamales, venison, wild boar and copious amounts of Balche, whose psychotropic nature propels the Lacandon into another reality, one where gods and men may comune, even if only for a short time, where the *Tohil* ("bearer of light'),the main Lacandon holy man, may have visions of the past as well as of those things which have yet to manifest themselves upon the Earth. Chan K'in Viejo would interpret dreams for the people of Naja, he would counsel them on what their dreams meant and what if any actions should be taken to either heed a warning or to give

thanks to a particular god for the services they have rendered usually in healing a family member or helping a particular crop grow large and abundant.

While the rulers of Classic Maya sites have particular names for their gods and even special names for certain revered Sak Huun that have been used in very special occasions such as commemorated in Yaxchilan where on the third step of Hieroglyphic Stairway number three the glyphic evidence speaks of a Sak Huun named, “Bolon Tzak K’ahkChaak” or *The Nine Conjurings of K’ahkChaak.* The Lacandon, in turn, use only the titles of their principal ceremonial deities. The three main gods referenced in ritualistic activity are known as

1.HachakYum,“one true lord”.

2.SukunYum, “older brother of the lord”

3. Akyantho, “god of the foreigners”

The Lacandon use thirteen gods over all in the god house ceremonies, however they have many more deities and helpers whose adventures and often ethically educative exploits are recounted to the young and old to remind them of who they are and where they come from. The Lacandon call themselves Hach Winik (True People) and their language Hach Ta’an (True Speaking), although they do understand that the world knows them as Maya people. Palenque is taught to be where the gods were created,born, or manifested. It is the setting for the stories of HachakYum, the betrayal by his son Chak Chib and his battles with Kisin of the Lacandon underworld, Mictlan. Yaxchilan is taught by the Lacandon Elders as being the sanctuary that was built by HachakYum after leaving Palenque with his ever faithful son Tu’up, who is depicted as a great stone statue which sits atop Temple 33 in Yaxchilan, guarding the Hach Bina, the headless statue of

his Father Hachakyum . Mayan origin stories speak of First Father who is decapitated by the Bolon Tiku, the 9 Lords of Death and afterwards rescued by his sons, the Hero Twins. Tu'up is said to be seated over Hackakyum's decapitated body at Yaxchilan awaiting the moment that the head is replaced as well as the return of the jaguar gods who will come for sacrificial blood in order to help start the new world. Chan K'in Viejo learned from his Father Don Enrique Bor and this is what he passed on to the men of Naja as they drank Balche and offered payment unto the gods who will one day return in full force to rebuild the temples, that Ts'ibatnah will repaint with the sacrificial blood of only the very best people . For the Lacandon of Naja, this is an endless cycle that has always and will always perpetuate itself upon the world of the Hach Winik, the True People.

Tu'up seated on Temple 33 at Yaxchilan, above the headless Hach Bina





Chan K'in Viejo and the men of Naja would make a five day walk to reach Yaxchilan.

Temple 33 was always their main place of focus because they believe that the headless Hach Bina represents Hachakyum and therefore this was the proper place to take their offerings of Balche, Copal, as well as their prayers giving thanks for life itself. The Lacandon believe that the great *Yax Che***,** the very world tree of the Maya also resides at Yaxchilan. They called this place Chichokla long before Maler named it Yaxchilan. It is considered to be a more important place even than Palenque , where the gods were born, because Hachakyum and his son Tu'up left Palenque and made Chichokla the center of the Lacandon Maya world. A Lacandon man who has a pregnant wife is not allowed on the temples and women are never allowed onto the temples in Lacandon tradition. This is still a law followed by the older Lacandon of Naja, Metsabok ,and Lacanja.

I

Huun – Sacred Royal Headband of the Classic Maya and Contemporary Lacandon People

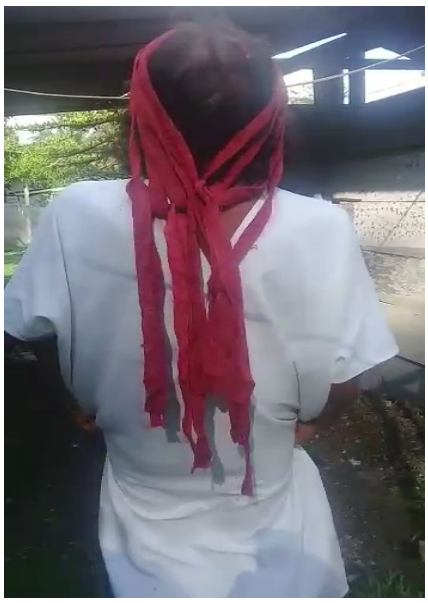
Huun

HUN-na(*hun*) **hu-na** (*hun*)

“paper, book, paper headband”



Chak Hun of Don K’in Paniagua Sak Huun of King Pakal.







The Sak Huun is depicted in various forms in places like Palenque and Yaxchilan, sometimes it is the main adornment while others it is used to help fasten or tie together other types of Headdress. Classic Maya rulers were presented with the Huun during ceremonies of ascension in the same way as a King would be given a crown in an inauguration. The Huun is made of a paper that comes from the .."soaked and beaten bark of the *Ficus cotinifolia* (amate) tree..in an investiture ceremony the headband was tied (k'al huun).. around the forehead of a new Maya ruler." (Rice 2019:100)



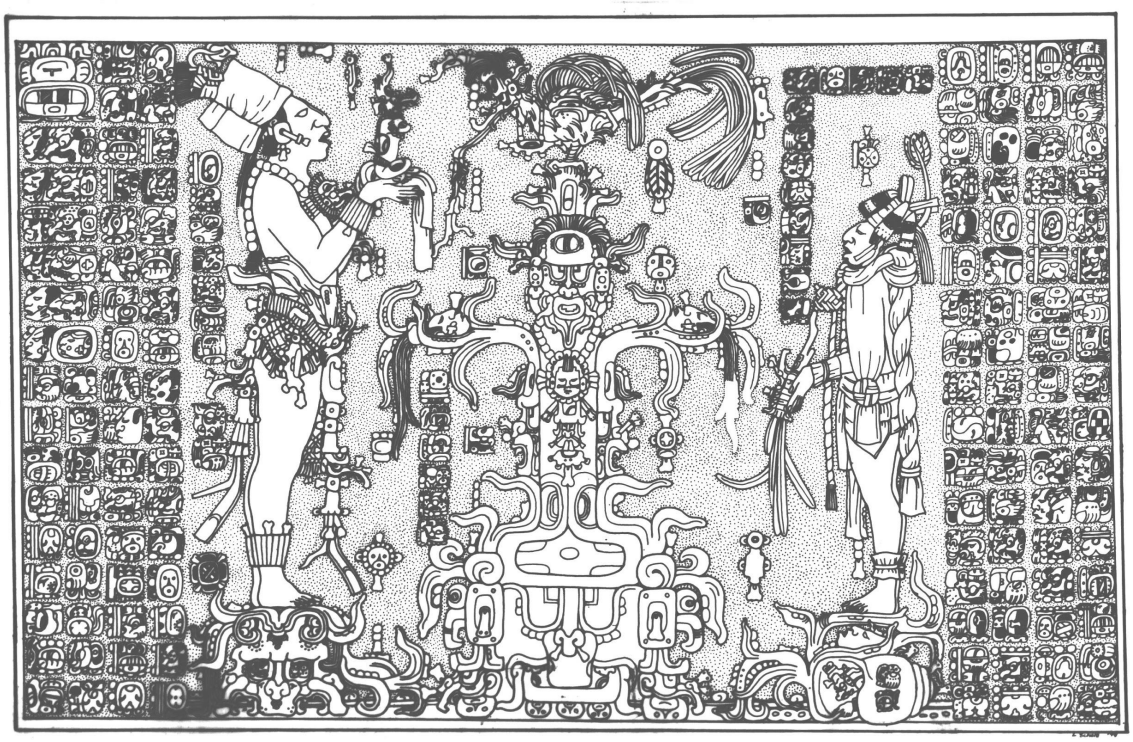
The ascension glyph as a tied head/bundle.

Rice states that in “Palenque this ascension ritual ... took place in a room or building ... known as the (*k’alhuun naah* “Headband Fastening House”)





Kan Balam and Pakal K’in, Tablet of the Foliated Cross, Palenque



The Lacandon believe that the ceremonies depicted in the Cross Group of Palenque are symbolic of the Hero Twins descent into Xibalba to rescue the *pixan,* the spirit, of the First Father. Kan Balam wears a large Sak Huun as he plays the part of the Hero Twin, Juun Ajaw. Prudence Rice mentions that “the headband can be.. a ..symbolic evocation of the Hero Twin , Juun Ajaw ”(Rice 2019:100) For the Lacandon the Cross Group of Palenque is where the gods made the first three stines of creation on Earth, mirroring the hearthstones in the sky, set in the constellation of Orion, the nebula Mn42 is the smoky pit where the gods make their fire each day to warm their tortillas and beans.

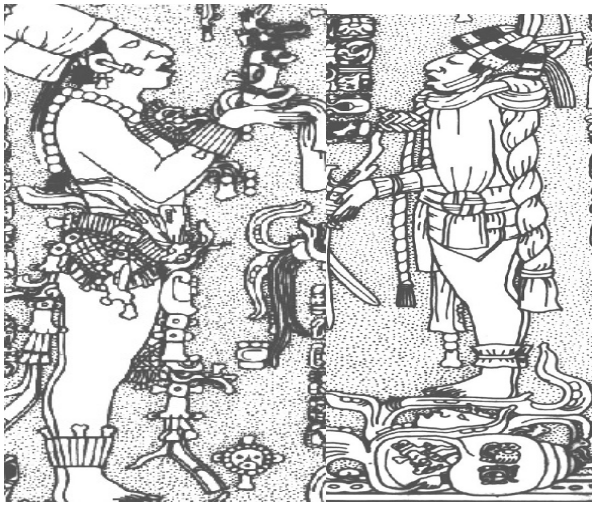
In *The Maya Scribe, His Art and World*, Michael Coe (1973: Figure3) identified the two characters he called "The Head Band Twins."



Fig. 3. K1183 Itzamná, the head of the Maize God, and the Hero Twins.

Justin Kerr states “The headband is probably the most important iconographic tool that we can use in identifying the Hero Twins...all of the characters wearing the headband,.. are related to ..the Hero Twins, their fathers, or their half-brothers in one way or another. However, ... there are other symbols.. to define the Hero Twins.. a thick round knot at the neck or waist, are shared with G1 and G3 .” (Kerr

1989:2)





Note the “thick round knots” at Pakal’s neck as well as as on his waist

Sak Huun worn by Hero Twins

David Stuart states that “The HUUN value for the head of the “Jester God” (Schele 1976) has been ..based on its common substitution by the syllables hu-na..in spellings of the term for the royal headband (huun or sakhuun).(Stuart 2013:123)







“

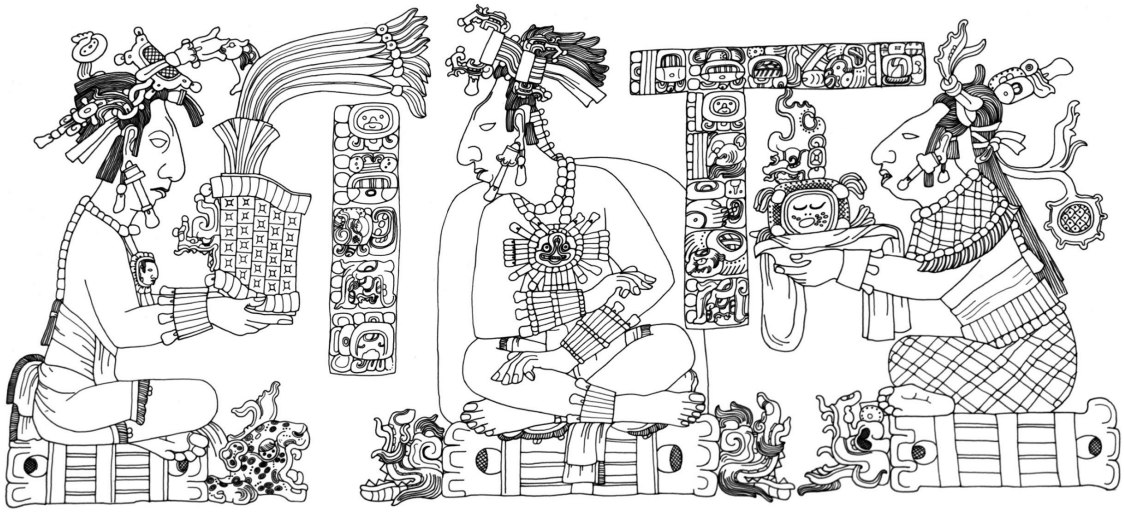
Jester God”

Kan Balam offers the “Jester God”

When Kan Balam performed the rituals in the Temples today known as the Cross Group of Palenque, he was not only conjuring the old gods and ancestors in order to help guide his father, Pakal K’in into the great Matawil, he was himself standing in the place of the old gods and ancestors. So was Pakal K’in. Micheal Coe tells us what type of objects and ceremonial regalia to associate with the Hero Twins and the old gods, mainly those known in Palencano lore as G1,G2,and G3. In *Maya Scribe* Coe states that “ The headband.. iconographic tool that we can use in identifying the Hero Twins. other symbols.. to define the Hero Twins.. a thick round knot at the neck or waist, are shared with G1 and G3 .” We clearly see these objects being worn and offered by Kan Balam and Pakal K’in in all of the tablets associated with the Temples in the Cross Group of Palenque. They are not only calling out to the old ones, they are participating in a type of Passion Play where they themselves play the roles of those that they seek to conjure.



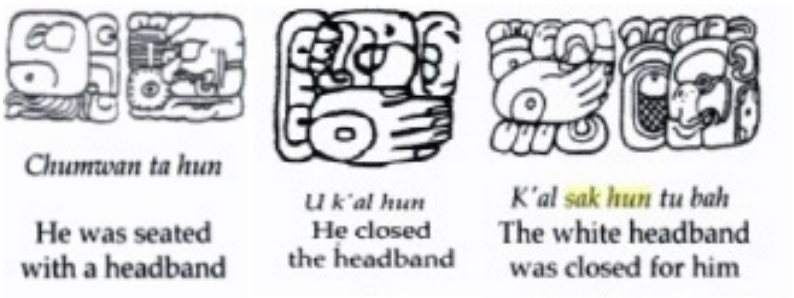
The tying of the “white paper headdress” was an important conclusion to rituals like those celebrating the accession of a new leader.



1.*Chumwan ta hun*-he was seated with a headband

2.*Uk'al hun*-He closed the headband

3. *K'al sak hun tu bah*-The white headband was closed for him.

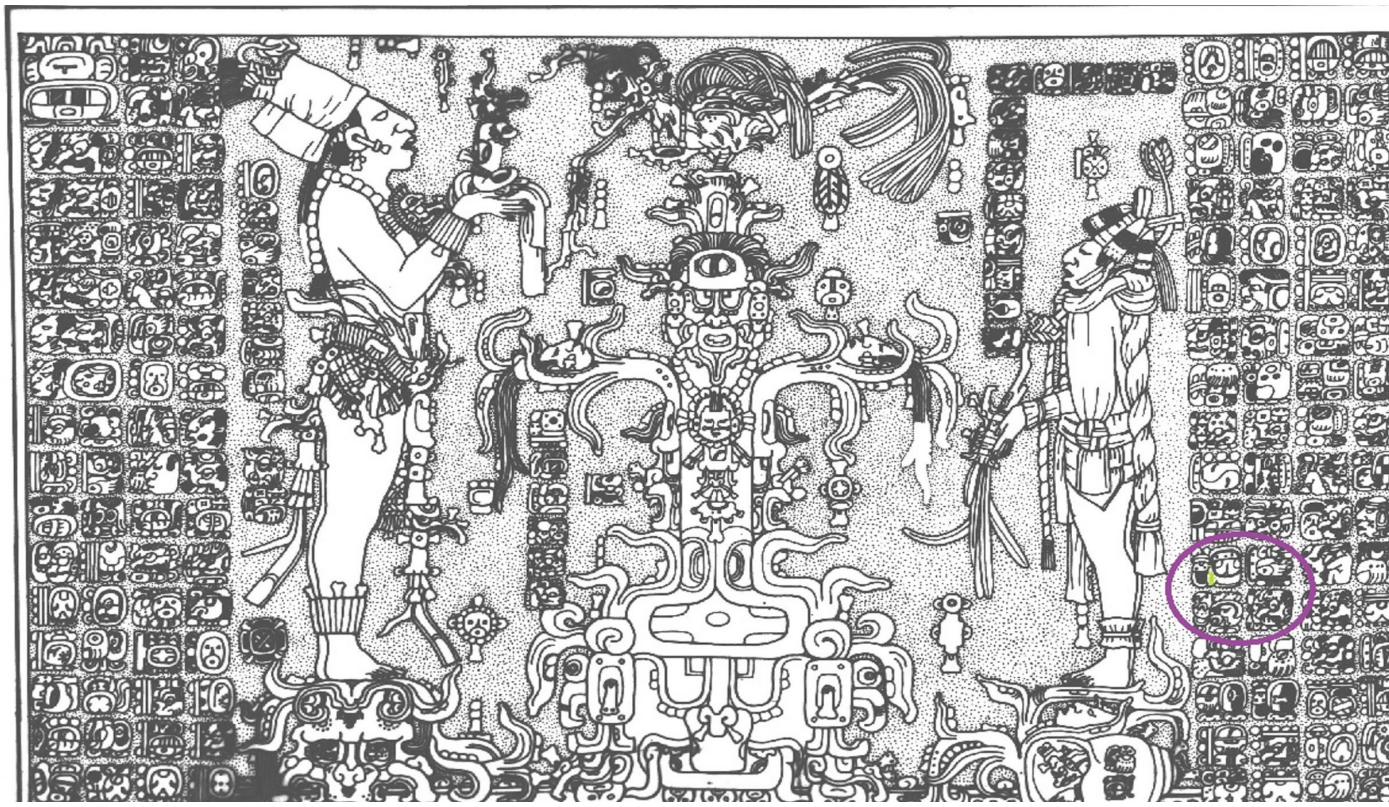


The Maya of Palenque and Yaxchilan were no different than their counterparts in the rest of the Empire in the sense that the old dates meant the world to them. They went through substantial mathematical gymnastics at times in order to tie in an upcoming ceremony or temple dedicatory event with a great date in the past. Perhaps not so different than those who were period costumes when performing Passion Plays during Easter time. Kan Balam and Pakal K'in are wearing items known to be associated with the great Hero Twins. The actions of the Hero wins in Xibalba helped free the First Father and subsequently all humankind from the darkness of permanent Xibalban death. Kan Balam is present in physical form when these rituals took place, however Pakal K'in had already died at this point so his participation is in spirit form. We see Pakal's hair wrapped in a long, spiraling white cloth that is tied around his head and then draped

down the length of his back. The Lacandon teach that the dead were wrapped in such a manner when being prepared to enter the next world, the mysterious realm of Matawil.

While he has died in a physical body sense Pakal still participates in the ceremonies that are etched in limestone in both hieroglyphic form as well as a visual representation of Kan Balam and his father Pakal K'in. We see the Sak Huun being worn by both men as well as being offered in a subtle and somewhat surreal manner. The offerings are being made to various entities.Some seen and some unseen. One of them that we can clearly see is the "Maize Man" who is in the center of the image. He is a personified corn plant with the face of a man, he wears a kerchief around his neck and even has necklaces on. His outstretched arms are actually part of a corn plant and instead of ears of corn coming out of the plant we see a Mayan head on the right and left side. Not just any Maya head, we are looking at the Hero Twins themselves, being reborn just as the corn plant is rebon each year to offer sustenance and life itself to the Ancient Maya as well as to the Maya of today. Another surreal aspect is Kan Balam offering a Sak Huun in the form of a long white headband but also offering a Huun Jester effigy who is also wearing a Sak Huun headband. The Sak Huun "wears itself" in this manner. The hieroglyphic text speaks of great dates in the distant past. Dates when great figures in the Maya universe were born and conjured into existence . K'awil is present in the glyphs as one being born, thus lending the power and importance of K'awil and his important date to the ceremony that was taking place at the time that Kan Balam was taking reign as King of Palenque following the death of his father, arguably the greatest of all Palencano Kings, Pakal K'in, the Solar Shield himself.

Kan Balam and Pakal K’in the Temple of the Foliated Cross





The Sak Hun can also be tied on broad and wide taking on a turban like appearance.



Don Domingo Kan Balam

Did the Post Classic Lacandon of the last 500 years inherit the Sak Huun through lineage teachings? Did they see them on the limestone wall carvings depicting the Lords of Palenque and Yaxchilan in ceremonial attire? The latter seems less likely being that the Temples were long sealed by earth and time, Palenque itself was buried to the rooftops, hidden in such a fashion that not even Cortez and his men had idea of their existence as they marched south from Tenochtitlan. It is said that Cortez came within 9 kilometers of Palenque and never knew it was there. I posit that logic points to the Sak Huun teachings being inherited through lineages, passed down from generation to generation. The Lacandon know not only how to correctly use the ritual objects such as

the Sak Huun, they also know how to gather the elements from the jungle and then convert them into textiles, paint, cloth and so forth. This knowledge could not come from a mere observance of figures carved into limestone walls. David Stuart also adds that,".. huun..exists as a specific term for the amate or fig tree (Ficus sp.) from which paper is traditionally made in Mesoamerica .(Stuart 2013:123).

The Lacandon of Naja and Lacanja, Chiapas utilize the amate tree for the production of bark paper, while the akhun (masamoro) tree bark is used for the creation of the huun as well as the xicul (tunic). This tradition was alive throughout Mesoamerica.



K'in Paniagua cutting the Huun from the processed Akjun(Masamora) Tree Bark



In the early 20th century the Lacandon Elders such as Don Domingo still wore the Sak Huun, white headband, as a symbol of authority just as the Classic Maya of Palenque and Yaxchilan had utilized the Sak Huun ceremonially. In this photo we can clearly see Don Domingo wearing the white headband in the same fashion depicted on the tablet of The Temple of the Foliated Cross, where Kan Balam has received the **U Sak Huun Kal Aj** "tying of the Sak Huun" ceremony, an action akin to the crowning of a King.



U Sak Huun Kal Aj

The Lacandon also use a Chak Huun or red headband in special ceremonies where the men wear the Chak Huun and each god pot is also given a red headband to wear as a form of payment for the many services rendered in healing, protection, foresight and

abundance of crops and water. The Lacandon are skilled in making the amate cloth from tree bark as well as the red dye from the bark of the chakash tree.

Lacandon Chak Huun

Don Antonio of Naja, tying the Chak Huun on Lacandon god pots.



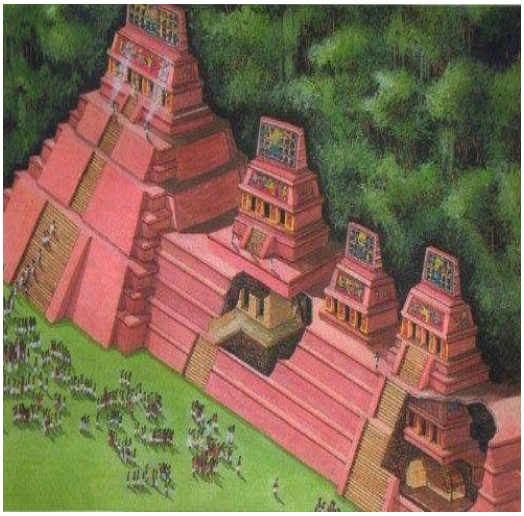
The Lacandon wear white tunics on a daily basis. In the god house there are certain rituals that include the Chak Huun, (red headdress). Instead of the customary color of purity, white, they opt for a red headdress because they consider blood to be of an especially awesome power subsequently red is considered to be the strongest color of any gift or offering. The Chak Huun are used in rituals that seek to replenish the relationships between humankind and the gods.

The Lacandon believe that the ancient temples of their ancestors were painted with the blood of the best people that lived back in those times, this blood magnetized the

temples and filled the people themselves with life as well as cementing a special blood bond with those that came before, that had given of their blood. Chan K'in Viejo spoke of the ceremony that took place in the time of the "Inuki Winik", the ancestors. It happened in front of the place in Yaxchilan now known as Temple 33. The Jaguar gods and their people were offered the blood of the very best people. This was a gift that could not be taken, it must be a gift given freely and from the heart, in this case metaphorically as well as quite literally. The blood flowed down the



large stalactite, now known as the "Speleothem Stela", into a large stone vessel which was used to collect the blood that was used to paint the temples at places like Yaxchilan and Palenque byTs'ibatnah,the god of the graphic arts



Ts'ibatnah's handiwork at Palenque.

A rendering of what ancient Lakam Ha would have looked like in its prime.

When the Lacandon use the boiled bark of the Chakash tree to produce the red color, it is as the tree itself giving up its blood for the Lacandon ceremonies. The Akjun tree (Amate) gives its bark which is transformed into the fabric of the Huun itself. The prepared bark "paper" is dipped into the Chakash bark water and thus the Lacandon Chak Huun is created.



Lacandon Elder K'in Paniagua was the Son in law of Chan K'in Viejo and his closest initiate. In the *Yotoch Ku***,** or god house of Naja, he learned many of the ancient secrets and rituals taught by the great Tohil of the Lacandon. Creating the red paint from Chakash bark is one of those skills that he now passes down to his students. He faithfully retells the stories verbatim as he learned them from his Elders. His wife, Chan Nuk, daughter of Chan K'in Viejo always listens attentively in order to make sure that the knowledge that her Father inherited and passed on is being retold in the correct manner. The ritual incantations are however only for the men and although her Father passed on in 1996, she still leaves the room out of respect when the old songs and incantations are being taught to the new generation.

Mateo Viejo teaching the youth



Chan K'in Viejo sharing his teachings



The Balche is flowing at this time and the male population of Naja Lacandones drink down the sour tasting ,sweet feeling potion that comes to life when the bark of the Balche tree is fermented with sweet jungle honey in the ritual "chem" or dugout canoe

that is made especially for the fermentation of the ritual drink known as Balche in honor of the tree that provides the potent bark.

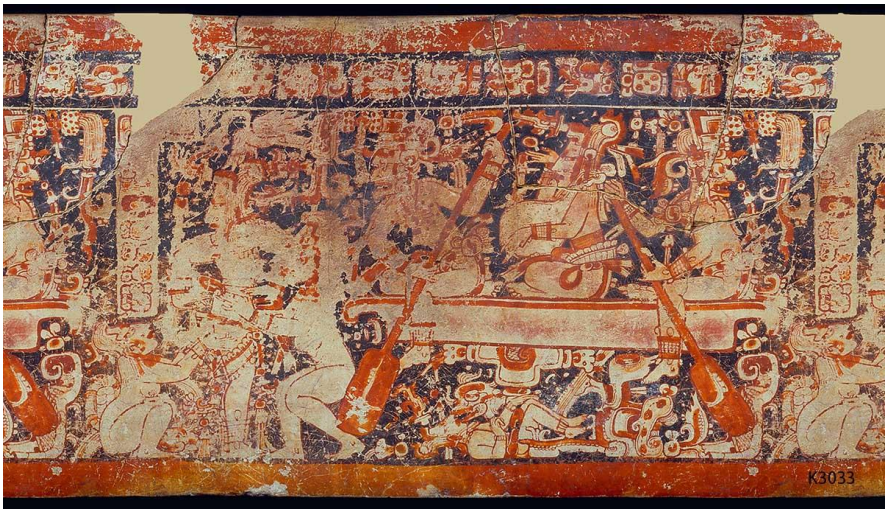
Don Bor and Don Antonio with the ceremonial Balche Canoe ("chem")





Chan K'in Viejo praying over the **Chem** which contains the Balche

The sacred use of the canoe is found with the stories of the Hero Twins and the Paddlers that rescue the spirit of First Father from Xibalba, the underworld. They transport him back to the constellation of Orion in a canoe. The canoe is certainly not uncommon in the Maya world.



II.

Tzak – The Conjuring Rituals of the Maya of Palenque, Yaxchilan,

and the Lacandon of Naja, Chiapas

Tzak



tza-[ka] *(tzak)*

"to grasp, to grab, to conjure"

The village of Naja, Chiapas was founded in the early 20th century by a handful of Lacandon Maya families, it was the product of a vision quest led by the "To'ohil" (spiritual leader) Chan K'in . The charismatic son of well-known Lacandon Elder Bor Garcia, Chan K'in led the people into the wild, green jungle in search of a more remote place to live and practice their traditional religion. Their home village ,which had been visited by Alfred Tozzer (Tozzer 1907) in the early 19th century during his studies with Lacandon Elder Bor Garcia ,was too close to the new rubber treatment facilities that were taking advantage of the rubber trees which grew in the green jungles of Chiapas. They searched for a place that had plentiful water as well as access to the ocote, (Pinus montezumae), a tree important to the Lacandon because it provides the valuable sticky, aromatic, piney, resin known to them as "Pom". After deciding upon the place now known as Naja, the first course of action by the Lacandon men was to build

their “god house”. A structure they call the Ya Hach Ku, a “Place for the Real Lord”. The term Ku for the Lacandon denotes an energy, a type of divine force that is so strong and good that it of itself can make anything a special thing, something holy. When the Lacandon smell the sweetness in the cool air and they see the large clouds forming overhead, they know that HanaKuh is in town. He will bring rain and winds with his magic power. Rain is good however strong winds can rip up corn fields and take the roof off of a hut, so the lacandon will sing to HanaKu, they will tell him..“please come and bring your rain, come and eat tamales and atole with us, have a cigar and some Balche, we give them all to you, we humbly ask for your rain and ask that your winds go around our humble village and leave our crops intact. Bayo HanaKu ! Thank You HanaKu!”

The Ya Hach Ku, a simple open palapa style hut, is created in order to house the gods and their helpers.. This is a space to call upon the gods as well as a place for them to reside after being conjured or manifested through offerings and prayers. This is a dream house, a conjuring place. Gods will be called upon from afar and offerings will be made, songs will be sung, tamales and atole will be offered, Balche will flow like the cool water that surrounds the jungle village of Naja. The Classic Maya built the Temples of the Cross in Palenque for the same purpose. The place they call the Pib Nah, the original cave, remembering back to prehistoric times when ceremonial life resided in caves and natural outcrops deep in the jungle. Imagine that the being who this space is being built for is not only someone of great respect , they are also potentially dangerous and powerful on various conceptual and existential levels. Since this space will be used to conjure and call upon the gods and helper spirits, it must be a place of great discipline. Almost like a type of a spiritual cage. The power that keeps the supernatural forces under

control comes from discipline and ritual order. Purity of mind ,body and spirit is of utmost importance inside the god house. The white tunics worn by the Lacandon men,("xicul"), are clean and fresh. The men must abstain from sexual contact with their spouses during the prescribed time that the ceremony and its preparations take place. For major rituals like the making of new god pots or the marking of celestial events such as a special Solar Eclipse there is separation of men and women altogether. The men prepare the psychotropic ceremonial drink known as Balche. The women prepare tortillas, beans, atole and tamales and leave them in a place where the men will collect the food. Each man goes out one by one, first bringing back an offering for their respective gods and helpers , then for the Elders then for themselves. Upon entering the god house a different set of social rules come into effect. The process itself is part of the ceremony and everything is done with emphasis on correct mental attitude. A proper focus must be maintained in order for the Chak Huun to become a worthy gift for the gods. These ceremonies are done by the Lacandon men while the women are at home doing their part by making sure the tunics are white, the food and drink is prepared and other activities that are vital to the success of the ritual. Part of the reason for keeping the men and women separate during the ceremonies has to do with the proper focus being maintained.

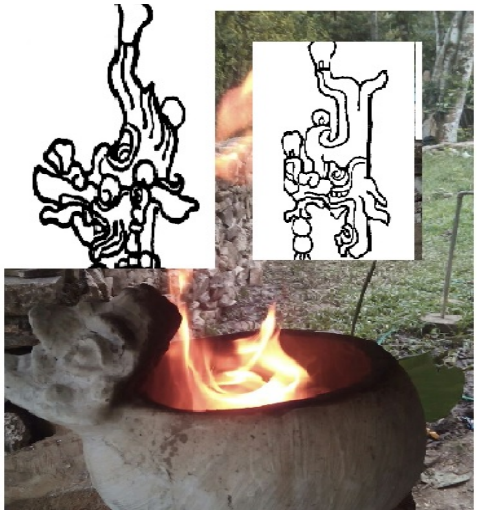
The thought being that if the men and women were all together during the days and nights of ceremony some amorous hearts and souls may lose focus on the act at hand and this cause the ceremony to fail and the connection with the gods to be damaged. There are several reasons this is an important fact to be understood when speaking of the Lacandon Maya and their ritual life. Anyone who is not taking the ritual in a serious fashion becomes a danger for the rest of the group. They are seen to be like a

hole in the protective fabric of the ceremony and a place and reason for malevolent forces to approach and enter the sacred space. If someone has not followed protocol they put the entire village at risk. There is a definite sense of a hunt taking place, a supernatural force is to be called forth from other worlds, a force that will be called through the offerings of prayers, songs, food and drink. The pungently sweet smoke of jungle tobacco will waft out into the dark night skies and the Lacandon will await the forces to appear. The religion of the living Lacandon does not utilize proper names of ancient ancestors or gods. Rather titles are used in the hypnotic chants that thank the gods and invite them to the god houses so that they may enjoy the sing-song of ancient prayers as well as steaming hot tamales, atole ,and balche that has been prepared for the gods holy appetite. Rhythmic chanting promising gifts for favors granted. Chants giving thanks for previous actions that were seen as to have come from the gods themselves. A child was healed, or a great crop of corn grew this year, there was plentiful rain without flooding. All these good things are the actions of certain gods and the proper thanks must be given so that they can be called upon again in the future. “HachakYum, I offer you tobacco and atole, I offer you Balche and tamales” Sweet Pom resin is offered in the clay god pots and the aroma of warm food and sweet incense blankets the night air. The Lacandon claim that their gods and helpers are actual beings who can be spoken to and seen on the physical plane. The contact that they experience during their prayers and rituals are real physical moments lived in their actual bodies, not mythic or mere spirit voyages taken on the backend of a psychotropic beverage. They teach their oral history directly to the youth, the stories of the gods, the recipes for Balche and Pom, the secrets of flora and fauna that have been passed down for perhaps thousands of years as the Lacandon

became a people, as they wandered through the Yucatan, the Caribe, perhaps parts of Guatemala and across the Usumacinta river back into Chiapas where they consider the rich jungle their ancestral home. Stories of the gods and their enchanted cities have been told across the Maya world for thousands of years, passed down from the old to the young these stories find new life. The stories the Lacandon share about the exploits of their gods that took place in Yaxchilan and Palenque contain clear echoes of universal Maya Cosmology. A First Father, Hero Twins, an Underworld are among the most easily recognized themes that we would also see in the Popol Vuh for instance. It is not beyond logic to think that they learned these stories back in time while they lived somewhere in the Yucatan Peninsula.

The Lacandon believe their gods to be real beings. They are not symbols; they are not allegorical characters from a past long dead and gone. Their oral history speaks of the time when these gods walked with men in the forest. Certainly, wise priests from other parts of the Maya world or perhaps even as far as Teotihuacan would have been considered gods by the ancient people. The ritual of Tzak could have been passed down to the ancestors of the Lacandon by these beings they considered to be gods. Imagine deep in the jungle these visitors explaining how to call upon allies from other worlds.

HachakY'um god pot and Huun Jester



Lacandon Hachak Y'um god pot and the Huun Jester gods share quite similar faces. Did the Lacandon see the Huun Jester faces on the walls of Palenque and Yaxchilan and then make their god pots in their image? Or is their knowledge from an older source contemporary with the Classic Maya images that we see in places like Palenque and Yaxchilan ?

Lacanja Lacandon feeding the gods at Bonampak



The Classic Maya seem to be performing a ritual in which they are trying to trap and keep supernatural entities in clay effigies which were in turn treated as living beings. The u-tzak-aw, the “fish in hand "glyph has been thought to allude to this practice. There have been some intellectual comparisons of the catching and keeping of a slippery fish to that of trapping an elusive supernatural entity. The Lacandon have a ceremony where they make new "god pots" which are brought to life or perhaps imbued with life through a series of gifts that are seen as supernatural payment to the entities.

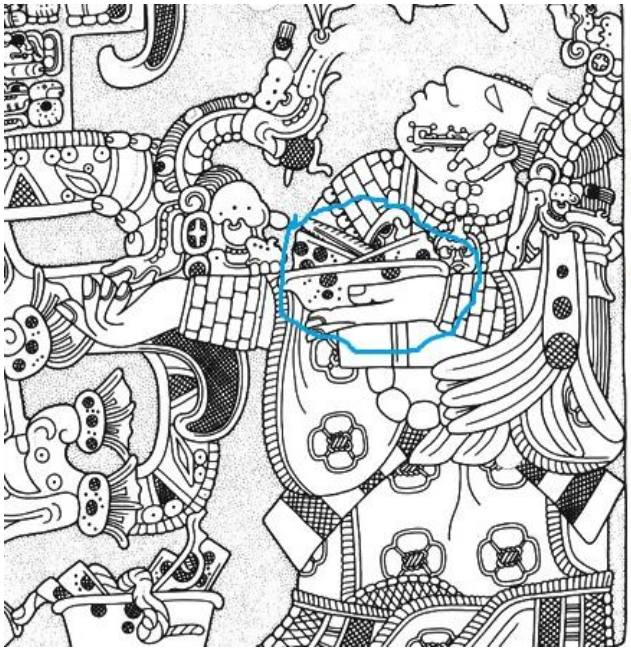


Ho'-imix chan-mak, u-tzak-aw u-k'awiilaal u-took' u-pakal aj-k'ahk'-o'-chahk.



“ On 5 Imix 4 Mak he conjured the (lightning-)power of the flints and shields of the god Aj K'ahk' O' Chahk.” Although the the glyphs of Lintel 25 of Yaxchilan are written in “mirror form”, that is to say that they read left to right instead of the customary right to left it is still cleary understood that the power of a god and his weapons/tools was being summoned,conjured through the Tzak ritual. There is no pertinent reason to believe that this moment is anything other than a real happening. An event that actually took place on Earth, more specifically at Yaxchilan over a thousand years ago.

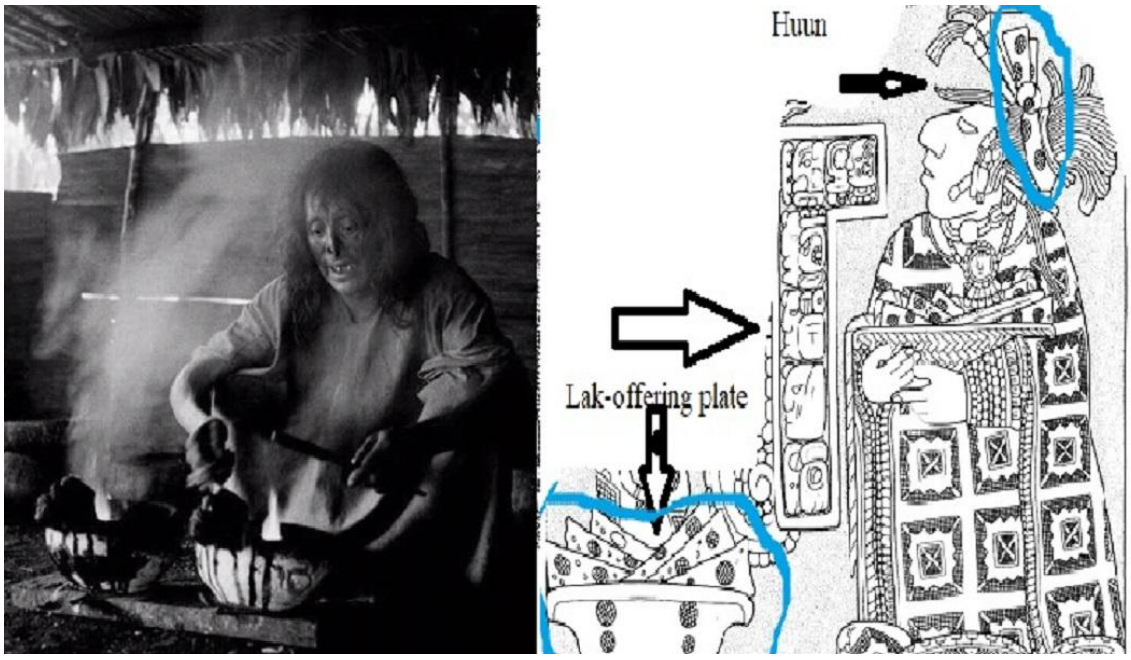
Lady K’abal Xook is seen as she communicates with the god that she has called as he springs forth from the maw of a great vision serpent.



She holds her offering plate from which the smoke rises and houses the great vision snake that looms above her watchful face. She has also perhaps been fasting and practicing sleep deprivation as well as bloodletting and ingesting psychotropic substances which would all come together to produce the experience that is depicted upon lintel 25. This brings to mind the Lacandon ceremonies witnessed by Roberto Bruce where the men were taken into an altered state of consciousness by sleep deprivation, meditation, chanting and the constant ingesting of psychotropic Balche, which the Lacandon say opens the doors to communication with the gods, which is what we appear to see on the Yaxchilan lintel.

Mateo Viejo conjuring his gods in Naja. He also performed this same ritual countless times at Yaxchilan, just as Lady Wak Tuun is shown doing in

Lintel 15



Balche and Copal Offerings in The Yotoch Ku of Naja

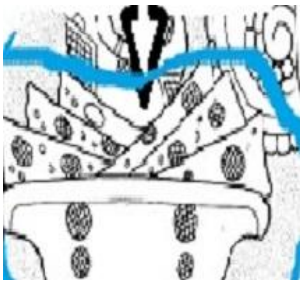


Payment is offered to the gods through the smoke of Pom and the sweet taste of Balche

Lacandon “Lak” from Bonampak compared to Lady Wak Tuun’s “Lak”









Lacandon “ki’ik” offering.

Yaxchilan Lintel 15

Chan-chajuk? lajchan-chakat, tzahkaj yaxchitnaahkaan? U-way k'awiil.

On 4 Kawak 12 Sip, the Waterlily Serpent is conjured. He is the nagual of K'awiil.”





Lady Wak Tuun as she holds ritual plates and receives guidance from this entity “which is an aspect of the waterlily serpent, itself the nagual of the lightning deity, K'awiil.” <https://www.peabody.harvard.edu/cmhi/detail.php?num=15&site=Yaxchilan&type=Lintel>

Chan K’in Viejo and Mateo Viejo prepare Tamale and Balche offerings



The Lacandon feed the gods Balche and Tamales and offer them cigars to enjoy after their meal, just as the Lacandon men do themselves. These items are used to call the gods into the clay god pots where they are subsequently maintained alive by further offerings which also include rhythmic chanting that thanks the gods for their continued support with crops, medicine and life in general.

In March of 1970 a major solar eclipse ceremony led by Chan K'in Viejo took place in Naja. Roberto Bruce participated in the 45-day-long event, which consisted of the men and boys of the village coming together for the entire period in the *yatoch k'uh ,"*the house of the gods' '. Like the 52 year cycle events conducted by the ancestors, personal material objects were made anew, and the old ones were disposed of. According to Bruce, objects such as "clothing, hammocks, benches, personal possessions, and tools' ' were either made new or refurbished for the ceremony. The men and women were separated for the entire 45 day period, food being left in a predetermined neutral spot as the women are not allowed to enter the house of the gods during this time.

Human blood is no longer offered, instead a dye made from the Bixa Orellana tree (also known as achiote or annatto)serves as a symbolic replacement.

Bixa Orellana





ki'ik offering



The wooden copal board, *the xikal*, bears the symbolic shape of a human. It is perhaps a reminder of the ceremonies that once took place in the red painted limestone temples of humid, hot, and ancient Mesoamerica. Human shaped effigies are also made of *ki'ik* rubber which is collected from trees in the jungle. The rubber is seen to be the blood of the tree and the Lacandon compare it to drawing blood from a human as well as when the rubber effigy is sacrificed in the ceremonial fire of the god pots, it is a substitute for the sacrifice of a living being.



Don Antonio paying the gods in Naja with god pots and balche “jicaras”

Offerings of raw rubber made by the Lacandones.The practice of combining rubber and copal seems to be an ancient ritual, as according to Alfred Tozzer remnants of “rubber encrusted with copal have been found at Mayan excavations”(Tozzer 1907:127)

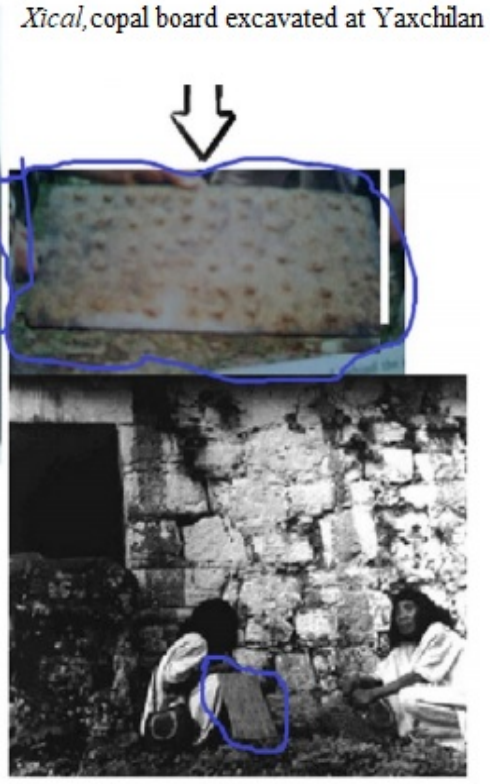
Don Antonio in meditative state performing a Divination



***Xical*, copal offering board with human shape**



Chan K'in Viejo prepares a Copal Offering Board



Xical, copal board excavated at Yaxchilan

A *Xical* is a wooden board that is cut to roughly resemble the shape of a human being, small nodules of copal are placed on the board which will later be used in ceremony when the copal is offered to the gods. Lacandon tradition is to emulate Hachakyum. By replacing a human sacrifice with a symbolic "Xikal" board they are remembering when Hachakyum made a surrogate for himself out of Xaan or guano palm leaves and left that behind at Palenque when he would travel to other places. Hachakyum taught against human sacrifices and even restored Kisin the evil one back to life after Tu'up (loyal son of Hachakyum) had decapitated Kisin for attempting to kill Hachakyum. Kisin's murder attempt was unsuccessful because he had attacked Hachakyum's Palm Leaf surrogate thinking it was actually him.

III.

Pat – The Creation of Incense Vessels and Effigies by the Classic Maya of Palenque and Yaxchilan as well as the Lacandon of Naja, Chiapas

Pat



PAT-ta (*pat)*

"to form", "to make"

"In Pat Ka'at" (*I form the clay* in Naja Lacandon Maya







The glyph PAT  speaks of the actual creation of the clay vessels and effigies which would house the beings called forth in the Tzak conjuring rituals.

The Lacandon still say "In PAT ka'at" ,(“I create the clay”)when making the clay god pots for their most important Triad of gods. The biggest ceremonies in Naja,Chiapas always included the making of new god pots.





The Classic Maya of Palenque also made their clay vessels and effigies in a ritualistic setting. It was a sacred action, worthy of inclusion in the glyphic texts of The Temple of the Foliated Cross, in fact the only other ceremonial action that is mentioned

in glyphs on the TFC tablet is the tying of Kan Balam"s Sak Huun,which is equal to the crowning of a King in Western culture. The "burning of the kiln" is compared to the

bringing into the world of the Palenque Triad by the great Progenitor. Creation of the gods and man creating vessels and effigies in the god's own image .

"In Pat Ka'at"



Chan K'in Viejo and Nuk bringing god pots into the world



Chan Nuk daughter of Chan K'in Viejo and wife of K'in Paniagua





Lacandon incensarios rescued from a fire in the Selva Lacandona

The old god pots were ritually put to rest in the same sacred cave of the ancestors where the very bones of the Lacandon Maya of the past are gathered together.







These bones are said to be of very ancient Lacandon people. Those that passed away over the last few centuries all received burials and did not have their bones deposited in the cave at Mensabok.

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The three major forms of Palenque incensarios, the majority of which appear to be locally made, are pedestal-based vessels, ladles, and elaborately decorated, hollow, flanged cylinders. The first two forms are used for burning copal. The elaborate cylinders show no sign of burning.

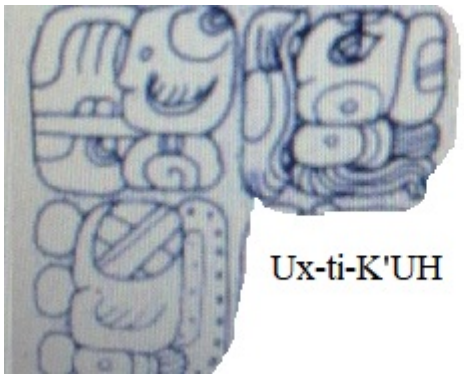


Elaborately decorated, hollow, flanged cylinders



Pedestal-based vessels and Ladles

On the tablet of the Temple of the Foliated Cross of Palenque, there is a set of glyphs that alludes to a kiln as well as to a burning that takes place in the Temple



Pu-lu-yi U chi-ti-ni-li-Ux-ti-K'UH can be read as "The kiln of the Triad gods burn", David Stuart translates it as "it burns, the kiln of the three gods".(Stuart 2006:96). The name and use of the Triad Temples of the Palenque Cross Group have been a topic of discussion for centuries. The decipherment of the glyphs especially since the late 1980s has helped us to understand what took place and perhaps what the intent was when the classic Maya performed rituals to summon the Triad Gods,G1,G2,and G3. In 2006 David Stuart shone a new light upon the names used to describe the space where certain rituals took place. It appears that as with the Lacandon the Classic Maya of Palenque also ritualized the making of clay vessels and effigies. The scribes made sure that the making of clay effigies was recorded as an event of importance. There is a limited space into which the scribe was assigned his duty of verbally painting the scene into the limestone tablet. If the making of clay effigies and vessels were just another step in the preparation of the ceremony it would seem logical that it would not be inscribed onto the wall of such a sacred space. For instance we are not told about the making of the clothing that Kan

Balam is wearing or about the preparation of Pom, the sweet smelling pine sap that filled the temples of Palenque for milenia. **Pu-lu-yi U chi-ti-ni-li-Ux-luut-K'UH- puluyi u**

chit inil ux luut kuh- "they burn, the kiln of the three gods"is written on that tablet and that makes it important in at least this instant and for our purpose here.

The Triad God Temples of the Palenque Cross Group are the deep roots of the Classic Maya connecting to claimed ancestors from as long ago as Olmec times. The Lacandon believe that the Cross Group was built by their gods and commemorates the birth of gods and their subsequent exploits in this world and in others. Chan K'in Viejo would walk around Palenque and explain the temples and their individual uses to his family and friends. This information would be confirmed many times through archaeology and common sense. When he and the other men of Naja would take their 5 day pilgrimage to Yaxchilan to pay the gods in Balche and Pom he would tell the men the stories of the gods and point out where they took place. I have shared such a walk with K'in Paniagua and he shared Chan K'ins knowledge with friends and family. It is a detailed and profound telling of Yaxchilan in ancient times. Chichokla is the name the Lacandon have always used for the place that Teobert Maler labeled Yaxchilan. In the 1907 travels of Alfred Tozzer to visit Chan K'in Viejos Father, Don Enrique Bor, they shared the stories with him of the rituals that took place in the limestone structures that had been pulled from the jungle and piqued the curiosity of so many explorers in the future. Before Alberto Ruz found Lord Pakal in his eternal rest, the Lacandon had been leaving god pots in front the the Temple of Inscriptions for many years. When Ruz had finally reached the inner chamber area of the tomb after digging for two years he was ready to keep digging into an area that is actually the doorway to a network of tunnels (which has been excavated in the last few years

under the Temple of Inscriptions) The Mayan men that were digging for Dr Ruz encouraged him to instead go through the wall that faced north. Their grandfathers had told them about the temple as children and what one could expect to find inside. Dr Ruz humbly paid heed to his workers and they found the cave-like room that housed the great tomb of Lord Pakal. The gentleman who shared this story with me in the 1990s was the among the last of the living who had participated in that excavation. His eyes welled with tears as he told me that when they opened the wall and saw the tomb that the entire temple rang like a giant bell and he said that they were all filled with a deep sense of melancholy, Dr Ruz himself spoke of this moment many times before his untimely death. The knowledge held by the indigenous people of places like Palenque and Yaxchilan is the remnants of a once great, profound knowledge of not only mathematics and astronomy but of flora and fauna, of cycles and of a history that even today we try to grasp at like trying to catch the wind. The Lacandon did not guess where Yaxchilan was. The men of Palenque that excavated the Tomb on 1952 were not stabbing around in the dark just as K'in Obregon did not stumble upon Bonampak and the other sets of temples in Lacanja. They were taught about these places just as their grandfathers and great grandfathers had also been schooled in the ways of the old ones. Today we can take the case of the site of **Sak Tzi** as an example. Mayanists have long known about the name of this city, yet it was the campesinos of Palestina, Chiapas who have always known its location. In the early 1990s while working as a guide in Chiapas we made friends with the Zapatista rebels who would facilitate our passages to places like Piedras Negras,

which entails a good metal boat and access to the Usumacinta river in strategic areas which at the time were all Zapatista territories. The rebels were friendly with us and took

us to several sites that I had never heard of. The place was Busilha, a spot visited and written about by Teobert Maler who had noted that the cave had several Lacandon vessels on the cave floor near the red hand prints. The Lacandon that left these offerings behind thought the red hand prints were made by Tsibatnah, the painter god who painted the Mayan temples of Palenque and Yaxchilan with the blood collected by the jaguar gods .



The Cave of the Red Hands in Busilha, Chiapas

Lacandon god pots were found at Yaxchilan by Maler in1903, they have been found at Piedras Negras and Palenque as well as other sites such as Union Maya Itza in the Southern Sierra del Lacandón National Park, Petén, Guatemala





Lacandon god pots are found in sites all around the Usumacinta river

According to David Stuart in *The Palenque Mythology*, the Classic Maya also created their gods from clay in special rituals that took place in places like the Cross Group at Palenque. (Stuart 2006:97)



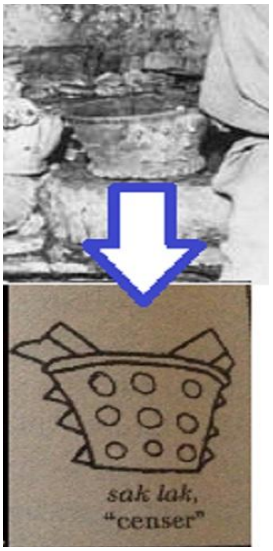
I-u-ti 2-"KIB" I-PAT-la-ja U-1-TAHN-na K'INICH-KAN-BAHLAM-ma K'UHUL-BAAK-la-AJAW-wa

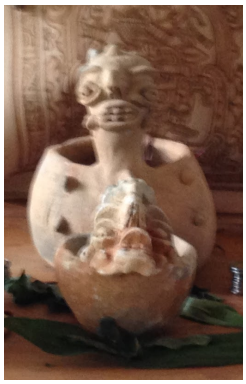
The verb *pat-l-aj* appears in most other texts with the meaning of "build" or "shape," and usually its subject is "house," "stone (monument)" or some sort of dedicated object. Here, however, the subject is explicity described as the "precious one(s)' of the king, a standard term of reference to one or more of the Triad deities. There seems little alternative but to see this as the physical "shaping" of the gods, presumably in effigy form. Taken with the "burning" and "oven" glosses from the other passages, I suggest that the 2 Kib' event describes the manufacture of ceramic effigy figures of the Triad deities. Significantly perhaps, the root *pat* is in Yukatek specifically oriented toward the making of ceramics (*pat*, "modelar; formar ollas").

Bombacoid species are depicted on Maya ceramics such as “incensarios” which bear images of trunk spines of *Ceiba pentandra*, the Maya “World Tree.”











Huun,Tzak,Pat

Conclusion

In conclusion a comparison of the concepts of Huun, Tzak, and Pat and their relation to the Ancient Maya as well as the more contemporary post conquest Maya, mainly the Lacandon of Naja and Lacanja, Chiapas, shows the universality of the Mayan religion and how different groups found ways to express what and how they understood from the stories of the gods and the best way to summon them as well as give payment for services rendered. Roberto Bruce compares the Maya Popol Vuh with the stories he learned from Chan K'in Viejo in Naja and the similarities are evident. Names of course change ,while actions and lessons being taught tend to stay the same.

The Ancient Maya went to great lengths to express their belief system in grand and lavish manners. If we are to believe what is currently understood by reading the glyphs in places like Palenque and Yaxchilan, the Classic Maya believed that they could summon and convince entities and beings to appear and render service in a variety of ways. In Naja when a great storm was approaching Chan K'in Viejo and the men of Naja would gather in the god house and begin to offer copal and balche to the great forces that were bringing rain and great storms to their small village. Chan K'in would not ask the

rain to leave, he was well aware that his thirsty corn plants and all the fields and jungle around him thrived because of the rain, instead he gently offered balche and tamales and burned sweet pungent copal which would carry his prayers in their great misty clouds. These offerings would reach the gods via those clouds of copal, the spirits that brought rain and wind would hopefully accept the offerings and circumvent the village of Naja as it stormed its way through "La Selva Lacandona". I have been with K'in Paniagua and his family when the great rains and winds begin to appear and they begin to offer prayers asking "Ha Na K'uh" to please take a path that will not cause damage to their home or anyone else in the village. The winds that rip through the jungle are massive and often uproot great mahogany trees that are in their path. In Lacanja entire wood and thatched palm homes have flown away in the wake of great storms.

As to the Lacandon being a Yukatek people who wandered into the Usumacinta River area after the conquest, I posit that first , there are several different groups of Lacandon, some with Cholti roots, some from the Lacanja area, and some that were the Lacandon that spoke with Alfred Tozzer near Chancala, Chiapas and would later found Naja.

WHen the Spanish arrived in Mexico some of the Lacandon went through Campech, Yucatan and Quintana Roo to avoid contact with the invaders.

In Benimerito ,Chiapas along the Usumacinta River, the Lacandon are still known as the "Caribes" because of an old memory of them arriving from the Mexican Caribe, mainly Bacalar. This is believed to be when the Lacandon returned from their migrations

through the Yucatan. Lacandon god pots are found around the Usumacinta River area, in places like Yaxchilan, Piedras Negras (Maler, 1903), Palenque, Bonampak, Lacanja, Sak Tzi, and Union Maya Itza. A forest fire damaged a section of the Selva Lacandona, the clearing of the flora revealed old Lacandon incensarios, perhaps from the Post Classic.



Lacandon god pots revealed by a recent forest fire

The Lacandon have no stories of their gods in Yucatan at Chichen Itza or Uxmal. All the god stories are in Palenque and Yaxchilan. The Lacandon knowledge of the flora and fauna of the Selva Lacandona is without rival in the areas between Palenque, Yaxchilan , and Piedras Negras. They have no knowledge of anything from Yucatan.

In recent times there have been exploration done looking for the lost Lacandon city of Sac Balam. This is believed to be a city where the Lacandon hid from the Spanish in the 1600's. This city is not thought to be located in Yucatan, rather it is in the Selva Lacandona. In an article from September 2019 a group of explorers writes about their

search for this elusive Lacandon capital. I quote here their findings and their concepts relating to Sac Balam.

In Search of Sac Balam

> A lost city known as Sac Balam, was founded over 400 years ago by the Lacandon who resisted Spanish colonial rule for centuries. Not the kind of Maya site that attracts tourists to places like Palenque and Chichen Itza. Sac Balam didn't have towering temples, or surreal sculptures. In fact, it was probably so unassuming that its ruins might elude an untrained eye. Hundreds of Lacandon once lived there, hidden from Spanish eyes and free to continue a way of life their ancestors had practiced for centuries: planting corn and beans, raising turkeys, weaving strong thatched roofs to resist the tropical rain, and leaving offerings to their gods in nearby caves. The Lacandon had looked at this impenetrable, remote jungle and had seen safety.until 1695, when the Spanish fin found the city. Less than 20 years later, the Spanish forcibly relocated its inhabitants and abandoned the place once and for all. It faded off colonial maps and back into the forest. If found, Sac Balam could offer archaeologists an unparalleled time capsule of Lacandon culture, showing how they preserved their independence as the world changed around them. Documents record little about life in the independent Maya capitals. Sac Balam is a particular mystery, because it was founded to stay hidden. The Lacandon originally lived in a city called Lakam Tun, on an island in Lake Miramar, on the western edge of Montes Azules. But after repeated Spanish attacks, they realized that to stay safe and independent, they would have to retreat deep into the jungle. They named their new city Sac Balam, or "the white jaguar," and lived there, undisturbed, for 109 years. When the Spanish finally discovered and conquered Sac Balam, it was the second-to-last independent Maya capital standing. (The last, Nojpeten, the capital of the Itza Maya in northern Guatemala, fell just 2 years later.) To understand life in Sac Balam, you need to look at the buildings and artifacts its residents used and left behind, says Josuhé Lozada Toledo, an archaeologist at Mexico's (INAH) in Mexico City. "Sac Balam preserves the story of a community that was erased from history," he says. Excavating what's left of its houses, community

> buildings, ceramics, and religious offerings "would be an act of cultural revindication." It's likely many had already fled deeper into the jungle, joining Maya refugee communities that included people from all over southern Mexico. It is their descendants who occupy parts of Montes Azules today. These modern communities are also called the Lacandon, but they speak a different language from what was spoken in Sac Balam and are considered a distinct cultural group, with their roots firmly in the Colonial period.(Wade2019)

The Lacandon perform many of the same rituals that the Classic Maya carved into the limestone walls of Palenque, Yaxchilan, Piedras Negras,and Bonampak in artistic as well as glypic form. The same words that are written on those walls such as Huun, Tzak, and Pat are still used by the Lacandon today. Their own stories tell us who they are and where they came from. In March of 2019 I took the Lacandon Grandkids and Great grandkids of Chan K'in Viejo and Mateo Viejo to Chichen Itza for the Equinox. They were tourists in a strange land. The forest was strange to them as were the temples/ I had to translate Lacandon Maya into Yukatek and vice-versa as the Lacandon could only understand a handful of words when we spoke with my Mayan friends in Piste,the village closest to Chichen Itza. I posit that there are more Lacandon sites yet to be discovered in the Usumacinta river area. More caves with ancient offerings and perhaps even a codex or two, this last thought is not so farfetched considering that Chiapas gave up an original Mayan codex as recently as the 1970s.

For over twenty years I studied with Medicine Men from the Lacandon as well as **X'men,**Yukatek Maya Priests. The only overlap I ever saw was the use of Balche and copal in rituals performed for healing ,paying the gods and divinations. Nothing else that I was taught in my 20 year apprenticeship in Yucatan and Chiapas matched together.

The Lacandon are a group of people wrapped in millennia of mystery. Their numbers are less each year and today only Don Antonio in Naja and K'in Paniagua in Lacanja have the full knowledge passed down by Chan K'in Viejo. They have only two living apprentices, Bor Paniagua in Lacanja and myself. From the late nineteenth century of Alfred Tozzer and Teobert Maler to the 1950s with Roberto Bruce and the 1990s with my own investigations, the stories told by the Lacandon have not changed. Alfred Tozzer learned from Don Enrique Bor, the father of Chan K'in Viejo. Roberto Bruce learned from Chan K'in Viejo, Mateo Viejo, and Don Antonio . I learned from the same three in addition to K'in Paniagua.

The stories and lessons do not change, they are not tales of whim but rather a carefully studied and guarded school of information that allows us to look back in time before the Spanish invasion. Chan K'in learned from his Father, who had learned from his Father and so on. They had knowledge of places like Pakal's tomb in Palenque centuries before it was excavated, they left many god pots in front of the Temple of the Inscriptions venerating Lord Pakal, whom they believe to be Hachakyum, their true god. K'in Obregon showed outsiders where the painted rooms of Bonampak were because he had been taught what was in those rooms. They had not been excavated, there was no visual evidence to their existence and when they were opened in the 1940's Lacandon god pots were found inside. In the Selva Lacandona there are many cities that remain asleep, awaiting to be awoken from their millennial slumber. My own Lacandon teachers are guardians of several caves and Balche Bee temples in the Selva. After comparing and contrasting the glyphic information available from Palenque and Yaxchilan with what I was taught in my twenty year apprenticeship with the Maya, I posit that the Lacandon

live now where their people have always called home. While there were migrations and cultural upheavals which took the Lacandon far from home for a time , their roots are thick and deep like the great Yax Che, rooted in the fertile soil of La Selva Lacandona.

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