



August 17, 2022 • Modern K'iche' Maya Long Count: 0.0.9.14.6 • 7 Kimi 19 Yaxkin • G7

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A Shrine to the God of Hellish Drunkenness

by Barbara MacLeod

Most of the passages in the cave of Naj Tunich in Petén, Guatemala (Brady 1989) are negotiable by walking. The most remote section, accessible via a deep vertical shaft, was named Mitlan Ch'en 'underworld cave' (or "hell hole") by its discoverers (Stone 1995:105; Brady et al. 1992) during its exploration in 1989. All evidence suggested that no person had entered here since Classic times. It contained two abstract images and one short text (Drawing 90) spelled **chi-li K'UH** (**Fig. 1**) which I analyze as *chi(h)il k'uh* 'pulque god'.¹ Painted on a large stalagmite (**Fig. 2**), this text marks the low entrance to a crystalline chamber containing an altar displaying seven broken, inverted stalactites. Nearby in the chamber was an inverted Late Classic gadrooned vessel with a kill hole in the shoulder. It was the only whole vessel noted in the entire cave and one of just two artifacts found in Mitlan Ch'en; the other was an isolated shell pendant. Within a passage ten meters deeper in the shaft lay the skeleton of a small child.

Fig. 1:

chi-li K'UH, original artwork by Andrea Stone.

Based on Naj Tunich Drawing 90 text, from her 1995 book: "Images from the Underworld".



There is one other association of *chihil* with *k'uh* in the script corpus: it occurs at the beginning of the text of Tortuguero Monument 6 (E1-F3) as the continuation of a missing section featuring the patron gods of the king (Gronemeyer and MacLeod 2010). What remains reads *Chihil Akan, Kakaw, chit k'uh Bahlam Ajaw K'uhul Baak Ajaw*: '...the pulque (-associated) God A-Prime (Akan) and (deified) cacao, the paired gods of *Bahlam Ajaw*, Holy Lord of Tortuguero' (see **Fig. 3**, page 3).

Akan, the god of drunkenness and of self-decapitation, is additionally linked to fire-drilling, to the Jaguar God

continued on page 3

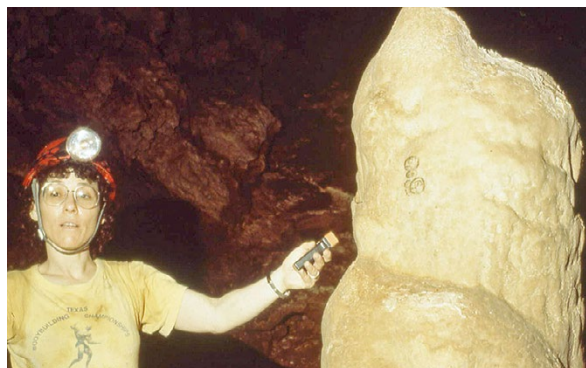


Fig. 2: Archaeologist Andrea Stone points a flashlight at Drawing 90, on the large stalagmite within Mitlan Ch'en. courtesy of James Brady.

¹The analysis favored by Stone (1995:181) and Brady et al. (1992) is *chi'il k'uh* 'mouth of the god', which would be fitting in a Yucatecan (but not Ch'olan) language were the text naming the chamber itself. Amid several glosses for *chi'il* and *chihil* considered by Brady et al., they mention *chih* 'pulque' in Ch'olan, though this was not pursued.

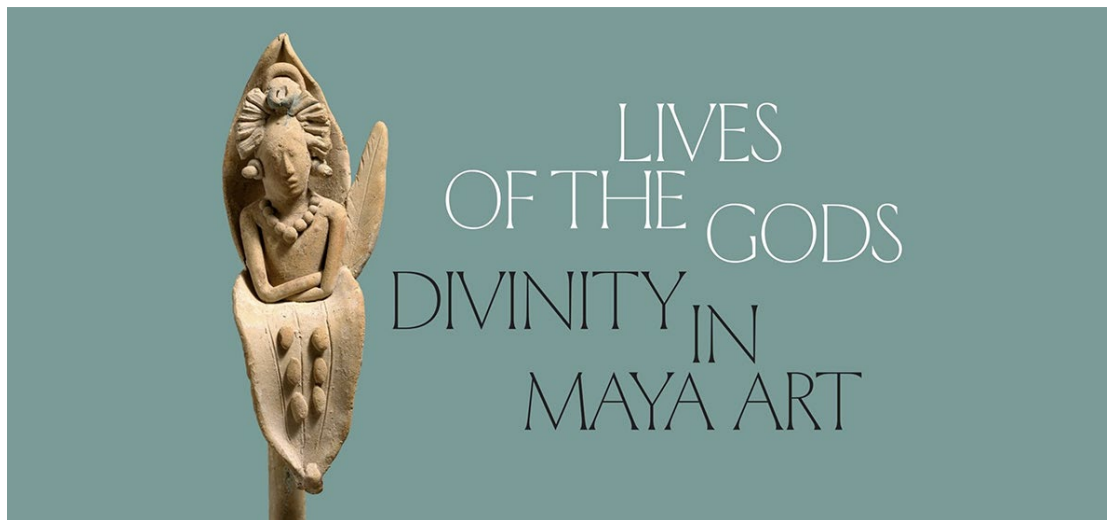
IMS Streaming:
August 17, 8 pm ET
Defensive Hilltop Structures Among the Ancient Maya
with
Kaitlin Ahern

August 24, 8 pm ET
The Archaeology and Mystery of Petroglyph Cave
with
Barbara MacLeod



Jim Reed,
Editor

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“Lives of the Gods: Divinity in Maya Art” November 21, 2022 – April 2, 2023 at the Met Museum

In Maya art, the gods are depicted at all stages of life: as infants, as adults at the peak of their maturity and influence, and as they age. The gods could die, and some were born anew, serving as models of regeneration and resilience. In “Lives of the Gods: Divinity in Maya Art”, rarely seen masterpieces and recent discoveries trace the life cycle of the gods, from the moment of their creation in a sacred mountain to their dazzling transformations as blossoming flowers or fearsome creatures of the night.

Maya artists depicted the gods in imaginative ways from the monumental to the miniature – from exquisitely carved, towering sculptures to jade, shell, and obsidian ornaments that adorned kings and queens, connecting them symbolically to supernatural forces. Finely painted ceramics reveal the eventful lives of the gods in rich detail.

Created by master artists of the Classic period (CE 250–900) in the royal cities of what is now Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico, the 120 landmark works in Lives

of the Gods evoke a world in which the divine, human, and natural realms are interconnected and alive.

The exhibition is made possible by the William Randolph Hearst Foundation, the Placido Arango Fund, the Diane W. and James E. Burke Fund, the Gail and Parker Gilbert Fund, the Mellon Foundation, and The International Council of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It is organized by the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Kimbell Art Museum.

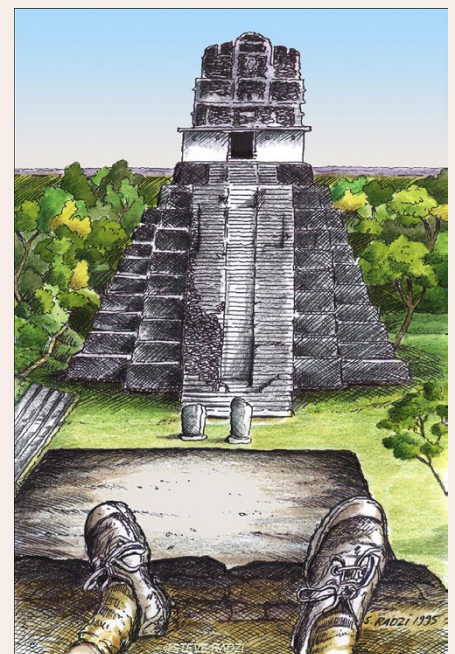
The catalog is made possible by the Samuel I. Newhouse Foundation, Inc.

Marquee: Maya artist. Whistle with the Maize God emerging from a flower (detail), Mexico, Late Classic period (600–900 CE). Ceramic, pigment. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Bequest of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1979 (1979.206.728)

An Artistic Eye for the Maya with artist Steve Radzi

TIKAL – Temple of the Grand Jaguar (Temple I) (732 AD) is located deep in the Peten jungle of Guatemala in the Parque Nacional Tikal. It is a magnificent Classic Peten style structure and was built as a funerary temple dedicated to the ruler Jasaw Chan K'awiil I, whose tomb was found buried deep inside. The temple is 180 feet high and was excavated between 1955 and 1964. The high roof comb is decorated with a sculpture of the seated king. The entrance into the shrine below is carved with wooden lintels that were originally painted red and made of sapodilla wood. On my first visit in 1975, I was able to climb to the top of Temple I. I sketched this view from the top of the Temple of the Masks, which lies across the main Plaza.

Steve Radzi has been illustrating Maya sites for many years. The original black and white illustrations were created in 1995 for an exhibition at the Miami Museum of Science. In recent times, Steve has colored them, bringing them to life. These illustrations have not been published before. We shall feature his work in this and upcoming issues. Enjoy. You may visit Steve's site for more of his work. www.mayavision.com



A Shrine to the God of Hellish Drunkenness

by Barbara MacLeod *continued from page 1*

of the Underworld (JGU), to child sacrifice and to mortuary practices. The Tortuguero monument explicitly pairs his intoxicated persona with chocolate, a ceremonial beverage honored in hundreds of Classic Maya ceramic rim texts. I will henceforth refer to the *chihil k'uh* of this remote chamber as *Akan*, who, as first recognized by Nikolai Grube (2004:61) in the Motul Dictionary (Arzápalo Marín 1995:1436) is ‘*el dios del vino, que es vaco (baco)*: the god of wine, who is Bacchus’.

Grube’s work originally identified not only *Akan*’s name and canonical attributes but also the contrasting Classic aspects of this deity, originally termed God A-Prime.² He is a fleshed death god, often with a transverse longbone or “death eyes” in his hair. On his forehead appears the **AK’AB** ‘night’ hieroglyph and the region of his eyes is blackened. His cloak is black and decorated with white crossbones, and a percent sign – associated with death gods and *wahy* beings – marks his cheek (**Fig. 4**).

Grube further sorted these into two groups: (1) the unequivocal *Akan* contexts – with the name glyph and/or a preponderance of attributes present – and (2) others belonging to “the *Akan* complex”. The former include numerous *wahy* beings on ceramics engaged in self-decapitation or stone-casting (Grube pp.63-64) as well as the occasional references to pulque, as on Copan Altar U (p.63) whose text states that the Copan king impersonates *Akan* while drinking pulque. The image in **Fig. 5** is indisputably our fellow, with the common paraphernalia of *Akan* often seen in underworld enema and drinking scenes: clysters, cups, jars adorned with the *Ak’ab* ‘darkness’ glyph, often amid line dances by intoxicated and vomiting supernaturals.

It is significant that *Akan* is a patron deity of a bellicose warrior king whose famous monument testifies to a demand for blood in the reciprocal pact between kings and gods. This is one of the narratives which features “the piling of skulls, the pooling of blood” following an attack on a neighboring town.

Grube’s “*Akan* complex” includes protagonists with several of the identifying features (blackened eye region, *ak’ab* markings, a longbone in the hair, “death collar” with eyeballs) but bearing other names. One of these found on ceramics is *Mok Chi(h)*, translated by Grube as ‘pulque sickness’ based on *Ch’orti mok* ‘sickness’ in general, with many modifiers, as well as derivations related to nausea (Wisdom 1950:528).

There is good reason to suggest that *Akan*’s “pulque” contained admixture plants including tobacco and *Datura* (Stross and Kerr 1990; Kerr, 2007; MacLeod 2021) which would guarantee a brutal hangover (*mok*), but one assumes that the purpose of consumption was visionary and propitiatory rather than recreational. *Mok Chih* frequently holds a “darkness” jar which contains this brew (**Fig. 6**, page 4).

Visually related to the *Mok Chih* beings are others termed *Bihal Akan*, literally ‘*Akan* of the Road’ – a new and compelling decipherment by Penny Steinbach (2015:180-182, 290-292, 348). These fellows have a broad-brimmed peaked hat tied with knots, and some have the “crueller cord” spilling from under the hat and looping across the face. One presumes this ‘road’ to be that of *och-bih* ‘enter-the-road’ – a metaphorical expression for death. Steinbach’s work advances that of Grube forward into the identification of *Bihal Akan* – named on Codex-style vases – as the recipient of the sacrificial infant from a lord who faces him in a palace chamber, as on K1200, K5855, and K8655 and others (see **Figs. 7 & 8**, page 4).

continued on page 4



Fig. 5: *Bihal Akan* ‘otherworldly-Road Akan’ (Detail from K5855; Steinbach 2015: 346). View the entire vase on the Kerr Maya Vase Database here: Kerr.MVDB.K5855

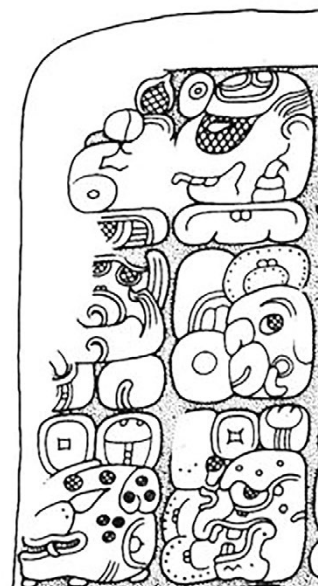


Fig. 3: *chi-hi-li AKAN... CHIT K'UH*, detail of text from Tortuguero Monument 6, by Ian Graham, from the Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions. An ongoing project of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. You can access the collection at: www.peabody.harvard.edu



Fig. 4: The vomiting God A' with an enema syringe on a polychrome vase from Naranjo (Pearlman 60, Drawing by Nikolai Grube).

²One of only two occurrences of *Akan* in the Dresden Codex is on page 28b amid the Wayeb rites of the black Mam of the West, wherein, upon his retirement from the West station at the close of the old year, *Akan* is installed in the temple facing a tall burning censer and an offering of “bone” tamales. The three other deities who hold these stations on the four pages are *K'in Ajaw* (East) *K'awil* (South), and *Itzamnaaj* (North).

A Shrine to the God of Hellish Drunkenness

by **Barbara MacLeod** *continued from page 3*

sees – as on K1200 – the bed of leaves signifying that the infant has already been transported to the forest and into the Earth.

On Tikal Altar 5, two royal Akan impersonators hold fire-drilling sticks as noted by Taube (1998:442) and Martin and Grube (2008:46) as they enact a mortuary ritual with the bones and skull of a high-ranking woman (see **Fig. 9**, page 5)

The foregoing discussion of the JGU and Akan serves to contextualize the scant remains in Mitlan Ch'en as the apparent residue of a single sacrificial rite in service to Akan, also known as *Chihil K'uh*. A speculative scenario is this: a child, delivered to a priest representing *Bihal Akan*: 'Akan of the Road' is carried alive to Naj Tunich and lowered – undoubtedly terrified – by ropes into the depths of Mitlan Ch'en, then taken into the crystal chamber and to the altar set with seven broken stalactites. Seven is the number of the gadrooned vessel containing pulque with psychotropic admixture plants; it is imbibed by all participants, including the young victim before his death. At the close of the ceremony, a hole is punched in the vessel to terminate it. It is left inverted in the chamber, and the child's body is lowered to a still-deeper passage in a re-creation of the fall of the Baby Jaguar into the mountain.

One might further speculate that the sacrifice served to call the rains – perhaps failing or overdue in a century of encroaching drought. The above hypothesis carries risk, but one must assume that some religious charter – embedded within a fully-articulated myth and prescribing in detail a specific ceremony – governed the events which left these few remains in such an inaccessible place.

Dedication: I dedicate this article to the memory of Andrea Stone: fearless explorer, brilliant archaeologist and iconographer, dear friend and fellow adventurer.

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Fig. 6: Mok Chih frequently holds a "darkness" jar as in this detail from K2284. View the entire vase on the Kerr Maya Vase Database here: [Kerr MVDB 2284](http://www.kerrmayavase.com/Kerr_MVDB_2284)



Fig. 7: Detail of K1200. God A' holds infant on bed of leaves in front of ruler on throne. View the entire vase on the Kerr Maya Vase Database here: [Kerr MVDB K1200](http://www.kerrmayavase.com/Kerr_MVDB_K1200)



Fig. 8: K8655. God A' holds infant. Compare with Fig. 7, K1200 above. View the vase on the Kerr Maya Vase Database here: [Kerr MVDB K8655](http://www.kerrmayavase.com/Kerr_MVDB_K8655)

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Fig. 9: Tikal Altar 5: Disinterred bones rest between two kneeling royal Akan impersonators. Drawing by Linda Schele. Explore this as part of the Linda Schele Drawings Collection maintained on FAMSI here: [Schele's Tikal Altar 5](#)

Unbundling the Past: Events in Ancient and Contemporary Maya History for August by Zach Lindsey

28 August 682 CE: On

9.12.10.5.12 4 Eb 10 Yax G4, a group of elites from Dos Pilas and their servants arrived in Naranjo. At the head of the group was a young woman, maybe still a girl. We call her Lady Six Sky, but her name was probably Ix Wak Chan Jalam Lem Ajaw.



Drawing of Lady Six Sky's name glyphs on the back side of Naranjo, Stela 29.

It must have been a chaotic time for Naranjo. The polity was reeling from losing their king to Caracol. Dos Pilas' offer to install a daughter of the Dos Pilas king into the remnants of the Naranjo royal family was hardly altruistic – Naranjo was the perfect place to attack their enemies at Tikal. But the young woman who arrived in Naranjo that day would go on to lead a building campaign, modify the moon count, and revitalize the city's ceramic arts. That said, she also took the city to war – a lot. So if they were nervous when she showed up, maybe they had the right to be.

31 August 682 CE: On 9.12.10.5.15 7 Men 13 Yax G7, Lady Six Sky, the young woman from Dos Pilas who came to Naranjo three days earlier, performed a ceremony in her new home. She "fire-entered" (probably ceremonially purified the inside of a building with incense) a building which may have been the central pyramid of the city. Presumably it was part of a suite of ceremonies and rituals she performed as the city's queen-to-be, but it was clearly the most important, because she noted it on Naranjo Stela 29. We know the ancient Maya performed days-long ceremonies, but stelae often focus on one part of the ritual. This event, three days after Lady Six Sky's arrival, is a reminder that ceremonies were lengthy affairs.



Naranjo, Stela 29, front, by Ian Graham 2004.15.6.3.8, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, Peabody Museum. See it here: [Stela 29 Front Ian Graham](#)

IMS Live Streaming 8.17.2022

Wednesday, August 17 at 8 pm ET

Access and bookmark this active hyperlink to join the event:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83080320260>

Defensive Hilltop Structures Among the Ancient Maya: An Example from Witzna

with Kaitlin R. Ahern, Ph.D., RPA

Recent excavations conducted at the Atalaya complex located in East Witzna revealed the early construction of a watchtower in the Holmul region during the Late Preclassic period. This discovery indicates the presence of early warfare in the region that continued into the Late Classic period. The Atalaya was utilized through multiple waves of warfare and its occupation ultimately ended after an act of warfare that burnt most of the architecture and floors. This recent find adds to a growing number of publications that explore the use of defensive hilltop locations and watchtowers by the ancient Maya throughout the Preclassic and Classic periods. This presentation also provides an overview of defensive hilltop structures among the ancient Maya with the goal of contextualizing the new findings associated with the Atalaya.

Katie Ahern graduated from the University at Buffalo in 2020, where she has a position as a Research Associate. She also works as an Archaeologist at New South Associates. She has spent multiple field seasons working with the Holmul Archaeological Project and recently published an article on lime plaster floors in the Holmul region.



Image: View from the top of the Atalaya.

Defensive Hilltop Structures Among the Ancient Maya: An Example from Witzna by Katie Ahern

In 2018 and 2019, Katie Ahern, PhD had the chance to excavate an ancient Maya watchtower located in the jungles of northern Guatemala. This short article details some of the highlights of her upcoming presentation on Wednesday, August 17th, 2022 at 8 pm. Focus is placed on a watchtower, which is known as the Atalaya (watchtower in Spanish).

Watchtowers or lookout points are defensive structures used by the ancient Maya that were positioned in strategic locations to provide information to nearby centers regarding the observation of the surrounding landscape. Information from these watchtowers was likely signaled to other sites through the use of mirrors, fire, and smoke and was utilized to protect centers by providing insight into the direction of attack by enemy warriors or raids. Watchtowers generally refer to small sites that contained no more than a couple of platforms and often lacked walls surrounding the entire complex.

The Atalaya is a pyramid located on the highest hill in the region. This pyramid received the name Atalaya because its summit provides an excellent vantage point where an individual can view almost all of the sites in the specific region. Additionally, the Atalaya was positioned in a naturally defensive location, as the hilltop was only accessible along its western side. The remaining three sides were not traversable due to steep slopes. This watchtower was part of a hilltop architectural complex that contained a southern pyramid, a plaza, a masonry structure, and a northern platform. There was also a wall discovered on the western edge of the complex and a potential quarry located to the southwest of the plaza.

Excavation on the Atalaya occurred during the Holmul Archaeological Project's 2018 and 2019 field seasons. A total of ten excavations were conducted on this complex and revealed several phases of architecture, a destroyed altar, and a ritual cache containing the remains of child's skull. Together, this information demonstrated that the Atalaya served a critical role in protecting a nearby Maya city from enemies. This presentation will go into these discoveries in greater detail, while also exploring the larger threats of warfare within the region. 🏰



Ceramics recovered from the Atalaya complex.



Fragment of an Altar from Atalaya.



Biface recovered from the Atalaya complex.

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Wednesday, August 24 • 8 pm ET

Pathways Into Darkness Revisited: The Archaeology and Mystery of Petroglyph Cave, Cayo District, Belize

with Dr. Barbara MacLeod

Access and download this active hyperlink: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83044388880>

In the spring of 1978, a group of graduate students and cave explorers undertook a five-month archaeology project in a deep sinkhole cavern largely unknown to the outside world. Visited once in the late 60s and next in 1971 by Barb MacLeod and local bushman Reuben Cox (who had found it previously), the cave was immediately recognized as the locus of extensive Classic Maya ritual practice within an awe-inspiring ceremonial space. Subsequent visits over several years by MacLeod (then attached



Peering into the depths. Photo by Clint Davis.

to the Belize Department of Archaeology as a Peace Corps Volunteer), together with Department staff and visiting cavers from the US – led to further exploration and new discoveries in the great entrance chamber and the cathedral-like rooms downstream reachable via a deep underground river. Dozens of human sacrificial remains – both infants and adults – were found in two principal chambers.

The 1978 University of Texas-Austin project was the first formal archaeological investigation of Petroglyph Cave – named for the many geometric images carved in ancient times along the edges of a steep series of dry rimstone dams.

Project members lived on the sinkhole floor most of those months, engaging in mapping and excavation in many areas of the cave. We made brief returns to Belmopan to clean and catalogue artifacts, get fresh vegetables and supplies, and enjoy a cold beer with tasty Belize cuisine before casting ourselves once again into the wild and compelling underworld. Barb's talk will share images, stories, and artifacts found in the cave during the years long before its transformation into a destination for high-adrenaline adventure tourism.



Barbara MacLeod

Barbara MacLeod grew up in Missouri and began exploring and mapping caves in her teens. From 1971 to 1975 she worked in the Belize Department of Archaeology as a Peace Corps speleologist, documenting extensive underground ritual sites from the Maya Classic period and rescuing artifacts in danger of theft by looters. She received her Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Texas/Austin in 1990.

For four decades she has been an independent academic and an active contributor to the field of Maya epigraphy, specializing in linguistic approaches to decipherment. She first visited Naj Tunich Cave in 1987 and subsequently collaborated with Dr. Andrea Stone on her 1995 book *Images from the Underworld*. She is currently completing a book about Naj Tunich titled *Celebrations in the Heart of the Mountain*. Before the pandemic she worked in Austin, Texas as a flight instructor, teaching beginners and basic aerobatics.

Barbara MacLeod will explain it all and more! *Plan to be there with us!*



“The Encounter of the Long Count Keeper”

Poem and Song by Barbara MacLeod

Please listen to the song before reading; go to: [Encounter of the Long Count Keeper](#)

“I wrote this song in 1972 while I lived in Belize and on this occasion performed it in the Blue Hole sump chamber (still a very secret place) with magnificent echo properties. It is here recorded by myself and Carol Jo Rushin as we sat in a canoe with guitar and tape recorder.

Absolutely inspired by my early visits to Petroglyph Cave.

“This cave was – and perhaps still is – a deep reservoir of mystery and mystique which I found absolutely spellbinding. It’s the most awesome of all the caves in Mayaland I have visited.

The sinkhole and the chamber below it represent a descent of more than five hundred feet in vast space obliquely lit by daylight all the way down to the river, which flows in darkness for several miles through the cave as part of the Caves Branch system.

This river – at points requiring a swim – leads to the cathedral-like sacrificial chamber downstream where many remains, including the crystal-covered skull (at right) and other ritual items were found. Eventually, years later, we found the “back door” – another entrance way downstream high above where the stream makes an uncanny babbling sound like people talking.”



*The crystal-covered skull.
Photo by Clint Davis.*

Darken the room and listen to the song. Welcome to Petroglyph Cave and a journey through time!

Old the dust that settles on the altar older still;
A thousand years since man stood here or walked beneath this hill;
Above, the tangled forest wild where once the temples stood,
But here the tendrils never reach, nor falls the rotting wood.

Old the bowls where incense burned, and older yet the stones;
They whisper, warn to not disturb the endless sleep of bones;
Deep and black, the river calls; the Maya answered then;
The water spirits beckon still to those who venture in.

I chose this cave where spirits dwell to find the finest thread
That takes me to the edge of things where wisdom lies ahead;
For this place I could not prepare; by unperceived design
I stood before the altar there and waited for a sign.

The writing on the mossy stone the ancients did incise;
It danced and faded, and it touched somewhere behind my eyes;
Above the glowing coals I raised my trembling fingers high,
And there let fall the white copal that calls the spirits nigh.

The pungent smoke curled upward, casting shadows on the wall;
My shadow, solitary, stood – but I was not alone at all!
I could not breathe; the air was thick with breath that reeked of slime;
“I’ve come,” said he, “and now with me you’ll cross the edge of time.”

continued on page 10



“The Encounter of the Long Count Keeper”

Poem and Song by Barbara MacLeod *continued from page 9*

My hardhat and my carbide lamp he made me leave behind;
With pitch-pine torch I stumbled down to where the stream does wind;
Chill and black, the water stood; I shuddered but stepped in;
From rock to rock I waded as he drew me from within...

The powdered marble stalagmites before me seemed to grow;
Behind me, silently, they moved – but this I did not know;
The vampires bared their needle teeth and fluttered past my head;
“Behold, the bat god welcomes you,” my unseen guide then said.

“Take heed, do not be frightened here; you know these caverns well;
Your eyes have marked the way back out; you’ll have a tale to tell.”
I’d told myself these words before; I grappled with them now,
But terror seized the moment and I turned – I know not how.

The cave behind looked strange to me, as strange as that ahead.
“They look the same exactly,” my guide, then laughing, said;
“The way in is the way back out, outside your mind or in;
It’s just another way to go back where we all begin.”

I’d had enough; I started back – it seemed to matter then,
But every lead I followed only took me deeper in;
”And so, the joke,” he laughed aloud, “you’re here, you’re where you are;
For once you’ve let go of the past, you cannot go too far.”

“But come, let’s hurry on,” he called, “you said you came to learn;”
The torch I carried flickered low; it hadn’t long to burn;
On and on, my mind adrift on seas of fallen stones
That broke on shores of oozing mud that hungered for my bones.

“But what about the sun o’erhead, the great and mossy trees,
The moon, the wind, the stars, the rain, why can’t I learn from these?”
“You shall meet them all,” he said, “you’ll come to know them well,
But hurry, for your torch burns low, and with it ends the spell.”

The shadows rose, and with me traveled now the taunting phantom fear;
The torch became too short to hold; he said, “I leave you here.
Perhaps you’ll find a vaulted room where daylight trickles in;
The damp green moss and songs of birds could guide your footsteps then.”

I watched the scattered embers fade, the dying of the light;
And now my silent universe was filled with starless night;
But through my resignation came the challenge of his words:
Perhaps I’d find the sunlit room, perhaps I’d hear the birds.

continued on page 11





L) A view from inside Petroglyph Cave looking out. C) Some of the many geometric images carved along the edges of a steep series of dry rimstone dams. R) The long and arduous task of using the ladder to get to floor level. All photos by Clint Davis.

“The Encounter of the Long Count Keeper”

Poem and Song by Barbara MacLeod *continued from page 10*

Now plunged into total darkness, on I groped along the ground,
But suddenly I saw the crack where sunlight filtered down!
I cried for joy and scrambled on; the rocks below me rolled,
The air was thick with mist, the sun a flash of cherished gold.

Before me now a narrow path around the breakdown wound,
Where tracks of many unshod feet impressed in dust I found;
And rows of jars in shadow waited, catching dripping water clear
Collected for the month Muan, the fifteenth of the year.

I climbed to meet the tangled vines with birdsong overhead;
Ecstatic as I found the trail that through the forest led;
But when I'd reached the ridge beyond, my unbelieving eyes
Across the emerald valley saw the gleaming temples rise...

So now at last, the play unfolds; I've crossed the edge of time;
It's counted out by twenties now, in cycles sung to rhyme;
So many things to ask of them: How did the world begin?
And what do all these pictures say? How will the katun end?

For this I'd learned their words for wind, and stars, and rain as well;
I wonder will these Maya old their secrets to me tell?
I've journeyed from beneath the earth, a stranger strayed afar;
Perhaps I'll learn to count the days in pictures, as they are.

The dusty lamp and hardhat speak a muted mystery.
How came I then to leave them here, and where then can I be?
Old the dust that settles on the altar older still,
But how long since I stood there, or walked beneath this hill?



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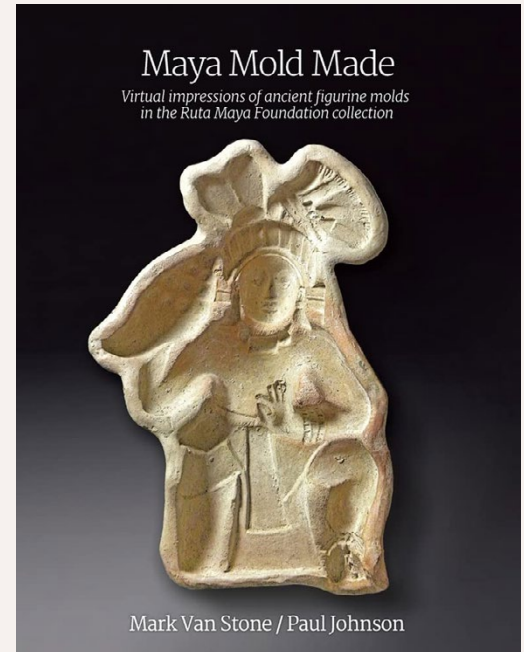
There's a New Book Out ! Now Available on Amazon:

Maya Mold Made: Virtual Impressions of Ancient Figurine Molds in the Ruta Maya Foundation Collection

by Mark Van Stone, together with Paul Johnson

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IMS July Third Wednesday Zoom:
“Quetzalcoatl and the Dresden Codex Venus Table”

with **Gerardo Aldana**, PhD,
University of California, Santa Barbara

Recording now on the IMS website:
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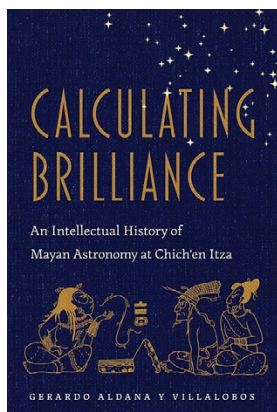
In this presentation, I offer a new interpretation of pages 29 through 54 of the Borgia Codex and how they speak to a complex interweaving of astronomy and politics during the Terminal Classic and Postclassic periods across Mesoamerica.

In *Calculating Brilliance*, I follow up on arguments that there is a relationship between the Central Mexican deity Quetzalcoatl, the Maya's K'uk'ulkan, and the treatment of Venus in the Dresden Codex – but, as Förstemann and Seler deduced over a century ago the references are implicit.

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IMS July Fourth Wednesday Zoom:
**“Gazing at the Death Face”:
The Story Behind the Story
of the Discovery of the Tomb
of K'inich Janaab' Pakal**

with **Elaine Schele**, PhD,
Adjunct assistant professor at Texas State University

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It's a story of the trials and triumphs encountered during archaeological excavation work including the qualities of friendship, trust, and scholarship between individuals and agencies. On the other hand, the story reveals moments of frustration, mystery, ineptitude and mistrust among those same persons and institutions – qualities that illuminate the fallibility of human nature.



Elaine has published several articles on Alberto Ruz and is currently collaborating on another. She lives in Austin, Texas, with her husband David and their blue and gold macaw, Blue Bird.

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