



The Ahau Chronicles



Volume 21

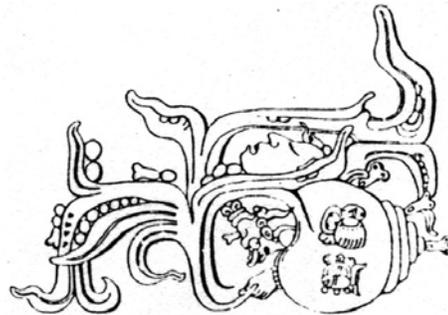
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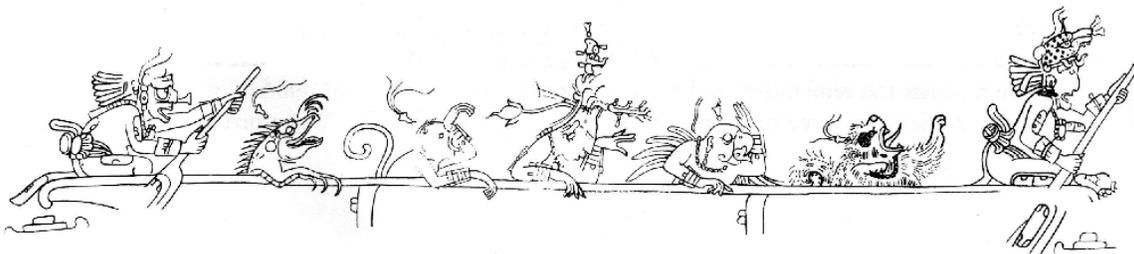


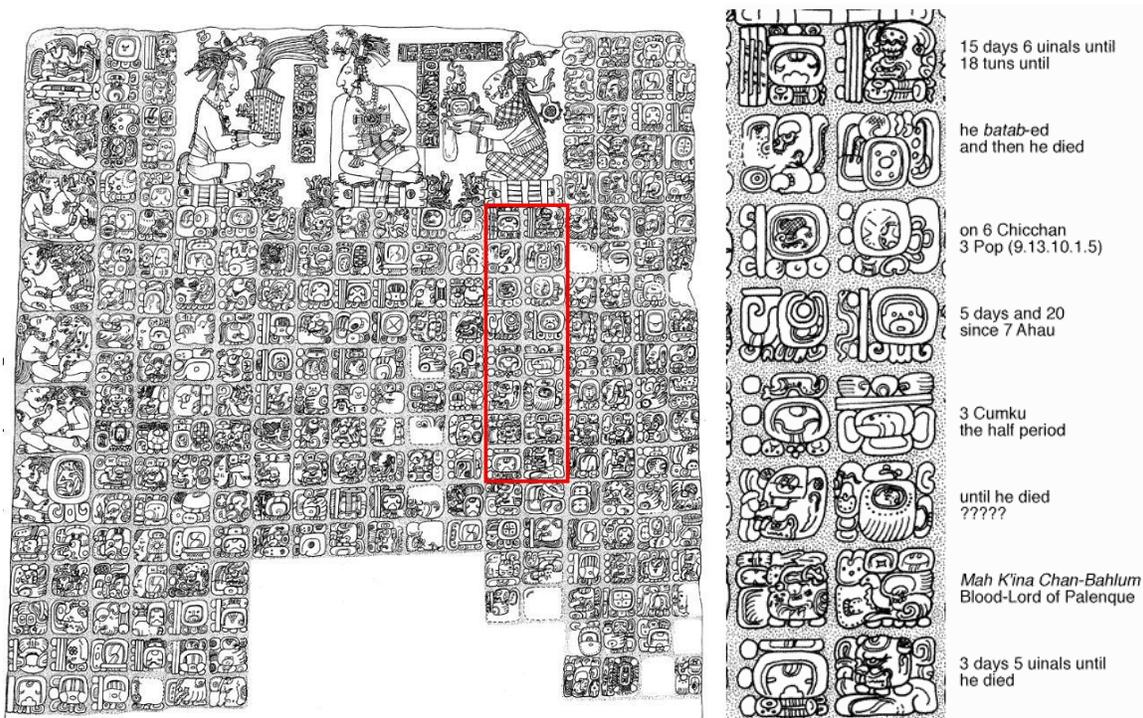
The Tomb of Chan Bahlum

Four days from the publication of this newsletter, on February 16th, the 1,309th anniversary of Chan Bahlum's death will occur. According to several hieroglyphic sources, the great king of Palenque died on February 16, 702 AD, on the Calendar Round date of 6 Chicchan 3 Pop or Long Count 9.13.10.1.5. The inscriptions associated with Chan Bahlum bear testimony to his ceremonial observances of cosmic events. I would also suggest that it is these events that indicate a direct association with the enormous monument on Robinson Crusoe Island, a monument specifically referenced in the hieroglyphic inscriptions at Palenque and the likely final resting place of Chan Bahlum.



Deep within the Temple of Inscriptions, Chan Bahlum's father Pakal is interred beneath his 7-ton sarcophagus lid, perhaps the most famous of all Mayan artifacts. But the tomb of his son has never been found. As Dr. Ed Barnhart explains in the **Apocalypse Island** movie, the location of Chan Bahlum's burial chamber is "the Holy Grail of Mayan archaeology." Undoubtedly, the discovery of this sacred tomb will cause a sensation around the world.





Adjacent to both Pakal's Temple of Inscriptions and Chan Bahlum's Cross Group of Temples, the sprawling Palace at Palenque contains a lengthy hieroglyphic inscription commissioned by Chan Bahlum's younger brother, Kan Xul. Known as The Palace Tablet, the inscription shows Kan Xul receiving the headdress of kingship from his deceased father Pakal while his mother, Lady Ahpo Hel, looks on. The accompanying text records the succession of kings and includes the end of his brother Chan Bahlum's reign (highlighted and translated) that prompted Kan Xul's accession to the throne.

The coronation of Kan Xul occurred 103 days later on the date May 30, 702 AD (5 Lamat 6 Xul, LC 9.13.10.6.8). Although Kan Xul would eventually be captured by a rival city-state more than nine years later, an event that led to the eventual decline in the fortunes of Palenque, it should be admitted that this interval would have been ample time to properly inter the mortal remains of his brother Chan Bahlum in a mortuary monument befitting one of the greatest of all Mayan kings.

In an article entitled "A New Carved Panel from the Palenque Area", David Stuart, a renowned Mayan epigrapher, describes the contents of a small limestone relief carving that resided in the municipal museum in the town of Emiliano Zapata in the nearby state of Tabasco. The tablet depicts Chan Bahlum sculpting a large stone resembling the distant island monument. The short hieroglyphic text makes specific references to the dates of Chan Bahlum's birth and death and suggests an association between his death and the sculpted stone which I believe is a reference to his burial.

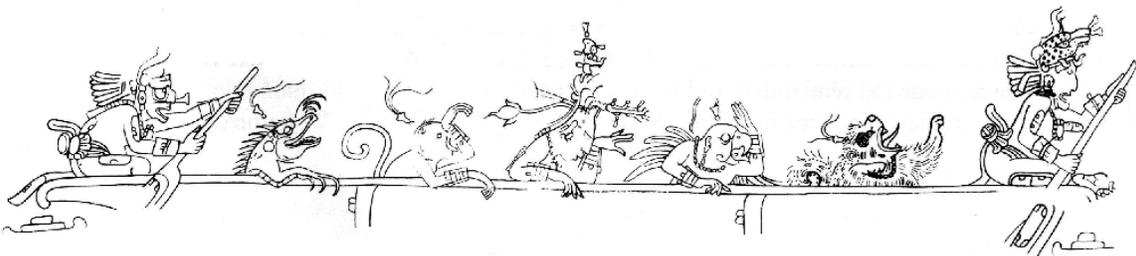
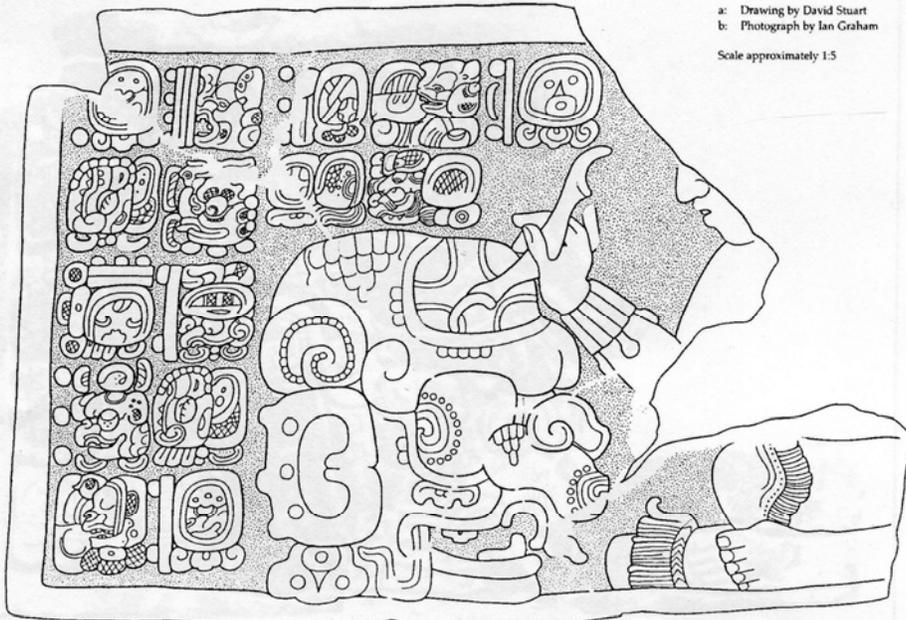


FIGURE 1. THE EMILIANO ZAPATA PANEL

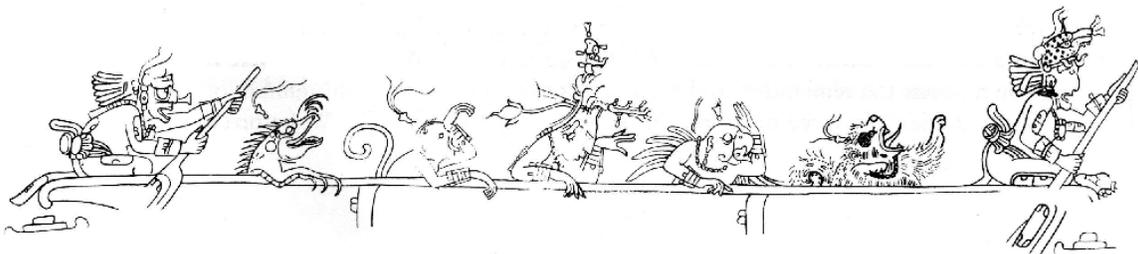
a: Drawing by David Stuart
 b: Photograph by Ian Graham
 Scale approximately 1:5



a

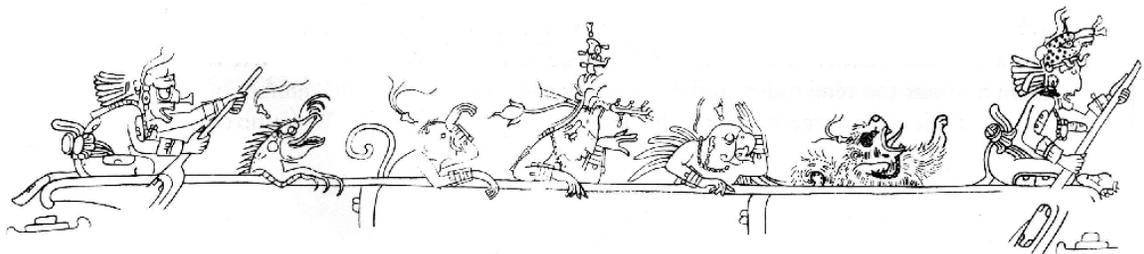
		May 20, 635 AD LC 9.10.2.6.6			
2 Cimi	19 Zotz		3 Pop	Sculptor	
Was born	Chan Bahlum		Precious Stone	On the back of	
		3.7.13.0= 24,380 days		January 22, 702 AD 9.13.10.0.0	
13 uinals	7 tuns		7 Ahau		
3 katuns	after birth				
		February 16, 702 AD LC 9.13.10.1.5			
He died	7 Cimi				

The tablet records the birth of Chan Bahlum followed by a Distance Number of 24,380 days until his death. It then uses a verb describing "sculpting" followed by the glyph for "kan tun" or "precious stone", likely a reference to the stone he is shown sculpting in the larger image. The inscription ends with a compound for "on the back of" and the date 7 Ahau.



For readers of this newsletter, the conclusion of this inscription with reference to an Ahau date might seem especially meaningful when we recognize that it represents the end of a *tun* on January 22, 702 AD (7 Ahau 3 Cumku, LC 9.13.10.0.0). Chan Bahlum's brother also references the end of the *tun* in his inscription translated above by counting 5 and 20 days since the 7 Ahau date. The curious part of the Emiliano Zapata Panel is that the date of Chan Bahlum's death is here recorded on a Calendar Round date 7 Cimi 3 Pop and not the 6 Chicchan 3 Pop date recorded in his brother's Palace Tablet. Another renowned Mayan epigrapher, Peter Mathews, suggests that the discrepancy arises from the possibility that the changeover of the Sacred Round designation (6 Chicchan) and the Vague Year (3 Pop) took place at different times on the day in question. In his study of Dos Pilas Stela 8 Mathews proposes that a similar discrepancy signified the burial of the deceased ruler at night.

The brevity of the inscription leaves little room for interpretation but this may have been intentional since even shorthand notation seems to be sufficient to explain the profound content. With 12 of the 15 glyphs dealing with the calendrics surrounding Chan Bahlum's birth and death we are left with only 3 glyphs to hint at the overall import of the inscription. In his article, David Stuart suggests that the second-to-last glyph that literally translates as "on the back of" is in fact a figurative temporal reference relating to the 7 Ahau date and means that the event in question took place "behind" or after the *tun*-ending. While this is a plausible meaning that seems to agree with the calendar dates I would suggest that it is a secondary level of abstraction that overlooks the obvious literal meaning of the passage. I take this panel to indicate that upon his death, the "sculptor" of the "precious stone" was interred "on the back of" the great monument.



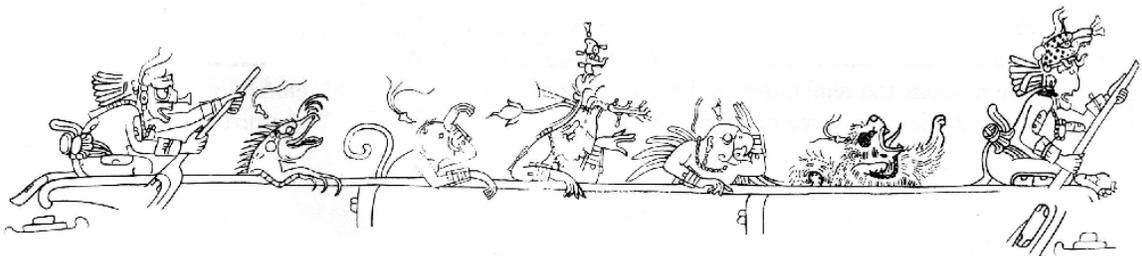
As I have noted in numerous instances before, to the rear of the Sun God tower of the island monument lies another sculpture of a crouching jaguar. The jaguar appears on the north side of the monument while the south side I have suggested looks like a snail shell from which the Sun God emerges, much like the image from Chan Bahlum's Temple of the Foliated Cross inscription that is shown at the beginning of this newsletter. The recumbent head shown surrounded by the "foliated" leaves of the corn plant also hints at his interment "on the back of" the "shell" of the snail. But the polyvalent nature of Mayan iconography allows for an additional layer of interpretation, one that concerns God L, also known as "The Smoker", who appears opposite Chan Bahlum in the Temple of the Cross and who is also figured prominently in the Temple of the Sun.



God L expresses a dual nature represented by both jaguar and armadillo aspects. These are thought to be *wayob*, co-essences or animal spirit companions that the god can manifest. In the central motif of the Temple of the Sun inscription shown at left, God L is depicted twice supporting the jaguar and Sun God images that I believe reference the island monument. In the depiction on the left, or north, side of the image he is shown wearing a jaguar skin cloak while the right or southern depiction shows a chevron-patterned cloak associated with his armadillo aspect.



South side of island monument (L) compared to armadillo stool from Maya region (R).



The armadillo aspect of the island monument was first brought to my attention by Ken King, a subscriber to this newsletter, who forwarded me an illuminating article entitled “The Armadillo Stool” by Brian Stross from the University of Texas at Austin. The image of the armadillo stool above immediately struck me as resembling the south side of the island monument. The articulated shell of the armadillo along with its pointy nose closely matched the sculptured elements behind the Sun God tower. But it was the related cultural symbolism that is most convincing.

The nine-banded armadillo is seen by the Maya as a representation of the 9 levels of the Underworld. The animal lives in a burrow underground, again associating itself with the Underworld, but also perhaps hinting at the hidden tomb of Chan Bahlum dug into the hillside beneath the monument. The most overt piece of evidence, however, comes from a widely known practice related to the preparation of armadillo meat for eating. In a book entitled *Folktales of Mexico*, Américo Paredes notes: “...as an eater of poisonous snakes the armadillo may be fatal to one who eats its flesh unless proper precautions are taken.” These precautions include cutting open the stomach of the armadillo to check for the presence of snakes. In a suggestive play on words, it seems we are being directed to open the belly of the armadillo monument to check for the remains of a snake, Chan Bahlum (Serpent-Jaguar). Stross also writes: “A number of Indigenous peoples in Mesoamerica, including Tzotzil, Mazatec and Aztec speakers, use an armadillo carapace as a container for seed corn when sowing the milpa”. The contents of the armadillo shell, the tomb of Chan Bahlum, will be the seeds from which a new generation of humanity will sprout at the beginning of the next World Age.

