

Lord of the Maya Creations on his jaguar throne: the eternal return of Elder Brother God L to preside over the 21 December 2012 transformation

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Abstract. Speculation about what ancient Maya texts have to say about 2012 is becoming a global phenomenon in popular culture. This speculation, largely apocalyptic, is more often based on acquaintance with historical Western interpretations than on familiarity with the texts themselves and their cultural contexts. This paper approaches the 2012 phenomenon through close readings of Maya texts and images considered within the contexts of historical and contemporary Maya culture and Western scholarship. It focuses on images of mythological events depicted on two Late Classic Maya vessels: the 'Vase of the Seven Gods' (Kerr no. 2796) and the 'Vase of the Eleven Gods' (Kerr no. 7750). These images are interpreted as representing deities, gathered in 'cosmogonic conclave', preparing to re-create the world with their sacrifices at the last completion of a great cycle and the beginning of a new 5,125-year 13-Bak'tun Maya 'Long Count'. The rites of passage are presided over by an enigmatic Venus-warrior/sacrificer deity previously known only as God L. God L's principal name and nature had remained undeciphered and his identity obscure until the author's researches resulted in the decipherment and 'reading' presented here. This study offers an explication of why God L, whom the author has demonstrated is the Maya god of tobacco among his many aspects, takes the senior role in presiding over these 13-Bak'tun completion rituals and why it is reasonable to hypothesize that the same entities would be back for the fulfillment of the present cycle in 2012.

Keywords. Maya calendar, 2012 phenomenon, Maya God L, tobacco flasks, Venus, Maya cosmology, Maya cosmogony

1. Introduction

Sometime in the first few centuries BCE, some Mesoamerican astronomers and 'day keepers' had accumulated enough astronomical and calendrical knowledge to create what we call the 'Long Count', a grand cycle of 13 Bak'tuns (exactly $13 \times 144,000$ days) or about 5,125 years. The designers of this monumental conception may or may not have been ethnically Maya, but it is certain that the Maya developed it and brought it to prominence in the first centuries of the Common Era. The Long Count reckons time in five units: the K'in (1 day); the Winal (20 days); the Tun (18 Winals or 360 days); the K'atun (20 Tuns or 7,200 days); and the Bak'tun (more correctly *Pik* in Mayan; 20 K'atuns or 144,000 days). As the Maya recorded them, the succession of days was tallied from the starting day of 0 Bak'tuns, 0 K'atuns, 0 Tuns, 0 Winals, and 0 K'ins. They understood this as the starting over again after a previous era of 13.0.0.0.0. The completion day of any Long Count, after 13 Bak'tuns, may thus be represented as 13.0.0.0.0. In Maya inscriptions, these Long Count dates are virtually always followed by other cycles such as the 52-year 'Calendar Round' which was, in turn, composed of a 260-day 'Tzolkin'

and a 365-day ‘Haab’ or ‘Vague Year’. The starting and ending dates of the current Long Count and Calendar Round *could* then be represented as 0.0.0.0.0 4 Ajaw 8 Kumk'u and 13.0.0.0.0 4 Ajaw 3 K'ank'in, respectively. In addition, some recorded inscriptions deal with much larger units and spans of time; the 13-Bak'tun count is simply one important period that Maya daykeepers created and explored for more than a millennium. The interested reader is advised to consult any standard source on the Maya calendar to learn more of its intricacies (see, e.g., Thompson 1971; Coe 2011).

Within this system, it is also important to understand that a special sub-cycle of 13 prophetic K'atuns (260 Tuns; approximately 256 Tropical years) was reckoned. Each of the 13 K'atuns was presided over by one of the ‘Lords of the K'atuns’ who installed a succession of fortunes and prophecies for that period thus controlling the perceived forces behind the events of history, much like the Biblical prophecies of Seven Fat Years to be followed by Seven Lean Years. After the 260 Tuns had passed, the Maya expected that the character of their history, if not the specific events, would repeat, *ad infinitum*. The same succession of K'atun Lords would return to be petitioned and propitiated, as before, in the hope that some dire events might not be repeated. The great Long Count cycle of 13 Bak'tuns is thus 260 prophetic K'atuns; the ancient Maya would have anticipated a powerful like-in-kind event and prepared their elaborate temporal rites of passage well in advance.

On December 21st, the winter solstice, 2012 CE—or perhaps December 23rd, depending on the calendar correlation—the current great 5,125-year ‘Long Count’ will reach completion, precipitating the rapidly-evolving global event we might call the ‘2012 phenomenon’. I have known about this and have been preparing for it, both professionally and personally, since the summer of 1973. In hindsight, perhaps my most influential meeting that year was with renowned Yale University Mayanist Michael D. Coe whose research interests and personal generosity inspired me to explore entirely new directions of scholarship that have led to a series of discoveries regarding what the ancient Maya might have anticipated for this impending Long Count completion in 2012. Many of these discoveries were highly serendipitous involving new archaeological finds that appeared at just the right moment. All were connected, in some way, to an enigmatic Maya deity, previously known only as ‘God L’, first identified as such by Paul Schellhas (1904) in his studies of the Maya codices.

My new chief research interest became the study of Mesoamerican practices of Venus-regulated warfare and ritual sacrifice, whimsically called ‘star wars’ after the George Lucas epic space opera released in 1977. One part of this project was to continue the research on Coe’s (1973: 150–154) first publication of the then-newly-discovered fourth pre-Columbian Maya book, the ‘Grolier Codex’, so called because of its first presentation in the 1971 Grolier Club of New York exhibition on *The Maya Scribe and his World*. Dating to the 13th century CE, the Grolier Codex is the oldest surviving pre-Columbian book. It is a Venus Almanac fragment that records the full 104-year Great Venus Cycle and depicts ten of the twenty total Venus gods as sacrificers dominating their victims. Due to the circumstances of its discovery, some prominent Mayanists such as J. Eric Thompson had questioned its authenticity. But in 1982, based on recent discoveries by Floyd Lounsbury concerning skeletal Evening Star Venus manifestations, the author was able to demonstrate that the Grolier Codex must be genuine because it contained specific information that no alleged faker in the 1960s could possibly have known (Carlson 1983; 1990). Subsequent research has convinced the author and most Mayanists that the Grolier is genuine and provides critical new information about Maya practices of Venus-regulated warfare and sacrifice. Although only ten of the original twenty pages are known to have survived—there is a chance that the others might yet be found—the



Figure 1. Maya Dresden Codex page 46b with image of God L as Venus Morning Star warrior/sacrificer. His name glyph appears above at center, first column on the left. Ernst Förstemann edition—see Förstemann (1901; 1906) for commentary. Public domain.

Grolier Codex is of the same calendrical construction as the Dresden Codex, which contains the most complete and best known surviving example of a Venus Almanac. The five main pages of the Dresden Codex Venus Almanac show only the Morning Star sacrificers. The first of these, on Dresden page 46 (Fig. 1), is the enigmatic Maya ‘God L’ who is depicted spearing his sacrificial victim, ‘God K’, with an atlatl (spear-thrower) dart. In my research, the fact that God L is a major manifestation of Venus as a warrior/sacrificer is critical to understanding his role as the chief creator god convening what I have called the Maya ‘cosmogonic conclave’ more than 5,000 years ago as it is depicted on the sides of two surviving Classic Maya chocolate-drinking vessels. These vessels are known as the ‘Vase of the Seven Gods’ (Kerr no. 2796; see Fig. 2) and the ‘Vase of the Eleven Gods’ or the ‘Ranieri Vase’ (Kerr no. 7750; see Callaway, this volume, fig. 1, p. 194) and it was remarkably serendipitous that the ‘Seven Gods’ vase was first published and interpreted by Michael Coe in his 1973 Grolier Club exhibition volume.

2. Maya ‘God L’: nature and name

(a) God L is one of the Maya ‘Old Gods’, a designation that also includes Gods D and N (see, e.g., Schellhas 1904; Taube 1992). God L is male. He has a mature face which sometimes exhibits sunken features and is always shown in profile. He is often portrayed with the mirror-like ‘god markings’ on his arms and legs; these markings signify his status

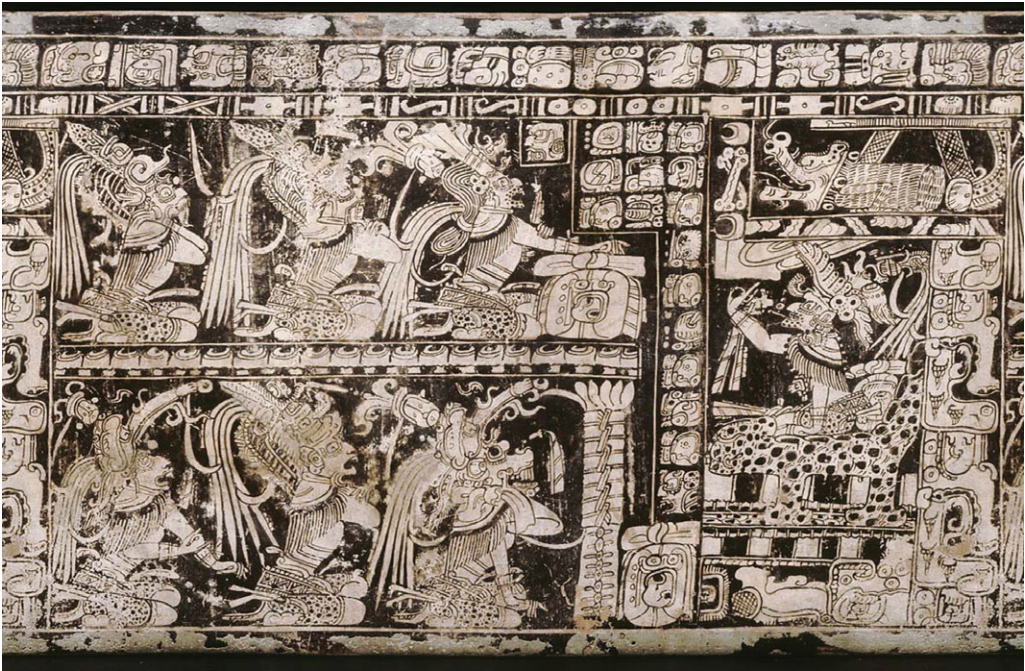


Figure 2. Vase of the Seven Gods. Rollout photograph (Kerr no. 2796). © Justin Kerr, reproduced with permission.

as a supernatural entity. All Maya scholars would probably agree that God L exists only in a mature form. The earliest known example, incised in full figure form, is found on a remarkable Early Classic (250–600 CE) rectangular cache vessel from the northern Petén district of Guatemala (Carlson 1988: 86–89).

(b) God L is an Old God of the Maya Underworld and hence of the night sky. He is depicted with prominent jaguar aspects: a jaguar ear; jaguar pattern markings on his mandible; and often wearing a jaguar pelt kilt. Throughout ancient Mesoamerica, the night sky is essentially imagined as a reflection of the dark cave-like Underworld. The particular black-spotted pattern of the tawny jaguar skin was seen to symbolize the night and its luminous denizens. (Completely black jaguars are also known with the characteristic spots discernable, and the ancient Maya would have been aware of this.) The Maya ‘Jaguar God of the Underworld’ (JGU) and the highland Mexican night aspect of *Tezcatlipoca* (the dark Smoking Mirror god of diviners) appears in a night, underworld Jaguar-man form known as *Tepeyolotl* (Heart of the Mountain). On the Vase of the Seven Gods (Fig. 2) he sits on a Jaguar throne in a dark cave Underworld scene. The author has suggested that the Jaguar is the primary *way* or ‘co-essence’ of God L. God L also usually wears a broad-brimmed, feathered hat with a supernatural bird (usually an owl, sometimes with ophidian attributes) and specific sky associations including glyphic names such as ‘13 Sky’.

(c) God L often displays armadillo attributes in the form of an armadillo carapace-like cape. Recently, Kerr & Kerr (2005) have explored this aspect and argued that the Armadillo is the *way* or ‘co-essence’ of God L. The author concurs (Carlson 1997) but has maintained that God L probably had several *wayob*, the Armadillo being one of them. The author has further argued that the cape with armadillo markings and wide-brimmed hat may both be closely related to his elite merchant/ambassador’s raincoat

and head gear. Related forms of hat and rain gear, often made of woven reeds, are found throughout Mesoamerica.

(d) In the Classic Period (ca. 250–900 CE), God L is demonstrably one of the Maya Merchant Gods and indeed was likely to have been the chief patron deity of merchants, messengers, couriers, ambassadors, and pilgrims—probably the guardian of all ‘people of the road’. This was proposed independently in the late 1980s by Karl Taube (1992), Nicholas Hellmuth (1987), and the author (Carlson 1991). The author’s proposal was based on his observations of a newly discovered depiction of an elite merchant lord on murals at the Maya-influenced site of Cacaxtla, Tlaxcala, with the calendrical name ‘4 Dog’ (see Carlson 1991; Stuart 1992). In this extraordinary example, ‘4 Dog’ is portrayed with virtually all of the diagnostic attributes of God L, including mirror-like ‘god markings’ on his body. He is accompanied by a supernatural quetzal bird flying in front of him seemingly ready to perch on a cacao tree. Here ‘4 Dog’ God L is shown with a broad-brimmed serpent-bird hat hung above his tortoise-shell shield at the top of his merchant’s *cacaxtli* backpack-frame. In the context of his study of God L, the author first presented arguments (Carlson 1997) that virtually all Mesoamerican merchants and porters had bird companions or ‘companion spirits’ with them on the road. Representations of such traders show birds in their head gear, perched on their pack-frames, or flying nearby. This Late Classic (ca. 8th century) Cacaxtla depiction of a high-status armed warrior-merchant represents, in essence, a much earlier Maya form of what became the Late Post-Classic Mexica (Aztec) *pochteca*. These were members of the elite guilds of long-distance armed caravan traders. For such elite armed merchants in Classic Maya times, their chief patron deity would seem to have been God L.

(e) God L is among the ‘Black Gods’ who are associated with Mesoamerican traders and their patrons. Black body painting or skin blackened with the soot of burning *copal* incense, native rubber, burnt paper offerings, and tobacco was *also* a diagnostic characteristic of the Mesoamerican priesthood and sacrificers. God L has all of these associations.

(f) God L is a well-established aspect of the planet Venus, the Venus Morning Star warrior/sacrificer named and portrayed on Dresden Codex Venus Almanac page 46 (Fig. 1). He was first identified by Förstemann (1901; 1906) and named by Schellhas (1904). This makes him an aspect of the pan-Mesoamerican Feathered Serpent deity known as Quetzalcoatl to the Nahua-speaking peoples such as the Aztecs, and K’uk’ulkan to the (Yucatec) Maya. Venus was seen as a dangerous, deadly male deity who presided over practices of Venus-regulated warfare and sacrifice (Carlson 1991; 1993a; 1999), the purpose of which was to take captives for sacrificial rites. In the course of these public executions, blood was transferred to ritual papers, including tied paper wristlets and anklets worn by the sacrificers, and subsequently symbolically transformed into nourishing water and fertility. This would also appear to be the case for individuals performing autosacrifice. Such rites are depicted on numerous Maya vase paintings and murals such as those at Cacaxtla (see Stuart 1992). Many lines of evidence suggest that these and other sacrificial papers were burnt, perhaps with incense, with the smoke of the consuming fire transporting clouds of sacred essence to the sky to communicate with the ancestors, summon the rains, and renew the cycle of life.

(g) God L and Maya God K are often depicted as a pair, with God L placed on the right of the image and with God K facing him to the left. (They also appear together as sacrificer and victim, respectively, on Dresden Venus Almanac page 46.) This pairing is first portrayed on the oldest known example of the two gods shown in full-figure form on the rectangular cache vessel (Carlson 1988: 86–89). I also first saw an aspect of this relationship in the famous bas relief-carved outer door jamb panels of the ‘sanctuary’ of the Temple of the Cross at Palenque (Carlson 1976). (In this important example, the role

of God K is taken by a Palenque ruler, then known as Chan Bahlum II, ‘Serpent Jaguar’.) The two are also represented this way on numerous examples of miniature Maya ceramics known as ‘Maya Flasks’ (Carlson 2003; 2007). In fact, the author’s long-term research program to document and investigate ‘Maya Flasks and Miniature Vessels’—funded, in part by the Jay I. Kislak Foundation—was undertaken in 1991 specifically to study this relationship and to learn the identity and nature of the Morning Star deity, God L.

(h) God L is regularly shown smoking large cigars or smoking tubes. He would seem to be the Maya ‘smoking god’ (Robicsek 1978) and it has always been presumed, but never previously demonstrated, that he was smoking tobacco. Tobacco is the ubiquitous Native American sacred plant and was used by priests, shamans, and ‘medicine men’ at all levels of society (see, e.g., Robicsek 1987; Winter 2000). Most native American tobacco species, such as *Nicotiana tabacum* and *Nicotiana rustica*, are powerful psychoactive botanicals (Wilbert 1987) depending on how they are consumed. In Mesoamerica, as well as South America, they are also taken internally (often with other substances such as alcohol) as nasal snuffs, quids for chewing, and even as enemas (via a clyster). As a serendipitous result of the author’s ‘Maya Flasks and Miniature Vessels’ research program (Carlson 2003; 2007), begun to explore astronomical questions regarding this enigmatic Venus deity, God L is now demonstrated to be the Maya god of tobacco, in all of its forms. He is the embodiment of tobacco and tobacco preparations and Maya impersonators, such as ‘4 Dog’ God L of Cacaxtla, assumed all of his aspects in presenting himself with his attributes.

(i) The Jay I. Kislak Collection, now housed in the U.S. Library of Congress, includes one of the world’s largest and most balanced collections of ancient Maya ceramic bottles and miniature vessels. These ‘Maya Flasks’ have been known for more than a century from archaeological discoveries and museum collections, but their contents and purposes had remained elusive until the author’s comprehensive study of this and numerous other collections (Carlson 2003; 2007). As a result of this research begun in 1991, based on glyphic, iconographic, and contents analyses, it was determined that virtually all flasks of this type were created primarily as ‘medicine’ bottles; most were made specifically to hold preparations of powdered native tobacco mixed with alkaline slaked lime and other ingredients. (The data and analyses from this project strongly suggest that such mixtures might include psychoactive and entheogenic ingredients such as *Psilocibe* mushrooms, toad secretions, peyote, and morning glory seed extracts.) These mixtures are called *may* or *moy* in various Maya languages. *May* was, and still is, used by the Maya for its medicinal, intoxicating, and magical-protective properties—see, e.g., Breedlove & Laughlin (1993), Gossen (1974; 2002), Groark (2010), Laughlin (1977), Lumholtz (1902), Hernández (1929), Ruiz de Alarcón (1984 [1629]), Starr (1900; 1902), and Thompson (1946; 1970). Today, these fresh green tobacco mixtures are carried in special gourds and the *may* is chewed; used as medicinal poultices for the skin and in birthing and midwifery practices; taken internally for stomach ailments and parasites; and ritually scattered for protection, particularly for embarking on a journey.

Several of the ‘Codex-style’ Flasks, in the Kislak and three other collections known to the author, have simple Maya inscriptions saying that they are *Yotoot u May*, a ‘Dwelling Place for *May*’ (the native tobacco and slaked lime medicinal or ritual mixtures with additives). Personified by God L, the tobacco and other medicines contained within these little homes were holy—and thus such flasks were miniature ‘god houses’ for this deity. The contents of one of these examples, in the Kislak collection, were tested and first reported in 2010 by Loughmiller-Newman & Zagorevski (2011) using high-sensitivity chromatographic mass spectroscopy microanalysis and found to have a clear signature for nicotine. This is the first such successful analysis for a Maya container and corroborates

the author's decipherment and prediction for this specific flask as well as for Maya Flasks in general. In fact, the author's first key decipherment in 2001 of an inscribed Flask that began with the text *Yotoot u May* was of one that had been published by Coe (1973: 138). In essence, Maya Flasks represent the oldest known tobacco snuff bottle tradition in the world.

(j) From inscriptions of God L's name on Maya Flasks and the appearance of his name glyph in the codices, the author had proposed several 'readings' of the name, including *May* (the tobacco and lime medicine mixtures themselves) and *Ch'ul May* or *K'uhul May* (Holy Tobacco). On two known flasks, the dedication inscription naming the contents of the vessel uses God L's profile face name glyph for the contents rather than spelling it out phonetically. God L certainly had other names and titles, but *May* is his primary name and embodies his essential nature. In 16th-century Yucatan, as documented by Bishop Diego de Landa (Tozzer 1941: 27–28), the chief priest of the region was named *Ah Kin Mai*, 'Chief Priest May'. Mai (May) is a common Yucatec patronym, but the author argues that, in this case, a priest was taking on the personification of God L, a character whose representation is well known in the archaeological record of Yucatan. The essential conclusion is that God L is the personification of tobacco itself, in all of its forms, in the same sense that the Maya Maize God E is the personification of corn. As for Tobacco medicinal mixtures, he is essentially the 'First Shaman' or 'First Priest', the primary Maya Patron of Medicine and Curing.

(k) The Old Goddess O, *Chac Chel*, was the Maya patroness of midwives and healers (see, e.g., Taube 1992; 1994). The author (Carlson 2007) has proposed that she is also essentially the female counterpart of God L and together they form another manifestation the Maya Primal Ancestral Pair. The Mesoamerican ancestral gods known as *Xpiyacoc* (male) and *Xmucane* (female) in the Quiché Maya *Popol Vuh* legend or *Cipactonal* (male) and *Oxomoco* (female) in the Highland Mexican tradition are examples of this creator couple. *Cipactonal* and *Oxomoco* are specifically the first ancestral priests or shamans for the Aztecs, and are depicted as such with their diagnostic tobacco flasks, for example, in the Aztec 'Codex Borbonicus'.

(l) Based on the author's analyses, from his research completed in the interdisciplinary 'Maya Flasks and Miniature Vessels' project (Carlson 2007), God L is seen to be closely related to the contemporary traditional 'Elder Brother' figure known as *Bankilal* among the Tzotzil Maya. God L is often seen facing God K, who is related to the personified smoking lightning axe of the Maya Storm God complex. Among the Tzotzil, the Younger Brother figure is *Chauk*, or 'Lightning Bolt', suggesting that the ubiquitous representation of the Old God L facing God K is an ancestral pairing of Elder Brother and Younger Brother. *Bankilal* is also the name for *May* tobacco mixtures and he is addressed reverentially as a respected person and as *Angel*. (This latter name may have pre-Hispanic as well as Christian connections.) Today, *Bankilal* resides in his special tobacco gourd, a living tradition carried on from the ancient practices of housing *may* tobacco mixtures, personified as God L, in Flasks, some of which actually take the form of gourds. He is regularly taken from his home and scattered before a traveler embarks on a journey as a magical protection from highwaymen and other hazards of the road (see, e.g., Breedlove & Laughlin 1993; Gossen 1974; 2002; Laughlin 1977). Furthermore, among the Tzutujil Maya of Santiago Atitlán, Guatemala, God L has virtually certainly been syncretized with San Simón as the cigar-smoking *Maximon* character. As a counter-culture saint, *Maximon* is clearly outside of the Catholic Christian pantheon, and is associated with the old Maya gods known as *Mam*, or 'Grandfather'. These traditions run deep and have survived in several contemporary cultures of the highland Maya.

(*m*) At least by the Late Classic Period, Old God L also became *the* senior cosmogonic god presiding over the gathering of supernaturals at the start of the current Long Count cycle on the night before 13.0.0.0.0 4 Ajaw 8 Kumk'u. As first suggested by Coe (1973), this scene is depicted, with important similarities as well as notable differences, on two known Late Classic Maya cacao-drinking vessels: the 'Vase of the Seven Gods' (Kerr no. 2796) and the 'Vase of the Eleven Gods' (Kerr 7750). Significantly, both have virtually identical texts naming one of the accompanying supernaturals as B'olon Yokte' K'uh (BYK), an enigmatic character the meaning of whose name and function are unknown and in active discussion in Maya studies. (It has been suggested by some scholars that BYK is an aspect of God L, but I do not favor this interpretation. I am convinced that the correct reading of his name is the 'Nine Steps God' and that he embodies specifically nine 40-day steps of time. I understand him as a deity in charge of setting up time (and space) for the year and for the new 13 Bak'tun era. The full argument will be given elsewhere.) As many have noted, including the author (e.g., Carlson 1993b), BYKs name also appears as the protagonist on the crucial final text of Tortuguero Monument 6, which clearly names the forthcoming date at the end of the great 13 Bak'tun cycle, namely 13.0.0.0.0 4 Ajaw 3 K'ank'in, December 21st, 2012 CE (see Gronemeyer & MacLeod 2010; MacLeod, this volume). This strongly suggests the hypothesis that God L will also be back, with BYK and the rest of the 'cosmogonic conclave', to celebrate the conclusion of the current cycle of 260 K'atuns, and probably to inaugurate the next. Although it cannot be proven, it is a reasonable hypothesis that at least some Maya schools of thought would celebrate this like-in-kind event with a rite of passage that would reset the count for another five millennia.

3. Conclusions and summary

The parallel scenes portrayed on both the Vase of the Seven Gods (Fig. 2) and the Vase of the Eleven Gods (Grube & Kerr 1998; see Callaway, this volume, fig. 1, p. 194) were painted in the Late Classic period, probably at or near the site of Naranjo, by artists of the same workshop. They both show God L as a Maya lord on his jaguar throne—the Senior Creator God—in the dark night cave of the Maya Underworld, awaiting the new dawn. Arrayed before him are groups of deities paying homage to him with Venus War bundles and bound packets probably containing blood-letters and other sacrificial implements, based on their diagnostic iconography. Such bloodletting instruments would hypothetically be used for the sacrifice of war captives but perhaps for their own auto-sacrifice as well. (This tradition of the sacrifices of the gods themselves to re-create the world is prominent in Highland Mexican cosmogony.) The Venus war bundles would directly argue for the sacrifice of captives taken under the auspices of God L in his role as Morning Star warrior/sacrificer. (Ironically, this would support Coe's (1966; 2011) hypothesis of an 'Armageddon' for the conclusion of the present cycle in December 2012, but the author does not favor this comparison with the Apocalypse of the Biblical Book of Revelation.) The Vase of the Seven Gods was painted in black and white, but the 'Eleven Gods' is in polychrome. Here one can see that these packets of sacrificial implements are wrapped in white paper speckled with the red droplets of blood. In addition, God L and these attendant deities wear the tied paper wristlets of sacrificers, several of which are shown on the 'Eleven Gods' to be speckled with red droplets of the victims, including God L himself. As with many ancient Mesoamerican blood sacrificial rituals, these papers were subsequently gathered and burned, creating the smoke that carried the essence of their ancestors in the form of symbolic clouds and mists, up to the sky to generate the rains that will nourish the Earth once again and renew the world. This is the same role

that tobacco plays, throughout the Americas. The sacred smoke carries messages to the gods and creates clouds of moisture and symbolic fertility. God L, as the personification of Tobacco, a primary Venus warrior/sacrificer, and the old Grandfather figure who was the first ancestor and tobacco priest, naturally takes the role of the primary creator god who was there at the beginning of the current Great Cycle and will return, in the company of B'olon Yokte' K'uh and the others, to repeat the cycle after 260 sacred K'atuns.

Survivals of these rituals of ritual warfare, sacrifice, and world renewal remain within the cultures of the Highland Maya of Mexico and Guatemala. The veneration of the cigar-smoking *Maximon* and the *Mam* 'Grandfather' figures of the Tzutujil, would seem to be the living manifestation of God L as the personification of tobacco and its smoke. The Tzotzil 'Elder Brother' *Bankilal*, the personification of *Moy* tobacco mixtures, coupled with his 'Younger Brother', *Chauk*, the 'Thunderbolt', would seem to be contemporary versions of God L and God K. Together, they embody the ancient Mesoamerican worldview of Venus-regulated warfare and ritual sacrifice conducted for the purpose of paying the gods back with blood sacrifices, transformed into the smoke and mists that rise up to the sky to become the clouds, that bring the nourishing rains and renew the world, accompanied by the thunderbolts and lightning. Both Gods L and K are 'smoking gods'. God L is the tobacco priest or 'shaman' with his cigars transforming tobacco (himself) into smoke. God K is the serpent-footed 'Manikin Scepter' held by Maya rulers who are posed on many of their monuments impersonating the Rain and Storm gods such as Chaak or Tlaloc. God K, whose name is also K'awil, takes the form of a hafted celt, a personified lightning bolt axe with smoke foliations or a smoking cigar piercing his skull through a mirror on his forehead. He is a 'smoking mirror' god, almost certainly related to the Aztec Tezcatlipoca as first suggested by Coe (1973). As a Thunderbolt, the Maya saw him strike the earth and start fires, and there is ethnographic evidence that, when ancient celts are found today, they are traditionally thought to be thunderbolts. This enduring relationship between these two brothers epitomizes the deep connections between warfare, sacrificial blood, tobacco, smoke, clouds, thunderstorms, and the eternal cycle of moisture and fertility in Mesoamerican cosmovision. In my interpretation of all the evidence at hand, I would expect Elder Brother God L to return with his Younger Brother God K and the rest of his 'cosmogonic conclave' including B'olon Yokte' K'uh to repeat these rites of sacrifice and transformation in fire and smoke to renew the fertility of the world, as he had done since the first dawning. For my part, the December 21, 2012, date will be the anniversary of two K'atuns of interdisciplinary research that began with an astronomical question about Venus in the Maya world and God L, and has led me down serendipitously branching paths that included years of documenting hundreds of small clay bottles which turned out to be the homes of this multifaceted deity.

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art, Lee Parsons and Arthur Dunkelman, who provided me access to his incomparable collection of ‘Maya Flasks and Miniature Vessels’ that has proved essential to my breakthroughs in understanding of the name and nature of the enigmatic Maya God L. These researches culminated in the completion of a comprehensive study of ‘Maya Flasks and Miniature Vessels’ under the auspices of a residential Kislak Fellowship at the John W. Kluge Center for Scholarly Research at the U.S. Library of Congress from 2005 to 2006 (Carlson 2007). The resources of the Library and generous hospitality of the Kluge Center and its staff—and interaction with the other resident scholars—created a unique environment for both creative research and writing. There would be many more institutions and individuals that I will thank for access to collections of archaeological materials, ethnographic and ethnohistorical resources, and for their knowledge, but my deepest gratitude goes out to my Yale University colleagues and mentors, anthropologists Michael Coe and the late Floyd Lounsbury. Without their deep knowledge, inspirational teaching, and personal generosity, I would never have embarked on this ever-branching path of exploration with old Maya God L which has brought me to the conclusion that the ancient Maya, were they here with us today, would have anticipated his return to the jaguar throne of his dark underworld court for the ‘sowing and the dawning’ of a renewed world near the end of our year 2012.

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