Ancient Mesoamerica, **11** (2000), 123–147
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PRE-HISPANIC MAYA RELIGION

Conceptions of divinity in the Postclassic Maya codices

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Abstract

For much of this century, scholars have tended to dismiss the *Madrid Codex* as a resource because of the large number of apparent scribal errors in the hieroglyphic text of the manuscript. An examination of naming patterns and attribute distribution with respect to the codical deities, however, reveals that many of these so-called errors are patterned in meaningful ways. These patterns suggest that our view of the Maya pantheon as consisting of a series of discrete entities with distinct conceptual domains is a Western construct, rather than a valid representation of pre-Hispanic Maya ideology. Reference to ethnohistoric sources from both within the Maya area and elsewhere in Mesoamerica (e.g., accounts from central Mexico) provides a model for conceptualizing Maya deities as members of overlapping complexes or clusters, each composed of a small number of underlying divinities characterized by various aspects, or manifestations.

> To understand the rules of the pantheons is to understand the principles of Mesoamerican cosmovisions [López Austin 1993:104].

One of the enduring questions of Mesoamerican studies centers on the nature of pre-Hispanic religious systems. As a means of addressing this issue, my research over the past decade has focused on the deities represented in the Postclassic Maya codices and what they reveal about the world view and ideology of the Yucatec Maya.

Scholars have generally assumed that a one-to-one relationship exists between individual deity figures and appellative glyphs in the codical texts (Figure 1), based on the early work of Paul Schellhas (1886, 1897, 1904). Patterns identified initially in the *Madrid Codex* (Anders 1967) and later found to be present in the other Maya codices show that, rather than representing static, discrete figures, the codical gods are instead fluid in nature, characterized by ever-shifting attributes and associations (Vail 1996a). This results in a great deal of overlap between and among specific figures in terms of how they are named and represented in the iconography. The picture that emerges is one of a series of deity complexes or clusters, composed of a small number of underlying divinities, each having various aspects, or manifestations. Deities may belong to more than one cluster and frequently merge with other deities in terms of their roles in the codical almanacs.

A similar situation is reflected in Colonial-period documents from both the Maya and the Aztec areas. In the discussion that follows, ethnohistoric data provide a framework for interpreting the patterns seen in the Postclassic Maya codices.

PREVIOUS STUDIES OF THE CODICAL GODS

The Maya codices represent a primary source of information on pre-Hispanic culture and religion. By integrating hieroglyphic captions with pictures, they offer a unique glimpse of religion and ideology in the Late Postclassic period. A particularly fruitful approach to interpreting these data involves a comparative methodology that relies on archaeological evidence from the same period (including the murals preserved and recorded from the eastern region of the Yucatan Peninsula) and Colonial-period documentary sources. Combining these resources makes it possible to test models of pre-Hispanic Maya ideology and ritual practice against several different data sets.[1]

Three screenfold manuscripts attributed to the Maya surfaced in Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They take their names from the European cities in which they are housed—the *Paris*, *Dresden*, and *Madrid* codices (Glass and Robertson 1975; for facsimiles, see Anders 1967, 1968a, 1968b). A fourth Maya screenfold came to light more recently (in the 1960s) in a cave in the Mexican state of Chiapas. It is named after the Grolier Club in New York, where it was first exhibited (Coe 1973). Iconographic and hieroglyphic evidence suggests that all four manuscripts were painted during the Postclassic period (ca. A.D. 900–1520s), with the earliest dating to the thirteenth century and the latest to either the fifteenth or sixteenth century (Taube 1992:1–4; but see Coe and Kerr [1997:181] for their interpretation of the *Madrid Codex* as a Colonial-period manuscript). The *Grolier Codex* (in Coe 1973), which is the most anomalous in style, lacks glyphic texts. The other three codices contain hieroglyphic texts in combination with pictorial scenes that form the basis of instruments known as almanacs and tables. Most almanacs are structured in accordance with the 260-day sacred calendar, whereas tables make use of the Maya Long Count, which places dates in absolute time.

[1] The term *Maya* is used throughout this study to refer to lowland Maya culture and, more specifically, to that of the Yucatan Peninsula.

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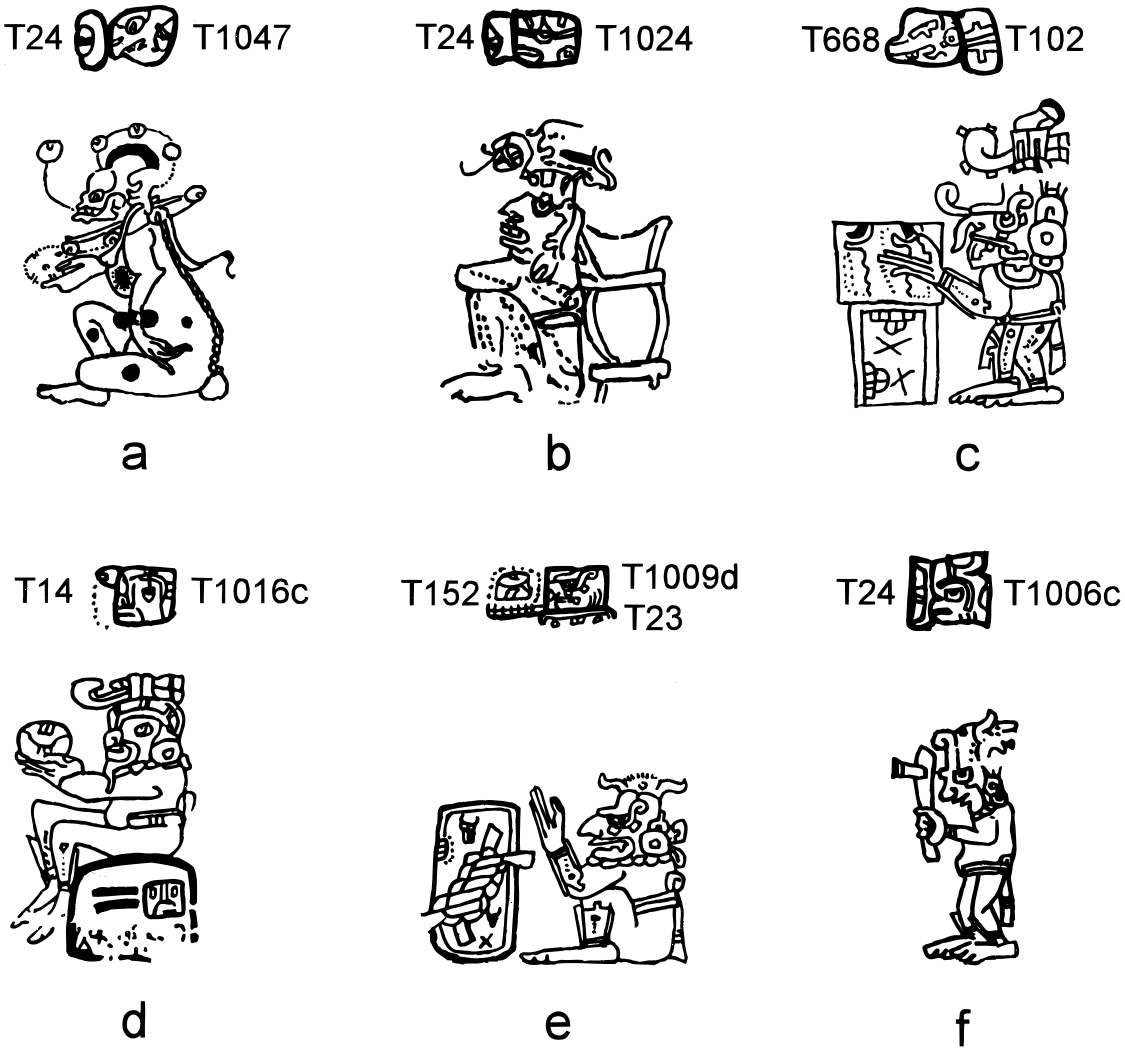


Figure 1. Deities discussed in the text. (a) God A, the death god Kimil. Named with T24 (*na* or *YANIL*) plus T1047 (*KIMIL?*). One of the meanings of *yanil* is 'esteemed' (Barrera Vásquez et al. 1980:968). (b) God A′, a secondary death god. Named with T24 (*na* or *YANIL*) plus T1024 (untranslated). (c) God B, the rain god Chaak. Named with T668 (*cha*) plus T102 (*ki*). (d) God C, a generic god. Named with the compound T14.1016c (*K'U*), meaning 'god.' (e) God D, the creator Itzamna. Named with T152 (*ITZ*), T1009d (*ITZAM–NA*), plus T23 (*na*). (f) God E, the maize god *Nal*. Named with T24 (*na* or *YANIL*) plus T1006c (*NAL?*). (g) God G, the sun god K'inich Ahaw. Named with T168 (*AHAW*), T544 (*K'IN*), plus T130 (*wa*). (h) God H, a flower and fertility god. Named with T147 (*NIK?*) plus T1059 (*NIK AHAW* or *NIK K'U*). Note that the word *nik* means 'flower,' *ahaw* means 'lord,' and *k'u* means 'god.' (i) Goddess I, an earth goddess. Named with T58 (*SAK*) plus T1026 (*IXIK? KAB*), meaning 'White Lady Earth.' (j) God K (*K'awil*), a god of sustenance. Named with T1020 (*K'AWIL*). (k) God N (*Pawahtun*), a deity of thunder and mountains; worldbearer. Named as *TV* (*HO*), T63 (*pa–wa*), and T548 (*TUN*). Note that the word *tun* means 'stone' and also refers to the 360-day year. (l) God R, an earth deity. Named as *TXI* (*BULUK*) plus T1005b (*KAB AHAW?*). The word *kab* means 'earth.' (After Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:20, 32, 40, 46, 266, 324, 352, 402, 416, 426, 432.) (*Figure continues on facing page.*)

Pioneering research on the anthropomorphic figures represented in the Maya codices began with the work of two scholars, Eduard Seler (1886, 1887, 1898a, 1902–1923:I) and Paul Schellhas (1886, 1897, 1904). Both identified these figures as gods, although it was Schellhas who isolated and cataloged the individual deities. Rather than giving them names, he labeled them with a neutral designation (God A, God B, God C, etc.), a practice that continues today (Figure 1). The use of the term "god" in reference to these figures accords with information provided by the Spanish chroniclers, who described a large pantheon of native deities for the Yucatan Peninsula during the Colonial period (Garza 1983:II; Landa in Tozzer 1941; Lizana 1893 [1633]; López de Cogolludo 1867–1868 [1688]; Martínez Hernández 1929; Scholes and Adams 1938). Nevertheless, during the 1960s and 1970s, scholars began to question whether the notion of deities was applicable to the Mesoamerican situation (cf. Marcus 1978 and Proskouriakoff 1965:470–471, 1978). This occurred largely as a reaction to the trend of characterizing all zoomorphic creatures from Classic Maya art and zoomorphs from other regions of Mesoamerica as divinities. Proskouriakoff (1978:113, 116–117) and Marcus (1978) argued that this concept is only relevant to a few late periods in Mesoamerican prehistory and at other times represents a mis-

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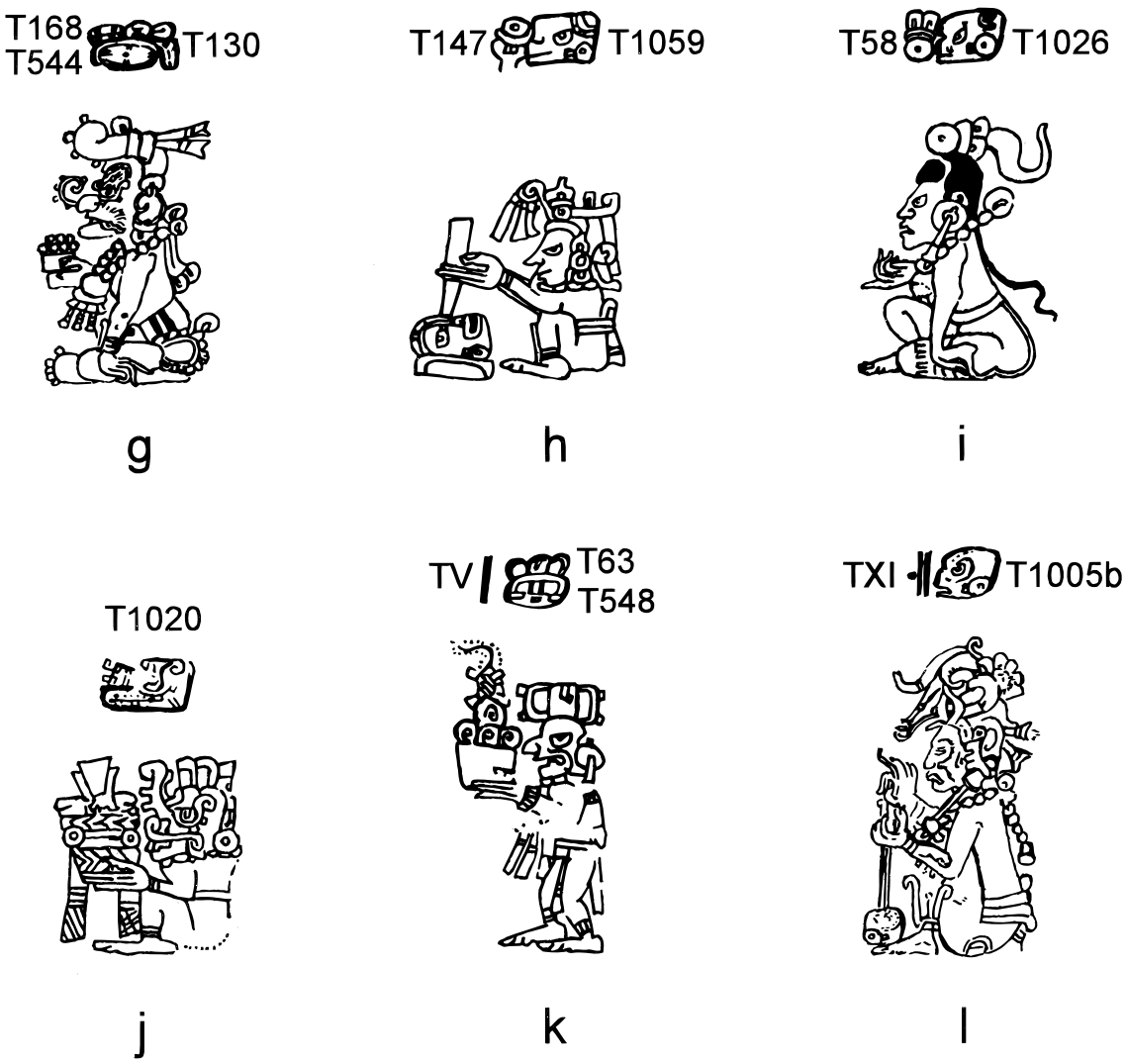


Figure 1. [*Continued.*]

application of European terminology. In most periods and times, they contend, Mesoamericans worshiped inanimate forces of nature and deified ancestors and lineage founders, who served as intermediaries with the supernatural world.

Despite the controversy surrounding the use of the word "god" in reference to pre-Hispanic beings, I find this term fully justified for describing the anthropomorphic figures represented in the Maya codices. These figures have counterparts with both the native deities discussed by the Spanish chroniclers at the time of contact and with the anthropomorphic beings seen in Classic-period and earlier media (in particular on painted ceramic vessels). Like the Lacandon deities worshiped today (Boremanse 1993:331), they represent personifications of natural forces, on the one hand, and supernatural beings, on the other. They exist in a world separate from, but parallel to, that of humans.

Clearly then, although Proskouriakoff (1965, 1978) and Marcus (1978) raised an important issue, their statements are not relevant to a particular class of anthropomorphic figures featured in the Classic Maya period (Houston and Stuart 1996; Taube 1992:8) or to Postclassic Yucatan and central Mexico (Taube 1992). Regarding the Postclassic situation, the ethnohistoric literature supports the presence of supernatural figures conceptualized as deities in both the Basin of Mexico (see Sahagún 1950–1982:II) and the northern Maya area (as discussed above). Even more compelling, however, is the evidence from Maya texts dating to both the Classic and Postclassic periods (Ringle 1988). Here, we find anthropomorphic beings pictured who are named in the accompanying captions with the title *k'u* (T14.1016c and variants), meaning 'god' (Figure 2). As Taube (1992) showed, the deities represented in the two periods overlap to a considerable extent, and both sets of figures can be correlated with the gods of the Schellhas (1904) scheme.

Research begun in the late-nineteenth century, and culminating in the past decade, makes it possible to identify many of the codical deities with their counterparts in the Colonial period, as documented by Landa and the other chroniclers (Tozzer 1941). In addition, studies of individual gods serve to clarify their roles within the codical almanacs and their relationships with other deities (see discussion in Vail 1996a:93–156). My contribution lies in expanding on the work of Eric Thompson (1934, 1939, 1950, 1970a, 1970b, 1972) and more recent studies (e.g., Stone 1980; Taube 1992) that

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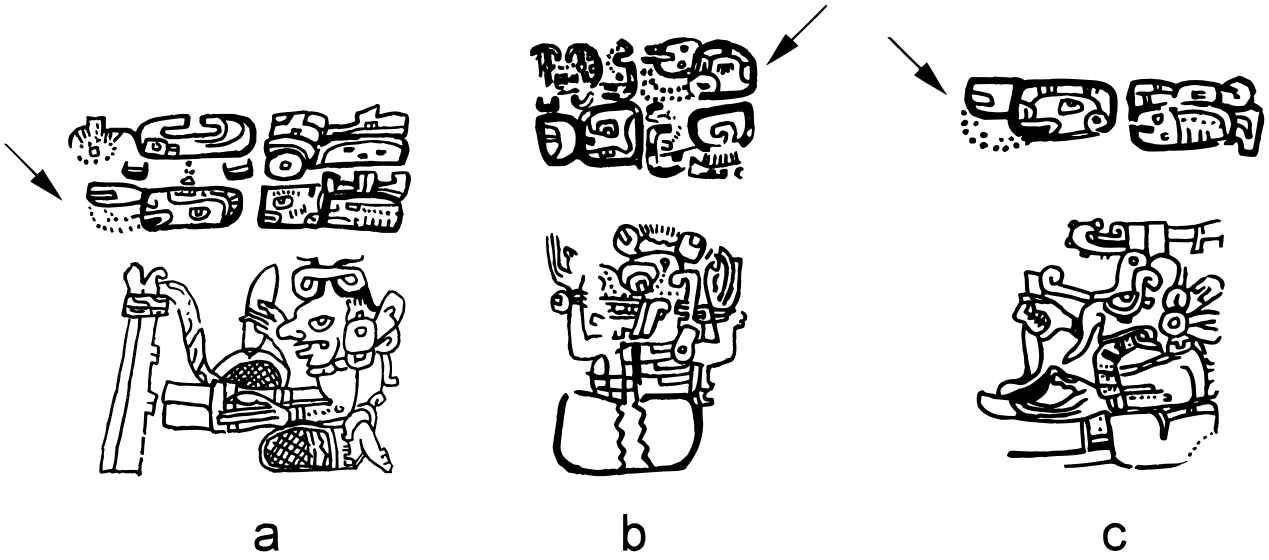


Figure 2. T14.1016c as a title meaning 'god.' (a) T14.1016c title preceding name glyph of aged Goddess I (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:428). (b) T14.1053b variant, preceding God A's appellative (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:390). (c) T14.1016c preceding God B's attributive glyph. This has been read as *ahawle*, meaning 'rulership' or 'reign' (Bricker 1986:104–105; after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:270).

focus attention on the question of deity aspects and manifestations. Before presenting specific examples, however, the following sections review the ethnohistoric literature from both the Maya and Aztec areas.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Lowland Maya

In his discussion of the Maya New Year ceremonies, Landa (Tozzer 1941:135–136) noted that "Among the multitudes of gods which this nation worshipped they worshipped four, each of them called Bakab." [2] He described the Bakabs as four brothers, placed at the four cardinal directions to hold up the sky. This introduces the idea of a multiplicity of aspects of a single god; in other words, the four Bakabs are seen as separate deities and, yet, as one.

In addition to the four Bakabs, Landa (Tozzer 1941:Note 638) discussed two related sets of quadripartite deities, the Pawahtuns and Xib Chaaks, each of whom corresponds to a specific color and cardinal direction. These associations are clearly evident in the Maya codices, as first noted by Cyrus Thomas (1882:59–92) and Eduard Seler (1887) with respect to the *Dresden Codex* and *Madrid Codex* yearbearer pages.[3] Thus, quadripartite deities with directional affiliations seem to form a common component of Postclassic Yucatec religion.

These principles continue to play a role in modern Maya communities. Redfield and Villa Rojas' (1934:115) descriptions of Chan Kom, for example, indicate that villagers worshiped a series of sky gods know as *chaaks* in the 1930s. Four of these deities are associated specifically with the world directions: Ek' (Black) Xib Chaak, Sak (White) Xib Chaak, K'an (Yellow) Xib Chaak, and Chak (Red) Xib Chaak.[4] In the more traditional Lacandon villages of today, a similar pattern prevails. In place of a quadripartite sky god, however, the Lacandon worship a rain deity known as Mensabak, who has six assistants. They represent the four cardinal directions, plus northeast and southeast (McGee 1990:68).

Despite several early references to relationships among the codical deities (Schellhas 1904; Seler 1902–1923:I), it was not until Thompson's pioneering work (e.g., Thompson 1934, 1939, 1950, 1970a, 1970b, 1972) that the question of deity aspects was applied at all seriously to the pre-Hispanic situation. From a detailed consideration of ethnohistoric and ethnographic sources, Thompson (1970b:198–200) formulated a series of principles that underlie Maya religion, and he made the following observations: (1) The idea of quadruplicity (involving four gods, each assigned to a different direction and world color, who in some sense represent a single being) forms a building block of Maya cosmology. Thompson likened this notion to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. (2) Deities exhibit a duality of aspect, which is expressed through the following oppositions: benevolent versus malevolent, youthful versus aged, and male versus female. (3) Deities could, and frequently did, merge with alien gods. The best-known example involves the syncretism of indigenous and Catholic elements that began in the sixteenth century, but a similar process was also present in earlier time periods. (4) Individual deities could have more than one manifestation, each associated with a different name. This explains why there are more than 250 gods listed in Thompson's catalog of Colonial period and modern Maya deities. (5) The Maya believed Itzamna symbolized both the earth and the sky. He was

[2] I have adopted the orthography of Barrera Vásquez et al. (1980) in place of the Colonial system used by Landa and the other chroniclers (Tozzer 1941), with the exception of replacing /ts/ and /ts'/ with /tz/ and /tz'/.

[3] More recent discussions of the gods represented in the yearbearer almanacs can be found in Love (1986), Taube (1988), and Vail (1997).

[4] Note that these deities retain the same names as those mentioned for Colonial-period Yucatan.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0956536100111022 Published online by Cambridge University Press

represented by several figures in the codices, including God D (the creator aspect), God K (the terrestrial aspect), and God G (the solar aspect).

In the years since Thompson (1970b) outlined these principles, they have undergone further testing and elaboration by a number of scholars. Of particular interest are discussions by Kocyba (1989) and Rivera Dorado (1986:65–71) of the complex of deities related to Itzamna; an article by Michael Coe (1989) on the Hero Twins; papers by Kocyba (1989) and Stone (1990) focused on the female deities; reports by Closs (1979) and Bill (1997) concerning the complex of black gods; a study by Stone (1995) of God H and related deities; and Taube's (1992) analysis of the major Postclassic gods. In addition, Mary Preuss (1988) provided a compelling discussion of the aspects and roles of four of the deities occurring in the Quichean narrative text, the *Popol Vuh*.

Over the years, scholars have sought to identify parallels between the Maya data and the situation in central Mexico, which is particularly well documented for the immediate post-Contact period (Seler 1898b, 1904; Taube 1992). For the most part, these comparisons center on specific deity figures (including, e.g., God A and Micantecuhtli, and God B and Tlaloc). In a recent article, Stephen Houston and David Stuart (1996:302–304) interpreted evidence from Classic-period inscriptions in light of central Mexican religious practices. They argued, in effect, that the Classic Maya venerated cult effigies, as did their Postclassic counterparts in Yucatan and the Aztec area. I return to this point below.

The Aztec

Alfonso Caso (1958:7) described Aztec religion at the time of the Conquest as polytheistic, involving the worship of a number of anthropomorphic deities with well-defined attributes. The large size of the central Mexican pantheon, he suggested, resulted from the Aztec practice of incorporating gods from areas they had conquered into the state religion (cf. López Austin 1993:19). Many of these were not distinct figures, however, but rather different aspects of a single underlying deity.

Aztec cosmology centered around the belief in a creator couple, whose four sons (the Tezcatlipocas) were entrusted with the creation of the world. Each son, including Xipe (the red aspect), Tezcatlipoca (the black aspect), Quetzalcoatl (who substitutes for the white Tezcatlipoca), and Huitzilopochtli (the blue aspect), corresponded to one of the four cardinal directions, whereas the divine couple occupied the center of the world (Caso 1958:9–10). In this respect, Aztec cosmology shares a number of features with the story of creation described in the *Popol Vuh* (Thompson 1970b:200–201).

Unlike their Maya counterparts, Aztec deities were rarely identified by hieroglyphic names but instead by their clothing, ornaments, and ritual paraphernalia (Caso 1958:21). Caso (1958) noted that Aztec mythology was complicated by the fact that a single god could assume various attributes. Quetzalcoatl, for example, represents the god of wind, life, and Venus, among other associations, and was known as Ehecatl, Quetzalcoatl, Tlahuitzcalpantecuhtli, or Xolotl, depending on which of these aspects was being highlighted (Caso 1958:23–24). To someone infamiliar with Aztec religion, each of these named incarnations appears to represent a separate deity, rather than different aspects of a single divine figure.

Henry Nicholson (1971:408–430) elaborated on this model, noting that each of the central Mexican gods exemplifies one or more unifying themes. The three most central to Aztec religion include celestial creativity and divine paternalism; rain, moisture, and agricultural fertility; and war and sacrifice. Within each theme, there are various subthemes, which are in turn expressed by deity complexes. For example, the theme of celestial creativity and divine paternalism is represented by three such complexes, centered around the creator Ometeotl, the deity Tezcatlipoca, and the fire god Xiuhtecuhtli. The theme of rain and agricultural fertility likewise includes several deity complexes, revolving around the rain deity Tlaloc, the gods of maize (Centeotl) and flowers (Xochipilli), the earth mother Teteoinnan, and the maguey gods.

Nicholson's (1971:428–429) analysis revealed that most of the Aztec divinities belong to several deity complexes and thematic groups. He noted, for instance, that Quetzalcoatl crosscuts each of the major themes and smaller deity complexes more than any other Aztec god. As Quetzalcoatl, he represents a creator deity and forms part of the Ometeotl complex. In his aspect as Ehecatl (the wind god), he is associated with rain and agricultural fertility and belongs to the Tlaloc complex. As Tlahuitzcalpantecuhtli, he personifies Venus as the Morning Star, a creature associated with death and sacrifice. López Austin (1983:76) defined these dual processes as "fission" and "fusion." In the former, a single god is subdivided into various entities sharing attributes with the primary deity, whereas fusion refers to a group of related gods who are conceptualized as a single divinity. These processes also characterize the Maya data, as I discuss below.

Another pivotal theme in Aztec religion involves the distinction between the concepts of *teotl* and *teixiptla* (Boone 1989; Hvidtfeldt 1958; Townsend 1979). *Teotl*, although translated by the Spanish chroniclers as 'god,' 'saint,' or occasionally 'demon,' relates more closely to the Polynesian concept of *mana*, defined as "a sacred but impersonal force or a concentration of power" (Boone 1989:4). *Teixiptla*, on the other hand, represents the physical manifestation, or incarnation, of the *teotl*. This term is used in Aztec religion to describe anything from human deity impersonators to effigies made out of stone, wood, or dough, and assemblages of ritual attire on a wooden frame. As Richard Townsend (1979:23) noted, the interest centers on the ritual costuming rather than on the physical form.

Among the Aztec, this concept also refers to the deity figures occurring in the pictorial codices. Like the cult effigies, they may be identified as *teixiptla*, since they represent physical manifestations of the Aztec supernaturals. Townsend (1979:23) suggested that these figures represent deity impersonators, although in his view, the Aztec did not worship a large pantheon of anthropomorphic gods and goddesses. Rather, he believes that the *teixiptla* personified various natural phenomena (Townsend 1979:25, 28).

Although Aztec scholars differ in their interpretations of these figures, they generally agree that their costuming represents the focal point in establishing their identity. Huitzilopochtli, for example, may be defined by a series of elements, several of which are usually necessary to identify this figure. Only one feature, however, is truly diagnostic—the hummingbird helmet. Different combinations of the remaining elements indicate which aspect of the deity is being highlighted (Boone 1989:8).

Other than the hummingbird, Huitzilopochtli's remaining attributes are shared by some or all of the Aztec gods. As the first step in analysis, one must therefore distinguish between those attributes that uniquely identify a particular deity and those that serve merely to qualify him or her. Elizabeth Boone (1989:9) noted that deities who share attributes usually have similar associations (e.g., a link to death or sacrifice), although this is not always the case.

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Concepts similar to those defined by the Aztec as *teixiptla* and *teotl* occur in other areas of Mesoamerica as well. Houston and Stuart (1996:302), for example, suggested that the Classic Maya venerated cult effigies similar to those used in central Mexico. They argued that this formed an integral part of Maya religion, implying that the Maya had a concept analogous to Aztec *teixiptla* at least as early as the Classic period. The act of creating an image, whether painted on paper or carved in stone, imbues the representation with the animation and essence of the original (Houston and Stuart 1998:86). According to Joyce Marcus (1978:174), the pre-Hispanic Zapotec worshiped a vital force that flowed through the natural world, comparable in some sense to the Aztec notion of *teotl*. This was conceptualized as *pè*, meaning 'wind, breath, spirit.' In the Maya area, similar concepts were embodied in the words *k'u* 'sacred, divine' and *ik'* 'wind, breath, life' (Marcus 1978:180).

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As the previous discussion illustrates, Aztec scholars have developed a solid theoretical framework for the study of central Mexican deities, coupled with a rigorous methodology. Because Maya studies have not progressed to this level, I found it useful to adopt a similar methodological approach in my investigation of the codical gods. My results serve to confirm that Postclassic Maya religion had much in common with the Aztec model described above.

The methodology used for this study involved coding data pertaining to the iconography, glyphic texts, and calendrics of the *Madrid Codex* and selected almanacs from the *Dresden Codex* (1–23, 25–28). This information was then entered into a customized database designed to model relationships between components of individual almanacs. The use of a database made it possible to store, access, and manipulate the data in ways previously not available to scholars. It enabled me both to test theories proposed by past researchers about specific deity relationships and to detect previously unrecognized patterns in the data. Patterns were identified by formulating a series of testable hypotheses (phrased as queries to the database) and then analyzing the results of the queries.

Using this methodology led to the development of a comprehensive model to explain the patterning seen in the codical almanacs. As my research shows, the data reflected in the Maya codices have clear parallels with the situation described for Postclassic central Mexico (Vail 1996a:360–377, 1996b). Only by studying this issue systematically, rather than focusing on isolated examples (as past studies have done), is it possible to perceive the overall structure. Approaching the issue of deity relationships from this perspective enables us to conceptualize pre-Hispanic Maya religion in a new way.



Figure 3. Correlation between text and image on *Madrid* 109b–110b. This almanac pictures the ritual deposition (burial) of deity masks or images, represented by God C heads (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:442, 444).

THE CODICAL EVIDENCE

As Yuri Knorozov (1955, 1967) demonstrated in the 1950s, text and image correlate in a fairly straightforward manner in the Maya codices. In most cases, the hieroglyphic text serves as a caption to the picture below, making reference to both the activity depicted and the deity represented in the scene. For example, the text associated with the first frame of the almanac on *Madid* 109b–110b (Figure 3) may be transcribed as follows: *u muk k'u itzamna yanil? nik-il*, meaning "Itzamna [+ title] was burying the god."[5] An examination of the picture confirms that Itzamna is indeed in the process of burying God C's glyph (representing the word *k'u*, or 'god') beneath the earth. A detailed survey of the codical almanacs reveals that a similar relationship (i.e., a direct association between the figure named in the text caption and the deity pictured in the scene below) holds true for most frames. There are occasional exceptions, however, and these form the subject of this discussion.

Discrepancies between the figure pictured in a particular scene and the name glyph appearing in the caption occur fairly often in the *Madrid Codex* and to a lesser extent in the *Dresden Codex* (Table 1). Although occasionally the result of scribal error (e.g., the third and fifth frames in Figure 4), most "contradictions" between the image and text can be explained in terms of a model that views the Maya deities as members of overlapping complexes or clusters. I argue that what we interpret as inconsistencies instead represent examples of substitutions and conflations involving the members of these various deity clusters. By providing a rational justification for the patterning seen in the codical almanacs, it is possible to show that the *Madrid Codex* is not riddled with scribal errors, as previously assumed.[6]

Dozens of examples of substitution and conflation occur in the codical almanacs. In the present context, four of the most significant patterns delineated by my research are considered, including God C's role as a generic god, the relationship between God C and Gods B and H, the God D/God A dichotomy, and deity complexes revolving around God D.

God C as a Generic God

God C has a special place among the codical deities in that both his image and his glyph (T14.1016c; Figure 1d) signify the concept of *k'u*, meaning 'god,' 'sacred,' or 'holy' (Ringle 1988:2–3). Because of this, he may represent any of the dozen or so deities worshiped by the pre-Hispanic Maya. In the *Madrid Codex*, God

[5] The final glyph block in a text caption usually represents either an epithet referring to the deity named or an augural compound. Here, *yanil? nik-il* is a title associated with flowers.

[6] Aveni et al. (1995, 1996) suggested that what have been interpreted as errors in the calendrical structure of certain *Madrid* almanacs can be similarly explained in terms of scribal intent rather than incompetence.

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Table 1. Relationships involving Gods B, D, E, H, and R as expressed through the substitution and pairing of name glyphs in the *Madrid Codex* and on *Dresden* 1–28

Deity	Examples
Deities associated with God B's glyph	
God B	Various
God C	*Madrid* 23cD1
God D	*Madrid* 52cD1 (Goddess I also pictured); *Madrid* 112cA2
God E	*Madrid* 10b–11bO2; *Madrid* 24dE1 (with *sak* prefix); *Madrid* 25dB1; *Madrid* 25dD1; *Madrid* 25dG1; *Madrid* 27c–28cJ1
God K	*Dresden* 3aF2
Goddess O	*Madrid* 10b–11bC2 (probably a reference to the rain pictured rather than the deity)
Deities associated with God D's glyph	
God C	*Madrid* 83bA2
God D	Various
God D black	*Madrid* 81cB1
God E	*Madrid* 20cA2; *Madrid* 29bE2; *Madrid* 38cD2; *Madrid* 89c–90cD1; *Madrid* 97dB1
God H	*Madrid* 87b–88bD2; *Madrid* 95aF1 (with *sak* prefix)
God M	*Madrid* 38bA2; *Madrid* 55bB2 (with *ek'?* prefix)
Goddess O	*Dresden* 9cB1
Deities associated with God E's glyph	
God E	Various
God K	*Dresden* 12aA2
God N	*Dresden* 12cD2
Deities associated with God H's glyph	
God D	*Dresden* 12cA2; *Dresden* 15cD2
God H	Various
God R	*Madrid* 59a–60aC2; *Madrid* 95d–96dK2 (God R has attributes of God H in both examples)
Unidentified figure	*Madrid* 66a2B1 (this may be God H)
Deities associated with God R's glyph	
God H	*Madrid* 103b–106bI3 (with T147); *Madrid* 112cE2
God N	*Madrid* 63c–64cI1 (transposed with N's glyph; scribal error)
God R	Various

C's glyph commonly precedes or follows other deity appellatives, a pattern originally documented by William Ringle (1988:5). In these examples, the T14.1016c compound presumably functioned as a title, serving to identify the figures referenced in the text and accompanying picture as deities (Figure 2a). A variant form of the God C glyph (T1053), characterized by a *kimi* (death) symbol in place of the eye, also occurs on several occasions (Figure 2b), specifically in reference to God A, the Maya death god. T14.1016c also sometimes appears in the caption to frames lacking deity appellative glyphs (Figure 2c). In these instances, the deities pic-



Figure 4. Scribal error in naming on *Madrid* 63c–64c. God N's appellative at E1 appears to have been transposed with God R's glyph at I1. Note that God R? appears in frame 3 and God N in frame 5 (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:350, 352).

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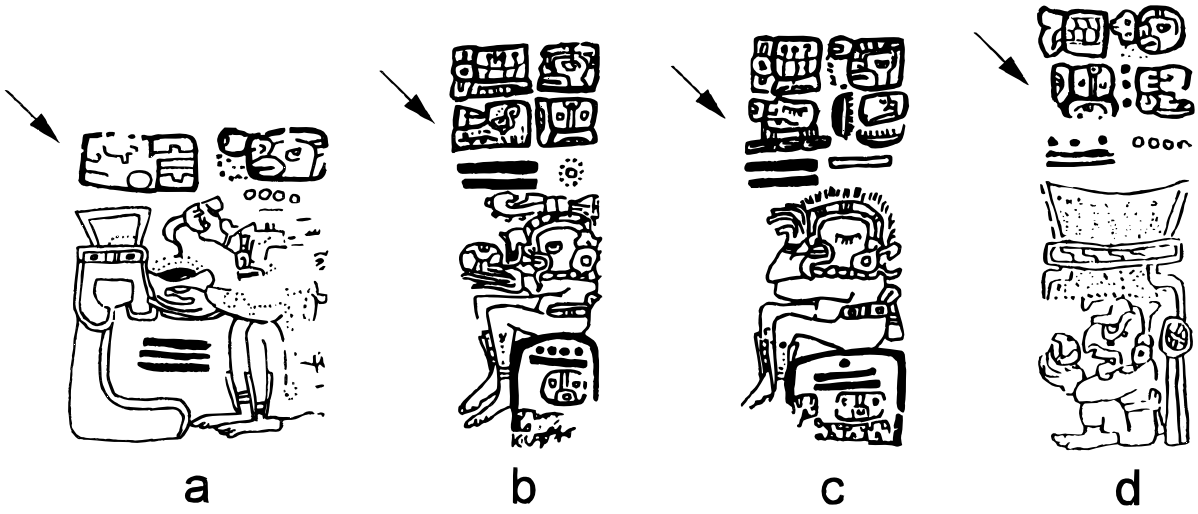


Figure 5. God C substituting for a second deity. (a) Standing in for God B on *Madrid* 23c. Note God B's glyph in caption (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:270). (b) Standing in for God K on *Madrid* 50c. Note God K's glyph in caption (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:324). (c) Standing in for God A on *Madrid* 50c, who is named by the *ah kimil* epithet (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:324). (d) God D referenced by his epithet in the absence of his name glyph on *Madrid* 63b (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:350).

tured are referenced by one or more attributive glyphs in place of their usual name glyphs, a pattern that occurs fairly commonly in the *Madrid* almanacs (Figure 5d).

A related pattern involves the conflation of certain deity appellatives with the T1016c main sign (Figure 6), as occurs in conjunction with the following deities: God E (compare Figure 6a and 6b), God H (compare Figure 6c and 6d), and Goddess I (compare Figure 6e and 6f). In these cases, it appears that the prefixes associated with these figures (T24, T58, and T147) are, by themselves, meaningful or salient enough to invoke recognition so that a portrait is not needed. The portrait glyph, in essence, is replaced by the 'god' title. The T58 *sak* prefix associated with Goddess I's glyph, for instance, means 'white,' so that combining T58 with T1016c produces a reading of 'white god(-dess).' The situation with respect to God H is complicated by the fact that his portrait glyph (T1059) occurs in many of the same contexts as T1016c, suggesting that the two figures may have had a similar role in the codical almanacs. A detailed consideration of the T24 prefix appears in relation to the deity complexes discussed below.

In addition to substitutions involving his portrait glyph, God C is occasionally pictured in place of other deities in the *Madrid Codex* (Figure 5a–c). Victoria Bricker (1997:22) argued that God C was not the intended referent in these examples but instead serves as a "stand in" for a second deity figure. Evidence in support of this interpretation may be found in certain almanacs in which God C is pictured in association with a second figure's name glyph, as in Figure 5a, where God B is named, and in Figure 5b, where God K is referenced. Even when a second deity is not named, it may nevertheless be possible to determine which figure was intended when an attributive glyph (or epithet) occurs in the text caption. For example, the God C figure appearing in Figure 5c was clearly meant to represent God A, as suggested by the first of the two attributives seen in the caption above the figure, which reads *ah kimil* (or *ah kamal*) 'dead person.' The associated iconography (e.g., the closed eye and the hand raised to the face) also points to the death god as the intended referent. I have previously suggested that this iconography is a graphic representation of the *ah kimil* epithet (Vail 1999): the hand and arm signify the agentive particle *ah*, and the closed eye suggests a reading of *kimi(l)*.[7]

This patterning may be explained by the fact that God C personifies the idea of sacredness and divinity, or *k'u* (Ringle 1988), a concept reminiscent of the Aztec notion of *teotl*. Taube (1992:8) suggested that the Maya, like the Aztec, believed in a *mana*-like concept of sacredness in addition to various individual supernaturals with their own personalities and mythic cycles. This belief is highlighted in a series of almanacs from the *Madrid Codex* that picture the God C head (T1016c) in contexts suggesting that it was intended to represent a sacred object (either a deity mask or an idol). Figure 6c, for instance, shows God H carving a deity head, which is represented by T1016c. An even more compelling example involves the scene on *Madrid* 109b–110b (Figure 3), an almanac with several sequential frames picturing buried God C heads (the *kab* markings surrounding the heads indicate that they are buried beneath the earth). The event taking place in this almanac seemingly involved the ritual deposition of masks or idols after they had been replaced by newer copies, a practice documented by Tozzer (1907:146–147) among the Lacandon at the turn of the century.

God C as Related to Gods B and H

Although God C may substitute for any of the codical gods, this figure seems to have had a special relationship with two deities in particular, Gods B and H. Scholars have previously commented on the link between Gods B and C, as seen in parallel almanacs occurring in the *Dresden* Codex, *Paris Codex*, and *Madrid Codex* (Bricker 1997:22; Love 1994:44–54). In these examples, God C

[7] My interpretation of the hand raised to the face as agentive *ah* is based on several lines of evidence, including the fact that Stuart et al. (1989:4) proposed this reading for T233a, which is similar graphically.

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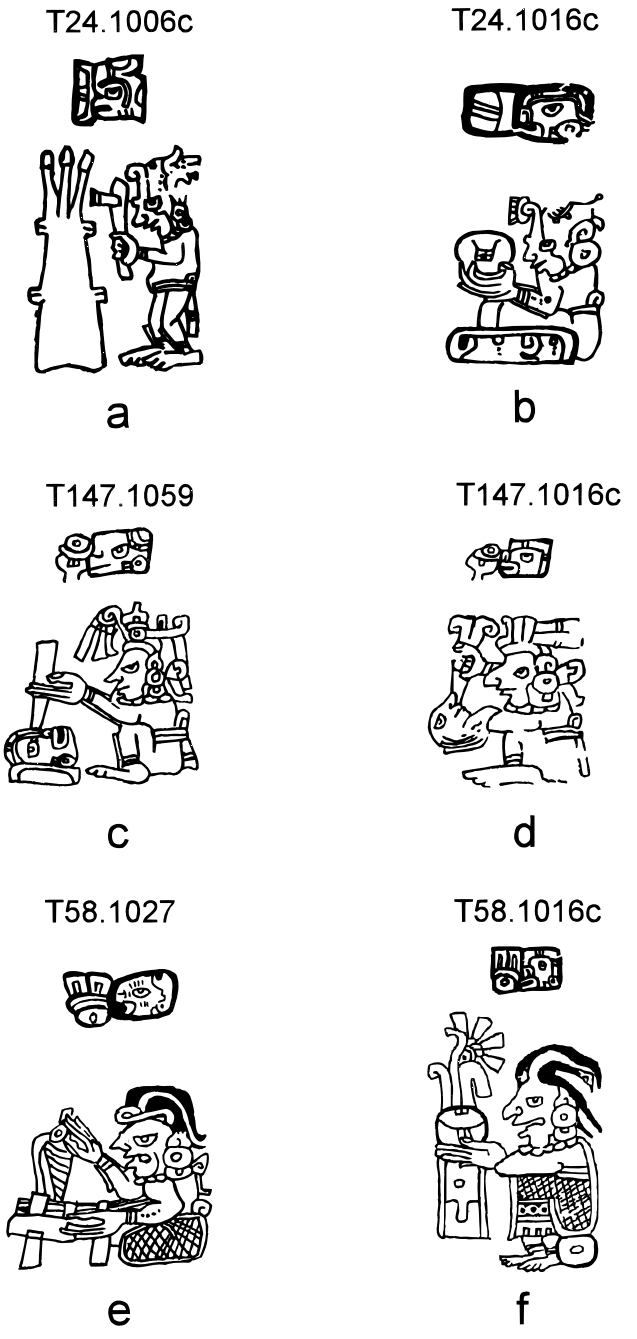


Figure 6. Conflation of deity appellatives with T1016c main sign. (a) God E named by standard appellative (T24.1006c) (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:402). (b) T24.1016c in reference to God E (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:278). (c) God H named by standard appellative (T147.1059) (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:426). (d) T147.1016c in reference to God H (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:422). (e) Aged Goddess I named by standard appellative (T58.1027) (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:428). (f) T58.1016c in reference to Goddess I (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:368).

appears in the *Madrid* and *Paris* manuscripts (Figure 7a,b) in place of God B in the *Dresden Codex* (Figure 7c). One explanation for this patterning stems from the fact that, in the codical almanacs, God B may represent either the rain god Chaak or a priest with the title *chaak* (Bricker 1997:22), thereby juxtaposing the roles of god and priest.

The relationship between Gods C and H is expressed most clearly in terms of glyphic substitutions. Evidence from the *Madrid Codex* indicates that God H's portrait glyph (T1059) may have been functionally similar to T1016c in certain contexts. In a recent analysis, Andrea Stone (1995:3) suggested that T1059 was read as *nik*, meaning 'flower,' on the basis of the Ahaw infix (logographic *nik*) in the parietal region (Figure 8). Flowers commonly serve as symbols of fertility and life in pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica, as indicated, for example, by the use of the *nik* glyph (T533) to represent the phrase 'his child' in Classic-period inscriptions (Grube and Nahm, 1991 correspondence to Schele, reported in Schele and Grube 1994:41). Among both the Maya of Yucatan (Roys 1933:105) and the Lacandon (Tozzer 1907:93), the Plumeria flower (*nikte'*) played a role in the creation of the gods. As Taube (1992:59) noted, God H may also symbolize the life force, as embodied in the word *ik'*, meaning 'breath' or 'spirit.' The words *ik'* and *nik* both suggest an emphasis on fertility. This conceptual link may provide the key to understanding the associations between T1016c (*k'u*) and T1059 (*ik'* or *nik*) in the codices, in light of Marcus' (1978:180) discussion of the vital force that underlies all life. Among the Maya, this concept is epitomized in the words *k'u* (sacred, divine) and *ik'* (wind, breath, life).

In its standard form, T1059 takes a T147 prefix (Figure 1h), a jewel cluster used metaphorically to represent a flower (Taube 1992:59). Occasionally, however, T1059 occurs with various other prefixes (Figures 8 and 9), including most commonly T58 (as seen in both the *Dresden* and *Madrid* codices; Figure 8) and T24 (seen exclusively in the *Madrid Codex*; Figure 9a,b). As these examples show, the T1059 main sign appears with various figures in addition to God H. It occurs most commonly with God D and Goddess I but is also used on occasion to refer to several other deities with positive associations, including Gods B, E, and R.[8]

This pattern of affixation calls to mind that seen previously with respect to T1016c (Figure 6), leading to questions regarding the relationship between the two forms. The two main signs (T1059 and T1016c) were occasionally conflated in the *Madrid* manuscript, as illustrated in Figure 10. In addition, they appear together in several almanacs with identical patterns of affixation. The first such example occurs on page 34 of the *Madrid* yearbearer pages (Figure 11a). Here, T1016c appears at B14 with a variant of the T14 prefix and a T47 suffix, whereas T1059 is in the glyph block directly above (B13), paired with the same affixes. As far as I am aware, this is the only example in which T1059 takes the T14 prefix that is commonly found with T1016c. In a second example, however, they both take the upper element of this prefix, the extruded eyeball (Figure 11b). This occurs on page 91c, where the T1059 main sign appears at B2 and T1016c at E2. The first seemingly refers to God E and the second to a figure who resembles God H.

I believe that the extruded eyeball (the upper portion of glyphs T14 and T15; Figures 1d and 12a) has the same value (*ah*) as T15, because it occasionally substitutes for this element in the *Madrid Codex* (compare Figure 5c, where the *ah kimil* compound has an

[8] T1059 also occurs on one occasion in the *Madrid Codex* in the caption to a frame picturing God A, the Maya death god, and in two others in association with sacrificial victims (Tables 1, 2). It is presently unclear how these examples relate to the others.

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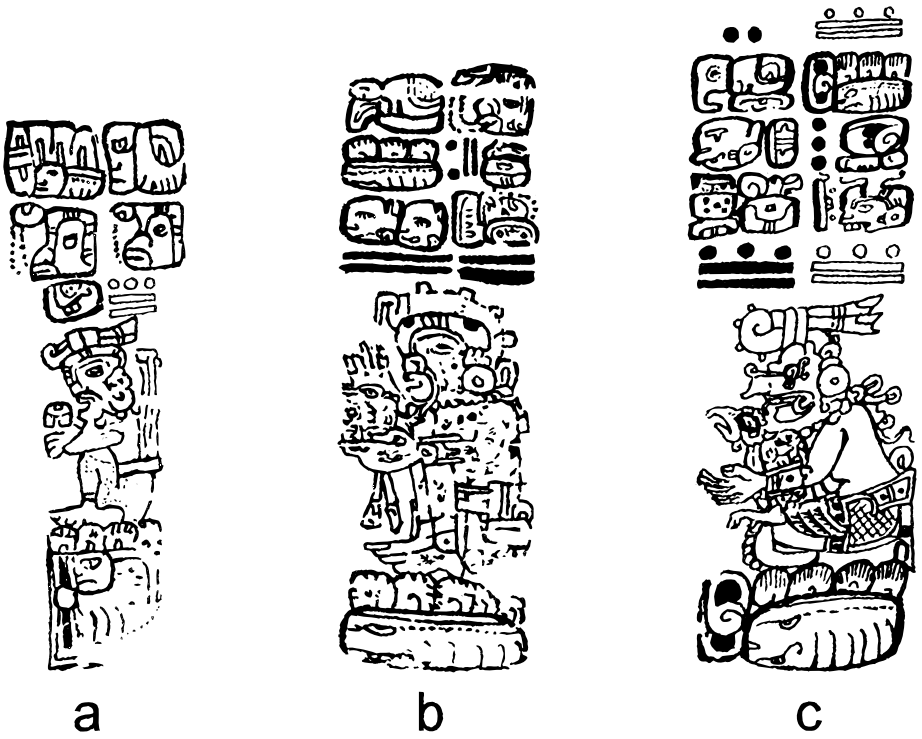


Figure 7. Cognate scenes showing the correspondence between Gods B and C. (a) God C from *Madrid* seasonal almanac (*Madrid* 11c) (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:246). (b) God C from cognate scene in *Paris Codex* (*Paris* 18b) (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:210). (c) God B from cognate scene in *Dresden* seasonal table (*Dresden* 69b) (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:148).

extruded eye, with Figure 12a).[9] When paired with T1016c (e.g., at E2 in Figure 11b), this results in a reading of *ah k'u*, meaning 'holy person' or 'priest.' This reading seems appropriate in this context, since both of the figures pictured in the almanac are wearing the robes commonly associated with priests throughout the codices. The same reading cannot be applied to the compound with a T1059 main sign (at B2), however, without contradicting Stone's (1995) reading of T1059 as *nik*, 'flower.' Instead, a reading of *ah nik* is suggested. Among the Itzaj, this term is translated as 'scatterer' (Hofling and Tesucún 1997:121), a word that may at one time have described a priest's actions (e.g., scattering incense or sacred water). What I would like to propose, therefore, is that the two compounds (*ah nik* and *ah k'u*) refer to the same semantic domain (cf. Vail 1996a:226–227). This fits with Bricker's (1973:89) observation that the *nichim* (cognate with Yucatecan *nik*) in present-day Chamula serves as the sponsor of Carnival rituals and acts as a kind of priest. The implied correspondence between priests and flowers suggests that both symbolize holiness and divinity among Tzotzil speakers.

It is possible, based on this analysis, to conclude that T1059 and T1016c functioned not as simple appellative glyphs but instead as higher level markers specifying inclusion in certain deity classes. T1016c, which embodies the concept of *k'u*, refers to deities generally and therefore could have been used in conjunction with any deity figure. In contrast, T1059 is limited in its distribution to those deities having positive, life-giving qualities, as suggested by the combined associations of the *nik* and *ik'* metaphors.

God D/God A Dichotomy

Each of the lettered deities may be grouped according to his or her relationship with either the creator god (Schellhas' God D) or the

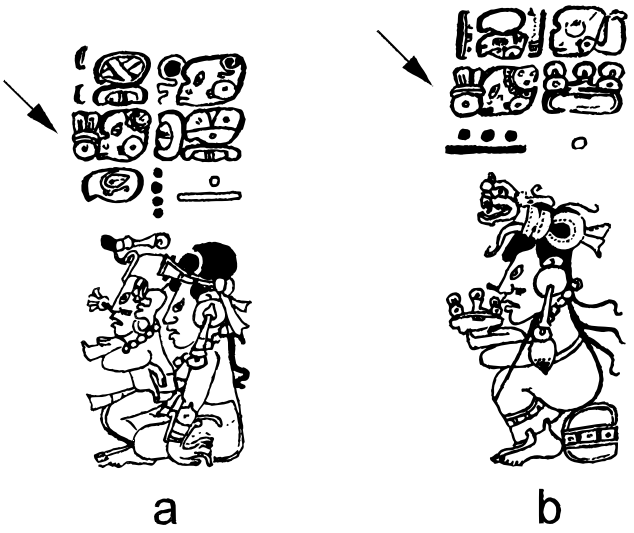


Figure 8. T1059 main sign in the *Dresden Codex*. Note the Ahaw infix in the parietal region. Both examples take a T58 prefix, the first referring to God H (a) and the second to Goddess I (b) (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:40, 50).

[9] Taube (1989:36–38) interpreted the upper portion of T14 as a maize symbol (logographic *wah*) but noted that it has associations with both blood and maize. He provided the same reading for the upper element of T39 (seen in Figure 9c), which represents a corn curl (*wah*). In light of this interpretation, an *ah* reading may also be productive, because the term *aj* means 'ear of maize' in several of the highland Mayan languages, including Kaqchikel, K'iche', and Tz'utujil (Dienhart 1989:145).

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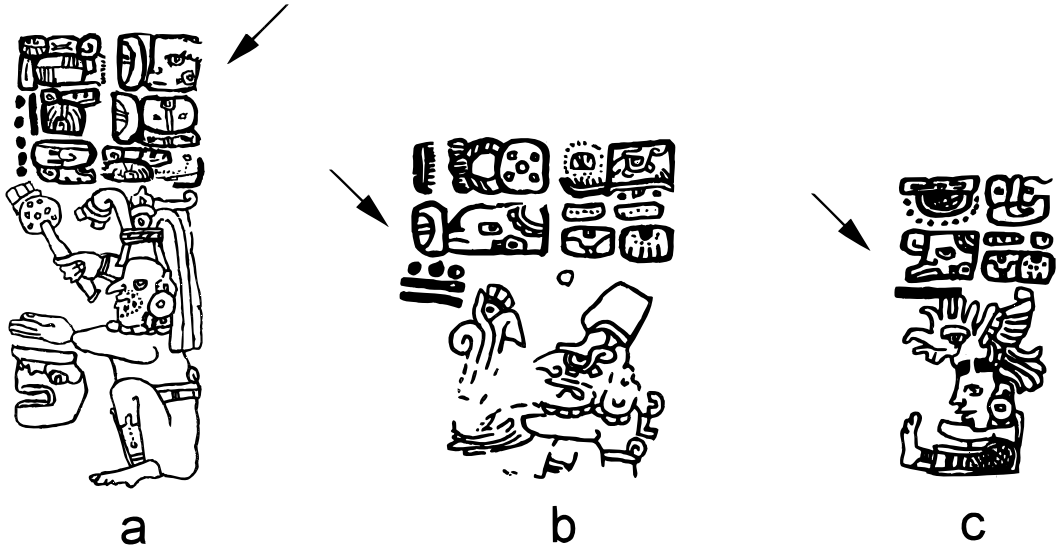


Figure 9. T1059 in the *Madrid Codex*, prefixed with T24 (a, b) and a curl-like affix (c). God H is pictured in the first scene, God D in the second, and Goddess I in the third (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:358, 412, 420).

death deity (Schellhas' God A), with the exception of the sun god, Schellhas' God G (as discussed below). These two groupings serve as a reflection of the opposing domains of life and death, or the upperworld versus the underworld (Vail 1998). Zimmermann (1956:18–24) was the first to make this connection explicit through his study of the distribution of attributive glyphs in the codical almanacs.

Building on Zimmermann's work, I have shown that the majority of attributive glyphs are not deity specific; instead, they occur with fairly equal frequency in relation to a series of deities who share certain associations. There are three attributives, however, that are each found with one particular deity far more frequently than they occur with any of the other figures. They include T15.736a(:140), which can be linked to God A; T24.533:24, a title commonly associated with God D; and T122.528:87, used in reference to the sun god, God G (Figure 12). The first has been read as *ah kimil* (or alternately *ah kamal*), meaning 'dead person' (Bricker 1986:101–102); the second as a title meaning 'flower person' (Vail 1996a:325) or 'esteemed flower' (Vail 2000); and the third remains unread, although it is possible to assign values to each of the individual elements (Vail 1996a:320).[10]

By examining the patterning of these attributive glyphs, it is evident that Gods A′, CH, Q, and S are linked to God A, whereas Gods B, E, H, I, K, M, N, R, and a variant of Goddess O (who represents the feminine version of God D) are linked to God D.[11] In addition, God L is named on one occasion with God D's attributive, as is God G, who also sometimes takes God A's epithet. God G's attributive glyph occurs exclusively in reference to this figure and a variant form of this deity found in the *Madrid Codex* (Vail 1996a:320–323).

My analysis of attributes and naming patterns reveals a similar grouping of deities into distinct conceptual domains (see Tables 1–3 and discussion below), although there are occasional incongruities that require explanation. Gods A, A′, and Q, for example, are occasionally associated with the God H complex of deities or with this figure's attributes, as seen in Tables 2 and 3. These and similar inconsistencies suggest that Thompson's (1970b:199) binary categories (e.g., benevolent vs. malevolent) were sometimes blurred, in the same way that deities occasionally crossed gender boundaries (Stone 1990).

God G seems to represent a link between the two worlds identified with Gods D and A. In certain situations, he is aligned with God A (e.g., on *Madrid* 91c, frame 3; *Madrid* 92c, frame 3; and

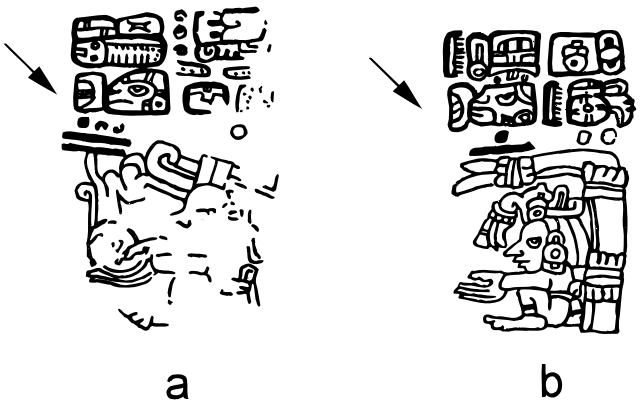


Figure 10. Conflation of T1016c and T1059 in the *Madrid Codex*. In example (a), T1016c lacks the lines usually seen encircling the nose and mouth, mimicking T1059, whereas T1059 has the "lips" of T1016c in example (b) (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:420, 422).

[10] T122 has been interpreted as *k'ak'*, meaning 'fire,' T528 as logographic *tun* 'stone' and phonetic *ku*, and T87 as logographic *te'* 'tree.' Schele and Grube (1997:100) suggested a reading of 'punishment' for the compound as a whole, whereas Davoust (1997) read it as *k'ak' chetun*, meaning 'sudden malady.'

[11] Several of these deities are not included in Figure 1. They are, however, illustrated and discussed in Taube (1992) and Vail (1996a).

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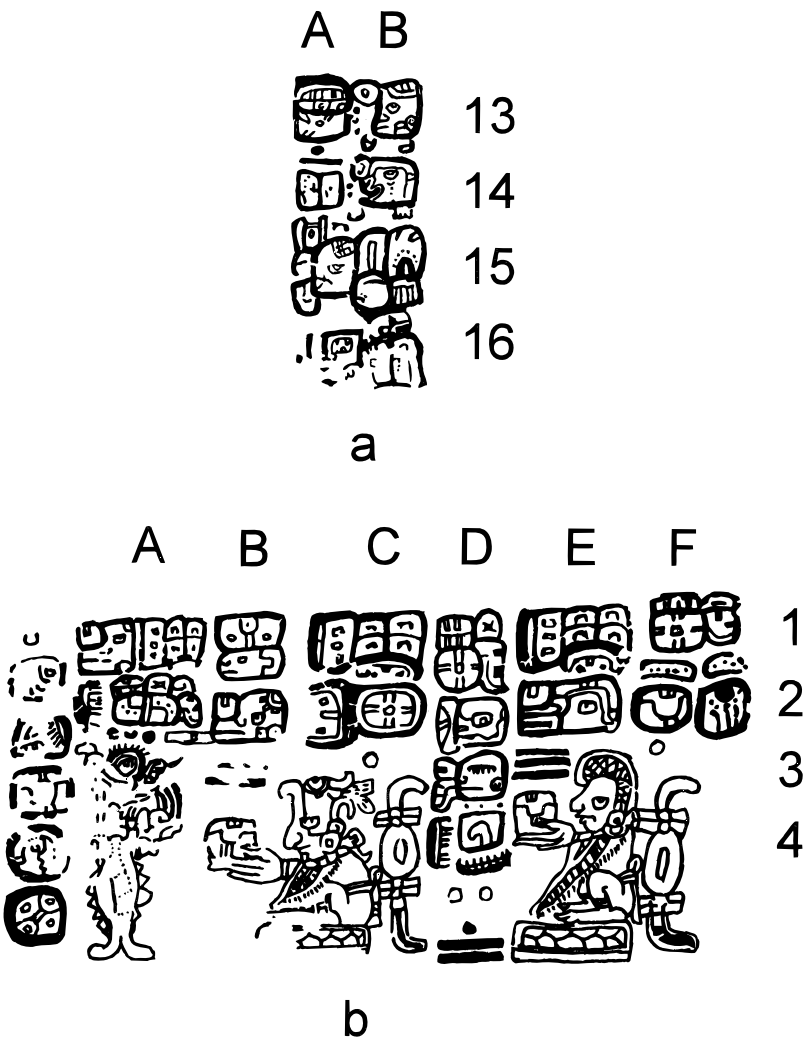


Figure 11. Co-occurrence of T1059 and T1016c on *Madrid* 34 (a) and *Madrid* 91c (b). In both examples, the two main signs show identical patterns of affixation (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:292, 406).

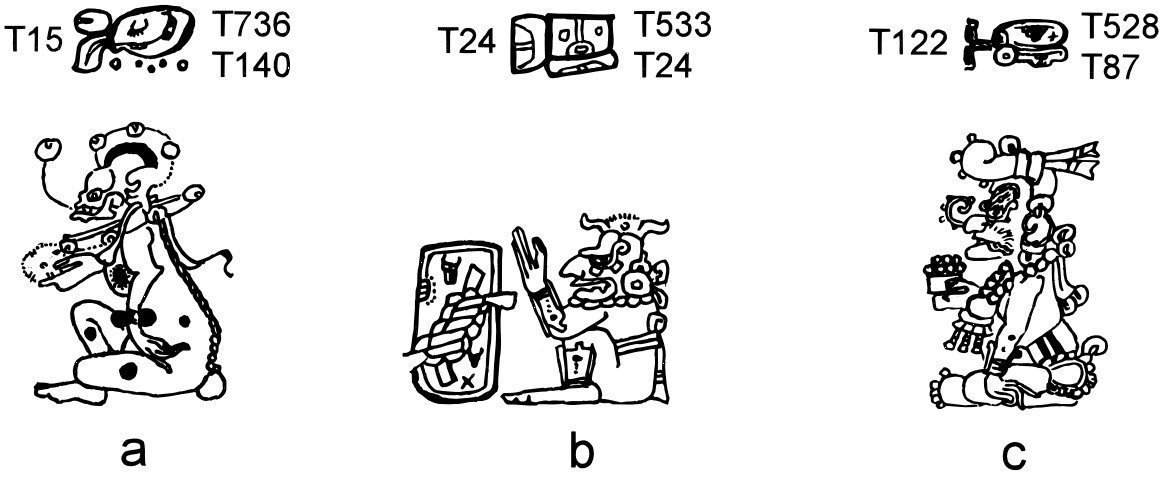


Figure 12. Attributive glyphs linked to specific deities. (a) T15.736a:140 attributive in reference to God A. Read as 'dead person' (*ah kamal* or *ah kimil*) by Bricker (1986:101–102) (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:40). (b) T24.533:24 attributive in reference to God D (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:426). (c) T122.528:87 attributive in reference to God G (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:32).

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Table 2. Deity complexes defined by T24.1016c, T24.1059, and T24.1005b

Deity	Examples
Deities associated with T24.1016c in the *Madrid Codex*	
God B	*Madrid* 29cC1; *Madrid* 69b2A2[a]; *Madrid* 99a–100aA2[a]
God E	Various
God D	*Madrid* 62aD2; *Madrid* 81c'B2; *Madrid* 90d–92dA2 (paired with Goddess I); *Madrid* 93a–94aG2[a] (paired with Goddess I); *Madrid* 98c–99cA2; *Madrid* 99dA2
God H	*Madrid* 20b–21bB1 (variant of God H pictured?); *Madrid* 62aA2; *Madrid* 83cB2; *Madrid* 97dD2; *Madrid* 98dD2; *Madrid* 99a–100aC2[a]; *Madrid* 101bA2
God Q	*Madrid* 28dC2 (pictured in an agricultural scene holding T503)
Gods Q and A	*Madrid* 26d–27dH2 (pictured in an agricultural almanac)
Deities associated with T24.1059 in the *Madrid Codex*	
God A	*Madrid* 69a2B1
God D	*Madrid* 92cA2, C2 (with black variant); *Madrid* 98dA2
God E	*Madrid* 92b–93bE2
God G, mummy	*Madrid* 71a2B2[a]
God H	*Madrid* 67a2B1; *Madrid* 93b–94bF2 (with Goddess I); *Madrid* 99c–100cA2 (note that main sign is a cross between T1059 and T1016c)
God H?	*Madrid* 92c–93cA2, D2, G2 (with Goddess I)
Deities associated with T24.1005b in the *Madrid Codex*	
God D	*Madrid* 71b2B1 (has TXIII prefix)
God E	*Madrid* 60bE2; *Madrid* 95d–96dI2; *Madrid* 97b–98bE2 (possible that all three are poorly drawn examples of T24.1006c?)
God H	*Madrid* 65a1B1
God R	*Madrid* 97aD2

[a]Association between text and image is unclear in these examples. In some cases, the referent of T24.1016C may be the maize itself rather than the deity pictured.

Madrid 98c, frame 2); elsewhere, however, he is conflated with God D, through a figure who closely resembles the latter deity but has the whiskers and attributive glyph of God G (Figure 13a). In one scene, this figure is labeled as Ah K'ak'mo' (Fire Macaw), a variant form of K'inich K'ak'mo', one of the names associated with the sun god in Maya texts (cited in Fox and Justeson 1984:26; Figure 13b). Another scene shows this deity associated with both God A's and God D's attributive glyphs (compare Figure 13c with Figure 12a, b).

The fact that God G has both positive and negative associations accords with perceptions of the sun held by the Yucatec Maya. Because of the lack of surface water and problems with drought, the sun was considered both a nurturing and destructive force. Moreover, the sun may be linked to the heavens and the underworld, because it possesses both daytime and nighttime aspects. Whereas the daytime sun is associated with God G, a jaguar commonly personifies the underworld sun (Taube 1992:54). The connection between God G and jaguars is explicitly represented on page 26 of the *Dresden* yearbearer almanac (Figure 14). Here, a jaguar occurs in the upper register, carried by an opossum figure, whereas God G is seated in front of a structure in the middle register. I suggest that the figures pictured in these two positions were intended to represent different aspects of the same deity.

The complete almanac consists of four pages. Each refers to one of the four days concerned with the yearbearer ceremonies discussed by Landa (Tozzer 1941:135–149). In the *Dresden Codex*, these days include Ik', Manik', Eb, and Kaban. Each page contains three distinct registers that relate to the events taking place during the final five days (the Wayeb period) of each year (Bricker 1989:12). The upper register (labeled "a") pictures a ritually attired figure carrying a deity (identified as the burden of the year) on his back. In the middle or "b" register, a second deity is shown seated within a structure, whereas the lower register, "c," pictures a third deity performing a sacrifice (Figure 14).

In his *Relación de las cosas de Yucatan*, Landa (Tozzer 1941: 139–148) described the sequence of events associated with the Wayeb period. He mentioned two deities in connection with each of the four years of the yearbearer cycle, one represented by a "statue" and the other by an "image" of a god, herein termed the "Wayeb idol." As Seler (1887) first pointed out, the figures in the middle register of the *Dresden* almanac correspond with Landa's series of statues—Bolon Tz'akab (God K) on page 25, K'inich Ahaw (God G) on page 26, Itzamna (God D) on page 27, and Wak Mitun Ahaw (God A') on page 28 (Figure 15, right column). Who, then, are the figures in the upper and lower registers?

The scene in the lower register correlates quite explicitly with the fifth event described by Landa in his discussion of the Wayeb ceremonies (Tozzer 1941:139–141): an elaborate ritual performed at the entrance to town before retrieving the Wayeb idol and returning it to the town center. If the pictures in the three registers on each page represent a sequential progression of events related to the yearbearer ceremonies, then the upper and middle registers must correspond to one of the first four activities mentioned by Landa (Tozzer 1941:139–140). These include the making of the Wayeb idol; the transport of the Wayeb idol to the entrance of town, where it is deposited; the manufacture of the Wayeb statue; and the placing of the statue in the house of the *principal*.

Register "b" seems to show the statues within the house of the *principal*, where they were later given offerings. The upper register, therefore, must correspond either to the second event, in which case the idol is the figure being carried, or to the placement of the statue in the house of the *principal*. I believe that either scenario

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Table 3. Examples of costuming and attributes shared by *Madrid* deities

Deity	Selected Examples
Death eyes	
God A	*Madrid* 14b; *Madrid* 19b; *Madrid* 23d1; *Madrid* 69a2; *Madrid* 83b3; *Madrid* 98c2
God A′	*Madrid* 19b; *Madrid* 64c1; *Madrid* 72b1
Goddess O	*Madrid* 32b
God Q	*Madrid* 28d2; *Madrid* 50a1; *Madrid* 52b2; *Madrid* 84c5
God Q/A	*Madrid* 85c5; *Madrid* 86c3; *Madrid* 87c3
Miscellaneous figures	*Madrid* 34a (*Kawak Pawahtun*); *Madrid* 66a2 (captive); *Madrid* 70a2 (God Y); *Madrid* 75 (bound and decapitated figure)
Flower elements	
God A′	*Madrid* 74b3
God B	*Madrid* 30b
God D	*Madrid* 61b4; *Madrid* 64b1; *Madrid* 87b5; *Madrid* 101c1
God H	*Madrid* 17b; *Madrid* 23a2; *Madrid* 59a3; *Madrid* 62a1; *Madrid* 63a2; *Madrid* 87b4; *Madrid* 88b2; *Madrid* 104b2
God Q	*Madrid* 21b2; *Madrid* 88a3
God R	*Madrid* 60a2; *Madrid* 90c2 (God R has attributes of God H in both examples)
Maize foliation	
God A	*Madrid* 34b
God D	*Madrid* 80c1; *Madrid* 106b3; *Madrid* 110c2
Bearded God D	*Madrid* 37b; *Madrid* 108b1
God E	invariably
God E/CH	*Madrid* 28d4
Miscellaneous figures	*Madrid* 80a (captive); *Madrid* 90d2 (both figures may be God E variants)
Headdress with jeweled flower	
God B	*Madrid* 65b2; *Madrid* 72a2; *Madrid* 73b; *Madrid* 97c2
God D	*Madrid* 67b1; *Madrid* 69a1; *Madrid* 70b2
God H	*Madrid* 65a1; *Madrid* 67a2; *Madrid* 71b1; *Madrid* 94b4: *Madrid* 97d3; *Madrid* 99a2; *Madrid* 99c2; *Madrid* 100c1; *Madrid* 101b2
God N	*Madrid* 67a1 (variant form)
God R	*Madrid* 65b1
Unidentified figure	*Madrid* 65a2

can be justified and that the pivotal question concerns the relationship between the figures pictured in the upper and middle registers on each of the yearbearer pages (compare left and right columns in Figure 15). I identify the figure being carried in the upper register on page 25 as God B or Chaak. The name glyph appearing in the caption (not illustrated), however, refers to God K (Bolon Tz'akab), the deity pictured in the middle register of this page.[12] We have previously seen that the figures pictured on page 26, a jaguar and God G, are interpreted as nighttime and daytime aspects of the sun. Likewise, the two deities from page 28 are both aspects of the death god (Kelley 1976:Figure 19; Zimmermann 1956). The final pair of deities, the maize god (God E) and Itzamna (God D), seen on page 27, can be linked through their associations with sustenance (Seler 1902–1923:I:380; Taube 1992:39–40; Vail 1996a:324–355).

Taken as a whole, this evidence suggests that the paired figures under discussion were closely related, as previous scholars have proposed (both Taube 1988 and Thompson 1972 provide an extensive discussion of this almanac). Like Taube (1988:233), I believe that the gods being carried in the upper register of each page represent aspects of the deities seated in the temples directly below. In other respects, however, Taube's interpretation differs from mine. He associated the almanac with the Puuc set of yearbearers (Ak'bal, Lamat, Ben, Etz'nab), rather than with the Tikal set (Ik', Manik', Eb, Kaban), based on an assumption that these pages show a sequence of events associated with the last day of Wayeb and the first day of the new year (in contrast to the first two days of Wayeb, as my model suggests). In his scenario, registers "a" and "b" center around the patron of the outgoing year, whereas register "c" relates to a ceremony performed by the patron of the new year in front of the world directional trees (Taube 1988:219–245).

Despite these differing assumptions, both models imply a correspondence between the figures being carried in register "a" and the deities seated in the structure in register "b".[13] Data from other sections of the codices provide further support for interpreting these paired figures as aspects of the same underlying divinity (Vail 1996a, 1996b).

[12] Bill Ringle (personal communication 1998) pointed out that the figure appearing in the upper register may be God K rather than Chaak, because the two are distinguished primarily by their noses (Figure 1c, j), and this region is eroded in the scene in question. If God K was intended, this provides an even greater measure of support for my proposal that there is a direct correspondence between the figures in the upper and middle registers.

[13] See Love (1986:220–223) for an alternate reconstruction of the identities of these figures.

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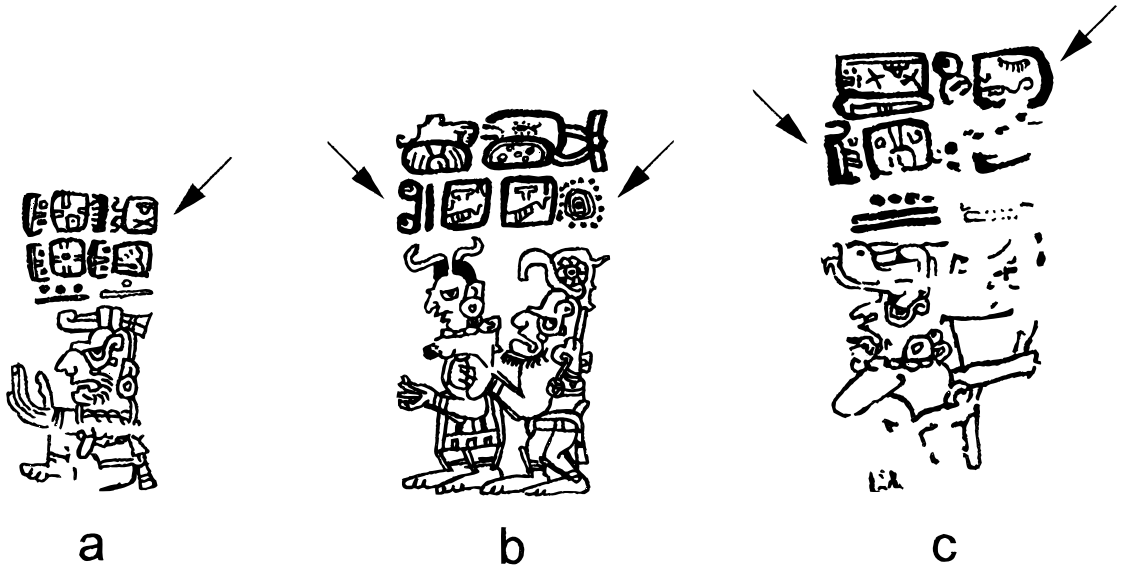


Figure 13. Links between God G and Gods D and A. (a) Bearded God D named with God G's attributive (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:404). (b) Bearded God D named in text as Ah K'ak'mo', 'Fire Macaw,' on *Madrid* 89a. This is one of the names associated with the sun god in Classic period and later contexts (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:402). (c) Bearded God D associated with God A's and God D's attributive glyphs on *Madrid* 64c (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:352).

Deity Complexes

Until recently, scholars have assumed that each of the codical deities was characterized by a unique appellative glyph and that discrepancies between the text and image represent scribal errors. My research has clearly demonstrated, however, that these discrepancies may have been intentional and are therefore open to alternate interpretations (Vail 1996a). I have shown, for instance, that there are examples of one deity substituting for another, and others in which two figures may be conflated. These processes, which reveal the fluidity of what were thought to be static roles, can be seen in the iconography, appellatives, and attributives (Tables 1–3).

To illustrate these processes at work, this section focuses on selected examples of deity relationships from the codical almanacs, centered on the figure known as Itzamna, or God D (Figure 1e). This deity has been variously interpreted as the creator, the supreme deity of the Maya pantheon, and more recently as a priest or diviner (Freidel et al. 1993:51, 412, Note 19; Taube 1992:33–36). Evidence from the Maya codices supports each of these interpretations, suggesting a multiplicity of roles.

One of Itzamna's primary associations in the codices revolves around the theme of sustenance (Seler 1902–1923:I:380; Taube 1992:39–40; Vail 1996a:324–339, 353–355), which may account for his close relationship with the maize god (God E), as discussed previously in relation to the *Dresden* yearbearer almanac (Figure 15). These two figures are intimately linked throughout the Maya codices, as first noted by Seler (1902–1923:I:380, 395). In Figure 16, for instance, they are pictured in a series of cognate almanacs from the *Madrid Codex*. God D appears in the third frame of the upper almanac (Figure 16a), whereas God E replaces him in the same frame of the lower almanac (Figure 16b). Both captions, however, name God D as the subject (seen at D2 in both almanacs). In other contexts, God E is sometimes referenced by God D's appellative in addition to his own (Figure 17a). Elsewhere, God D occasionally assumes God E's cranial maize foliation (Figure 17b).

The two figures are further linked by their association with the T24.1016c compound that substitutes for God E's name glyph on a number of occasions in the second half of the *Madrid Codex* (Figure 6a,b). In addition to referencing God E, this compound occurs most commonly with Gods D and H (Figure 18a,b), suggesting the possibility that all three figures were closely affiliated (Table 2).[14] Certainly this appears to be the case with respect to Gods D and H, as both Taube (1992:56) and Stone (1995:7) have discussed. Ties between these deities may be seen from the fact that God H is named with God D's appellative on several occasions in the *Madrid Codex* (Figure 19a,b), as well as from examples in which God D assumes God H's cranial ornamentation, which Stone (1995:11) has identified as flowers. (Compare God D in Figure 19c with God H in Figure 19b; additional examples are listed in Table 3.) On several other occasions, God H's appellative seemingly refers to God D, once in place of his own glyph (Figure 20a) and once in conjunction with his name glyph (Figure 20b). The two figures are further linked in that both are occasionally named with the T24.1059 compound in the *Madrid Codex*, which incorporates the main sign from God H's appellative glyph (Figure 9a,b and Table 2). The link between this compound and God D is made explicit in the almanac on *Madrid* 92c–93c (Figure 21); here, God D's name glyph occurs in the third frame (at E2) in place of T24.1059 in the other three frames. Elsewhere, the T24.1059 compound occurs once in reference to God E (Figure 18c).

I interpret this collocation as a title referring to 'flower gods,' based on Stone's (1995) reading of the God H portrait glyph as *nik*, meaning 'flower.' A similar meaning (*yanil?-nik-il*) can be inferred for God D's attributive glyph (Figure 12b), based on the

[14] In the *Madrid Codex*, the same compound is used on occasion to refer to the 'north' quadrant, in place of T48.1037 (*na* NAL?/XIB?) in the *Dresden Codex*. This pattern of substitution suggests that the T24 prefix may have been read as *na* in certain contexts.

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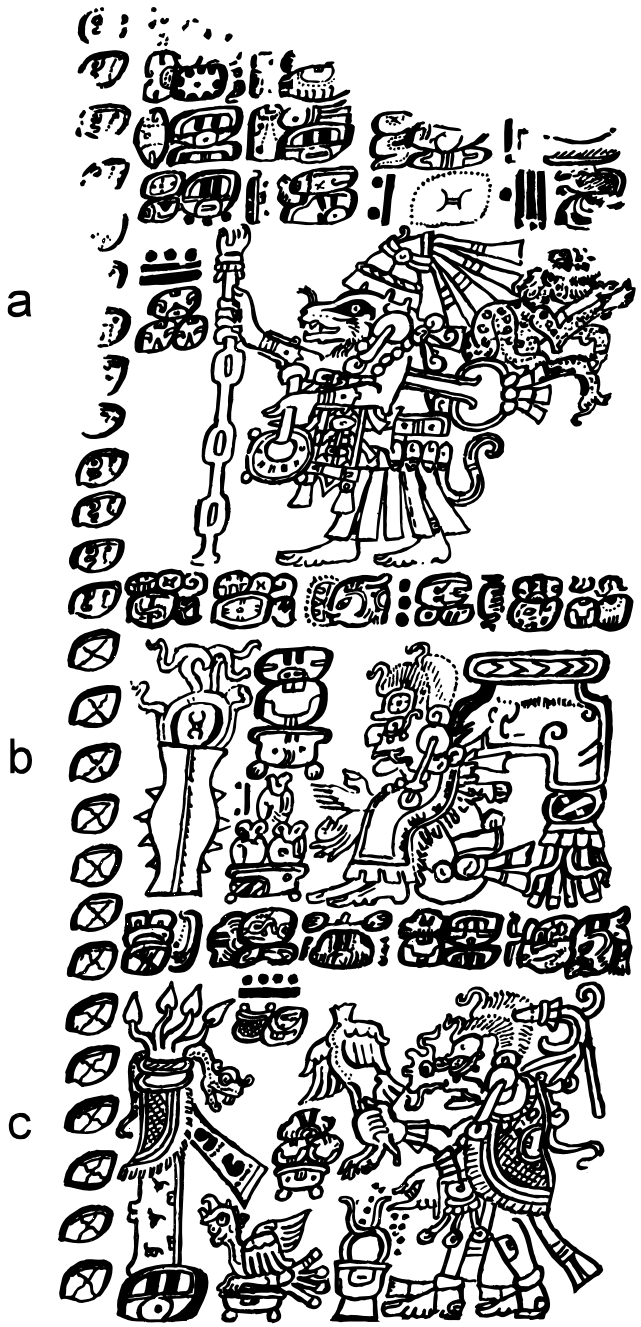


Figure 14. Page 26 from the *Dresden* yearbearer almanac. Descriptions of the yearbearer ritual suggest that the deity being carried in the upper register (a) and the figure seated within the structure in the middle register (b) on each page are related (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:62).

fact that the T533 main sign was also read as *nik* (Gruhe and Nahm 1991 correspondence to Schele, reported in Schele and Grube 1994:41).[15] Davoust (1997) read God D's attributive as *ah nik-il*, which he translated as 'the flower.' An alternate interpretation of this phrase suggests a priestly function, since *ah nik* refers to one who sprinkles or scatters among the Itzaj (Hofling and Tesucún 1997:121). I know of no evidence to support an *ah* reading for T24, however, although the title *ah nik* (with a T181 prefix) does occur on several occasions in the *Madrid Codex* (e.g., at B1, F1, and J1 on *Madrid* 63c–64c; Figure 4). The possibility of a *yanil* reading is discussed in Vail (2000).

The *nik* title was apparently shared by God D and God H, since the attributive of one (God D) and the name glyph of the other (God H) were synonymous, or nearly so, in meaning. This suggests that the two figures were intimately linked through an association with flowers and perhaps also through a shared role as priests. Such an association receives support from the fact that flower imagery commonly occurs in reference to both deities (e.g., with God H in Figures 1h, 6c, 8a, 9a, 10b, and 19b, and with God D in Figures 1e, 9b, 12b, 19c, and 20a). Moreover, God D's glyph is prefixed with an element read as *itz* (T152; Figure 1e), signifying, among other things, the dew or nectar of flowers (Taube 1992:34). This device also occurs as part of his headdress in various scenes from the *Dresden Codex* (Figure 20b).

Gods E and H were also closely related, as suggested by both the iconographic and glyphic evidence. Seler (1902–1923:I:700) first commented on this relationship, which was later discussed by Stone (1995:12). Stone pointed to a particularly expressive scene from the *Madrid Codex* in which the two figures grow out of a double-stalked plant (Figure 22). Elsewhere, they are both named by the T24.1016c and T24.1059 compounds (Table 2).

I interpret T24, when prefixed to various portrait glyphs, as a means of linking a group of figures who share conceptual associations (Vail 1996a:235–245). The T24.1016c compound, for example, occurs with Gods D (Figure 18a), E (Figure 6b), H (Figure 18b), and occasionally God B (e.g., *Madrid* 29c, frame 3), and T24.1059 refers to Gods D (Figure 9b), E (Figure 18c), H (Figure 9a), and possibly Goddess I (but see discussion in Vail 1996a:272).[16] The first grouping, with God E at its core, seemingly represents a complex of agricultural deities, who each share an identification with maize. The deities in the second group, many of whom also form part of the first grouping, may represent flower gods (and/or priests), who are linked through their associations with fertility and the creative life force.

Another compound that fits this pattern is T24.1005b, which occurs in reference to Gods D, E, H, and R (Figure 23, Table 2). T1005b, God R's portrait glyph, includes a *kab* infix (compare Figure 24a with 24b), an element that also appears on God R's face in representations of this figure (e.g., Figures 23d, 25a,b). Because *kab* means 'earth,' I believe that the T24.1005b compound signaled a complex of earth deities. The fact that Goddess I's name glyph also incorporates this element (Figure 24c) indicates that she also may have formed part of this complex.

Gods H and R may have been especially closely related, because their name glyphs substitute for each other directly (Table 1). On two occasions in the *Madrid Codex*, God H's portrait glyph refers to a figure with God R's facial marking (Figure 25a,b). In the same manuscript, God H is referenced once by a variant form of God R's glyph that includes a T147 prefix (Figure 25c). The specific identification of the deities in Figure 25a,b remains to be established, however, because the two figures share attributes of

[15] Stone (1995:5) independently suggested a *nik-il* reading for this compound, although she does not discuss the implications of this interpretation.

[16] Gods A and Q are also occasionally associated with these compounds, as may be seen from Table 2. I believe that this patterning should be interpreted in light of my previous comments regarding incongruities in the data set (see discussion of the God D/God A dichotomy).

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Figure 15. Deities in the upper (a) and middle (b) registers on the *Dresden* yearbearer pages (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:60, 62, 64, 66).

both Gods H and R. They may represent additional examples of deity conflations.

The figures named by the T24 compounds may be identified as embodiments of maize, flowers and/or the life force, and the earth. T24 has been interpreted as a mirror (*nen*) or a celt, both of which identify the bearers as divinities or personages charged with supernatural power (Taube 1996:42; see also Schele and Miller 1983:9–14). I believe that T24's associations with the word *nen* are relevant to interpreting these examples, suggesting a reference to deities manifested through divination, which often involved the use of mirrors (Vail 1996a:235, 369). This interpretation rests on the assumption that the pre-Contact Maya, like the Aztec,

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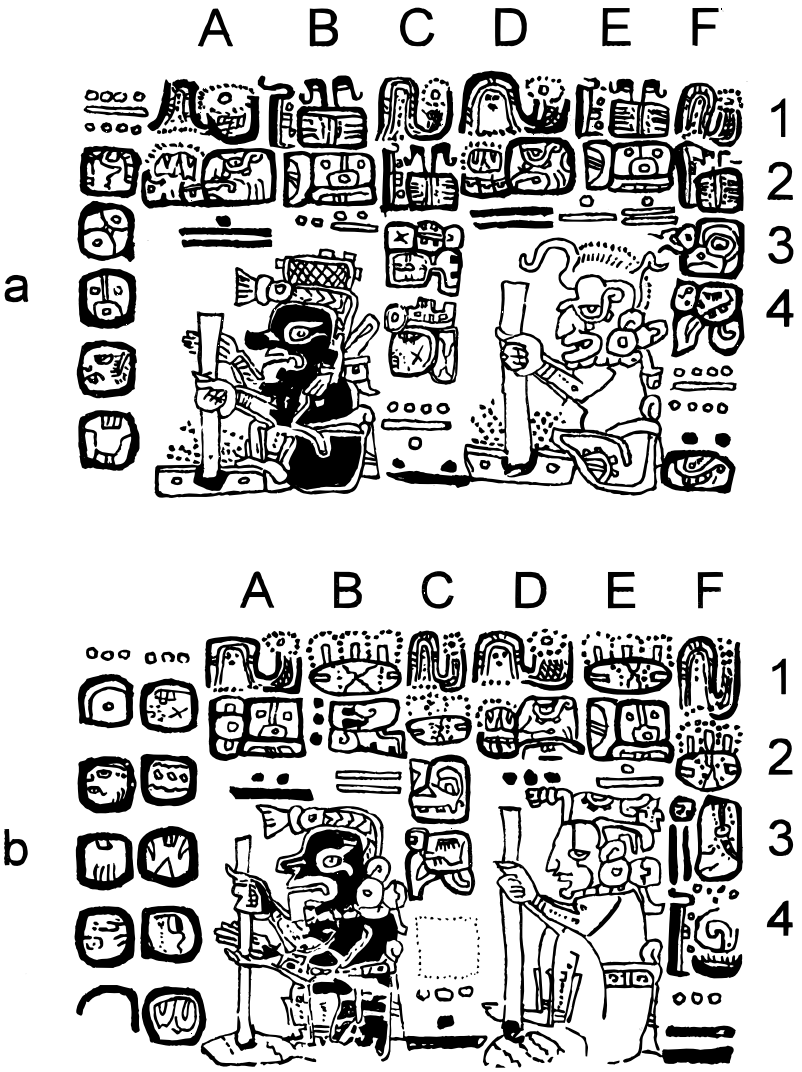


Figure 16. Cognate almanacs from the *Madrid Codex* showing link between Gods D and E. Note that God D appears in the third frame of the upper almanac (*Madrid* 38b), whereas God E appears in the same frame of the lower almanac (*Madrid* 38c). Both captions include God D's appellative (at D2) (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:300).

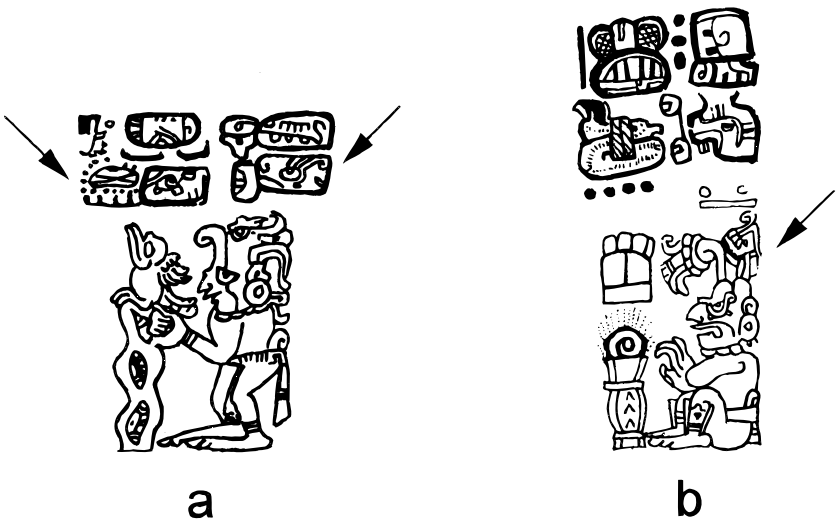


Figure 17. Additional links between Gods D and E. (a) God E named with his own and God D's glyph on *Madrid* 20c (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:264). (b) God D pictured with God E's cranial maize foliation on *Madrid* 106b (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:436).

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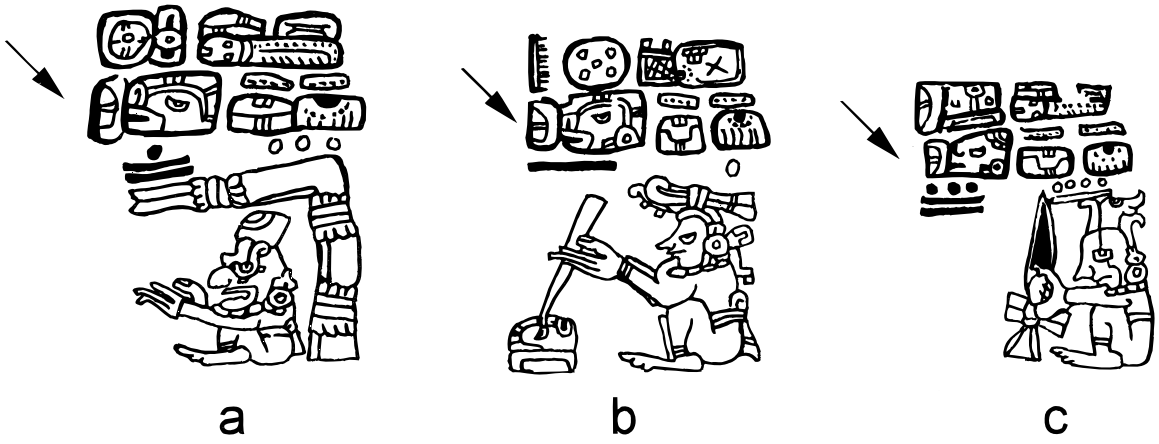


Figure 18. Examples of T24.1016c and T24.1059 compounds. T24.1016c in reference to Gods D (a) and H (b) and T24.1059 in reference to God E (c) (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:410, 424, 426).

believed that deities possessed both a sacred essence and a distinct physical manifestation. In this respect, it is interesting that T24 substitutes for the God C glyph (*k'u*) on page 65b of the *Madrid Codex* (Figure 26). Both are the subject of a presentation event; the mirror occurs in the text, in place of the God C head in the picture. This scene may refer to the manifestation of a specific deity, perhaps the maize god, who is named at B1 in the caption.

Another parallel with the Aztec situation concerns Itzamna, who may be compared with Tezcatlipoca in the Aztec legends (Caso 1958:10) in that both figures combine different aspects based on directional and color associations. This interpretation receives support from the fact that three separate deities are named as Itzamna in the *Madrid* manuscript—Itzamna proper (God D, as seen in Figure 1e), the white Itzamna (God H; Figure 27a), and the black Itzamna (God M; Figure 27b).[17] Additionally, God Z (Figure 27c) may represent a second black version of Itzamna, as suggested by a number of similarities in their appearances. Here, however, the relationship involves what seems to be the warrior aspect of this deity. I can suggest no way of empirically testing this hypothesis, however, because God Z is not named in the codical texts.

[17] I believe that the prefix illustrated in Figure 27b is T95 (*ek'*) rather than T58 (*sak*), as previous researchers have assumed (cf. Bill 1997:124–125). In the *Madrid Codex*, the *sak* glyph invariably has an element separating the upper and lower halves that is not present in this example (compare with Figure 6e–f). For this reason, I also identify the prefix to T1016c on *Madrid* 52b–53b (frame 4) as *ek'*, resulting in a reading of *ek' k'u*, 'black god,' an epithet that quite accurately describes the figure pictured (Vail 1996a:216).

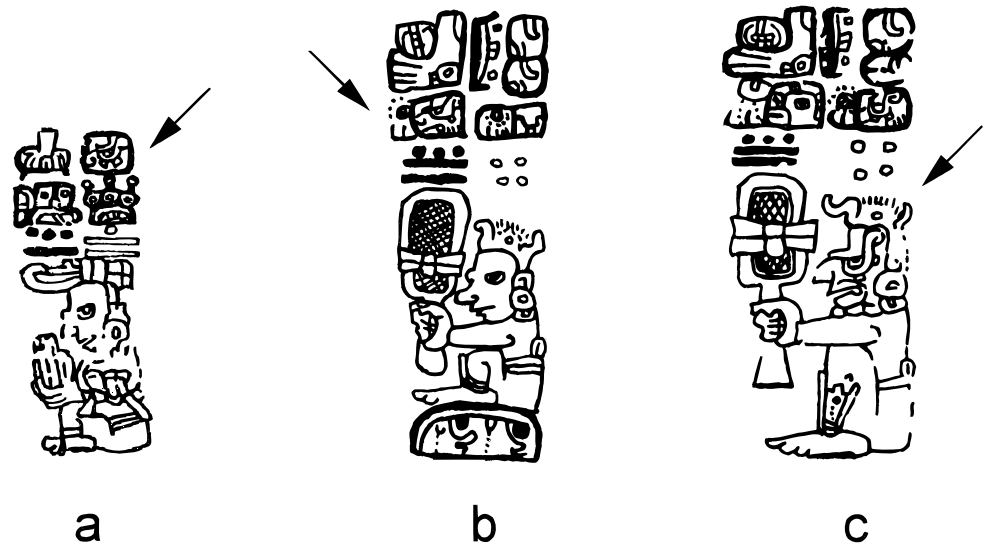


Figure 19. Links between Gods D and H. (a) God H named with D's appellative on *Madrid* 90b (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:404). (b) God H named with God D's appellative on *Madrid* 88b (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:400). (c) God D wearing God H's cranial decoration on *Madrid* 87b, believed to represent a flower. Compare with figure illustrated in example b (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:398).

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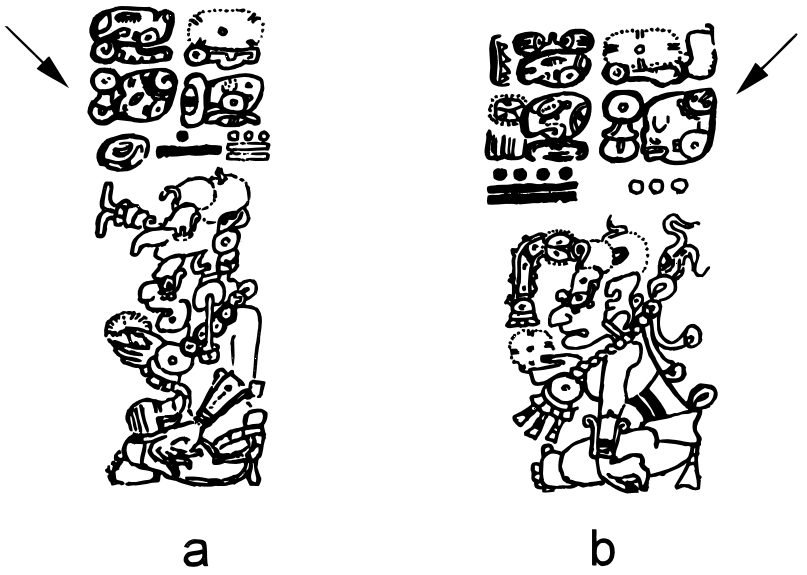


Figure 20. Additional links between Gods D and H. (a) God D named with God H's appellative glyph in place of his own glyph on *Dresden* 12c (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:34). (b) God D named with God H's appellative glyph in conjunction with his own name glyph on *Dresden* 15c (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:40).

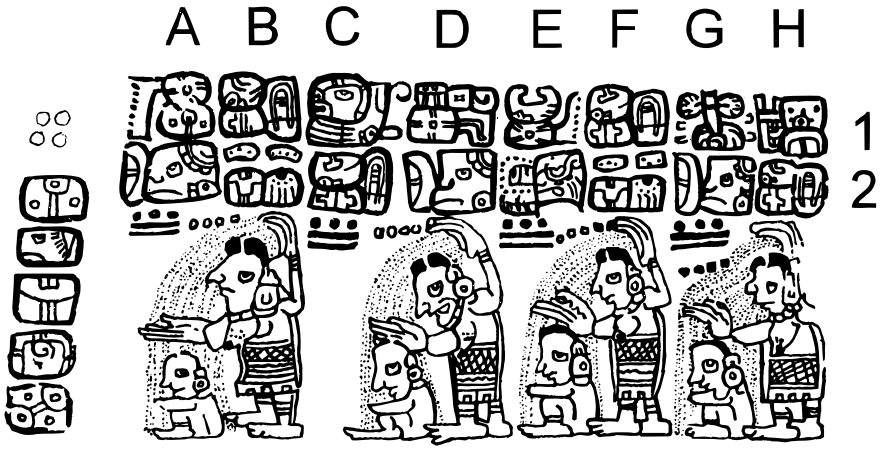


Figure 21. Alternation between T24.1059 and God D's appellative in the almanac on *Madrid* 92c–93c. T24.1059 occurs in the first, second, and fourth frames (at A2, D2, and G2), but it is replaced by God D's appellative in the third frame (at E2) (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:408, 410).

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The evidence presented indicates that the Postclassic Maya, like the Aztec of central Mexico, conceived of deities as members of overlapping complexes or clusters. Three separate deity complexes have been identified on the basis of glyphic evidence—one focused on the maize god, another on the god of flowers, fertility, and the life force, and a third on an earth deity. Many of the same deities belong to all three complexes, suggesting that they formed the basis of a larger thematic grouping centered on sustenance and agricultural fertility. This situation shows clear parallels with that documented for Postclassic central Mexico, and the emphasis on sustenance and fertility fits squarely within the "rain-moisture-agricultural fertility" theme defined by Nicholson (1971:414–424) for that region.



Figure 22. Gods H and E growing out of double-stalked plant on *Madrid* 96b (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:416).

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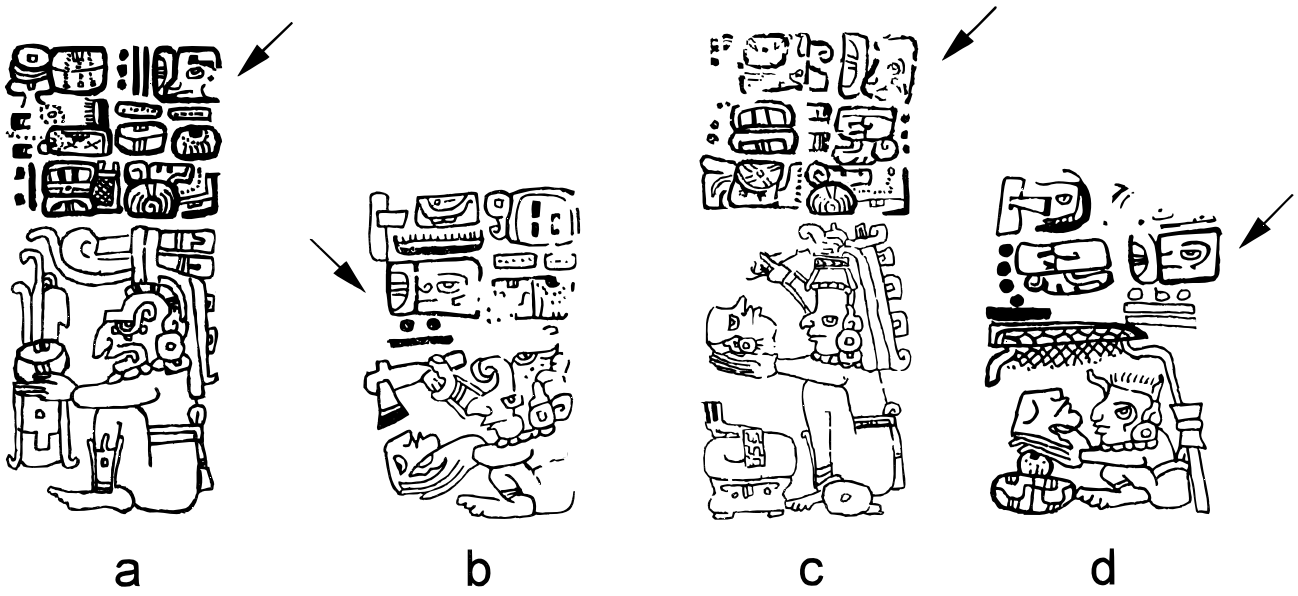


Figure 23. T24.1005b in reference to Gods D (a), E (b), H (c), and R (d) (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:354, 366, 418).

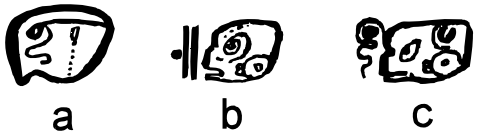


Figure 24. *Kab* infix seen in day sign Kaban (a), God R's portrait glyph (b), and Goddess I's portrait glyph (c). Note also the *kab* prefix to Goddess I's glyph in example c (example a after Morley 1975:Figure 17; examples b and c after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:20, 46).

In the Maya codices, God D plays a central role in the sustenance and fertility theme. He shares strong ties with Gods E and H, deities linked not only to each other, but also to God R. Links among these figures are congruent with their associations, that is, God D's emphasis on creation and sustenance, God E's on maize and agriculture, God H's on flowers, fertility, and the life force, and God R's on the earth. God B and Goddess I played a role, albeit less central, in this theme as well.

The other themes Nicholson (1971) outlined for central Mexico also are present in the Maya codices, although they have only been

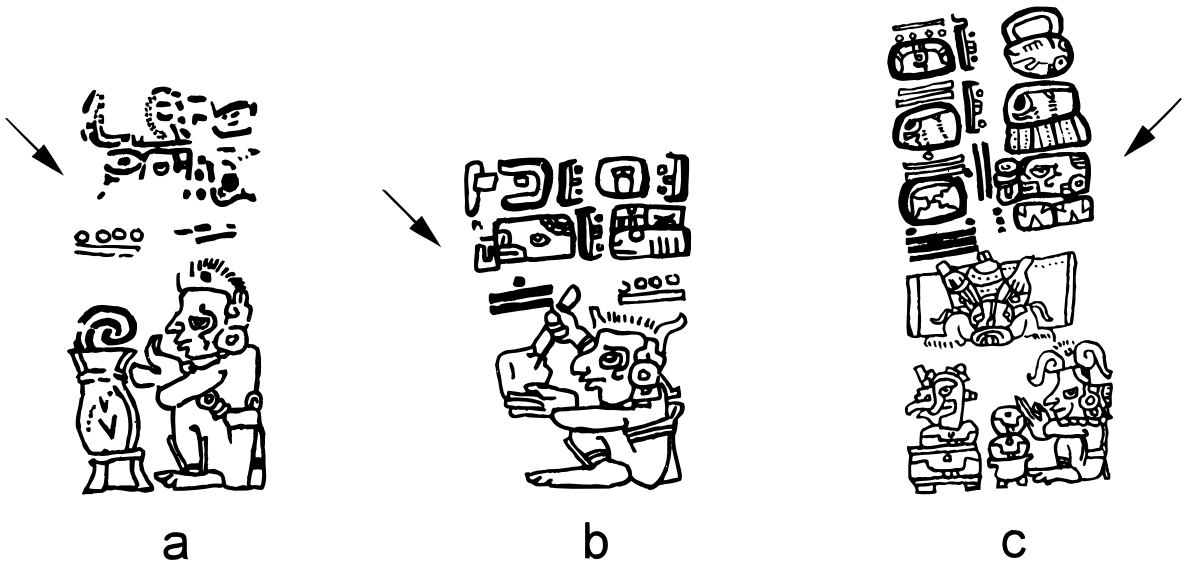


Figure 25. Substitution of God H's and God R's appellative glyphs. (a) Deity resembling God R named with God H's glyph on *Madrid* 60a (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:344). (b) Deity resembling God R named with God H's glyph on *Madrid* 96d (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:416). (c) God H named with a conflated glyph incorporating elements from his own and God R's appellatives on *Madrid* 104b (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:432).

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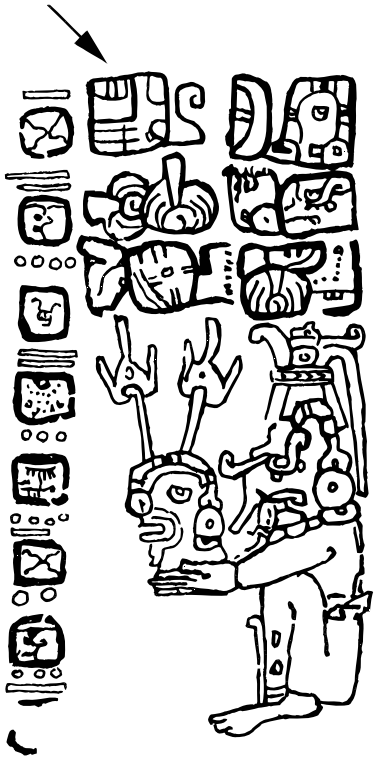


Figure 26. Substitution involving T24 and the God C glyph (*k'u*) on *Madrid* 65b (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:354).

mentioned briefly here. They relate to creation and celestial affairs, on the one hand, and to war, sacrifice, and death, on the other. The first theme revolves around God D in the codices and the second around God A, as discussed in reference to the God D/God A dichotomy defined previously.

Like Quetzalcoatl, Itzamna encompasses many different aspects that crosscut the various thematic concerns of the codices. One of these pertains to his role as creator, another to his role as a priest. Both of these reflect his link to the celestial realm. His terrestrial associations are manifested in the aspects related to sustenance and fertility. Finally, his role in the warfare and sacrifice complex may have been assumed by another aspect of this deity, the black God Z.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

During the Postclassic era, the Maya pattern (at least during the Postclassic era) parallels that seen in central Mexico in a number of respects. Specifically, the two areas share a distinction between an abstract notion of sacredness (Aztec *teotl*, Maya *k'u*) and the manifestation of that sacredness in particular deity figures (Aztec *teixiptla*, Maya *nen?*). Moreover, both Maya and Aztec deities had a number of separate aspects or manifestations, as defined through naming patterns, costuming, and the assumption of particular attributes. This suggests that our understanding of the Maya pantheon as consisting of a series of discrete deities inhabiting distinct conceptual domains is a Western construct, rather than a valid representation of Postclassic ideology. I propose reformulating this model to account for the overlapping names, functions, and roles of the Maya deities—in other words, their fluidity.

The correspondences seen to underlie Late Postclassic Maya and central Mexican ideology raise a number of important questions. Is the same structure evident elsewhere in the Mesoamerican world? Is it reflected in the iconography and glyphic texts of earlier periods in Maya history? Or is it a later development, resulting from increased culture contact throughout Mesoamerica during the Postclassic period? Although additional research is necessary to provide a broader outline of religious beliefs in specific areas, my analysis represents an important step toward resolving these issues. What I have demonstrated is that there are striking parallels across both time and space in terms of how divinity is conceptualized in Mesoamerica. My sense, therefore, is that we are witnessing remnants of a deeply rooted pan-Mesoamerican tradition.

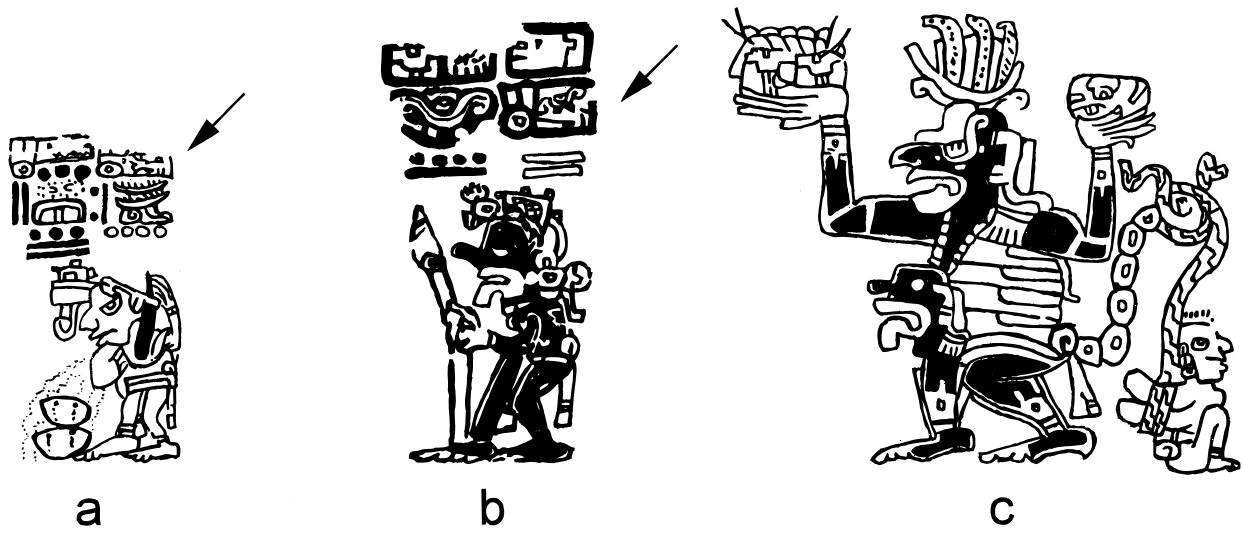


Figure 27. Itzamna distinguished by color associations. (a) White aspect, represented by God H on *Madrid* 95a (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:414). (b) Black aspect, represented by God M on *Madrid* 55b (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:334). (c) Warrior aspect, represented by God Z on *Madrid* 79a (after Villacorta C. and Villacorta 1976:382).

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RESUMEN

Durante buena parte del presente siglo, el *Códice de Madrid* ha sido soslayado como una fuente confiable por la mayoría de los investigadores. Esto se debe al gran número de supuestos errores de escriba que aparenta tener el texto jeroglífico del manuscrito. Sin embargo, un examen de la distribución de los jeroglíficos nominales y los atributos de las deidades representadas en el códice ha revelado que los llamados "errores" forman patrones significativos. Estos patrones sugieren que nuestra visión del panteón maya—como una serie de entidades bien definidas, con diferentes dominios conceptuales—es un constructo occidental, y no es una representación válida de la ideología maya prehispánica. Refiriéndonos a las fuentes etnohistóricas, tanto a las que se originan dentro del área maya, como en el resto de Mesoamérica (ej., descripciones de México central) nos proveen con un modelo para conceptualizar a las deidades mayas como pertenecientes a complejos que se traslapan y articulan, formando conjuntos compuestos de un número determinado de divinidades subyacentes, cada una de ellas manifestándose bajo diferentes aspectos.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Institutional support for this project was provided by a National Endowment for the Humanities Dissertation Writing Award (July 1993–March 1994) and a Dumbarton Oaks Fellowship in Pre-Columbian Studies (September 1997–January 1998). Discussions with numerous individuals have contributed to the model of deity interrelationships outlined in this paper. I would especially like to thank the members of my doctoral committee, Victoria Bricker, Will Andrews, Elizabeth Boone, and Judith Maxwell, for their critical reading and invaluable comments on my dissertation, which served as the impetus for the present manuscript. More recent discussions with Jeffrey Quilter and the 1997–1998 fellows at Dumbarton Oaks have been helpful in refining my interpretations. Special thanks are extended to Victoria Bricker and Martha Macri for commenting on earlier drafts of my manuscript, to Jorge Marcos for preparing the Spanish summary, and to Cynthia Vail for her editorial assistance.

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