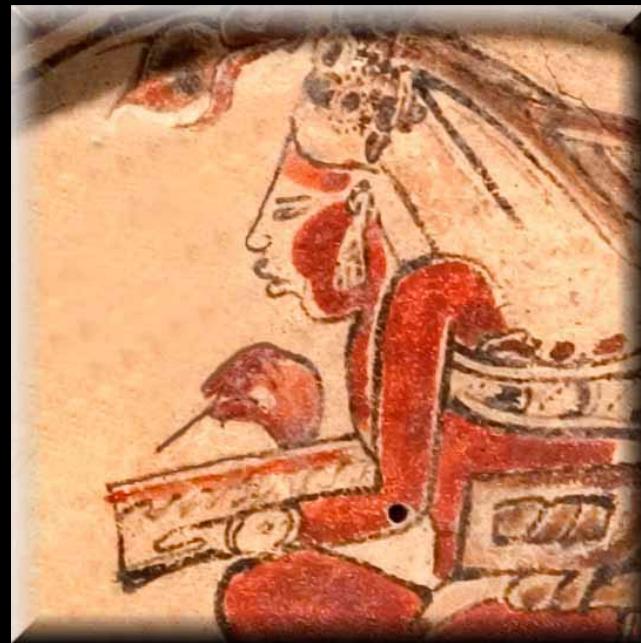


A Photographic Essay
By
Justin Kerr



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THE POPOL VUH

ARE V XE OHER ESTE ES EL PRINCIPIO DE LAS
varal quiche vbi.
Este es el principio de las
antiguas historias aquí en el quiche.
Varal xchicatzibah vi xchica-
lquiba vi ohorbih, vhecanibal,
xenabal puch tonohet xban, zo de todo loq' hecho en el pueblo de
Agui' es erigiremos, y empejaremos las
antiguas historias, suprincípios, y comien-

THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF THE ANCIENT TRADITIONS
*of this place called Quiche. Here we shall write. We shall begin to tell
the ancient stories of the beginning, the origin of all that was...*



The Popol Vuh or The Book of Council was transcribed in the sixteenth century by an anonymous Quiché Maya writer living in or near the city of Chichicastengo in the highlands of Guatemala. Taught by Spanish friars, the unknown author had learned to write his Quiché language in Latin characters.

The author says:....*we shall bring it to light because the Popol Vuh, as it is called, cannot be seen any more,....*

And from a new translation by Allan Christenson

“Because there is not now Means of seeing of Popol Vuh, Means of seeing clearly Come from across sea, Its account our obscurity, Means of seeing light life, as it is said.

There is original book anciently written also, Merely hidden his face”

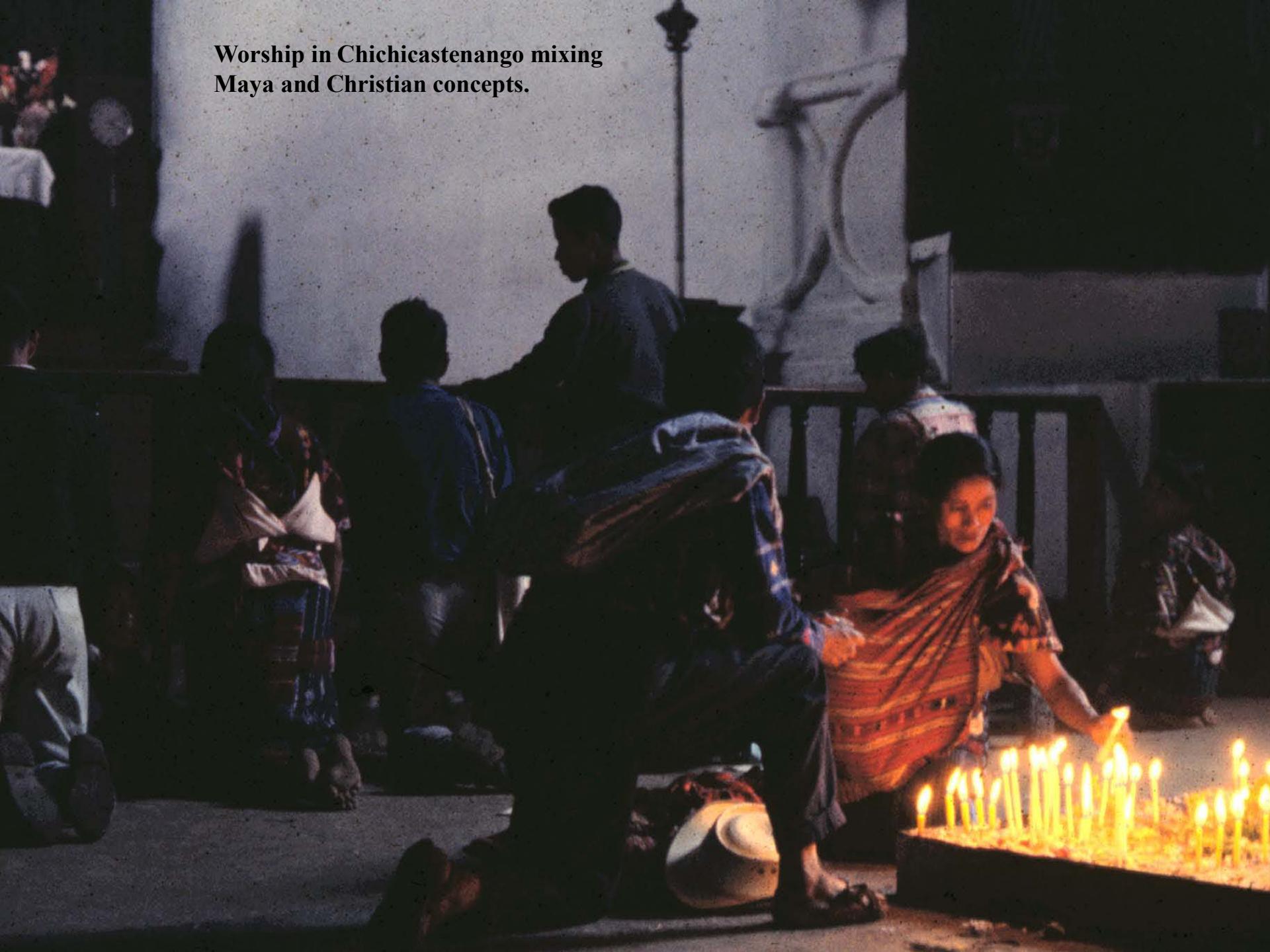


An Offering—Burning Copal

Bundles of COPAL, The incense that was used from earliest times till now



**Worship in Chichicastenango mixing
Maya and Christian concepts.**



The Popol Vuh was published in a Spanish edition with illustrations from the Codicies

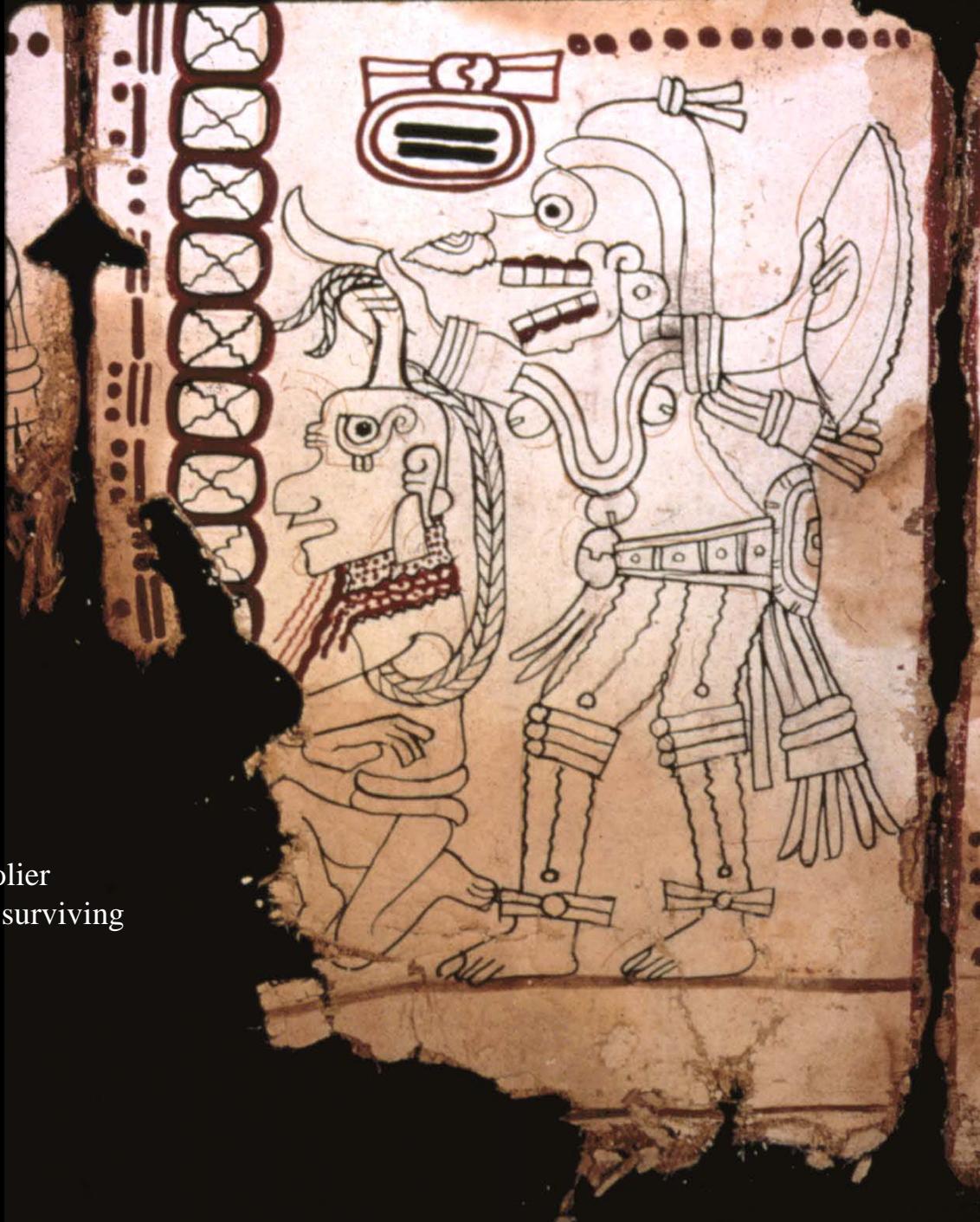


XXVI*
C. T.

Habiendo amanecido llamaron los Señores a Hun Hunahpú y a Vucub Hunahpú y les preguntaron:

—“¿Dónde está el tabaco y el ocote que os mandamos?”
—“Se acabó todo, Señores”, respondieron.
—“Ya se cumplieron vuestros días y habéis de morir”, sentenciáronles los Ahauab de Xibalbá, los Señores del Infierno.

A page from the Grolier
Codex, one of the 4 surviving
Maya Books





A Mayan manuscript illustration depicting the Hero Twins. The scene is set against a yellow background. In the center, two figures are shown. The figure on the left is standing, wearing a detailed headdress with a large eye motif and a necklace of white circular beads. The figure on the right is seated or kneeling, also wearing a headdress and a necklace. Above them, a row of stylized, multi-eyed and multi-mouthed faces, possibly deities or demons, are depicted. The entire scene is framed by a decorative border at the bottom.

THE
HERO
TWINS

This is the account of how all was in suspense, all calm, all motionless, still and the expanse of the sky was empty. This is the first account, the first narrative. There was neither man, nor animals, birds, fishes, crabs, trees, stones, caves, ravines, grasses, nor forests; there was only the sky.

*Thus let it be done! Let the emptiness be
filled! Let there be light, let there be dawn
in the sky and on the earth.*



The Forefathers Create The Animals--- The DEER,e



The BIRDS,



K4861

And the Other Animals



K3332

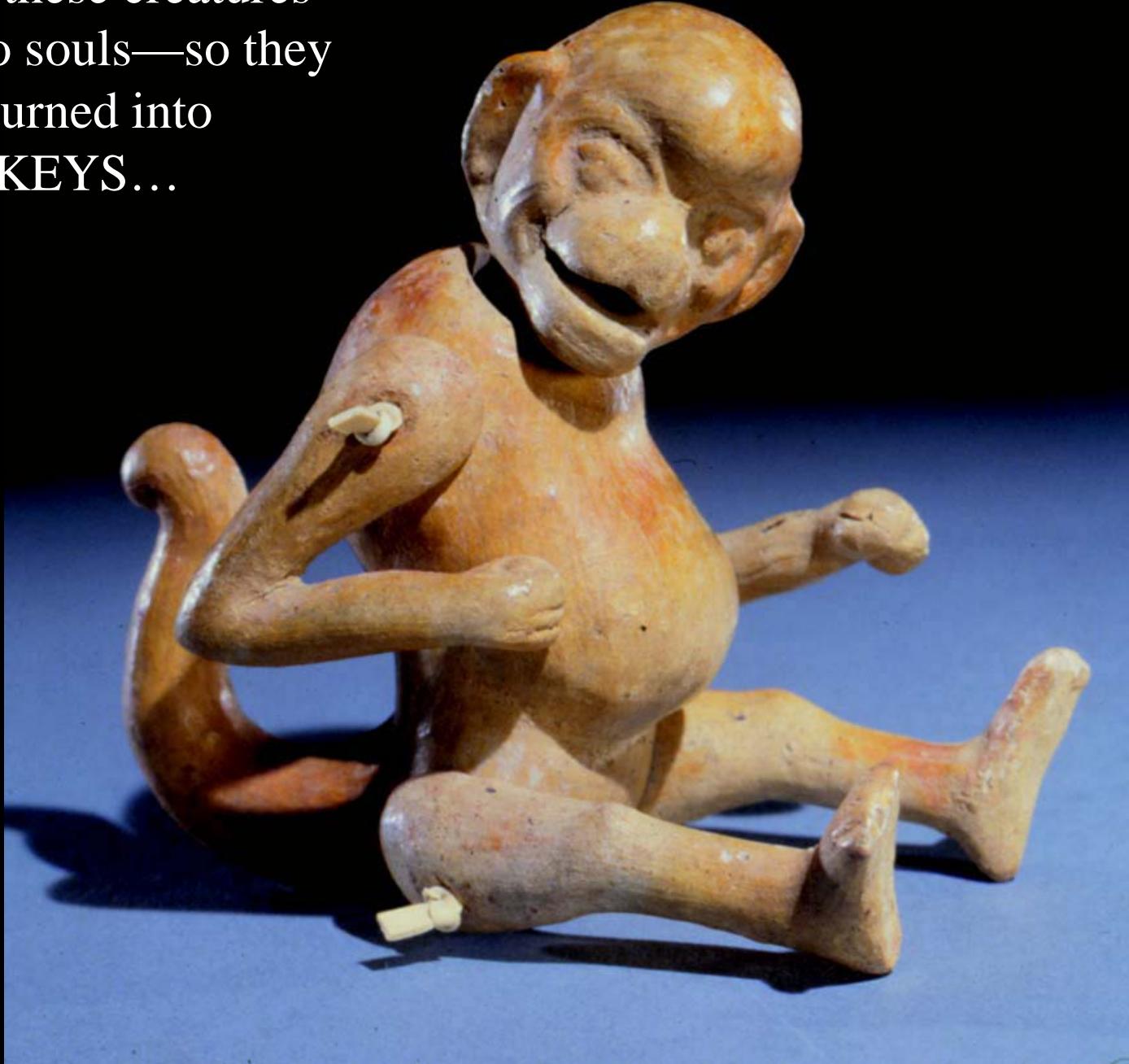
They made Humans from MUD



...and then they
tried WOOD...



...but these creatures
had no souls—so they
were turned into
MONKEYS...





...Women were
made of
rushes...

Vucub Caquix speaks...

I shall now be great above all beings created and formed. I am the sun, the light, the moon. Great is my splendor. Because of me men shall walk and conquer. For my eyes are of silver, bright, resplendent as precious stones, as emeralds; my teeth shine like precious stones, like the face of the sky. My nose shines afar like the moon, my throne is of silver, and the face of the earth is lighted when I pass before my throne. So, then I am the sun, I am the moon, for all mankind. So shall it be, because I can see very far.



This is the beginning of the defeat and the ruin of the glory of Vucub-Caquix brought about by two youths, the first of whom was called Hunahpú and the second, Xbalanqué. They were really gods.' When they saw the harm which the arrogant one had done, and wished to do, in the presence of the Heart of Heaven, the youths said: "It is not good that it be so, when man does not yet live here. on earth. Therefore, we shall try to shoot him with our blowgun when he is eating. We shall shoot him and make him sicken, and then that will be the end of his riches, his green stones, his precious metals, his emeralds, his jewels of which he is so proud. And this shall be the lot of all men, for they must not become vain, because of power and riches.



Hunahpú



Xbalanqué





The shooting of Vucub Caquix



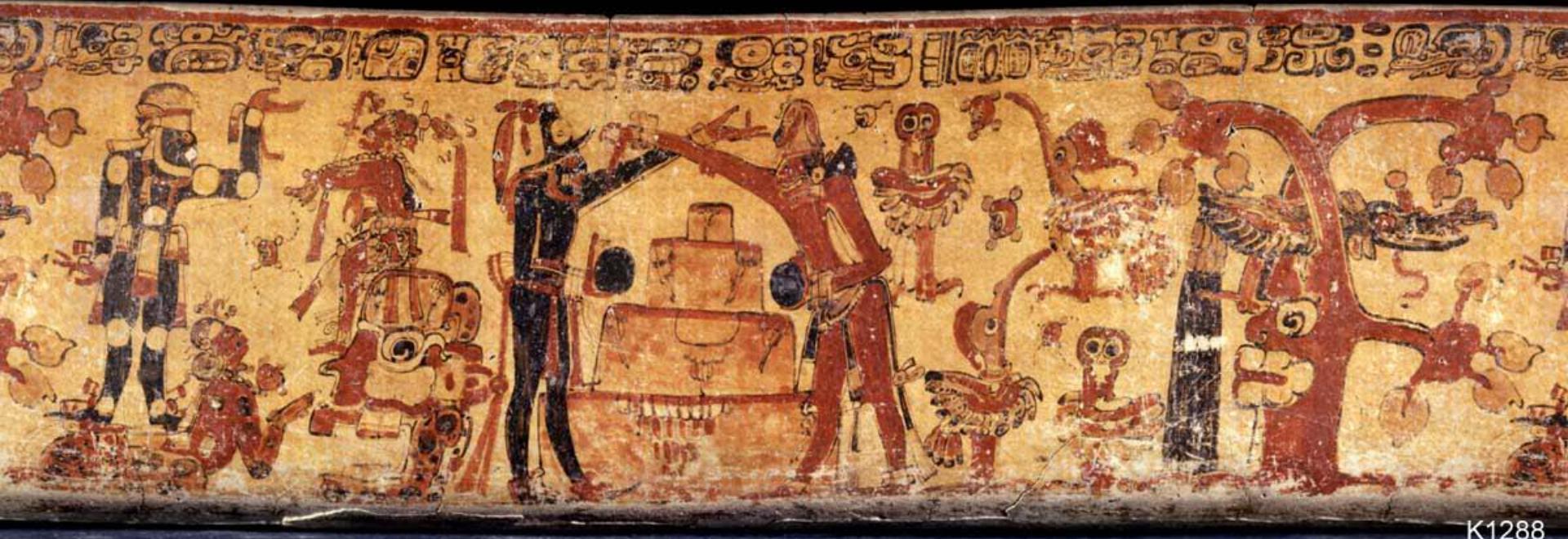
One of the sons of Vucub Caquix--- Zipacna



The 400 boys have a drunken party to celebrate the killing of Zipacna



The Twin's Father and Uncle play ball which rouses the ire of the
Lords of the Otherworld



K1288

God K and God L
Conspire to bring the
Players to Xibalba.



K5810



© K8483b

...so they can steal the father's
ball game equipment.



K3677





... they lose
and grovel
before a
major
deity...
Itzamna



K1670

They are tortured in the House of Flame

They have to smoke
cigars throughout the
night, but return them
un-burnt in the
morning



The Father is
decapitated...





The rat carries the
decapitated head...

And the head is Hung in a Cacao Tree

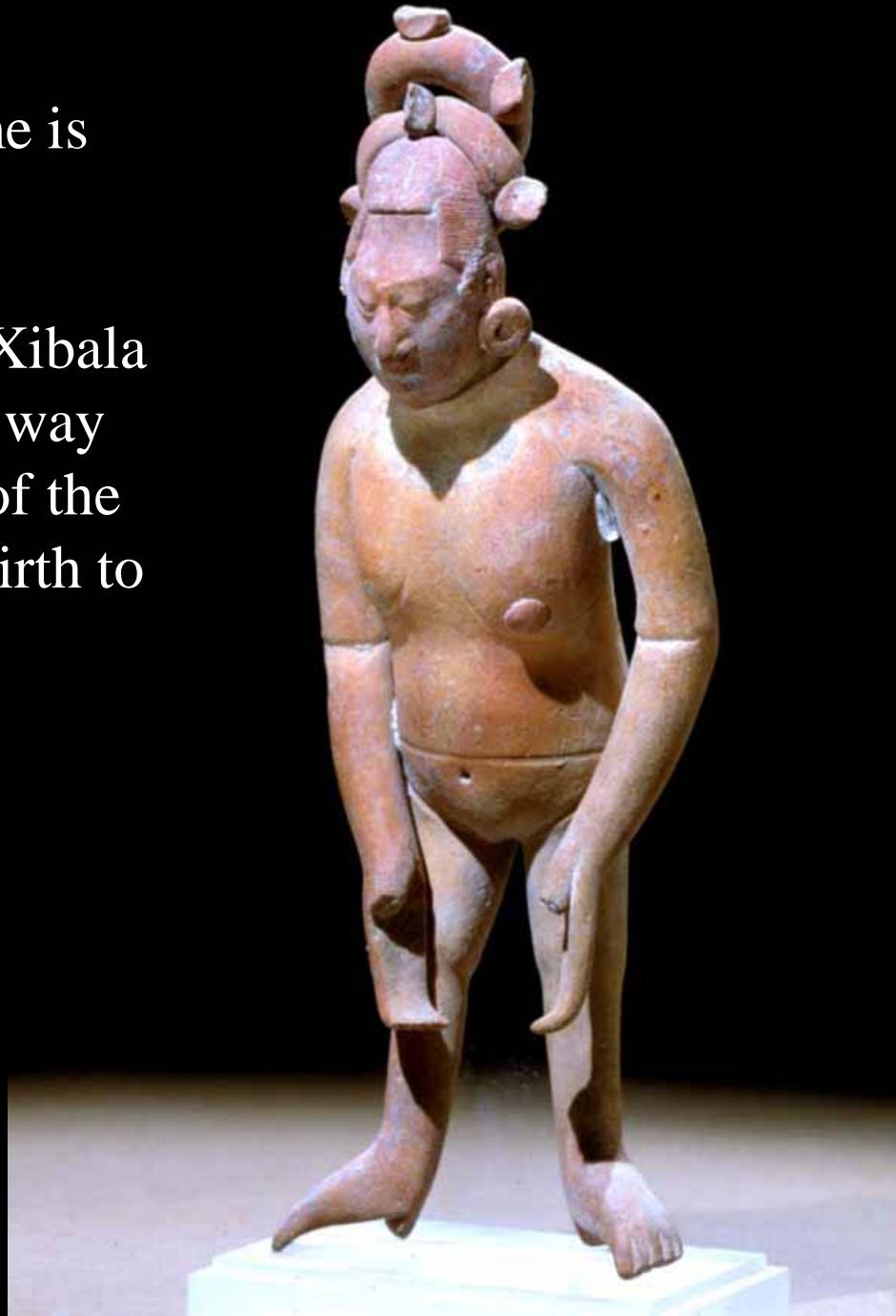


K5615

A daughter of a Xibalban Lord is impregnated by the Head in the Tree



The Girl's name is
Xquic; she is
disgraced and
thrown out of Xibalba
and makes her way
to the surface of the
Earth to give birth to
Twin Boys





One of Twins as a
Child, they are
Hunters...

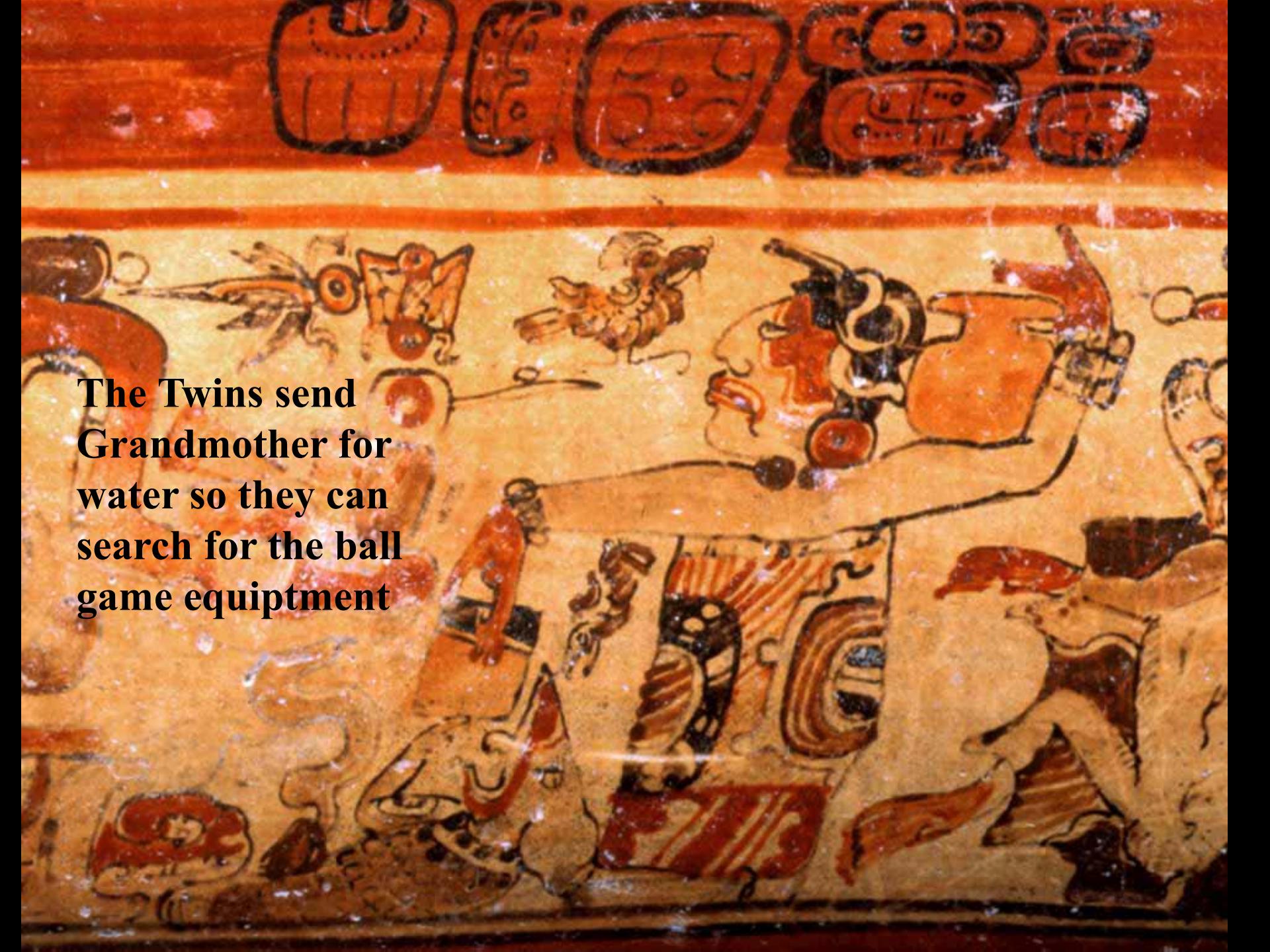
They are also Scribes.



K1185

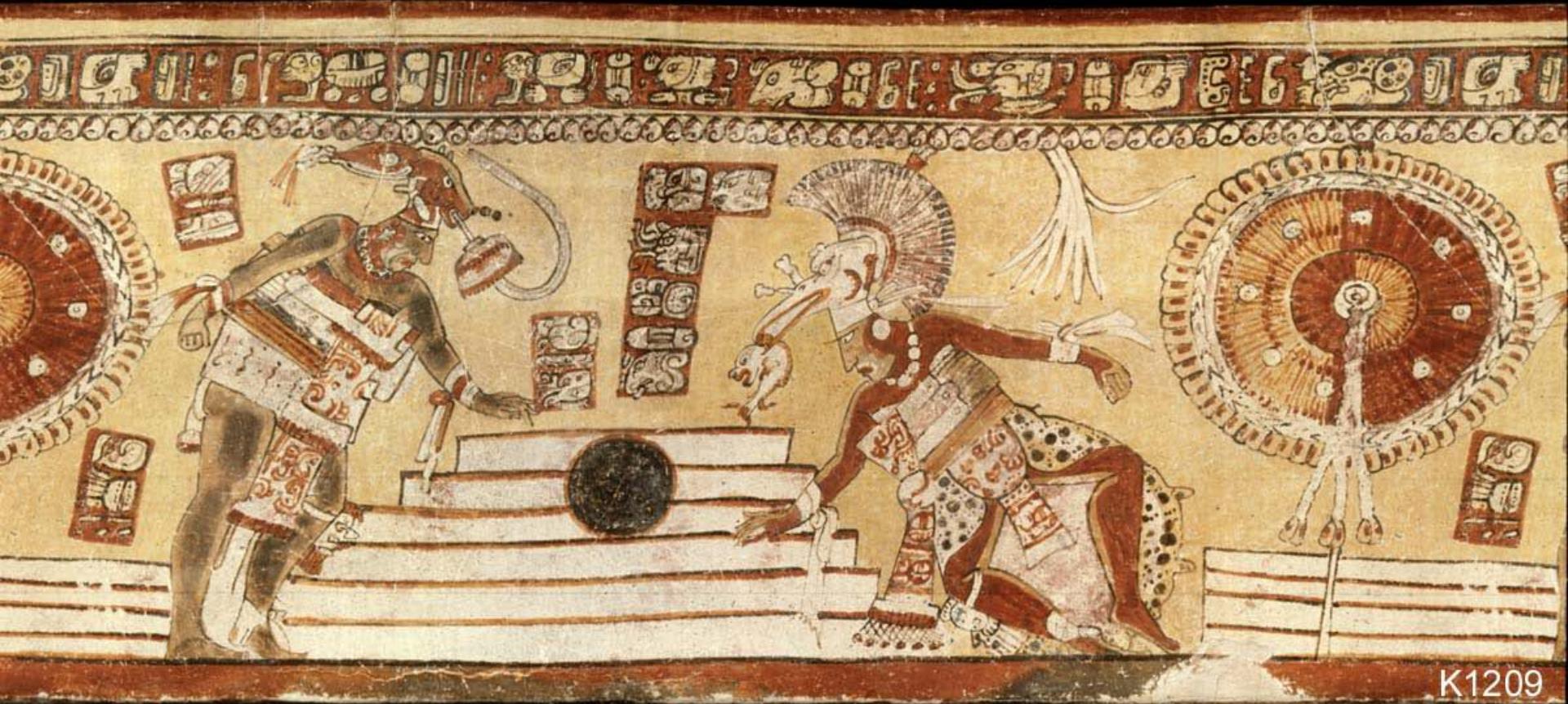


Grandmother hides the ball game equipment in the rafters of her house

A vibrant, traditional Mayan ball game court scene. The court is marked by a large, stylized ball at the center. Two figures, possibly the Twins, are shown in dynamic poses on the left side, one holding a long staff or rattle. On the right, another figure is depicted in a crouching position. The background features intricate architectural details and decorative elements, including a prominent red and black circular motif at the top.

**The Twins send
Grandmother for
water so they can
search for the ball
game equipment**

They find the ball game equipment and like their Father, play ball and rouse the ire of the Lords of the Otherworld



K1209

The Lords of
the Otherworld
send a
messenger
Toad to tell the
Twins to come
to Xibalba to
play ball with
them



The Twins meet with the Lord Itzamna, who shows them their father's head as a skull

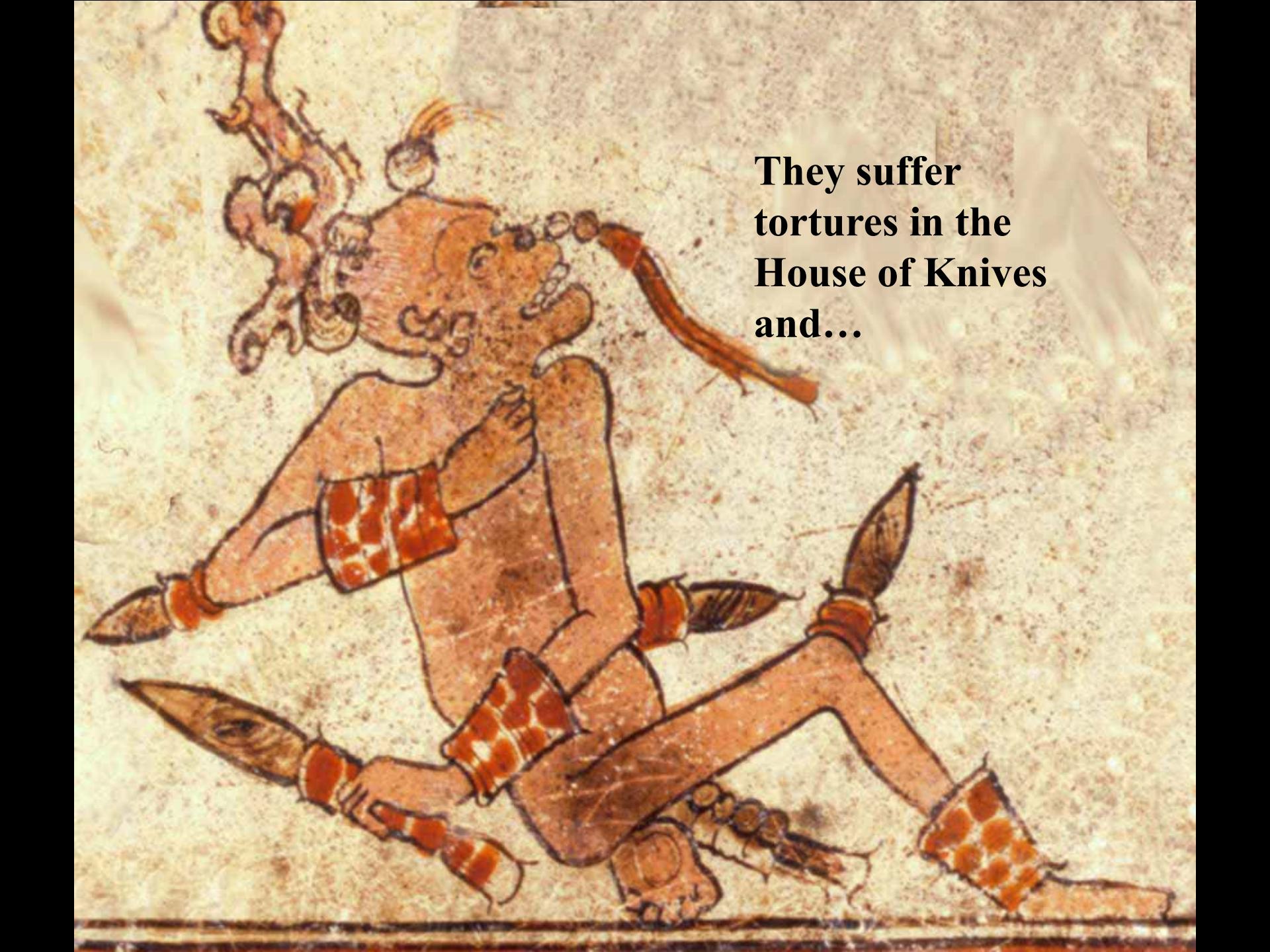


K1183

After they lose one of the games, they...



K1921c

A medieval manuscript illustration of a tortured figure. The figure is bound in a kneeling position with their arms and legs stretched out. They are impaled through their wrists, ankles, and torso by four long, sharp wooden stakes. The figure's face is contorted in agony, and they are wearing minimal reddish-brown clothing. The background is a textured, light-colored parchment.

**They suffer
tortures in the
House of Knives
and...**

The house of
Flames, and...



The House of Bats.



A Bat takes off the head of one of the Hero Twins, but



An Agouti brings a squash which turns into a head and regrows



They lose the last game. Their bones are ground up and thrown into the river



K3266

The Twins regenerate and turn into catfish

The Twins are now disguised as Dancers



As masked Magicians, they perform in the court of God L. They cut themselves up and put themselves back together again. Now they cut up one of the Lords of the Otherworld.



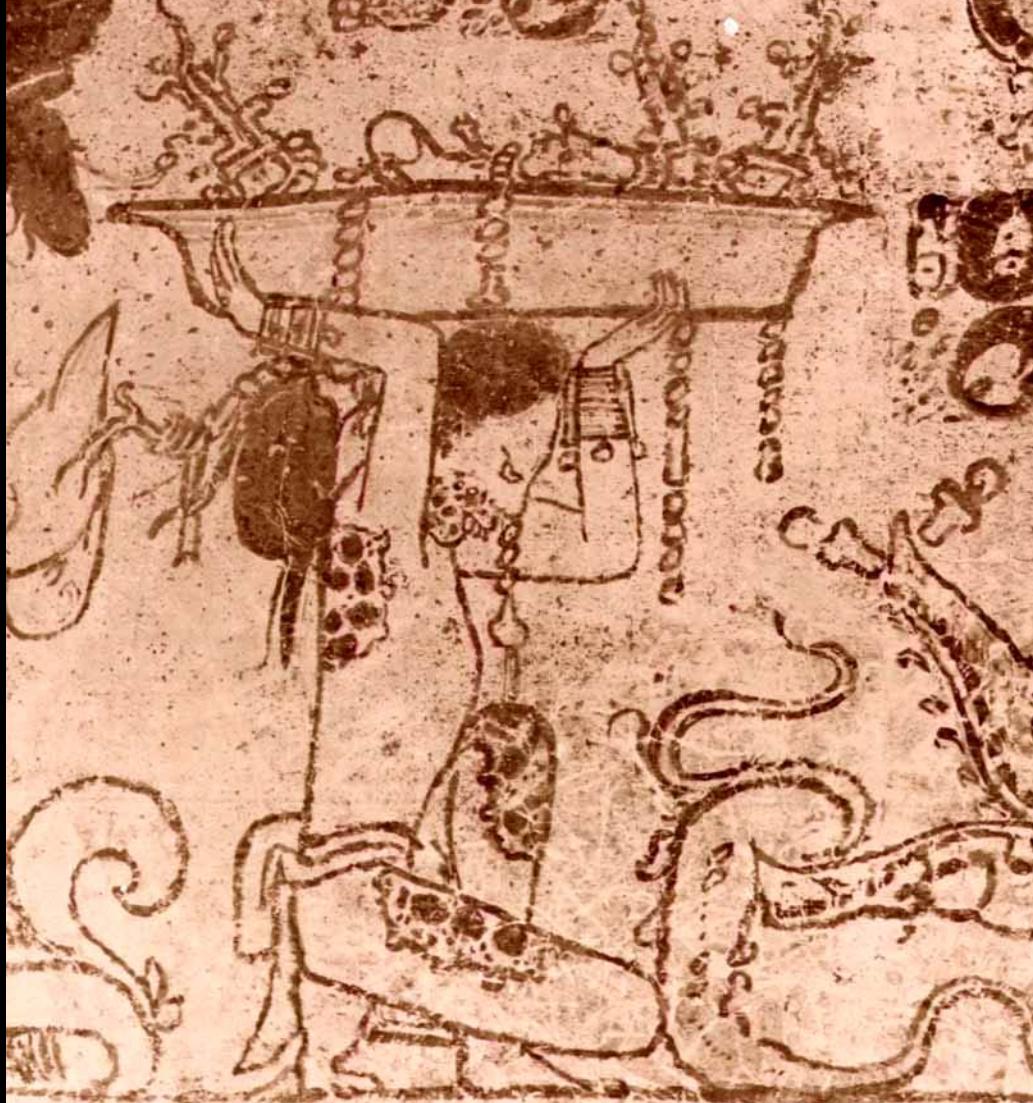
Although
Masked, We can
recognize
Hunahpú cutting
the neck of the
Lord, while
Xbalanqué holds
his ax in
readiness.



The Twins now control the Lords of the Otherworld. God N is pulled from his shell by one of the Twins who holds a stone knife.



K578



Xbalanqué brings
jewels for the ladies
to dress his Father for
his rebirth

The Twins, on the right, assist the Ladies in the dressing of the Twin's Father, the Maize God, for his resurrection.



K7268

The Maize
God is
Reborn



After his Resurrection, The Maize God humiliates God L and other deities. A dwarf holds God L's cloak, staff and hat, symbols of his power.



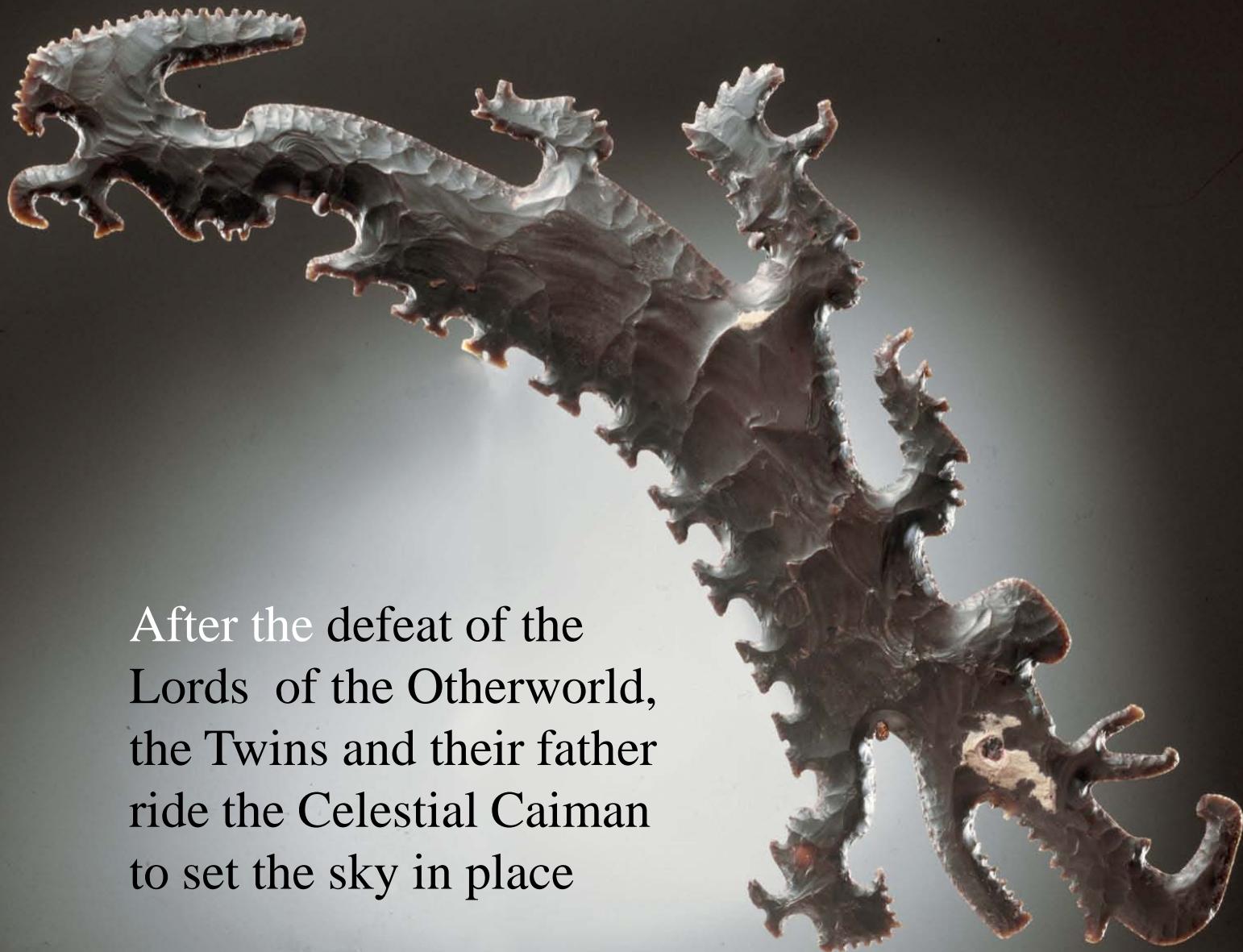
K1560

God L pleads to get his hat back, but the Rabbit tells him that his pleas will go unanswered.



K1398

After the defeat of the
Lords of the Otherworld,
the Twins and their father
ride the Celestial Caiman
to set the sky in place



Hunahpú as
the
SUN GOD





A NEW DAY DAWNS FOR THE MAYA