

### **Royal Emblem Stone (Slide #3)**

Late Classic Maya culture

Limestone

Mexico

700-900

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Baker

1971.895

One of the greatest civilizations in the western hemisphere, the Maya, lived in the area including southern Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras. Their civilization began over 2,500 years ago. The Maya were learned in astronomy and mathematics. They developed an accurate calendar by which they could predict eclipses of the sun and moon and the movements of the planets Venus, Jupiter, and Saturn across the sky.

The Maya practiced farming, grew maize (corn) as their primary crop and also cultivated beans, squash, tomatoes, and other foods that were unknown in Europe. They perfected a system of writing with pictures called hieroglyphic writing and recorded the oldest known history in the ancient Americas. By the Common Era, they had built magnificent cities with temples, pyramids, and palaces dedicated to the gods of the earth and sky. Around the year 900, many of their magnificent cities were abandoned.

The Maya believed that the forces of nature and man's actions were interconnected. According to Maya beliefs, many gods ruled the earth, including gods of the sun, moon, rain, and maize. Some brought good fortune and others disaster. The kings who ruled the Maya on earth were considered extremely important because it was thought that a king could speak to the gods. To be a king and have a successful rule, one had to have been born in a royal family and later be crowned on days ruled by gods of good fortune. Maya monuments often recorded family names, birth dates, the time of coronation, and other special occasions in the lives of kings. This public record of a king's family history told everyone that the ruler had a right to serve as a link to the gods.

Maya hieroglyphs combine visual art and language. Pictures of things such as animals, people, or everyday objects are combined with words representing sounds and dots and dashes representing numbers. Scribes were very important in Maya society: their job was to use hieroglyphs to write down all the activities of the king and keep track of everything that took place near the palace.


























It is only in recent years that scholars have learned how to read the complex Maya hieroglyphs. Even when this stone was carved, most Maya could not read it. Only scribes and priests could translate the hieroglyphs.

### **The Calendar:**

To keep track of time and important events in the lives of kings, the Maya developed a calendar. This calendar consisted of five time periods that were like our day, month, year, decade, and century.

The day was called a **KIN**. Twenty kins made up a month, called a **UINAL**. Eighteen uinals were in the 360-day Mayan year, called a **TUN**. Twenty tuns made a **KATUN**, which consisted of 7,200 days. The great period called the **BAKTUN** consisted of 20 katuns and was 144,000 days long or about 400 years. When the Maya wrote a date, they gave a number to each of these periods to indicate how many kins, uinals, tuns, katuns, and baktuns to count from the beginning of their calendar. This 360-day calendar was called a **HAAB**.


Numbers 0 through 19 in Maya hieroglyphics:


 =0	 =12
 =1	 =13
 =2	 =14
 =3	 =15
 =4	 =6
 =5	 =7
 =6	 =8
 =7	 =9
 =8	 =10
 =9	 =11
 =10	 =17
 =11	 =18
	 =19

We use 10 signs to count to eternity in our number system.

The ancient Maya used only three.

shell  equals 0

dot  equals 1

bar  equals 5

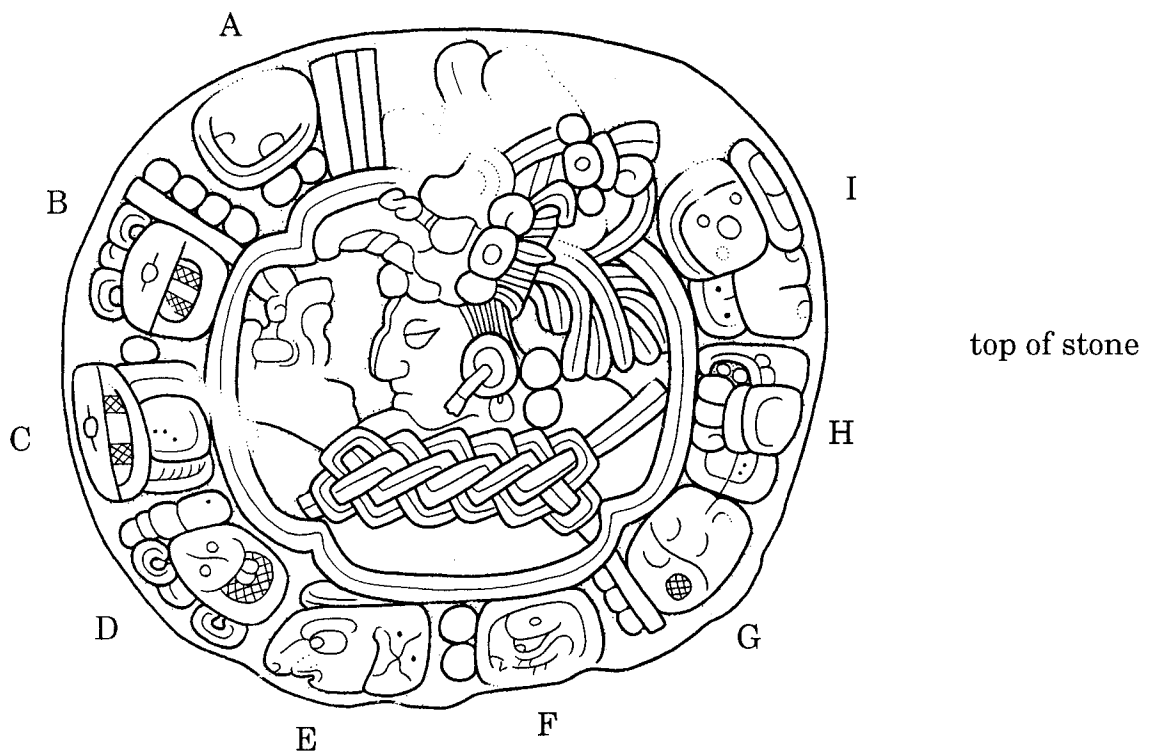
Month signs from the HAAB:



### Translation of the Royal Emblem Stone:

The top of the altar shows the king inside a circular design surrounded by a border. Maize is sprouting from his head. The Maya understood that the land was the giver of maize, but they also knew the importance of the king in sustaining the fertility of the earth.

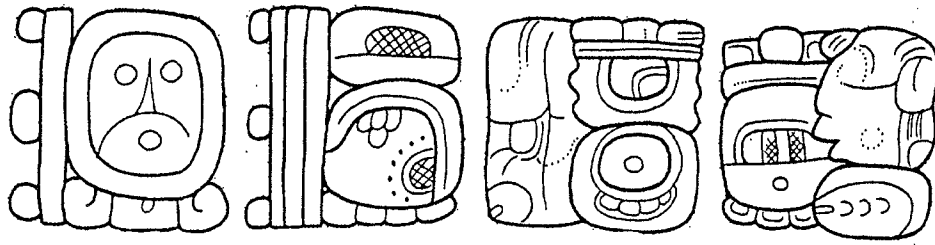
The king holds the head of a god, perhaps that of K'awil, in his hand. This image probably represents the ruler at the time he became king. A common expression for becoming king is "to grasp K'awil."



The following is a translation of the Royal Emblem Stone:

Top:

- A. 15 kins (days), 2 uinals (months of 20 day)
- B. 9 tuns (years)
- C. 1 katun (7,200 days)
- D. Kimi, "he died"
- E. "Rabbit" - The person on the top of stone in the flower-shape design
- F. 2 Chicchan (date)
- G. 8 Kankin (date)
- H. i ts'apah, "then it was planted"
- I. refers to the stone "his altar"



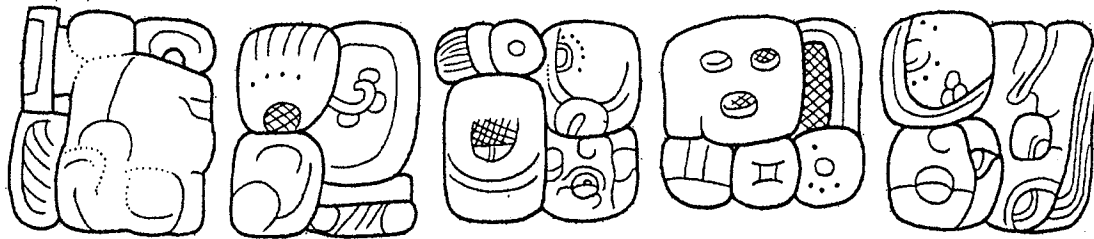
J

K

L

M

sides of stone



N

O

P

Q

R

Side:

- J. 8 Ahau (date)
- K. 18 Ch'en (date)
- L. tsutsah, "it was finished"
- M. 6 Tuns, Ahau lel, "6 years in the rulership"
- N. personal name or title
- O. ch'ahom, "young man"
- P. akul pat, personal name
- Q. ah bubulha, "he of Bubulha"—where he lived
- R. ahaw, "Lord of 'Lacanha'

Translation of the Royal Emblem Stone Hieroglyphs:

"It was 28 years after 'Rabbit' died, on November 26, 641, that the stone was placed on August 21, 670. This was also the sixth year anniversary in the rulership of Akul Pat."

Translation by Stephen Houston, Vanderbilt University

Drawing by David Stuart