

**ON THE TRAIL OF QUETZAL COATL / KUKUL CAN:
TRACING MYTHIC INTERACTION ROUTES AND NETWORKS IN THE
MAYA LOWLANDS**

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines ethnohistoric accounts and oral histories accumulated during the last 50 years concerning the movements of the mythical personage of Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can¹, and the role of these narratives in political ideologies between the Epiclassic and Postclassic Periods. These narratives outline the movements of Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can² by way of terrestrial, celestial and subterranean routes connecting pilgrimage centers across the Maya Lowlands in the Peninsula of Yucatan. These ethnographic and ethnohistoric data describe linkages between important political, economic, and ritual centers that had roots in pan-Mesoamerican social dynamics dating as early as the Terminal Classic / Epiclassic Period. From these accounts linkages between cities include not just the physical intersite connections represented by causeways that are so prominent in the archaeological record, but also intangible mythical and symbolic links embodied in mythical histories as subterranean passageways and celestial umbilical cords. These mythical accounts and oral histories highlight the importance of migration and founding events in the establishment of new cities during the major political, economic, and social reorganizations that took place after the end of the Late Classic Period. As a whole, these linkages comprised a political infrastructure connecting a

¹ For the sake of simplicity and to minimize confusion, this paper employs standard spellings for common terms – including proper names and place names – that are well established in the literature. However, additional information about the etymology of many of these terms are included in the text and explored in greater detail in footnotes and the glossary at the end of this paper.

² The names Quetzal Coatl and Kukul Can are etymologically analogous in Nahuatl and Mayan, with Quetzal / Kukul meaning “feather”, in particular “quetzal feather” and Coatl / Can meaning “snake”. Remember that there is a significant difference in pronunciation between the “c” and “k” in the Mayan language and that Can cannot be spelled Kan when using the colonial orthography. See BMTV: Plumas berdes mui galanas y grandes que sacan en los bayles: kuk .l. kukul. / CMM: Can: culebra; nombre generico.

network of cities within the highly integrated and international Postclassic Mesoamerican world. The indigenous histories outlined in this paper complement archaeological data reflecting an increase in internationalism, economic integration, and the spread of new religious movements beginning in the Terminal or Epiclassic periods across Mesoamerica.

INTRODUCTION

The political, economic, and social changes that swept across Mesoamerica after the close of the Classic Period (between AD 600-800) has been a central issue since the advent of scholarly interest in prehispanic history. Evidence for increasing political and ideological links between Western and Eastern Mesoamerica were first documented at the cities of Tula and Chi Cheen Itza.³ Early theories to explain similarities in material culture combined indigenous historical accounts recorded during the Contact Period to interpret the historical links between the two cities. This research drew on indigenous accounts charting migrations and invasions of historical figures, lineages, and ethnic groups as a basic framework to understand sociopolitical dynamics originating at the close of the Classic Period. In these narratives, archaeological evidence for increasing links between eastern and western Mesoamerica – including distinctive forms of architecture, urban planning, and art styles – was associated with the spread of “Mexican” groups with links to the Gulf Coast and Central Mexico (Pollock, et al. 1962; Roys 1962; Thompson 1970). Central themes in the reconstructions included the (rather facile) correlation between material culture traits and historically documented groups, including the Itza, Olmeca Xicalanca, Toltec, Putun, and Nonoalca.⁴ Although subsequent research challenged or contradicted many of the central elements of these

³ Following Mayan Colonial Orthography this place name should be spelled as Chi Cheen Itza, from Chi = mouth, edge, Cheen = well and Itza, the tribal group. See CMM: Chij: la orilla o ribera de mar o rio o orilla de heredad, boca de pozo, la margen de la escritura o de papel escrito, de la halda de la vestidura o ropa. / Cheen: pozo o cisterna o cueva de agua.

⁴ Also spelled Nonoualco and Nonohualco. There are various meanings attributed to this place name, but foremost amongst them is “Place of the mute”, with the word “mute” applied to people who do not speak an intelligible language. In the Mayan texts there is a similar reference to the Itza who at times are called “Ah Nun Itza”, the mute Itza. Whether it is coincidental that there is the place name Nonohualco in Nahuatl and the fact that it is thought that Ah Nun Itza come from the area around Nonohualco deserves further study. See BMTV: Boçal, persona que no sabe el lenguaje que se habla en la tierra: nunal, ah nun .l. nun.

models – particularly the chronological relationships between “Old” and “New” Chi Cheen Itza and its relationship with Tula – these theories have proven quite durable.

A central figure in many indigenous accounts was the mythical personage or god Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can. The nature and significance of this figure as a historical individual, mythical ruler, or deity – and his relation to Feathered Serpent iconography – has been a source of significant debate within Mesoamerican archaeology (Baldwin 1998; Florescano 1999; Gillespie 1989; López Austin 1973; López Austin and López Luján 1999; López Austin and López Luján 2000; Nicholson 2001; Ringle, et al. 1998). While uncritical acceptance of indigenous narratives as historically accurate accounts and projection of these sources into the pre-Hispanic era is highly problematic (Gillespie 2007; Gunsenheimer 2003; Smith 2007), indigenous histories provide an important window into the role of migration and foundation myths in political narratives late in the prehispanic era.

Contemporary views of the relationship between increasing similarities in political / religious symbolism, iconography, architecture, and material culture traditions have shifted from invasion and migration models to theories focusing on interaction, economic integration, and the spread of shared political-religious ideological charters across Mesoamerica during the Epiclassic and Postclassic Periods (López Austin and López Luján 1999; López Austin and López Luján 2000; Ringle, et al. 1998). From this perspective, architectural, artistic, and ceramic links between a network of important centers in the Epiclassic was part of a new world order melding religious and political messages. These dynamics were intricately linked to a pan-Mesoamerican religious cult associated with Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can. This network included several Epiclassic (AD 800-900 / 1100) and Postclassic (AD 900 / 1100-1500) cities in the Maya area, the Gulf Coast, and Central Mexico. This transitional period also witnessed radical changes in regional economic systems, trade networks, systems of governance, and the ways in which political power was legitimized and reinforced. In aggregate, these histories provided both a geographical outline of interpolity linkages that defined the political landscape of the Epiclassic and Postclassic Periods as well as a fictive genealogy of power that functioned to link elites across disparate parts of Mesoamerica. These narratives were a central element in the negotiation of political legitimacy for several centuries.

Mythical narratives associated with Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can reflect important links between polities that transcended political, cultural, and linguistic boundaries. When viewed from the level of pan-Mesoamerican cultural dynamics, three types of interpolity connections outlined in this paper formed a symbolic political infrastructure. As the origin and purveyor of *Toltecayotl*, or just and pious leadership, Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can played a central role in this new geopolitical order as archetypical ruler and source of political legitimacy. Mythical accounts tracing the migrations of this individual across Mesoamerica, and his role in the foundation of cities and ruling dynasties, was a central component of an emergent political ideology based on fictive descent. Changing settlement patterns and urban traditions across Mesoamerica – including establishment of coastal cities, more nucleated forms of urbanism, and adoption of common forms of epicentral urban planning – suggest that the founding of cities played a major role in these developments starting in the Epiclassic Period and continuing into the Postclassic Period.

This paper traces mythical accounts relating to the development of pan-Mesoamerican international linkages associated with this emergent politico-religious order. In the sections below we outline information from indigenous histories pertaining to connections between prehispanic cities throughout Mesoamerica along the migration route associated with Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can. These migrations between centers across the Yucatan Peninsula and beyond were associated with three types of symbolic or real infrastructure networks: terrestrial roads (*sacbeob* or *zac beob*)⁵, celestial avenues (*cuxaan zumoob*),⁶ and underground roads (*zahcaboob*).⁷ These three types of physical links between centers were metaphorical reflections of the high degree of socio-cultural and economic integration between centers which began to crystallize at the end of the Late Classic and continued into the Postclassic Period. These linkages are consistent with the hypothesis proposed by Ringle, Gallareta Negrón and Bey (1998) and Lopez Austin and Lopez Lujan (2000) about the cultural importance of the god Quetzal Coatl / Kukul

⁵ **zac beob** is the plural of *zac be* = “white road”. See CMM: *Çac be*: calçada o camino de calçada.

⁶ **Cuxaan zum** = “living rope”. As noted below in this article, mythical accounts and folklore depict *cuxaan zumoob* as large blood-filled cords that connected cities or individual deities.

⁷ See DMM: *Cueua y tierra blanca de donde la sacan*: çahcab.

Can in the Epiclassic period based on the distribution of shared styles of material culture, including architecture, art, and ceramics.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: CHANGING MESOAMERICAN INTERACTION SPHERES

The development of increasing pan-Mesoamerican linkages between eastern and western Mesoamerica has long been noted as a fundamental characteristic of the Classic to Postclassic transition. Similarities between the distant cities spread across ancient Mesoamerica – particularly Chi Cheen Itza and Tula, provided clear evidence for changes in the geopolitical landscape and the adoption of shared symbolic systems. Researchers such as Daniel Brinton (1882) and Désiré Charnay (1885) used Contact Period indigenous histories to interpret historical links between these two cities, a method that was later expanded upon by Carnegie Institution researchers such as Alfred Tozzer (1957) and Ralph Roys (1933; Roys 1957; Roys 1962; Roys 1966). The seminal ethnohistorical syntheses by Roys and Tozzer identified common central themes in myths and historical narratives across Mesoamerican culture areas (Roys 1933; Roys 1957; Roys 1962; Roys 1966; Tozzer 1957). These sources were used as a framework to understand the sociopolitical dynamics originating at the end of the Classic Period.

Based on this framework, changes between the Classic and Postclassic periods were interpreted as the result of migrations and invasions of ethnohistorically documented groups. Tozzer's (1957) research on the link between Chi Cheen Itza and Tula was among the first to combine ethnohistorical data to develop pre-Hispanic archaeological chronologies, including the basic chronological framework dividing Chi Cheen Itza into Old (Puuc Maya) and New (Toltec) sectors. These observed similarities included site layout, architectural styles (such as I-shaped ballcourts, tzompantli, and colonnaded buildings), and new sculptural styles (such as atlantean figures, chacmool monuments, feathered serpent columns, and military and sacrificial scenes) (recent literature on these similarities include Jones 1993a; Jones 1993b; Kowalski and Kristan-Graham 2007). In these narratives, the strong archaeological evidence for increasing links between eastern and western Mesoamerican culture areas was the result of invasions, with the spread of "Mexican" traits traced through incursions of ethnic groups

with supposed links to the Gulf Coast and Central Mexico (Pollock, et al. 1962; Roys 1962; Thompson 1970).

Among the most notable migration myths included the movements of the mythical personage of Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can (for reviews of this literature see Baldwin 1998; Florescano 1999; Gillespie 2007; López Austin 1973; López Austin and López Luján 2000; Nicholson 2001; Ringle, et al. 1998). As many of the indigenous historical texts begin with origin myths connecting local lords to the Toltecs and Tollan, these sources provided an expedient framework to project ethnohistoric documents back into the pre-Hispanic past. In many of these reconstructions, primacy was placed with historical narratives of the movements of ethnic groups such as the Itza, and their role in larger scale pan-Mesoamerican cultural dynamics. Although later research on the iconography and architecture (Lincoln 1986) and ceramic chronologies (Ball 1979; Robles Castellanos 1990) of Chi Cheen Itza clearly demonstrated that the division of chronologically distinct New and Old components was untenable, this framework for understanding the past proved quite durable (Folan 1991-1992:122).

The historical context of the emergence of Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can as an important pan-Mesoamerican deity has roots in the feathered serpent at Teotihuacan. There is a marked spread in the distribution of this deity following the collapse of Teotihuacan and the later decline of inland cities in the heart of the Southern Maya Lowlands. The nature and significance of this quasi-historical figure, and his relation to the Feathered Serpent deity, has been a source of significant debate within Mesoamerican archaeology (Baldwin 1998; Florescano 1999; Gillespie 1989; López Austin 1973; López Austin and López Luján 1999; López Austin and López Luján 2000; Nicholson 2001; Ringle, et al. 1998). This is at least partly due to the melding of attributes of a historical personage, mythical ruler, and the Feathered Serpent deity (see Figure 1, Nicholson 2001). While debates about the historical veracity of migration myths associated with Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can and the correlation of these events with the archaeological record have been largely unsuccessful (Smith 2007), these ethnohistoric accounts and indigenous oral histories raise some important questions about the nature of pre-Hispanic communication routes, religious movements, economic systems, and pan-Mesoamerican integration.

Contemporary views of the nature of these political, economic, and social dynamics have moved away from migration and invasion as explanatory frameworks, instead focusing on new political institutions and ideologies. Ringle and colleagues (1998) and López Austin and López Lújan (1999; 2000) have argued that architectural, artistic, and ceramic links between a network of important centers in the Epiclassic were part of a new world order melding religious and political messages intricately linked to a pan-Mesoamerican religious cult associated with the personage or deity Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can (Figure 2). The connections between the pilgrimage centers identified by Ringle and colleagues (1998) and López Austin and López Lújan (1999; 2000) are reflected most notably for their remarkable architectonic and artistic similarities (Kristan-Graham and Kowalski 2007; Love 2012). David Freidel (1986) has stressed the importance of religious syncretism and shared symbols in pan-Mesoamerican trade cartels linking the Maya area, Highland Mexico, and the Gulf Coast. The spread of this cult likely originated in the Chontalpa region in the ninth century (Dahlin 2002), with the strongest evidence of participation occurring along riverine waterways and the Gulf Coast (Pohl 2003; Ringle, et al. 1998:214). This network included several Epiclassic (AD 800-900 / 1100) and Postclassic (AD 900 / 1100-1500) pilgrimage centers oriented in an arch between Central Mexico and the Maya Area, connected by the Gulf Coast maritime trade route. Some of the most prominent examples of these pilgrimage centers include Tula, Chi Cheen Itza, Cholula, El Tajín, Xochicalco, Cacaxtla, and Uxmal. The mechanisms and nature of the spread of the cult of the Feathered Serpent are poorly understood, but probably include a high degree of economic, social, and political integration.

In the Maya Area these new developments are most prominent at Chi Cheen Itza, where political, economic, and ideological innovations included new forms of art and architecture. These new visual and symbolic systems are characterized by an eclectic and cosmopolitan mix of symbols with strong foreign elements that reflect linkages with centers in Veracruz and the Basin of Mexico (Cobos 2004; Dahlin 2002; Krochock 1998; Lincoln 1991; Love and Kaplan 2011; Ringle, et al. 1998; Wren and Schmidt 1991). Changes in the role of warfare at Chi Cheen Itza indicate a focus on territorial expansion and the importance of access to coastal trade routes (Cobos 2004; Dahlin 2000; Dahlin 2002; Freidel and Schele 1989; Krochock 1998; Lincoln 1991; Schele and Freidel 1990;

Stuart 1993). These innovations would become defining attributes of the Postclassic period across Mesoamerica (Masson, et al. 2006; Milbrath and Peraza Lope 2003).

The nature of exchange networks also underwent significant change, with a shift from low-bulk, high-value items in the prestige sphere to the movement of bulk goods via maritime trade routes (Andrews 1983; Andrews 1990; Berdan, et al. 2003; Dahlin and Ardren 2002; Ek 2008; Ek 2009; Ek 2012; Kepecs, et al. 1994; Masson and Mock 2004; West 2002). The increase of trade and religious activity as well as armed conflict in Northern Yucatan was likely associated with radical changes in the geopolitical landscape following the depopulation of Classic Period city-states across the raised karstic plain that extends across much of the Southern and Central Maya Lowlands (Braswell, et al. 2004; Dominguez Carrasco et al. 2012; Dunning, et al. 2012; Gates 1992, 1999; Turner and Sabloff 2012). The movement to the coast included a major reorientation of trade routes. Provenience studies of obsidian have demonstrated a notable increase in exchange between the Maya lowlands and central Mexico, which likely focused on the Gulf Coast trade route (Andrews, et al. 1989; Braswell 2003). Masson and Mock (2004) have argued that shifts to coastal trade routes and decentralization of market systems would have further undermined the power of large inland centers. Braswell and Glasscock (2002; see also West 2002) have convincingly shown that changing obsidian exchange systems in the Terminal Classic period at Chi Cheen Itza reflect a transition from a bounded solar market system to an open interlocking market system by 900 AD (Smith 1976a). These processes were part of a general pan-Mesoamerican pattern of increasing commercialism, interregional exchange, and a general strengthening of linkages between previously disparate parts of Mesoamerica (see Andrews V and Sabloff 1986; Berlo and Diehl 1989; Braswell 2003; Freidel and Sabloff 1984; Masson 2000; Masson, et al. 2006; Milbrath and Peraza Lope 2003; Sabloff and Rathje 1975b; Smith and Berdan 2003b).

With the emergence of the Gulf Coast as the most prominent trade thoroughfare, the frontier region between the Maya Lowlands and Central Mexico, including coastal zones of Campeche, Tabasco, and Veracruz, take on much greater pan-Mesoamerican significance in the Terminal Classic / Epiclassic Period, with population expansion along coastal and riverine trade routes. A demographic boom took place in southern Veracruz between A.D. 700 and 1000, with a shift from inland settlement to a repopulation of

coastal areas (Borenstein 2005; Killion and Urcid 2001:19). A similar pattern has been noted in the Maya Area at Chakan Putun⁸ (Ek and Rosado Ramírez 2004; Folan et al. 2012; Forsyth 2012), the Chikinchel region (Kepecs 1999; Kepecs 2003), and along the Caribbean coast (Joyce 1991; Masson 2000; Masson 2003; McKillop 1996). Additional research along the Candelaria River (Vargas Pacheco 1998; Vargas Pacheco 2001) and along a postulated inland trade route across the base of the Yucatan peninsula (Alexander 2000; Alexander and Canché Manzanero 2005; Chase and Chase 1982; Hammond 1983) indicate that trade became a major factor in site location.

Whether instigated by climatic change, anthropogenic environmental change, or other factors, the movement of interior population centers from urban areas such as Calak Muul⁹ to coastal redistribution centers such as Chakan Putun during the Terminal and Post Classic instigated major changes in political, economic, and social institutions. Our own research in Cobá,¹⁰ Calak Muul, and Chakan Putun support our initial arguments that climatic change played a major role in demographic movements to Northern Yucatan and coastal and riverine zones during the Terminal Classic Period (Folan, et al. 1983). These new seats of power were well situated near strategic coastal trade routes that afforded a more efficient form of transportation for goods and people between disparate parts of Mesoamerica.

⁸ “Potter’s savannah”, from **chakan** = savannah and **putun**, a variant of **patom** / **potom** = potter. Today called Champoton See CMM: Chakan: çauana o deesa, vega o campo llano, o heruaje para pasto. / Patom: ollero o alfarero en general; official de cosas de barro. / Potom; potomal: en lo de Mani y Ti Kax; lo mismo que patom, patomal.

⁹ This place name is composed of two parts: **calak** which means “paired” and **muul** which means “man-made mound / hill”. For an example of the use of **calak** see CMM: Calak kuch: hilo doblado. For the meaning of **muul** see NEM: Mul: Cerro, montículo, montículo arqueológico. It might be worth mentioning that epigraphers have seized upon the word **uitz** / **huitz** for the hieroglyph which represents a pyramid, T685. In the modern language **uitz** means specifically a natural hill as opposed to **muul** which means a man-made hill. Whether this distinction was made back when the hieroglyph was used is something open to question.

¹⁰ There are a couple of possible meanings for the word **Coba**: CMM: Coba: especie de los faisanes llamados bach. / BMTV: Lago o laguna de agua: koba .I. hoc akal. Given its environment it would appear that in fact the name should be spelled **Koba** and not **Coba**, but the Mayan texts are consistent in using the word **Coba** so it would seem that the first meaning is the correct one.

GOD, MYTH OR KING?

QUETZAL COATL / KUKUL CAN IN MESOAMERICAN FOLKLORE

The nature, social meaning, and mythology of Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can have been a source of considerable debate within Mesoamerican archaeology due to the different aspects of this deity and the multiplicity of phenomena associated with him. In his exhaustive synthesis of ethnohistorical sources on the subject, Nicholson (2001) identified two main aspects of the Feathered Serpent: the quasi-historical Toltec ruler Topiltzin Quetzal Coatl and the god Ehecatl Quetzal Coatl (Figure 1). Many ethnohistoric sources conflate these two, adding a great deal of confusion to interpretations of the role of this deity in Mesoamerican pantheons as well as in changing political systems and religious movements between the Classic and Postclassic periods.

Historical narratives associated with the mythical personage Topiltzin ('our ruler') Quetzal Coatl describe an individual with the prototypical attributes of ruler, priest, and cultural hero: fundamentally human qualities (Figure 1C and 1D, Florescano 1999; Nicholson 2001). The deeds and actions associated with Topiltzin Quetzal Coatl range from the mundane to the supernatural, including pilgrimages as a wandering holy man to the mythical founding of the great city of Tollan (Gillespie 1989; Nicholson 2001). In the latter role as sovereign Quetzal Coatl is depicted as the inventor of many of the prototypical attributes of civilization, including the founding of the first great city of Tollan and the seed for all subsequent legitimate dynasties. As such Topiltzin Quetzal Coatl serves as a symbol for the pious and just ruler. These characteristics were the basis of idealized rulership and political legitimacy encompassed within the concept of "*Toltecayotl*." This concept would form a central element in political ideologies that linked rulers across Mesoamerica (see discussion below).

Migrations and founding of cities and dynasties is a central element of indigenous historical accounts associated with Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can (see Appendix A). Central Mexican historical narratives recount the exile of Quetzal Coatl ('Feathered Serpent' in Nahuatl) from Tollan and exodus to the east via Cholula to the Gulf Coast. In some historical narratives he continues east via raft. Parallel sources document the arrival of the mythical personage of Kukul Can ('Feathered Serpent' in Mayan dialects) in the Yucatan Peninsula from the west. After this arrival, Kukul Can was said to migrate across the Maya Area establishing a network of cities (Folan, et al. n.d.; López Austin

and López Luján 2000; Ringle, et al. 1998). In early correlations between archaeological and ethnohistoric data, these events have been correlated with archaeological evidence of “Mexican” influence in the Maya Area during the Terminal Classic Period, particularly in similarities between the cities of Tula and Chi Cheen Itza (Roys 1966; Thompson 1970; Tozzer 1957). Because of the correlations between Central Mexican and Maya historical narratives, many invasion models of the Classic to Postclassic transition have focused on the role of Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can as a real historical personage. A common theme in these historical narratives is the foundation of cities and dynasties along this migration route. In these cities veneration of Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can was a central element in religious practices and political ideologies.

The other aspect of the Feathered Serpent, Ehecatl Quetzal Coatl, pertains to the realm of the supernatural (Figure 1A and 1B). Ehecatl Quetzal Coatl was an important deity associated with a range of phenomena, including creation, wind, fertility, rain, the star Venus, merchants, and the arts (López Austin and López Luján 2000; Taube 1992; Taube 1999; Taube 2001). López Austin and López Luján (2000:37) argue that the Feathered Serpent combines a diverse set of incongruous symbols, with his body forming the column that supports the sky, and playing a major role in phenomena associated with human gestation, wind, dawn, and Venus. Characteristics that link the deity Ehecatl Quetzlacoatl with Topiltzin Quetzal Coatl include the invention of important elements of ‘civilized life’ or ‘*Toltecayotl*’, such as commerce, calendrics, the priesthood, learning and knowledge, and the temporal order. López Austin and López Luján (2000:37-38) condense his many attributes down to a fundamental role as ‘extractor’, or one who moves substances or knowledge from the realm of the gods to the world of humans, or one who “transcends boundaries.” As noted above, linkage or descent from “Toltec” ancestors were based on this concept, and were a fundamental component of political ideologies in the Epiclassic and Postclassic Periods.

This huge diversity of attributes and multiplicity of names and associations has led to a great deal of confusion about the role of this god in Mesoamerican religious, social, and political life. While it is certainly within the realm of possibility that the mythic Topiltzin Quetzal Coatl personage might have been based on an actual historical ruler – either associated with the city of Tula or some other place or polity – this personage was subsequently conflated with the supernatural entity of Ehecatl Quetzal

Coatl. The ambiguity in different accounts – ranging from the exclusive realm of gods, to a melding of godlike and human qualities, to mundane roles as wandering pilgrim and priest – leave a great deal of leeway for potential interpretations.

Research focusing on the location of Tollan, the identity of Quetzal Coatl, and the role of this mythical ruler in broader Mesoamerican dynamics has approached the topic from many different perspectives (reviews and critiques include Davies 1977; Gillespie 1989; López Austin 1973; Nicholson 2001; Ringle, et al. 1998; Smith 2007). In his ethnohistorical synthesis, Nicholson (2001) was credulous about the status of this character as a real historical figure. Others, such as Gillespie (1989) and Ringle and colleagues (1998) argued these accounts are best included in the realm of myth, functioning as an ideological charter for political legitimation during the Late Postclassic and Colonial Periods. Gillespie (1989) argues that the melding of myth and historical elements in a political narrative took place during the Late Postclassic, likely including the conflation of the Topiltzin and Ehecatl aspects of the Feathered Serpent into single entity. Smith is highly dubious of any attempt to glean historical information from these sources, arguing that use of these histories to understand developments in pre-Hispanic era are misguided (Smith 2007). (Historiographic studies of Mesoamerican indigenous histories would seem to support this more critical perspective (Gillespie 2007; Gunsenheimer 2003; Kepecs 1997; Smith 2007).

As mentioned above, the increasing prominence of feathered serpent imagery associated with the god Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can is one of the most important changes in public art and iconography during the Terminal Classic Period (Baldwin 1998; Berlo and Diehl 1989; Folan, et al. 2010; Folan, et al. n.d.; Kowalski and Kristan-Graham 2007; López Austin and López Luján 1999; López Austin and López Luján 2000; Rice 1983; Ringle 2004; Ringle, et al. 1998). Ringle and colleagues (1998:233) envision this process as a reconceptualization of the role of this god within Mesoamerican pantheons, including new aspects of Quetzal Coatl as the alligator earth monster *cipactli* and the association with creation (see also López Austin 1973; López Austin and López Luján 1999; Thompson 1970). The association with creation that is evident in Aztec creation myths seems to have origins at least as early as the end of the Classic Period, as reflected in numerous depictions of humans emerging from the mouth of a feathered serpent. Ringle and colleagues (1998:188) argue that the conflation of Topiltzin Quetzal Coatl

with the god Ehecatl Quetzal Coatl was a symbolic narrative: "...the wandering city-founder Quetzal Coatl is better viewed as a later etiological attempt to explain the spread of his cult, uniting in a single figure several historical episodes probably separated by centuries".

Indigenous historical accounts link the spread of Feathered Serpent worship with the migrations and movements of various mysterious ethnic groups, including the Olmeca Xicalanca and Tolteca-Chichimeca (López Austin and López Luján 2000; Ringle, et al. 1998). Many of these accounts are associated with the establishment of Cholula as a pilgrimage center devoted to Quetzal Coatl (Dúran 1971:128-133). An oft-reference account by Ixtlilxochitl (1975:528-530) attributes the introduction of Feathered Serpent worship to the arrival at Cholula of the Olmeca-Xicalanca, who are said to have arrived by boat from the east prior to the age of the Toltecs. Other sources corroborate the mythical origins of Quetzal Coatl in the east (see Ringle, et al. 1998:187). The connection of both the god and personage of Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can with migration is abundantly clear in art and iconography from across Mesoamerica, ranging from feathered serpents as stages for ritual processions or scenes to migration iconography such as "footprint" motifs.

While migration stories are a central theme in oral histories and symbolism associated with Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can, evaluation of the historical accuracy of these accounts is beset by major historiographical problems. Instead these myths and stories are part of political narratives reflecting the importance of links between political and religious centers within the context of an emerging new religious movement. Ringle and colleagues (1998) and López Austin and López Luján (1999; 2000) argue that the spread of feathered serpent imagery within a network of cities along the Gulf Coast reflects the spread of a new political-religious order during the Epiclassic / Terminal Classic period. From this perspective, migration and place-making narratives were central elements in creation myths which lent a genealogical charter to emergent Epiclassic and Terminal Classic elites within the context of the more highly integrated and international political, economic, and ideological systems.

An associated change in religious iconography includes increasing centrality of the deity Ek Chuah (God L). Although less prominent than the Feathered Serpent, Ek Chuah also assumes a more central role in Mesoamerican art and iconography during the

Epiclassic Period. The importance of God L reaches its apogee slightly earlier (around AD 750), appearing in the monumental art centers across Mesoamerica such as Cacaxtla, Chi Cheen Itza, and Cauinal, and in several sites in Campeche, such as Edzna, Dzhehkabtún, Sabana Piletas, and Santa Rosa Xtampak (Arnauld 1990:360; Grube, et al. 2009:Martin, 2009 #4367:151-152; Pallán Gayol 2009:99-101; Taube 1992:Fig 41b; Taube 2001:272). The early association with this deity during the beginnings of the Classic Maya collapse – particularly in Campeche – is particularly interesting given the role of this god as the patron deity of merchants and long-distance trade (Pallán Gayol 2009:99-100; Schellhas 1904:34-35; Taube 1992:90; Thompson 1970:306-308). This correlation makes sense given the well-documented role of Gulf Coast groups in coastal trade. Both Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can and God L have been associated with Chontal groups or with religious movements between centers on the Gulf Coast (Folan, et al. 2010; López Austin and López Luján 1999; López Austin and López Luján 2000; Pallán Gayol 2009; Ringle, et al. 1998). While the Gulf Coast maritime trade route was likely an important thoroughfare in increasingly integrated pan-Mesoamerican political, economic, and ideological systems of the Epiclassic and Postclassic Periods, many of the traits associated with this ‘new order’ have not been extensively documented at centers in the southern and eastern Gulf Coast.

Historiographic studies have demonstrated the shortcomings of uncritical acceptance of indigenous narratives as historically accurate accounts and projection of these sources into the pre-Hispanic era (Gillespie 2007; Gunsenheimer 2003; Smith 2007). However, indigenous histories provide an important window into the role of migration and foundation myths in political narratives late in the prehispanic era. In particular, these mythical narratives reflect important links between polities that transcended political boundaries. Indigenous histories were part of political narrative that linked cities across Mesoamerica through both mythical migrations of the personage / god Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can. Interpolity links consisted of both actual physical connections and symbolic ties between cities, which were envisioned as celestial, terrestrial, and subterranean links. In addition to the clear evidence for increasing pan-Mesoamerican interaction reflected in material culture, these histories offer important additional information about the nature of the interregional networks of the Epiclassic and Postclassic periods.

POLITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE: PHYSICAL, METAPHORICAL, AND SYMBOLIC

The central thesis of this paper is that the connections between cities that defined political, economic, and social interpolity networks were signified by both physical and symbolic linkages. These linkages can be divided into three types of interpolity connections, including both tangible and symbolic “political infrastructure.” Terrestrial roads, or *zac beob*,¹¹ consist of raised roads built from masonry, earth, or shell common in centers across the Maya Lowlands (see Figure 3, Bolles 1997; Bolles and Folan 2001, Bustillos Carrillo 1964, Shaw 2001, 2008). The elevated road systems of the Lowland Maya are well known archaeologically from the Preclassic period onward (Benavides Castillo 1981; Bennett 1930; Bolles and Folan 2001; Folan 1977a; Folan 1977b; Hanks 1990; Maldonado Cardenas 1979; Normark 2006; Shaw 2001; Shaw 2008; Stanton 2005; Stanton and Freidel 2005; Stuart 2006; Villa Rojas 1934).

Less well understood are links between cities envisioned as celestial roads and mythical underground routes (Sharer and Traxler 2006:731). These include the *cuxaan zum* routes (Tozzer 1907) at times represented by umbilical cords and the Tamacaz or Milky Way, which is interpreted as a celestial path or road. Celestial avenues, or *cuxaan zumoob*, are conceptualized as living ropes symbolizing a consanguineous relationship in the form of an umbilical cord (see Figure 4, Miller 1974, 1982:91-95, Olton 2002, Tozzer 1907:133). Whereas the *cuxaan zum* stretch from one population center to another, *thexibalba be* leads to the underworld (Villacorta C. 1934). The *cuxaan zum* also represents relationships between individuals and by extension, their families and extended households, as depicted on polychrome vessels (Reents Budet 2005:Fig. 19). According to Prof. Jose A. Xiu (1972) speaking in Merida, when the Cuxaan-zuum is once again joined together “... it will be strung up like an immense suspension bridge from the turbulent Caribbean sea and this sacred city of Ich canziho” (Miller 1982:92) giving the idea that the *cuxaan-zuum* once stretched from a place such as Tulum on the shores of the Caribbean to Merida thus resembling our descriptions of the sites and cities from Tulum to Coba to Valladolid and westward to Merida. It is here where they turn south to Mani, Uxmal and Champotón in the form of a subterranean *zahcab*. These mythical subterranean routes were underground links between cities. These were called

¹¹ See CMM: Çac be: calçada o camino de calçada. In post-Beltrán orthography (1742) the ç is replaced by z.

zahcab according to oral histories collected by Folan in Chemblas, Campeche (see Bolles and Folan 2001). The above mentioned tie between Kukul Can and the Coba / Yaxuna *zac be* indicates his travels on terrestrial roads (Villacorta C. 1934) and as we will see, Kukul Can was associated with both terrestrial and subterranean routes before arriving on the peninsula. Villacorta (1934) also describes accounts in which Kukul Can travelled on the Coba-Yaxuna *zac be*. Information from myths and oral histories recorded by Bolles and Folan presented below, in addition to other relevant ethnohistoric data, provide important information about indigenous Maya conceptions of connections between cities that were linked into religious, political, and economic networks as early as the Terminal Classic / Epiclassic Period. During our investigations in the ruins of Cobá, Quintana Roo between 1972 and 1974 we made a record and a detailed analysis of more than 30 intersite and intrasite *zac beob* (Benavides 1976a,b and Folan et al. 1983) (Figure 3). Simultaneously, we made an ethnographic record of a celestial *zac be* network connecting the sites of Tancah Tulum, Cobá, Zac Ii¹² (modern Valladolid), Chi Cheen Itza (Cobos 2003; Cobos and Winemiller 2001; Schmidt 1994), Itzmal, (Lincoln 1980), Dzibil Chaltun (Bolles and Folan 2001; Maldonado Cárdenas 1995; Maldonado Cardenas et al. 2002), Ich Caan Ziho (modern Mérida), and Uxmal based on ethnohistoric and ethnographic efforts (Bolles and Folan (2001). The sources of these accounts included primary research by Folan in interviews with residents of Coba and analogous sources collected by Tozzer in Valladolid, Yucatan (1907). From Uxmal, the road network continued underground to Chakan Putun (modern Champotón) and from there to México (Folan 1977a). Below, we outline the nature of these links and their political, social, and symbolic importance in prehispanic Maya society.

These linkages between cities had striking similarities to our own concepts about the political geography of the Yucatan Peninsula. Independently, we created a model of Maya geopolitics with principal regional centers of Cobá, Zac Ii, Chi Cheen Itza, Itzmal, Ich Caan Ziho, Uxmal and Edzná (Folan 1977a and 1980b). Each of these regional centers was related to a port on the Caribbean or the Gulf of Mexico and associated intermediary sites, following a model outlined by Kenneth Hirth (1978) for Highland Mexico. Chakan Putun was a regional center and a port located on the Gulf Coast in

¹² **Zac Ii** = “white hawk”. Over the front north-facing door of the cathedral at the Zocolo of Zac Ii is the image of the bird.

central Campeche (Ek 2009; Ek 2012; Ek and Cruz Alvarado 2010; Folan, et al. 2003; Folan, et al. 2002; Folan, et al. 2004). The Chi Cheen Itza / Xuenkal / Isla Cerritos route was hypothesized by Andrews and colleagues (1989) and Manahan and Ardren (2008), while an Itzmal and Dzilam route was suggested by Burgos Villanueva and colleagues (2009). In the aftermath of the Classic Maya collapse, the Terminal Classic geopolitical landscape consisted of large cities and associated port centers incorporated into the highly integrated and international pan-Mesoamerican social political and economic systems.

MAYA ZAC BEOB: INTERSITE CAUSEWAY SYSTEMS IN THE MAYA LOWLANDS

The most obvious evidence for links between cities and polities are reflected archaeologically in built roads or *zac beob*. There is a large body of literature focusing on the nature and function of *zac be* systems in prehispanic Maya polities. In one of the more recent reviews of this literature, Shaw (2001; 2008) differentiates between “local intrasite” causeways that linked plaza groups within a single urban epicenter, “core–outlier intrasite” roads that linked urban epicenters with minor centers and peripheral communities in the surrounding hinterland, and “intersite” causeways that linked cities together. This latter class of road systems would have had both practical and symbolic importance as components of the political landscape as formal material signifiers of interpolity relationships. She also classifies *zac be* systems based on the nature and connectivity of nodes, including radial, solar, and dendritic systems (Shaw 2008). Within these different types of roads there is a great deal of variability in the form and degree of architectural elaboration, ranging from simple dual alignments of stone delimiting a pathway, modest raised roads, to the truly monumental causeways at centers like Cobá (Figure 3, see also Chase and Chase 2001; Cobos and Winemiller 2001; Folan et al. 1983; Shaw 2001; Shaw 2008; Thompson et al. 1932). Additionally, we have classified *zac beob* according to terminology and concepts recorded in dictionaries dating from the 16th to 18th centuries (Bolles and Folan 2001), including the Mayan terms *noh be* for large, long roads, *chibal be* for roads associated with specific lineages (such as the recently discovered *zac be* in Oxpemul) and *buth be* which cross low, wet areas (Folan et al. 2010). These terms provide information about emic socio-cultural concepts associated with these features of Maya political landscapes.

Prehispanic Maya road systems created physical links both within interpolity regional systems as well as marking the territorial limits of individual polities (Figure 3). Intra-site *zac be* systems often form a closed system linking different urban complexes within Classic Maya cities. A closed pattern has been documented at Tikal, where the main *zac be* system is triangular in plan and provides access only to the main plazas within the site epicenter (Figure 3C). Only the Mendoza *zac be* extends beyond the nucleus of the city (Carr and Hazard 1961). At the site of Oxpemul we documented an example of an isolated and defensive communication system with its entry points located below the epicenter of the city, defended by high points and plateaus in a pattern that differs greatly from the other examples previously mentioned (Barnes et al. 2009). We have recently documented a linear *zac be* 1,250 meters in length, 20 meters wide and one meter high that connects the two main plateaus of Oxpemul, linking the two major civic / religious nuclei of the city (Folan et al. 2010).

Other cities were connected in more open systems, with intersite *zac be* networks facilitating social, economic, and political links between urban centers. The system of *zac beob* in the Petén centers on Calak Muul, with terrestrial *zac be* extending from urban epicenter and market zone located behind Structure VII (Folan 1991-1992; Folan et al. 2001) to El Mirador (Folan et al. 1995) which, according to Folan, may be a twin city (Figure 3D). Intersite *zac be* systems have been documented at sites such as Cobá (Figure 3A), Ich Muul, Itzmal, Chi Cheen Itza, Ich Caan Ziho, El Mirador, and Caracol (Figure 3B). We have classified these road networks within a system different to radial, solar, or dendritic as proposed in the excellent work by Shaw (2001; 2008) into another based on the symbolic configuration of arteries. In the case of Cobá, this system mimics the shape of a ‘V shaped’ funnel formed by its principal *zac beob*. This latter pattern reflects an open communication system designed to facilitate the passage of people, ideas and goods (Folan et al. 2009), as is the case at Chi Cheen Itza, Calak Muul, El Mirador, and Caracol. These terrestrial *zac be* systems provide a clear material correlate for interpolity communication routes extending from the Formative through Postclassic period.

CUXAAN ZUMOOB: CELESTIAL LINKS BETWEEN PILGRIMAGE CENTERS

A metaphorical and less tangible form of intersite connections include celestial avenues, or *cuxaan zumoob*, that symbolized consanguineous relationships between individuals, groups, and places. These links were envisioned as living ropes in the form of an umbilical cord (see Figure 4, Miller 1974, 1982:91-95, Olton 2002, Tozzer 1907:133). Umbilical cord imagery has been noted in Maya art and iconography – particularly in images on polychrome vessels – as living ropes connecting individuals, families, extended households, and places (Reents Budet 2005:203).

Mythical accounts and folklore depict *cuxaan zumoob* as large blood-filled cords that connected cities (see Appendix B). In one important account, a *cuxaan zum* was able to support a group of Itza warriors (Bolles and Folan 2001). In another account, a Spanish military contingent cut the *cuxaan zun* connecting Coba and Zac Li, effectively severing communications between these two important cities (see below, Bolles and Folan 2001, Folan et al. 1983). Other celestial links were associated with the Milky Way (*Tamacaz*, CMM) that was interpreted as a celestial path or road (Sharer and Traxler 2006). While the *cuxaan zum* stretch from one population center to another, the *xibalba be* led to the underworld (Villacorta C. 1934). This latter account is outlined in its entirety in Appendix B.

ZAHCABOOB: UNDERGROUND NETWORKS

In addition to the terrestrial and celestial links, mythical subterranean routes linked cities via underground passages between cities. These subterranean passageways were called *zahcab* according to three conversations with José Maria Calan Zuc of Chemblas, Campeche (see Bolles and Folan 2001). Myths outlining the deeds of Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can frequently include migrations and founding events in subterranean settings (see Appendix 2). In one account, Quetzal Coatl, accompanied by Xipe Totec, built houses under the earth in Mictlancalco (“the house of dead”). In others Quetzlacoatl / Kukul Can excavated a passageway through a mountain that they could not cross (Kingsborough 1831-1848; Figure 5) and another in the form of a tunnel passing beneath the sea (Muñoz Camargo, 1981, P. 84v). In the Codex Kingsborough, Quetzal Coatl and Xipe Totec are depicted leading migrants through an underground passageway through a mountain:

“The two lords of penitence, Quetzalcóhuatl and Tótec, also called Chipec (Xipe) took the people that remained (in Tula), children and innocent people, and left with them going into the world populating it and taking with them other people that they encountered, and they say that they went on walking in this way.... *They arrived at a certain mountain that they were unable to traverse, they thought up a way to bore a whole underneath it, and thus passed through it.*”

Translation from Kingsborough 1831-1848
by B.Volta

Subterranean routes were related to the numerous sascaberas in the Peninsula of Yucatan, including several very large and long ($\pm 300\text{m}$) sascaberas in Chakan Putun (J.A. Hernandez Trujeque: personal communication 2012) and other sascaberas in Mani (Brainerd 1958; Folan 1969b). Compared to the terrestrial and celestial links reviewed above, there are far fewer depictions and iconography associated with subterranean routes. These are discussed by Reents Budet (1994:101 N. 24, 203), who equates caves with sacrificial rites as being entrances to the underworld. Cenotes were associated with similar meanings. These are reasonably similar to sascaberas and the subterranean *zahcab* routes between Merida, Mani, Uxmal and Chakan Putun, as well as the obsidian mines in the highlands and the tunneling of mountains associated with Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can along with his numerous sojourns into the underworld (Carrasco 2000).

Underground routes were related to religious rites that include human sacrifice of adults and / or children, (Folan 1970) as exemplified in the underground route between the Cenote X-Lacah in Dzibilchaltun with Chablekal (Marden 1958), the route between Mani and Ich Caan Ziho associated with a celestial and underground route, and apparently the route linking Acanmul and Uxmal, almost all which are found in the western part of the Yucatan peninsula. Although we do not know of a mythical or physical link providing access to the Postclassic round observatory at Mayapan, we believe that there is a strong possibility that they may have existed and that myths associated with them are still to be discovered.

From the point of view of chronology, the oldest routes appear to be terrestrial *zac beob* that are common by the Preclassic period and continued in use and increased in frequency through the Classic and Terminal Classic Periods. Not surprisingly, we have

far fewer dates for celestial and underground routes due to the lack of the material correlates identifiable in the archaeological record. Myths concerning subterranean *zahcab* routes, most frequent in the western part of the Yucatan Peninsula, include clearly late historical elements such as cows, roosters, horses, cats, and other species introduced from the Old World. A similar pattern has been documented in myths concerning underground routes followed by Quetzal Coatl between the Mexican highlands to Coatzacoalcas as well as his association, in the form of an Ehecatl Quetzal Coatl effigy, registered in an underground obsidian mine in the highlands of Mexico (Pastrana 2010).

Based on archaeological, ethnohistoric and ethnographic data, we propose that migration myths associated with the god / personage of Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can were part of a political narrative associated with the development of highly integrated political, economic, and religious systems after the close of the Classic Period. Linkages between important cities were envisioned as physical connections corresponding to terrestrial, celestial, and underground communication routes based on the mythic migrations of Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can during the ninth century. These migrations followed a general path extending between Mexico and the Yucatan Peninsula, later returning via the same route (Landa 1941).

THE KUKUL CAN PILGRIMAGE ROUTE AND INTERSITE LINKAGES IN LATE MAYA PREHISTORY

As noted above, the migrations and trajectory of Quetzal Coatl across Mesoamerica between 700 and 900 AD has captured the imagination of many investigators of the Maya and Mexica cultures (Lopez Austin 1973; Lopez Austin and Lopez Luhan 1999). The role of Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can in political narratives combining migration myths, foundation events, and the construction of linkages between centers was part of a major reorganization of political, religious, and economic systems across the Yucatan Peninsula and Mesoamerica. Based on synthesis of ethnohistoric and ethnographic accounts and our own analyses of the different types of ancient Maya communication routes over the past 35 years we have developed the following model of Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can's movements from Chakan Putun to Tancah Tulum in the Caribbean and back again to Chakan Putun. In the sections below we examine each of these routes in greater detail.

THE INITIAL EXODUS FROM CENTRAL MEXICO

In many sources, the migrations start with Quetzal Coatl's departure (either voluntary or through exile) from Central Mexico and journey to the Gulf Coast (see Appendix A). According to Jimenez Moreno (personal communication 1956), Quetzal Coatl disembarked on a raft of serpents, perhaps raising anchor near Coatzacoalcos ("the place where serpents are locked up") to arrive at Tlilan Tlapallan ("the place written in red") that many have interpreted as the Maya region. One of the pilgrimage centers – perhaps located in the southwestern coast of the Yucatan Peninsula – was Nonoalco (Nonoalco or Onoalco, possibly located somewhere near the linguistic border between Nahuatl and Maya speakers, (Tozzer 1941) "where they are mute" (Garibay 1940). After leaving Nonoalco, Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can would have continued rafting toward the area frequented by Mexica merchants, perhaps making landfall in Potonchan ("house of stench"), Xicalanco ("place of calabash") and Cochiztlan ("the rest place") (Bolles and Folan 2001), before arriving at Chakan Putun (modern Champotón).

Chakan Putun (whose toponym translates as "the savannah of the potters," or "the potter's savannah" according to Bolles [Folan et al. 2004a]) was a port capital and commercial center of great importance on the west coast of the Yucatan Peninsula during the ninth century. Items exchanged through Chakan Putun included fine paste ceramics (Bishop et al. 2007; Forsyth and Jordan 2007; Ek and Rosado Ramirez 2005; Ek and Cruz Alvarado 2009, Ek 2012), obsidian (Braswell, personal communication 2006 and 2010 and Folan et al. 2012), and terrestrial and marine food resources (Gotz 2012; Folan et al. 2004; Piña Chan 1978; Villanueva nd). Chakan Putun also is a place with a great deal of archaeological evidence for cultural influence from Highland Mexico and Veracruz, such as mortuary practices associated with the god Xipe Totec (Gómez Cobá and Folan 2007; Hurtado et al. 2002).

Indigenous histories recorded by Spanish chroniclers in both the Maya Lowlands and Central Mexico focus on the migrations of Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can from his homeland in Central Mexico to Chakan Putun via the sea, the founding of Chakan Putun, and his subsequent departure from the same port via the sea. Landa (Tozzer 1941:26) recounted a later migration myth associated with the personage / deity of Kukul Can:

(From the facsimile, pages 5r-5v.):

Que este *Cuculcan* viuio con los señores algunos años en aquella ciudad (Mayapan) y q[ue] dexando losen mucha paz, y amistad se torno por el mismo camino a Mexico, y que de pasada se detuvo en *Champoton* y que para memoria suya y de su partida hizo dentro en la mar /5v/ vn buen edificio al modo del de *Chiçeniza* vn gran tiro de piedra de la ribera, y que assi dexó *Cuculcan* en Yucatan perpetua memoria.

(From Tozzer, page 26):

This Kukul Can lived with the lords in that city for several years; and leaving them in great peace and friendship, he returned by the same way to Mexico, and on the way he stopped at Champoton, and, in memory of him and of his departure, he erected a fine building in the sea like that of Chi Cheen Itza, a long stone's throw from the shore. And thus Kukul Can left a perpetual remembrance in Yucatan.

A small island located just off the coast, adjacent to the mouth of the Río Champotón, is very likely the same temple (see also Ruz Lhullier 1969:36; Scholes and Roys 1968:3). From these mythical accounts, Chakan Putun was a launching point for a series of migrations, pilgrimages, and perhaps conquests into the Yucatan Peninsula.

THE CHAKAN PUTUN / TULUM ROUTE

From Chakan Putun, oral histories and myths trace the movements of Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can to Tancah Tulum in the Caribbean, beginning his migration between Chakan Putun and Uxmal via an underground *zahcab* (Figure 6, Bolles and Folan 2001). From there, Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can continued on to Campeche after leaving Chakan Putun, where the Spaniards described a building with an enormous stone serpent swallowing a lion in 1517 (Díaz de Castillo 1632). Afterwards he arrived at Acanmul, where there exists a myth (recorded in an account by Calan Zuc [Bolles and Folan 2001]) of an underground passage associated with Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can between this center (under investigation by Ojeda Mas 2006, 2007, Ojeda Mas et al. 2001, and Williams Beck et al. 2005) leading to Uxmal (Bolles and Folan 2001). Myths also

describe a celestial *zac be* or *cuxaan zum* linking Uxmal and Ich Caan Ziho (Bolles and Folan 2001). Furthermore, there are myths of both an underground and celestial route between Mani and Ich Caan Ziho (Brainerd 1958 and Folan 1969b) with the former associated with a temple dedicated to Kukul Can, the sacrifice of infants, and the distribution of water by Ix-Nuc Mani (“Old woman of Mani”), the mother of the Dwarf of Uxmal (Appendix 2, Burns 1983; Stephens 1962 and 1963). Other underground routes supposedly linked Noh Cacab¹³ (Santa Elena, Yucatan to the Spanish speaking world) and Uxmal (Bustillos Carillo 1964; Dunning 1992, Dunning and Kowalski 1994), as well as the route recorded by David Bolles between Noh Cacab and Ich Caan Ziho. The cenote at the ruins of X-Koch,¹⁴ (Smyth and Ortega Zapata 2008) located between Uxmal and Noh Cacab is connected with Mani by another underground route, thus making Mani perhaps the nexus of the underground *zahcab* from Uxmal, X-Koch and Noh Cacab on their way to Ich Caan Ziho.

From Ich Caan Ziho to Chi Cheen Itza with its manifold *zac beob* (Shaw 2008, Cobos and Winemiller 2001), Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can continued on to Itzmal as indicated in the myth of a *cuxaan zum* between these two centers (Folan et al. 1983). The *cuxaan zum* between Dzibilchaltun (Chable) with its Kukul Can sculpture (Maldonado Cardenas and Echeverria Castillo 2011) – also known as Ich Caan Ziho according to Maldonado Cardenas (1995) – and Itzmal. This corresponds precisely with the modern route taken by the Purisima Virgin de la Concepcion Inmaculada from the cenote in the principal plaza of the former site to Itzmal where she resides to the present day (Bolles and Folan 2001; Marden 1958). The route continued along another *cuxaan zum* between Itzmal, Chi Cheen Itza (Relations of Isamal and Santa Maria 1967:270) and Zac Ii (Valladolid) according to the same myth compiled in the ruins of Coba, Quintana Roo (Folan et al. 1983). This celestial *zac be* runs parallel to the 99 km long *zac be* between Yaxuna and Coba and the Coba – Ixil *zac be* (Benavides 1976 a, b and Folan 1977) with the former *zac be* also being linked with Kukul Can in indigenous mythology (Villa Rojas 1934).

¹³ **Noh Cacab** = “large village”, from **noh** = large, big, and **cacab** = village. See CMM: Noh: cosa grande. ¶ noh be: camino grande y real. / Cacab: pueblo pequeño /o/ asiento de pueblo pequeño. This is also called Santa Elena is situated on the road from Uxmal to Mani.

¹⁴ For the meaning of the name **Koch** see CMM: Koch .l. ix koch: higuierilla que llaman del infierno de que se saca aceite muy medicinal. ¶ sus ojos son buenas para dolor de tripas faxandolas con ellas y calientes a la lumbre y puestas sobre llagas viejas las sana mudandolos cada dia y limpiando la llaga.

In Valladolid, with its mythological sacred tree (Tozzer 1907; Villacorta y Villacorta 1933), the route continues via another *cuxaan zum* to Coba. Architecture at the latter site includes a substantial round temple generally associated with veneration of the god Ehecatl Quetzal Coatl in addition to the Kukican terminus of Sacbe #8. From there, Kukul Can continued on to Tulum Tancah along another *cuxaan zum* supposedly constructed by the Itza (Folan 1977). There are several representations of Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can at Tulum Tancah as the Star of Venus, according to Miller (1982), as well as the goddess Ix Zac Beliz pictured on what may be a *zac be* (Sabloff and Rathje 1975). Interestingly, analysis of dental morphology of burial samples between the sites of Chakan Putun (Champotón) and Tulum reflect direct relations between these two populations (Cucina and Tiesler 2008). Already established in Tulum Tancah, the expansion of the network associated with Kukul Can may have extended into Central America. This expansion to the south could have followed the *zac be* at Tulum Tancah southward as registered by Cogolludo (1971) and Vapnarsky (1995), passing by what would come to be the home of the Talking Cross of Chan Santa Cruz (Dumond and Folan 2001).

THE RETURN THROUGH CHAKAN PUTUN TO MEXICO

Already having extended his politico-religious powers and trade routes across much of Yucatan, Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can then began his return “along the same route to Mexico” according to Landa (1941), following the celestial *cuxaan zum* between Tulum Tancah and Coba and continuing on to Chakan Putun (Figure 7). More recent myths suggest that this *cuxaan zum* remained intact until the contact period, when a mounted army cut the cord between Coba and Zac Ii (Bolles and Folan 2001; Folan et al. 1983), thus terminating the link between these two centers. Another possible route led along the *zac be* between Coba and Yaxuna to Zac Ii and Chi Cheen Itza, where, according to a myth, Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can continued on to Mexico perhaps by means of an underground passage leading from the Sacred Cenote (Folan 1977 and 1980) possibly related to an underground passage extending from beneath the Temple of Kukul Can to the Cenote Xtoloc, with a deviation to the west at the ball court (Folan 1980a, b) where he could have continued to Chakan Putun (Roys 1933). In an alternative route to Chakan Putun, Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can travelled from Chi Cheen Itza to Itzmal

(Relations of Isamal Santa Maria 1967:270) with a mention of Kukul Can listed on a stela from Dzilam, according to Voss (verbal communication 2009).

After conquering Chi Cheen Itza in the person of Hunac Ceel, Kukul Can (see Tozzer 1941 Note 123:22) apparently continued to Mayapán, perhaps with the Itzaes during his entrance to the peninsula from Cozumel / Ppole¹⁵, and took control of a large part of the Yucatan Peninsula. Leaving Mayápan, Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can could have taken the *cuxaan zum* to Ich Caan Ziho and Motul (Relations of Motul 1967:77), and from Ich Caan Ziho to Uxmal where the anthropomorphic heads within several mosaics bear iconographic links to Kukul Can (Piña Chan, personal communication 1960; Dunning and Kowalski 1994). His trip later continued south along a masonry *zac be* between Noh'pat, Uxmal, and Kabah (Carrasco V. 1993; Kurjack and Garza Terrazona 1981; Segovia Pinto, personal communication 1962) and the underground *zahcab* linking Uxmal to Chakan Putun. At Chakan Putun, ethnohistoric sources indicate that the people paid tribute to Kukul Can before he embarked on his return to Mexico by sea, erecting in his memory a temple and monument on an island similar to those documented on the east coast of the Yucatan Peninsula (see Ruz Lhuillier 1969, Shook 1951).

From Chakan Putun, Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can embarked on his return journey to Mexico, following the maritime route via Cuchiztlan, Potonchan, Nonohualco, and Coatzacoalcos, probably personified there as the star Venus before reappearing within the Mexica Empire as the god Quetzal Coatl. In Tenochtitlan, Quetzal Coatl was venerated by the round temple located opposite the Temple of Huitzilopochtli in the sacred precinct of the city (Carrasco 2000). This latter city was later visited and conquered by another prince of adventure, in the person of Cortez, who followed much of the same route of Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can outlined above from the coast of the Yucatan Peninsula to Tenochtitlan via Cholula. Later, the conquest of the Yucatan Peninsula by the Montejos in the XVI century also includes Chi Cheen Itza and perhaps Coba in the first stage and a second stage disembarking at Chakan Putun and continuing on via Calkiní to arrive at Ich Caan Ziho where they established the European regional center today referred to as Merida. Today the modern highways between Chakan Putun, Uxmal, Ich Caan Ziho, Chi Cheen Itza, Itzmal, Zac Ii, Cobá and Tulum follow the same routes some 1000 years later

¹⁵Ppole is associated with Kukul Can according to Hernandez de Cordova (1921). See also Ringle et al. (1998)

(Figure 8). Plans to construct a rapid transit train will follow this same route, linking Chakan Putun, Palenque, Uxmal, Ich Caan Ziho, Itzmal, Zac Ii, Chi Cheen Itza, Coba and Punta Venado on the east coast of Quintana Roo (Anonymous 2013).

DISCUSSION

Based on the prominence of Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can in both prehispanic iconography and Contact Period indigenous oral histories outlined it is clear that this god / personage takes on great importance in political ideologies by the Terminal Classic period. There exists a possibility that the mythical story of Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can was at some point based on a historical individual, but the historiographic issues inherent in projecting oral histories centuries in the past makes interpretations of these sources as historically accurate accounts untenable. An alternative possibility is that actual historical personages undertook pilgrimages and military campaigns as representations of (or within the guise of) Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can, which could help explain the long history of these myths starting in the Epiclassic period. Unfortunately, evaluating these possibilities is impractical through archaeological methods. Regardless, it is clear that stories concerning the movements of Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can across Mesoamerica were an important component in the spread of a new political and religious order that occurred within the context of increasing internationalism, economic integration, and pan-Mesoamerican trade that characterize the Epiclassic / Terminal Classic periods (Ringle, et al. 1998). This trend was part of a major change in political ideologies in which the fundamental basis of political legitimacy was reorganized into a new narrative that connected rulers across Mesoamerica into a type of fictive genealogy of power (López Austin 1973; López Austin and López Luján 1999; López Austin and López Luján 2000). In this new geopolitical landscape, the establishment of cities – and links between cities – was a crucial element in this new cosmopolitan and “international” system. This geopolitical order was materialized in a distinctive urban tradition as exemplified in the new types of urban landscapes that spread across Mesoamerica in the Epiclassic / Terminal Classic Period. The spread of this new tradition across previously disparate parts of Mesoamerica has been a topic of intense debate among archaeologists for the past century.

As the archetypical symbol of just and effective rulership, mythical accounts of the migrations and deeds of Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can played a central role in emergent links between rulers across disparate parts of Mesoamerica beginning as early as the Late Classic Period and intensifying in the Epiclassic / Terminal Classic and Postclassic Periods. In these political narratives, Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can was the source and purveyor of *Toltecayotl*, particularly just, enlightened, and pious leadership. While these pan-Mesoamerican political, social, and economic reorganizations are still poorly understood, the oral histories and myths outlined above were undoubtedly part of a political rhetoric linking rulers across Mesoamerica through fictive descent from common ancestors. As we have argued above, this political rhetoric focusing on the descent of contemporary rulers from the original “Toltec” ancestor as a central element of political legitimacy would last for several centuries.

The spread of this new political and ideological order can be traced in the strong links in monumental art, architecture, and iconography among a network of cities across Mesoamerica. George Andrews (1975: 21 and 93) has proposed that the great urban centers of the Maya Lowlands would be distributed along important routes of interregional communication and that the internal structure of cities would conform to the trajectory of circulation routes embodied within internal causeway systems (or *zac beob*). In addition to trade relationships, the distribution of major cities of the Yucatan Peninsula after the end of the Classic Period was also influenced by spatial proximity to maritime and riverine communication routes, sources of potable water and fertile land. Interregional communication networks were determined by spatial relationships between cities, the emergence of international religious movements, and the kinship, economic, and political relationships that existed between states across Mesoamerica. Most of these cities were located within 50 kilometers of the coastal margin, following the important maritime trade network that connected many cities into a pan-Mesoamerican interaction sphere that became increasingly important after the end of the Classic Period (Andrews 1990; Folan et al 1983; Freidel 1984, 1985, 1986; Freidel and Scarborough 1982; Ringle, et al. 1998; Sabloff 1977; Sabloff and Rathje 1975a,b; Smith 2007; Smith and Heath-Smith 1980; Smith and Berdan 2000; Smith and Berdan 2003a,c). Although long-distance exchange and interaction has roots no later than the Middle Formative, by the end of the Late Classic Period participation in these pan-Mesoamerican networks would

have increasingly clear political, economic, and social ramifications. These mythical accounts linked important participant cities in the Postclassic Mesoamerican world through a shared political rhetoric combining migration stories, founding events, and archetypes of political leadership centering on the personage and deity of Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can.

The highly integrated political, economic, and social networks of the Postclassic were associated with maritime trade networks and three different types of interpolity linkages or routes. This “political infrastructure” included terrestrial *zac be*, celestial *cuxaan zum*, and subterranean *zahcab* routes. The more common and archaeologically notable of these, the terrestrial *zac beob*, apparently played an important role in the development of social, political, and economic integration both within cities and between centers. All three types reflect increasingly important links between centers that developed during the Terminal Classic Period in the Maya Lowlands. Intersite terrestrial *zac beob* serve to reinforce social, political, economic, and religious relations within regional centers with Coba, Chi Cheen Itza, Itzmal, Ich Caan Ziho, Uxmal and Yookop, marking not only consanguine relations between lords (*chibal be*) but also sacred and secular links between central places and outlying communities.

These ethnohistoric sources provide complementary and corroborating information to the archaeological data outlined by Ringle, Gallareta and Bey III (1998) and Lopez Austin and Lopez Lujan (2001) concerning the role of the god / personage of Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can in historical developments within the Yucatan Peninsula. While it is impossible to verify if Kukul Can was an historical individual, a mythical amalgamation of several individuals, or a deity, the social importance of Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can within Mesoamerican cultural developments is abundantly evident by the Terminal Classic / Epiclassic Period. While this network has clear economic aspects, we argue that these dynamics were largely political, reflecting a process through which inter-elite political ideologies were fused across previously disparate Mesoamerican culture areas. This new “genealogy of power” was encoded in political rhetoric focusing on Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can as the root of political legitimacy. The mythical accounts outlined above reflect the “mythical political infrastructure” associated with this new world order. The social importance of these linkages is clearly reflected in the continuity

of oral histories relating to Kukul Can that are still kept alive in the cultural memory of modern Maya across the Yucatan Peninsula (Gillespie 2007 and Smith 2007).

CONCLUSIONS

It seems difficult to imagine that diverse modern Maya communities could retain oral histories and memories related to a mythical or real routes after 500 to 1000 years. But in the case of the terrestrial, celestial, and subterranean routes associated with the personage of Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can, there is a great deal of consistency and continuity in mythical accounts in dispersed places such as Chakan Putun, Chemblás, Mani, Chi Cheen Itza, Coba, Cozumel, Mayapán, Uxmal and Tulum. Whether it be associations with terrestrial, celestial, or underground links between cities, specific temples and buildings, *zac be* termini, hieroglyphic texts, or iconography, the information communicated by archaeology, oral histories and ethnohistories reflect the importance of Kukul Can within a network of important centers during the Terminal Classic and Postclassic period. This phenomenon was most likely part of a generalized pattern of international ties that spread across Mesoamerica beginning in the Epiclassic period, with shared cultural patrimony, religious syncretism, and common symbolism across disparate areas of Mesoamerica facilitating much greater social and economic integration.

Unresolved issues concern the precise function of the terrestrial *zac beob* that are so common in archaeological sites across the Maya Area, and if these features functioned in similar ways to the more ephemeral and mythical *cuxaan zum* and subterranean *zahcab* routes. In the case of terrestrial *zac beob*, they likely served multiple social functions including the demonstration of the power of a ruler and the state, as physical manifestations of political links between centers (such as the *zac be* systems in the Puuc Hills, and at Itzmal, and Coba), in organizing movements of people in religious and ritual processions, and to provide support for everyday movements of people and goods within cities, between urban centers and peripheral areas, and between polities in inter-polity economic networks. The construction of causeway systems would provide a durable physical symbol of the power of centralized rulership, showing that nothing was outside the reach of the king while providing a mechanism for boundary maintenance, as reflected most clearly in the case of Coba and the distant centers of Ixil and Yaxuna. Generally, terrestrial, celestial and underground routes between pre-Hispanic cities

formed symbolic linkages between members of ruling lineages, avenues for commerce, as well as pathways for religious and ritual relations and defensive mechanisms. These linkages were, and continue to be, important symbols for the development of the image of sociopolitical and economic entities, its governors, citizens, and their well-being generally as well as the keepers of the myths in the 21st Century.

¹A similar version of this paper titled “Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can: Su ruta comercial and conquista a través de la Península de Yucatán del siglo IX al XVI en adelante: Una interpretación emica and ética de comunicaciones mesoamericanas regionales and locales” was presented by William J. Folan, David Bolles and Jerald Ek at the XIX Encuentro de Investigadores de la Cultura Maya en la Univ. Autónoma de Campeche in November 2009.

²This paper was translated from the original Spanish version by Jerald D. Ek.

RESUMEN

Este trabajo examina los mitos etnohistóricos e históricos orales acumulados durante los últimos 50 años en referencia a los movimientos del personaje mítico de Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can sobre rutas terrestres, celestiales y subterráneos a través de las Tierras Bajas de los mayas después de su llegada a la Península de Yucatán. Los datos etnográficos y etnohistóricos incluyen una gran cantidad de información pertinente a conexiones entre importantes centros políticos y económicos, además de centros rituales entre el Clásico Terminal y Posclásico para continuar después de la llegada de los españoles. Estos mitos e historias orales completan los datos arqueológicos reflejando así un aumento en el internacionalismo, integración económica y la posible extensión de movimientos religiosos durante el Clásico Terminal o Epiclásico a través de Mesoamérica.

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ABBREVIATIONS USED

References to the various Franciscan vocabularies and other vocabulary sources are given as code letters. These sources cited here are as follows:

BELMS	Beltrán's <i>Arte</i> , Mayan-Spanish
BELSM	Beltrán's <i>Arte</i> , Spanish-Mayan
BMTV	<i>Bocabulario de Maya Than de Viena</i>
BRD	<i>Birds of the Maya</i>
CAM	Pérez's <i>Coordinación Alfabética</i> , 1898
CMM	Motul Mayan-Spanish (<i>Calepino Maya de Motul</i>)
DBM	my entries
DESF	<i>Diccionario de San Francisco</i> , Spanish-Mayan
DMM	Combined Solana / Motul II / S.F. Spanish-Mayan
EBL	Roys' <i>Ethno-Botany of the Maya</i> , Latin-Mayan
EBM	Roys' <i>Ethno-Botany of the Maya</i> , Mayan-English
JPP	Pío Pérez, <i>Diccionario de la Lengua Maya</i>
KAL	Bricker & Miram's <i>An Encounter of Two Worlds</i> , Appendix C
KAM	Bricker & Miram's <i>An Encounter of Two Worlds</i> , Appendix A
NAM	Glossary from the <i>Chilam Balam of Na</i>
NEL	Barrera's <i>Nomenclatura Etnobotanica Maya</i> , Latin-Mayan
NEM	Barrera's <i>Nomenclatura Etnobotanica Maya</i> , Mayan-Spanish
RBM	Roys' <i>Ritual of the Bacabs</i>
SFM	<i>Diccionario de San Francisco</i> , Mayan-Spanish
TIC	Ticul 1898
YHM	<i>Yerbas y Hechizarías</i>

GLOSSARY OF PROPER NAMES, PLACE NAMES AND OTHER NATIVE MESO-AMERICAN WORDS

Belize / Beel Itza: There can be two interpretations of the meaning of the name Belize. If we take into account the Spanish pronunciation of the name then perhaps it is derived from Beel Itza, from **beel** = “road” and **Itza** = the tribal name. The other possibility is that the name is derived from the word **beeliz**, as shown in the Calepino Maya de Motul: Beeliz: caminante de a pie y cosa que se anda por tierra y ba por tierra. However, in this case one has to wonder why the third syllable “-ce” is pronounced in Spanish.

Cacaxtla: “Place of the backpack rack”. From cacaxtli = backpack rack and -tla = place. Alternatively, Molina adds that Cacaxtli is the name of a “certain bird” although a search for other sources for this name as a bird has not been fruitful. See Molina: Cacaxtli. escalerillas de tablas para lleuar algo acuestas el tameme, o cierto paxaro.

Calak Muul: The name Calakmul is derived from the Mayan name Calak Muul = “paired man-made mounds”. This place name is composed of two parts: **calak** which means “paired” and **muul** which means “man-made mound / hill”. For an example of the use of **calak** see CMM: Calak kuch: hilo doblado. For the meaning of **muul** see NEM: Mul: Cerro, montículo, montículo arqueológico. It might be worth mentioning that epigraphers have seized upon the word **uitz** / **huitz** for the hieroglyph which represents a pyramid, T685. In the modern language **uitz** means specifically a natural hill as opposed to **muul** which means a man-made hill. Whether this distinction was made back when the hieroglyph was used is something open to question.

Calkini: As a possibility see CMM: Cal kin: encalmamiento con sol.

Chac Mool: “Red claw”, from chac = red and mool = claw. See DMM: Pies y manos del tigre: mool; ox.

Chakan Putun: “Potter’s savannah”, from **chakan** = savannah and **putun**, a variant of **patom** / **potom** = potter. The Mayan name for the present-day Champoton. See CMM: Chakan: çauana o deesa, vega o campo llano, o heruaje para pasto. / Patom: ollero o alfarero en general; official de cosas de barro. / Potom; potomal: en lo de Mani y Ti Kax; lo mismo que patom, patomal.

Chi Cheen Itza: Following Mayan Colonial Orthography this place name should be spelled as shown, from Chi = mouth, edge, Cheen = well and Itza, the tribal group. See CMM: Chij: la orilla o ribera de mar o rio o orilla de heredad, boca de pozo, la margen de la escritura o de papel escrito, de la halda de la vestidura o ropa. / Cheen: pozo o cisterna o cueva de agua. As a side note: the name for Chi Cheen Itza appears 14 times in Landa’s Relación, usually spelled Chi Cheeniza, but also once as Chiçeniza and once as Chi Cheenyza. Just as in the case of Chi Cheen Itza, it appears that many of the spelling practices for place names in Yucatan originate with Landa and do not correctly reflect the way the place name should be spelled according to the texts written by the Maya.

Chikin Cheel / Chikin Chel: “The western Cheel”. Given that the location of Chikin Cheel is in northeastern Yucatan it is rather surprising that the region should be called Chikin Cheel. Perhaps this is due to migration. It might also be mentioned that there is the family name Chel, so it is not certain if this spelling is correct or whether it should actually be Chikin Chel. Chel is a type of jay bird and Cheel is, among other things, rainbow.

Cholula: “Place of the refugees”. See page 303 of Garibay’s *Llave del Náhuatl*: Cholollan - top. de una famosa ciudad en la región del actual Puebla. Lugar de refugiados de Choloa.

Chontalpa: “Place of the foreigners”. See Molina: Chontalli. extranjero o forastero., and Pa. es preposicion, la qual siempre se pospone a los nombres, en esta lēgua y quiere dezir, en.

Coatzaqualco: Coatzaqualco, according to the Siméon dictionary, means “place where the snakes are enclosed”, from coatl = snake, tzaqua = enclosed, detained, and co = place. Perhaps this is relevant to the idea that Quetzal Coatl made a raft of snakes and sailed off to the east.

Coba: There are a couple of possible meanings for the word **Coba**: CMM: Coba: especie de los faisanes llamados bach. / BMTV: Lago o laguna de agua: koba .l. hoc akal. Given its environment it would appear that in fact the name should be spelled **Koba** and not **Coba**, but the Mayan texts are consistent in using the word **Coba** so it would seem that the first meaning is the correct one.

Cochiztlan / Cuchiztlan: Cochiztlan is derived from cochi = sleep, rest, and -tlan = place. Cochiztli = deep sleep. See the paper “Puerto de Champoton” which has the following quote: “Scholes y Roys (1948) de que los mexicanos lo llamaban la “Provincia de Cochistlán” a toda la región comprendida por Champotón que fue definido como significativo de “lugar hediondo” tal vez por la gran cantidad de restos de pescado y marisco que debían haber sido abandonado en la playa y alrededor del templo en el mar.” That is, Scholes and Roys surmise that Cochiztlan might be either Champoton or Campeche, although here they are talking about provinces rather than towns of these names. (See Scholes and Roys, p. 34)

Cuxaan Zum: = “living rope”. See lines 6-8 of the narrative in Appendix B for a description of one such rope at Mani. See also Tozzer 1907, 153: It was at this period (meaning the period of the first creation) that there was a road suspended in the sky, stretching from Tuloom and Coba to Chi Cheen Itza and Uxmal. This pathway was called kušansum or sǎbke (white road). It was in the nature of a large rope (sum) supposed to be living (kušan) and in the middle flowed blood. It was by this rope that the food was sent to the ancient rulers who lived in the structures now in ruins. For some reason this rope was cut, the blood flowed out, and the rope vanished forever.

Ehecatl Quetzal Coatl: “Air/Wind Quetzal Coatl”. One of the aspects of the god Quetzal Coatl.

Hunac Ceel: This name translates as “Uniquely cold”, meaning very cold-blooded. In the semi-historical narratives of Yucatan there are various personages who lived a historically impossible length of time, and are thus assumed to have been people who had taken on names of deified heroes. One such name is Hunac Ceel.

Itza: an ethnic group of Maya, perhaps speaking a somewhat different dialect from those Maya which are referred to as Yucatec, although studies by Otto Shuman show a very close relationship between the Itza dialect as spoken around the lake of Peten and Yucatec. It is thought that the Itza migrated north from Nonohualco. As pointed out in the entry Nonohualco, it is interesting that the Maya colonial texts refer to the Itza as Ah Nun Itza, meaning “the mute Itza”, or people who don’t speak intelligible.

Itzmal / Itzamal: Izamal is derived from the Mayan place name Itzmal, a name also often employed by early Spanish writers such as Lizana. Itzmal is the site of one the largest pre-Columbian structures in Yucatan along with numerous other structures, and thus a logical stop on Kukul Can's sojourn. The site is said to be dedicated to the principal god Itzam Na which has often been glossed as "Lizard House". However, Lizana parses the name equating the syllable itz to "dew". Because of various place names which end in the suffix -mal it may well be that the suffix -mal means "place", and thus the name Itzmal could mean "Place of dew". See CMM: Itz: leche, lagrima, sudor, o goma por quaxar de arboles y de matas y de algunas yeruas. Compare with BMTV: Lagartos, como iguanas de tierra y agua: ytzam. For the Lizana quote see pp. 255-256: En el pueblo de Ytzmal, junto á un cerro de los muchos que se ha dicho hay labrados á mano, que era morada de sacerdotes gentiles, y en él se fundó despues el convento que hoy <256> permanece, habia un templo edificado á un ídolo, que tenian muy celebrado, que se llamaba *Ytzamat ul (Itzam Thul)*, que quiere decir él que recibe y posee la gracia, ó rocío del cielo. Decían los indios, que este fué un gran rey, señor de esta tierra, que era obedecido por hijo de Dioses, y cuando le preguntaban, como se llamaba, ó quien era; no respondia mas de estas palabras, *Ytzencaan Ytzen muyal (itzen caan, itzen muyal)*, que era decir: Yo soy el rocío, ó sustancia del cielo y nubes.

Kukul Can: The names Quetzal Coatl and Kukul Can are etymologically analogous in Nahuatl and Mayan, with Quetzal / Kukul meaning "feather", in particular "quetzal feather" and Coatl / Can meaning "snake". See BMTV: Plumas berdes mui galanas y grandes que sacan en los bayles: kuk .l. kukul. / CMM: Can: culebra; nombre generico. The names Quetzal Coatl and Kukul Can, meaning "Precious-feathered Serpent" in Nahuatl and "Feathered Serpent" in Mayan, are the Nahuatl and Mayan equivalents for the name of the god-king who by many accounts originated in what is now known as Tula, a town and archaeological site in the state of Hidalgo.

Mexico: From Kartunen: The etymology of this is opaque. Because of the difference in vowel length, it cannot be derived from ME-TL 'maguey.' the sequence XIH also differs in vowel length from XĪC-TLI 'navel,' which has been proposed as a component element. The final element is locative -C(O).

Mictlanalco: "House of the place of the dead", from Mictlan = "place of the dead", calli = house and -co = "place".

Noh Cacab: Noh Cacab, meaning "large village", is the Mayan name for the town of Santa Elena which is situated on the road from Uxmal to Kabah. See CMM: Noh: cosa grande. ¶ noh be: camino grande y real. / Cacab: pueblo pequeño /o/ asiento de pueblo pequeño.

Nonoalca / Nonoualca: The people from Nonoualco. See Nonoualco.

Nonoualco / Nonoalco / Nonohualco: There are various spellings for this place name: Nonoalco, Nonoualco, Nonohualco. It is called in one case Nonohualco Teotlixco in Muñoz Camargo. Muñoz Camargo usually calls this place Onoalco. There is general agreement that Nonohualco is the same as Onoalco / Onoualco / Onohualco, and is situated just west of Xicalanco which in part borders on the western edge of the Laguna de Términos, Campeche. From Siméon's dictionary Onohualco apparently means "flat land", from "onoc" = lying down. However, Garibay has the following note on page 306 of his Llave del Náhuatl: Nonohualco, Nonoalco, Onohualco — top. de varios sitios,

aunque el principal es mítico. Et. dud. “Donde moraron gentes” (onoque, onohua); “donde son mudos” e. d. gente a quien no se entiende lo que hablan (nonotli: mudo). For Teotlixco see Siméon: Teotlixco s. Provincia situada hacia el mar del Sur. También es el nombre de un poblado (Sah.). The place name Teotlixco appears to be the conjunction of teotl = “god” and ixtli = “face, surface”. From the foregoing it is clear that there are various meanings attributed to this place name, but foremost amongst them is “Place of the mute”, with the word “mute” applied to people who do not speak an intelligible language. In the Mayan texts there is a similar reference to the Itza who at times are called “Ah Nun Itza”, the mute Itza. Whether it is coincidental that there is the place name Nonohualco in Nahuatl and the fact that it is thought that Ah Nun Itza come from the area around Nonohualco deserves further study. See BMTV: Boçal, persona que no sabe el lenguaje que se habla en la tierra: nunal, ah nun .l. nun.

Olmeca Xicalanca: For Olmeca see Siméon: olmecatl s. pl. olmeca. Pueblos llegados al Anahuac en lejanos tiempos, a los se atribuye generalmente la construcción de las pirámides de Teotihuacan (Clav.). For Xicalanca see the entry for Xicalanco.

Onoalco / Onoualco / Onohualco: See the entry for Nonoalco, Nonoualco, Nonohualco.

Potonchan: Potonchan is the present-day Frontera, Tabasco, at the mouth of the Grijalva River. According to the Siméon dictionary, the name is derived from the Nahuatl words potoni = stinking and chantli = house, residence, habitation. The similarity of the name Potonchan to Champotón has led to some confusion about which town is meant, and, as in the case of the Siméon dictionary for example has placed the site of Potonchan at Champoton. However, while it is fairly clear that the place name Potonchan is derived from the Nahuatl language, it is certain from the Mayan literature that the place name Champoton is derived from the Mayan name Chakan Putun / Chakan Poton = “savannah of potters”, due to the clay deposits in the area.

Poton / Putun: The people from Potonchan. See Potonchan.

Puuc: the hill region south of the Yucatecan plain. See CMM: Puuc: cerro, monte, o sierra baxa, o cordillera de sierra como la que va por junto a Maxcanu, Ti Cul, y Ti Kax. ¶ vitz: la sierra alta.

Quetzal Coatl: The names Quetzal Coatl and Kukul Can are etymologically analogous in Nahuatl and Mayan, with Quetzal / Kukul meaning “feather”, in particular “quetzal feather” and Coatl / Can meaning “snake”. See BMTV: Plumas berdes mui galanas y grandes que sacan en los bayles: kuk .l. kukul. / CMM: Can: culebra; nombre generico. The names Quetzal Coatl and Kukul Can, meaning “Precious-feathered Serpent” in Nahuatl and “Feathered Serpent” in Mayan, are the Nahuatl and Mayan equivalents for the name of the god-king who by many accounts originated in what is now known as Tula, a town and archaeological site in the state of Hidalgo.

Tenochtitlan: “Place of the nopal”, from tenochtli = Tuna lapidea (Hern.) and -tlan = place.

Teotihuacan: “Place sent by the gods”, from teoti = to be a god or become a god, ihua = to send, -can = place. There is some question as to what the original name of Teotihuacan might have been, with suggestions from the reading of Mayan hieroglyphs that it might have been “Place of Reeds”, In as much as Teotihuacan predates the ruins at present-day

Tula, perhaps this place was originally called Tollan, but for some yet unknown reason the population moved from there to the present-day ruin site of Tula.

Tlilan Tlapallan: The suffix Tlilan appears to be derived from tlilania, which according to the Molina vocabulary means: debuxar o hazer rayas con tinta, o echar perfil de negro a lo que se pinta con pinzel. For Tlapallan: (red (earth) place?). See page 310 of Garibay's Llave del Náhuatl: Tlapallan — top. de un país mítico. “La tierra del rojo”. Región legendaria a donde se encaminó Quetzal Coatl. For what it is worth, for the Maya and to some extent for the Nahuatl red is the world direction color for the east and Acatl years are associated with the east. Siméon concurs with Garibay that Tlapallan is derived from tlapalli = red and the suffix –tlan = in, within, near, etc. Thus, the whole name of Tlilan Tlapallan appears to mean “the place which is painted / written with red.”

Tollan: See Tula below.

Toltec: People from Tollan / Tullan.

Toltecatoytl: See Siméon: toltecatoytl s. Maestría en las artes mecánicas, todo lo relativo a la mecánica. R. toltecatl. toltecatl s. Arteson, maestro, obrero hábil, artista...

Topiltzin Quetzal Coatl: “Our ruler Quetzal Coatl”.

Tula / Tollan / Tullan: From the Nahuatl name Tollan / Tullan. Siméon has this entry: Tollan o Tullan s. Ciudad antigua fundada por los toltecas, capital de un Estado cuyo primer rey, Chalchiuhtlanetzin, se supone que empezó a reinar en el 667 (Clav.); hoy Tula, situado a 50 kilómetros al norte de la ciudad de México. R. tollin, tlan. (Tollin is Nahuatl for “reed” and –tlan means “the place of”, making Tollan meaning “the place of the reeds”, probably so-called because of the reeds which grow along the river flowing through the valley below the site of the ruins. In the Nahuatl texts given in the Florentine Codex this name is written as Tullan or Tulla, and generally translated by Anderson and Dibble as Tula.

Tulum / Tuluum: “Walled in” See BMTV: Cerca de pueblo o güerta: tuluum .l. v tuluumil v pach cah. Probably originally from tul luum: surrounded with earth.

Tzompantli: Siméon: estaca, poste donde se colgaban las cabezas de las víctimas. R. tzontli, pantli.

Uxmal: While various sources claim that the meaning of Uxmal is based on the corruption of the word oxmal (literally “three times” from ox = 3 and –mal = times, but often glossed as “Thrice built”), there is reason to think that for a place name the suffix –mal has a different function. That is to say, there are several places in the Yucatan peninsula which have their names end in –mal, and none of these use numbers in their name, meaning that in these cases –mal is not a number classifier as in the case of oxmal. Some examples of the usage of the suffix –mal in this manner are in the place names Akumal, Chactemal (modern Chetumal), Emal, Itzmal (modern Izamal), Otmal / Otmal, Ulumal. Given the foregoing, it appears that there is principally one meaning of the word ux which would give the name Uxmal a meaningful name, and that is “to harvest”. If this is true, then Uxmal means “the place of harvest”. See DMM: Coger con la mano fruta y legumbres: vx.

Xochicalco: “House of Flowers”, from *xochitl* = flowers, *calli* = house and *-co* = place. See page 311 of Garibay’s *Llave del Náhuatl*, entry *Xochicalcatl*: “En la casa de las flores”, o quizá de los cantos, por la significación metafórica de *xochitl*.

X-Koch: For the meaning of the name **Koch** see CMM: Koch .l. ix *koch*: higuera que llaman del infierno de que se saca aceite muy medicinal. ¶ sus ojas son buenas para dolor de tripas faxandolas con ellas y calientes a la lumbre y puestas sobre llagas viejas las sana mudandolos cada día y limpiando la llaga.

Xicalanco: Xicalanco is derived from *Xicalli* = jicara, probably so named because of the *xicara* trees which dot the savannah in the area. Scholes and Roys place the site at present-day Cerrillos, Campeche, which is on the shore of Laguna de Términos. However, there also exists Xicalango a few km east northeast on the other side of the peninsula on the shore of the Gulf of Mexico.

X-Toloc: “Lady lizard”, the name of one of the cenotes at Chi Cheen Itza. See CMM: Lagarto, otro que anda por los arboles: *toloc*.

Yucatan: The name for **Yucatan** most probably comes from a combination of Taíno with Nahuatl. The name seems not to be Mayan because most Mayan place names have recognizable meanings and **Yucatan** does not, although there have been various attempts to explain it as a Mayan word. The reason for supposing that **Yucatan** is derived from a Nahuatl word is because of the suffix *-tan*. The Nahuatl suffixes *-tla* and *-tlan* both indicate “the place of”. According to Bernal Díaz, the word **yuca** is the native word for cassava in Cuba and Jamaica. Note that the word **tlati** in his explanation given here is transformed into *-tlan* in the last instance of the mention of **Yucatlan**. The Nahuatl vocabularies do not give **tlati**, so either this is a mis-transcription of the original text or perhaps alternatively there was some other language such as Taíno involved here. However, there is the Nahuatl word **tlatli**, meaning cultivated ground or garden bed, and as that fits the description attributed to **tlati** we could assume that **tlati** was written in error. Note further that Bernal Díaz states that **Yucatan** is not the name which the Maya applied to their land. See page 24 of the 1904 edition of Bernal Díaz’s book: “y ansi mismo les mostravan los montones donde ponen las plantas de cuyas rraizes se haze el pan caçabe, y llamase en la ysla de cuba yuca, y los yndios dezian, q[ue] las auia en su tierra, y dezian tlati por la tierra en que las plantauan, por manera que yuca con tlati quiere decir yucatan, y para declarar esto dezianles los españoles questavan con el Velasq[ue]z hablando juntamente con los yndios, señor, dizen estos yndios, que su tierra se dize yucatlan y ansi se quedo con este nonbre que en su lengua no se dize ansi.”

Zac Be: The word a paved road, often written as *sacbe*, is derived from the Mayan word *zac be* / *çac be* = white road. See *Calepino Maya de Motul*: *Çac be*: caçada, o camino de calçada. From this it could be surmised that this term should be applied only to paved roads, as opposed to the swept roads which from many indications and reports made up the majority of the road network in Yucatan and in Meso-America in general.

Zac Beeliz: The meaning of *Ix Zac Beeliz* is “Ella que camina el camino blanco” (Bolles y Folan 2001). See the entry *Beeliz* above about the meaning of *Beliz* / *Belize* for further discussion about the meaning of *Beeliz*.

Zac Ii: Zac Ii is the Mayan name for Valladolid, Yucatan, the meaning of which is “white hawk”. Over the front north-facing door of the cathedral at the Zocalo of Zac Ii is the image of the bird.

Zac Luum Cheen: Roys thinks that Sacalum is the modern name for Zac Luum Cheen which appears on page 8 of the Chumayel. It is one of the many places which the Itzas visited on their wanderings, and is listed in conjunction with Ticul, which makes sense in terms of location.

Zahcab / Zazcab: See DMM: Cueva y tierra blanca de donde la sacan: çahcab.

Ziho: This is the abbreviated version of the older Mayan name for Mérida, Ich Caan Ziho = “In heaven born”. In modern Mayan the place name is Ho, without the locative prefix “ti”.

Appendix A

(From Anderson and Dibbles' "Florentine Codex, Book 3, pp. 33-34)

Twelfth Chapter, which telleth how Quetzal Coatl fled, took flight, when he went there to Tlapallan,¹⁶ and of the many things he did on the way.

And still many more portents came upon the Tolteca until Tula was destroyed.

And when these were happening, Quetzal Coatl, who already was troubled, who already was saddened, was thereupon minded to go, to abandon his city of Tula.

Thereupon he made ready. It is said that he had everything burned—his house of gold, his house of seashells; and still other Tolteca craft objects which were marvelous achievements, which were costly achievements, he buried, all; he hid all there in difficult places, perhaps inside a mountain or in a canyon.

And also the cacao trees he changed into mesquites. And all the precious birds, the resplendent trogons, the lovely cotingas, the roseate spoonbills, all of them he sent away beforehand. They kept themselves before him; they went toward Anauac.¹⁷

And when this was done, thereupon he departed; thereupon he followed the road.

Then he came to arrive elsewhere, at Quauhtitlan. A very thick tree stood [there], and it was very tall. He stood by it. Thereupon he called forth for his mirror. Thereupon he looked at himself; he saw himself in the mirror; he said: "Already I am an old man." Then that place he named Ueuequauhtitlan.¹⁸ Thereupon he stoned, he threw many stones at the tree. And as he threw the stones, the stones indeed went into it in various places, were stuck to the old tree in various places. Just the same has it continued to exist; thus is it seen. Beginning at the foot, [the stones] extend rising to its top.

And when Quetzal Coatl followed the road, they went blowing flutes for him.

Once again he came to rest elsewhere. Upon a stone he sat. He supported himself on it with his hands.¹⁹ Thereupon he looked toward Tula, and thereupon he wept. As one sobbing

¹⁶ Sec Fourth chapter, supra; also Garibay, *Llave del nahuatl*, p. 310, or Caso, *Tire Aztecs*, p. 25.

¹⁷ Anauac. Seler, in *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, Vol. II, pp. 49 sqq., argues that the name always referred to the "reichen Küstengebiete der Nord- und Südmeers, die Lander der Golfküste und an der pazifischen Küste, und zwar insbesondere die Gebiete wohin von den mit México verbündeten Städten des Hochlandes aus die grossen Handelsexpeditionen unternommen wurden...."

Of the phrase *ixpan onotiaque*, a note in Seler's *Einige Kapitel*, p. 287, n. 1, suggests that it might better be read *ixpan nonotiaque*, "'auf die Nonotiaque zu' d. h. sie suchten auf die Leute von Nonotiaco, 'wo man stumm wird,' d. h. die fremdsprachigen Nonoualca in Anauac Xicalanco."

¹⁸ Cf. Garibay, *Llave del náhuatl*, p. 304.

¹⁹ There may be a copyist's error here. This paragraph could, by inserting here the first paragraph of the Thirteenth Chapter, read:

"Once again he came to rest elsewhere. Upon a stone he sat. He supported himself on it with his hands. And as he supported himself on the rock by his hands, they sank deeply; as if in mud did the palms of his hands penetrate. Likewise his buttocks, as they were on the rock, submerged deeply. They are clearly visible, so deeply are they pierced [in the rock]. Hence the place was named Temacpalco.

"Thereupon he looked toward Tula, and thereupon he wept. As one sobbing violently did he weep. Two hailstones fell as his tears; over his face did his tears spread; as they dripped they indeed pierced holes in the stone."

Cf. Seler, *Einige Kapitel*, p. 287, who suspected an omission; Garibay, in *Llave del náhuatl*, pp. 149 sq. and 233 sq., who transposes the passages as above; and the corresponding Spanish text.

violently did he weep. Two hailstones fell as his tears; over his face did his tears spread; as they dripped they indeed pierced holes in the stone.

Appendix B

(From Allan Burns' *An Epoch of Miracles*, pp. 37-38)

Not far from Ticul, where Alonzo has spent most of his life, is the town of Mani. Mani today is a quiet town, about eighteen miles off the main highway between Muna and Felipe Carrillo Puerto. In addition to the fame Mani has as being the home of the prophet who predicted the coming of the Spaniards to the New World, it was the location where Fray Diego de Landa, in an act of faith, burned a large pile of Yucatec Mayan picture manuscripts soon after the conquest. This next narrative was untitled, although the story was referred to at other times as "The Old Lady of Mani." This version was written down by Alonzo in a notebook he kept after we had worked together for a year.

THE OLD LADY OF MANI

Well, there in the town of Mani there is a deep well.
There's a huge box there; there's a huge rope there, rolled up in the box.
It's a thick rope. The thing is, the rope lives—it has blood.
There in the middle of the town of Mani it is rolled up.
Half of the rope. When it is cut, blood runs out.
When you try to roll it up again, it won't go.
Long ago it was cut like that, it was put in two huge boxes. / 38
That's the only way it can be rolled up, because one box can't carry it.
There at the deep well there in the middle of the center of Mani,
there is water, because the well is enchanted.
It was made that way by the ancient Makers.²⁰ It was spoiled in the old times.
At midday strange things are heard. Roosters sing and turkeys shout. People talk, dogs bark.
Burros shout, pigs, goats, cows, horses—it's enchanted like that.
There is a big path inside the Deep Well that runs to the town of Ho.
There underneath the cathedral the big path comes out.
That road keeps going, it doesn't have an end.
It just keeps going, it doesn't have an end.
Because the path that runs there goes all the way to Jerusalem too.
That rope that goes from Mani to Ho,
there is where the "poor people's horse" is going to run—the squirrel.
There is where the "rich people's horse" is going to run too—a real Spanish horse.
There they will be sent to get some hot tortillas from Ho and bring them to Mani.
When the horse gets on, it falls because its feet slip like that. Because it can't go like that.
That "horse of the poor people"—the squirrel—has feet too.
When it grabs the rope—the "horse of the poor people"—with its claws, then it can't fall like that.
"Tha'—tha'—tha'" it goes like that.
It comes right away running with the hot tortillas to Mani too.
There is the Old Witch Who Sells Water too.
There is the Feathered Serpent.
There water will be sold:
you'll be given a little nutshell of water; you'll give one boy child for it like that.
These things are coming to pass. The day is growing closer too.

²⁰ The word used here was *hmen*, which is often translated as "shaman." The word is derived from *meentic*, "to make" or "to create," so I have translated *hmen* as "maker" here.

Appendix C

Trying to Separate the Factual Quetzal Coatl from the Mythical

The names **Quetzal Coatl** and **Kukul Can**, meaning “Precious-feathered Serpent” in Nahuatl and “Feathered Serpent” in Mayan, are the Nahuatl and Mayan equivalents for the name god-king who by most accounts originated in what is now known as Tula, a town and archaeological site in the state of Hidalgo.²¹

It should be noted that in the title of this paper we mention that Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can, as told to us through the indigenous sources, was active from the 9th Century through the 14th Century. Obviously, this is a person of mythical proportions, a theme not uncommon not only to Meso-American semi-historical narratives,²² but also to Biblical narratives in which we are told that various people lived to what are physically impossible ages. In the semi-historical narratives of Yucatan another personage also living a historically impossible length of time is Hunac Ceel.²³ Thus, even if we take the history of the flight of Quetzal Coatl from Tula as being a true account of what happened to a particular individual, we must ask ourselves, given that the Sahagún text states that upon arrival in Cuauhtitlan, Quetzal Coatl, when he “saw himself in the mirror; he said: ‘Already I am an old man.’”,²⁴ whether it was physically possible for him, upon arrival in Yucatan in the guise of Kukul Can, to have accomplished what the various narratives said he did. Indeed, one could ask whether or not it was the even same person mentioned in Sahagún who arrived in Yucatan with the Itza.

One possible explanation for the apparent length of time a “person” lived is the custom of people taking on alternative names. There are various indications that people in Meso-America took on nicknames (for a lack of a better word) with great frequency. This might in part be the result of the naming systems employed. For example, Landa gives us an insight as to how this worked for the Maya in the following comment:

Los nombres de los padres duran siempre en los hijos; en las hijas no. A sus hijos e hijas los llamaban siempre por el nombre del padre y de la madre; el del padre como propio, y el de la madre como apelativo; de esta manera, el hijo de *Chel* y *Chan* llamaban *Nachanchel* (**Na Chan Cfel**), que quiere decir hijos de fulanos y esta es la causa (por la cual) dicen los indios que los de un nombre son deudos y se tratan por tales.

This naming system continued to be employed in the Peten through the late 1800's.²⁵ Not mentioned by Landa, but clearly evident in the Mayan literature, is that the male children of Landa's hypothetical union were called Ah Na Chan Chel and the females Ix Na Chan

²¹ Ringle (p. 187) points to Durán (1971, pp. 128-129, 133) to say that Cholula was Quetzal Coatl's principal seat. Oddly enough, Sahagún's sources make no mention of Cholula.

²² I use the term “semi-historical” because while these narratives, such as the Mayan Chronicles which are to be found in the various “Books of Chilam Balam”, are presented as historical narratives, in fact when one investigates the contents it becomes clear that events seem not to follow what we would consider to be a purely historical model.

²³ This name translates as “Uniquely cold”, meaning very cold-blooded. He will be mentioned again later in this paper.

²⁴ Book 3, Chapter 12. See Appendix B for some of the more pertinent texts from this book.

²⁵ See <http://www.famsi.org/research/bolles/autobiography/index.html> for an example of the late use of this naming practice.

Chel.²⁶ Obviously there had to be more than this in order to distinguish the individual children within the family, and today this alternative name is called **baxal kaba**,²⁷ known as “apodo” in Spanish.

A good case in point is that of the name of Hunac Ceel. From the text about his rise to power²⁸ we learn that he did not come from a royal family and the his family name was Ah Mex Cuuc. One could assume that he took on the name of Hunac Ceel because he fearlessly jumped into the cenote at Chi Cheen Itza and brought forth a prophecy from the gods of the well. Thus the name Hunac Ceel belongs to the class of names now called **baxal kaba**. Further, we look at the time periods in which a person named Hunac Ceel is supposed to have existed, it becomes obvious that there had to be more than one individual who named himself Hunac Ceel.

As a secondary naming device, there is some indication that amongst the Maya, people were also given the name of the day of the Xoc Kin²⁹ they were born on. From Sahagún and Durán³⁰ it appears that for the Nahuatl speaking people the same was also true, although there it almost appears that this is in fact a primary naming device.

It is thus reasonable to assume that when we are talking about historical personages named Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can we are in fact talking about several individuals who assumed the name of this god-king.

Given the above, some of the early historians and even presently some researchers have tried to make distinctions between the various personages named Quetzal Coatl. The one mentioned above in Sahagun’s Book 3 is sometimes referred to as Topiltzin Ce Acatl Quetzal Coat or Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzal Coatl,^{31 32} or more simply Topiltzin Quetzal

²⁶ **Ah** is the male prefix and **Ix** is the female prefix.

²⁷ **Baxal kaba** = “play name”. So far a search through the Franciscan vocabularies and other colonial sources has yet to turn up the correct colonial term. However, whatever it might have been it appears to have been associated with the verb root **pat**. There are also the terms **paal kaba** (“child’s name”) and **coco kaba** (“crazy name”) which show up in the literature, and perhaps one of these, especially **coco kaba**, is the correct original term for this type of name.

²⁸ Chumayel, pp. 10-11.

²⁹ **Xoc Kin**, also known as **Tzol Kin**, and in Nahuatl as the **Tonalamatl**, is the 260 day count used for divinatory purposes.

³⁰ Book of the Gods and Rites and The Ancient Calendar

³¹ Ce Acatl is the day One Reed of the 260 day count which is the day Quetzal Coatl was supposedly born in. However, there is also the claim that this is the year he was born in, with some going so far as to specify the year Ce Acatl / 895 AD as being the birth year. In the year Ce Acatl, which occurs only once every 52 years, there are two days named Ce Acatl, the first day of the year from which the year derives its name and the 261st day. One claim is that other events occurred in this particular Quetzal Coatl’s life, such as his ascent to the throne and the year of his death, on the day Ce Acatl, in the case of the ascent, and in the year Ce Acatl in the case of the year, which reinforces the use of this name.

It has been suggested that 52 years was the maximum length of time a person was allowed to live, there being something about it being unacceptable to live into the next 52 year cycle. In any case, it is claimed that Quetzal Coatl was born in the year Ce Acatl and died 52 years later in the next year Ce Acatl.

There is still not general agreement as to which year Ce Acatl Quetzal Coatl was born in and which one he died in. Some sources, mostly Mexican, use the dates 843-895 AD as being those of his life span, while other, more generally North American, use the dates 895-947 AD.

Coatl. Another name which supposedly apply to this particular personage is Nacxiti Topiltzin.³³ In Durán there is a seemingly contradictory pair of chapters, Chapter 1, “The High Priest Topiltzin (Huemac)”, and Chapter 6, “The God Quetzal Coatl”. The personage in Chapter 1 is treated as a real person, whereas the personage in Chapter 6 is treated as a god. As noted by the translators of Durán’s work, “In Durán’s time there was utter confusion about Topiltzin-Quetzal Coatl, the Toltec priest-king and holy man...”

One of interesting facets of Quetzal Coatl and his people was their legendary ability to move from one place to another with great speed. Sahagún has the following comment:³⁴

And for his vassals, the Tolteca, nowhere was [too] distant [where] they dealt. Indeed swiftly they quickly reached where they went. And so very quickly they went that they were called *tlanguacemilh uime*.³⁵

And there was a hill called Tzatzitepetl. It is also just so named today. It is said that there the crier mounted. [For] what was required, he mounted there to cry out a proclamation. He could be heard in Anauac.³⁶ Indeed everywhere was heard what he said, what laws were made. Swiftly was there going forth; they knew what Quetzal Coatl had commanded the people.

Perhaps this view of the Toltec powers is the inspiration for the myths of the supernatural subterranean and celestial pathways.

From Sahagún (Book 3, chapter 12) it appears that Quetzal Coatl went from Tula through various highland places to Tlapallan (red (earth) place?). The first stop was Anauac (“water’s edge”, meaning the large lakes of what is now the city of Mexico D.F.) Then he went to Quauhtitlan (probably Cuauhtitlán, just north of Mexico D.F.), Temacpalco, Tepanoayan, Coaapan, Cochtocan (apparently all still in the state of Mexico), after which he crossed the pass between Iztac Cihuatl and Popocatepetl and continued to Poyauhtecatl (volcano of Orizaba). After this “he built a house all underground at a place called Mictlan.” Then he reached the seacoast and set forth to Tlapallan. Curiously enough, the final comment is that “No one knoweth how he went to arrive there at Tlapallan.”

So in fact from Sahagún all we know is what his route was in Mexico.

Now we come to the Mayan sources.

I mentioned the prophecy for 4 Ahau Katun, which appears in the Tizimin and Chumayel:

³² There is some discussion as to the meaning of Topiltzin. One possibility is given by Garibay in “Llave del Nahuatl”: “our child” from “to-” = “our” and “piltzin” = “child”. Another possibility is given in Siméon’s dictionary: “principal sacrificial priest”, derived from “topilli” = “bar, rod, scepter of justice”.

³³ Garibay: Nacxiti — n. pr. de una divinidad de los viajeros. Probablemente es Quetzal Coatl en su calidad de patrón de los caminantes, o una deidad similar más antigua. Et. dud. tv. “El que tiene cuatro pies” (nahui-icxiti). Siméon’s Diccionario notes: “Nacxiti: s. Uno de los hermanos de Yacatecutli, dios de los viajeros (Sah.). R. nauí, icxiti.”

³⁴ Book 3, Chapter 3.

³⁵ Those who walked the whole way without tiring, according to Sahagún, Robredo ed., Vol. III, p. 114.

³⁶ Corresponding Spanish text: “pregonaua, un pregonero, para llamar a los pueblos apartados: los quales distan, mas de cient leguas, que se nombra Anaoc... Cf. also infra, Twelfth Chapter, n. 2.

e730 Can Ahau Katun u buluc dzit katun cu xocol
 Chi C'Een Itza u hedz katun ti canil Ahau Katun
 ulom tu cahal Ah Itza
 ulom kuk, ulom yaxum, ulom ah kantenal
 ulom xe kik tu can uadz

e735 ulom Kukul Can tu pach Ah Itza tu caten
 u than katun uale

4 Ahau Katun is the 11th katun which is counted
 4 Ahau Katun is seated at Chi Cheen Itza
 The Itzas shall return to their city
 The quetzal shall return, the blue-bird shall return, the Ah Kante Nal³⁷ shall return
 The vomiting of blood shall come around for the fourth time
 Kukul Can shall return with the Ah Itza once again
 This is the word of the katun it seems

From this it is difficult to determine which 4 Ahau Katun this could be. Using the Mayan 24 year katun calendar correlation the most probable ones would be either 816 AD or 1128 AD. In the Maya Chronicles, the earlier 4 Ahau Katun of 816 AD was much more active. This was the katun that peoples came from the four corners of the world to gather at Chi Cheen Itza, and is called "the katun of the great descent, the little descent (noh emal, dze emal)". It is also stated that for 13 ahau katuns they stayed there until Chi Cheen Itza was destroyed by Hunac Ceel and the people went to live in the forest at Tan Xuluc Muul. There is also the comment that "Forty years they came to establish their dwellings again after they lost their way to Chakan Putun."

In the Chumayel Roys has the following footnotes about this prophecy and Kukul Can:

Here the count recommences for no apparent reason. The feathers in the picture no doubt represent Kukulcan, or Quetzal Coatl, the feathered serpent. The stars in the picture may refer to the four Venus periods of the Dresden Codex. It will be recalled that the Mexicans believed that Quetzal Coatl became the planet Venus after his death.

This statement is important as it enables us to date the beginning of the worship of Kukulcan at Chi Cheen Itzá which was accompanied by a number of new architectural features at this city. Cf. Landa 1928, pages 62-68, and Relaciones de Yucatan, I, page 121. The Tizimin version of this prophecy is even more explicit than the Chumayel, for it says: "Kukulcan shall come with the Itzá." Although Torquemada (Book 3, chap. 7) says that Quetzal Coatl went to "Onohualco,"³⁸ a term comprising Tabasco, Campeche

³⁷ Apparently a type of bird, perhaps in the guise of a sorcerer. The first two items are birds; the famous quetzal and the lesser-known Cotinga amabilis Gould, a bird prized for the green feathers on its breast. The name ah kante nal appears twice in the Chumayel, and in both instances is not translated by Roys. However, in the other instance it is paired with Ix Puc Yol Ha and is said to be a sorcerer. Ix Puc Yol Ha in other texts is paired with birds of omen, but further deductions about Ah Kante Nal are difficult to make at this time.

³⁸ Apparently meaning "flat land", from "onoc" = lying down. However, Garibay has the following note on page 306 of his Llave: Nonohualco, Nonoalco, Onohualco — top. de varios sitios, aunque el principal es mítico. Et. dud. "Donde moraron gentes" (onoque, onohua); "donde son mudos" e. d. gente a quien no se entiende lo que hablan (nonotli: mudo).

and Yucatan, the writer is inclined to doubt that the Kukulcan who came to Chi Cheen Itzá in the Tenth Century was the actual culture-hero, who is supposed to have lived about the Seventh Century. Like the Kukulcan mentioned in the Tizimin (p. 23) in connection with the Hunac Ceel episode about 1200 A.D., this was probably also a ruler who bore as a title the name of the deified hero.

From Landa (Porrúa pp.12-14) we have a bit more detail of the route supposedly taken by Kukul Can. The first paragraph of Landa's statement agrees with the prophecy given above that Kukul Can arrived with the Itza to populate Chi Cheen Itza.³⁹ Then, in the next paragraph it is stated that he moved on to populate Mayapan and built a temple which was named after him. After some years he moved on to Chakan Putun and built a temple similar to that at Chi Cheen Itza on an island a stone's throw away from the shore.

³⁹ Chi Cheen Itza existed before the arrival of the Itzas or Mexicans and apparently was called Uucil Yaab Nal ("seven quantities of corn") prior to having its name changed to Chi Cheen Itza. The walls of Las Monjas has a mural showing the Mexicans attacking a costal village, perhaps Chi Cheen Itza's port which some consider to have been Isla Cerritos.

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Figures



Figure 1: The multiple aspects of Quetzal Coatl.

A, B: Images of the god Ehecatl Quetzal Coatl from Duran and Codex Borgia;
 C, Depiction of ruler Topiltzin Quetzal Coatl performing autosacrifice from the Florentine Codex.
 D: Quetzal Coatl, Detail from folio 10 recto (Trecena 3), Codex Telleriano-Remensis.



Figure 2: Quetzal Coatl Cult Network as defined by Ringle, Gallareta Negrón, and Bey (1998) (Adapted from Ringle et al. 1998: Figure 1).

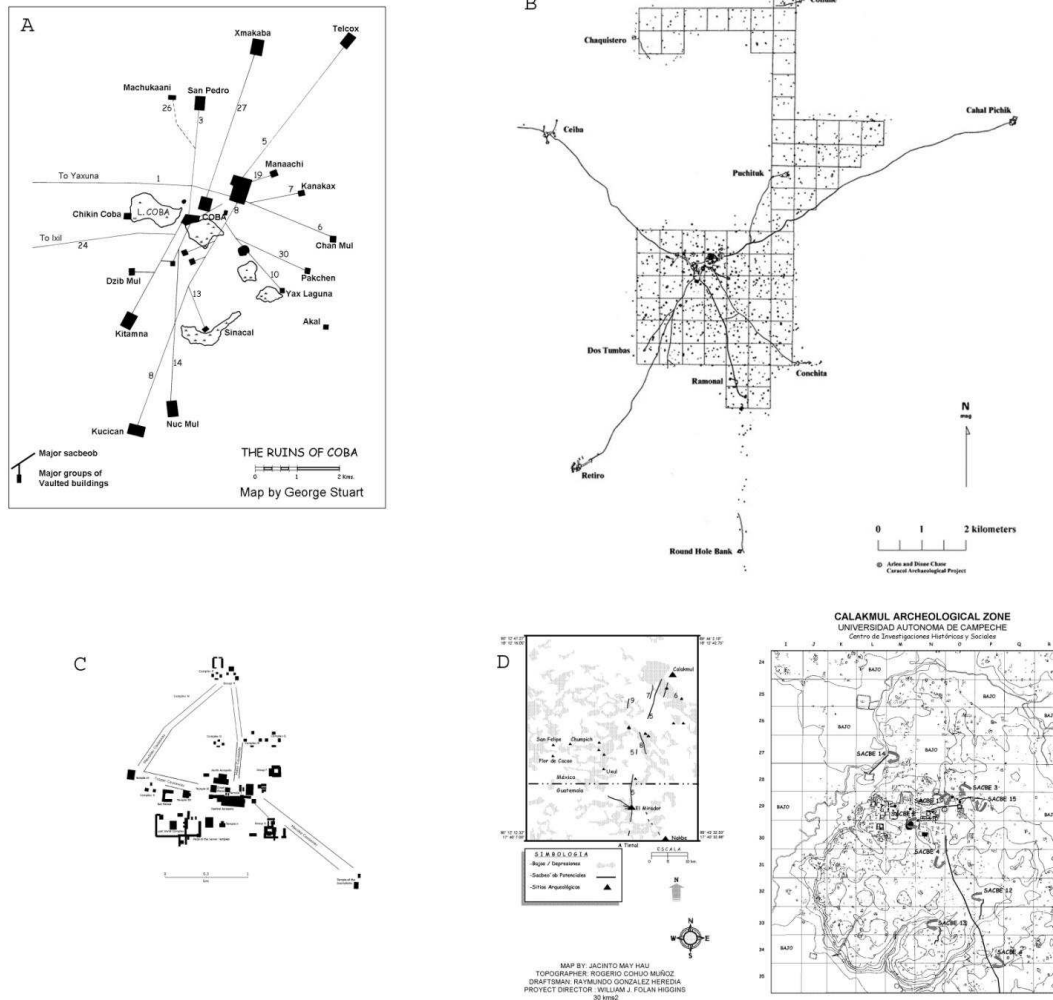


Figure 3: The zac be systems of Classic Maya cities, including A: Coba; B: Caracol; C: Tikal; and D: Calak Muul.

The zac be system of Caracol and Coba connect the city with surrounding communities and subordinate centers, including the Coba-Yaxuna causeway that extends 100 kms and the 20 km long Ixil zac be. The zac be system of Tikal is internal, connecting plaza groups within the site epicenter. The zac be system of Calak Muul combines both internal and intersite systems. These images are of different scales.

Adapted from Folan et al. (1983), Chase and Chase (2001), Carr and Hazard (1961), and Folan et al. (2001).

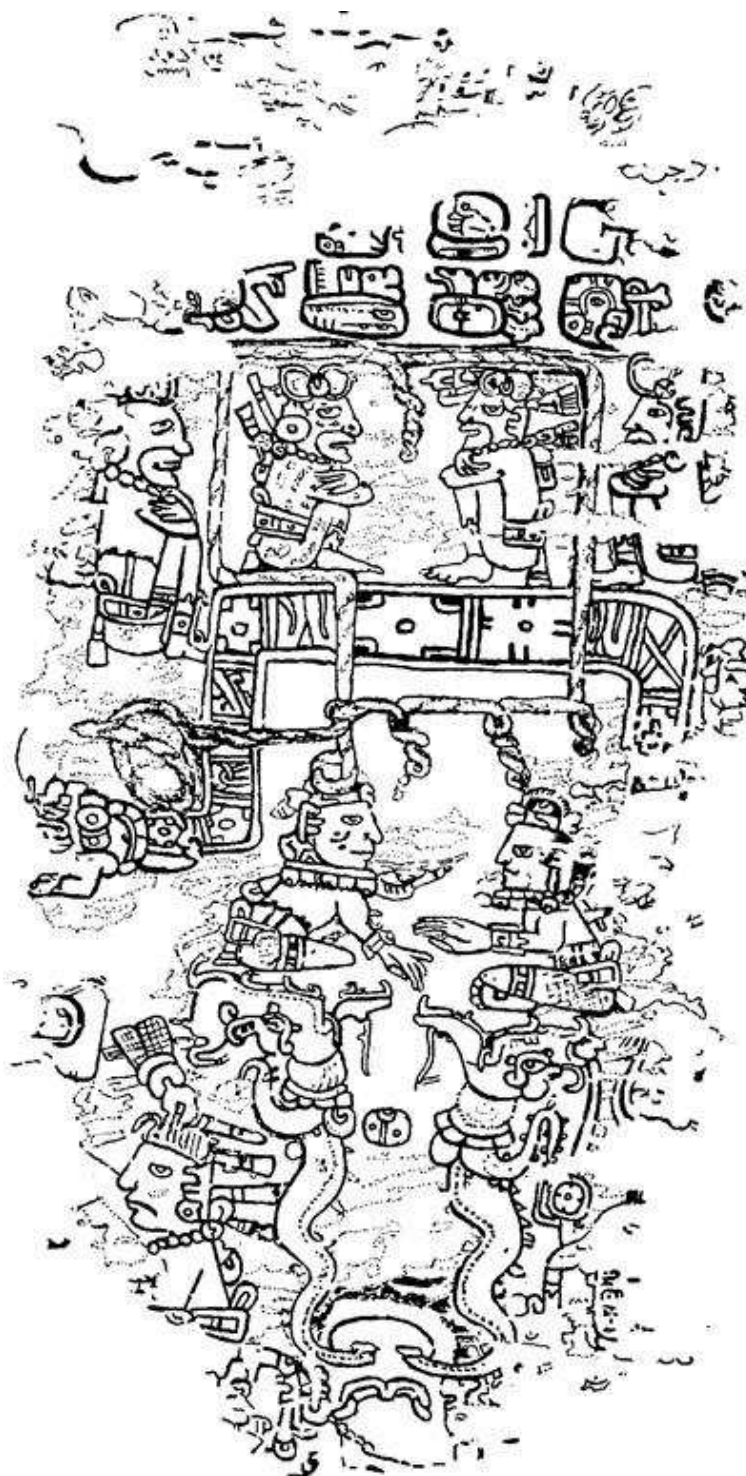


Figure 4: Images of cuxaan zum as a rope or umbilical cord connecting places and individuals,
Codex Perenianus, Page 22.



Figure 5: Quetzal Coatl and Xipe Totec migrating.

From the Codex Kingsborough in this image, the migrants pass through an underground passageway through a mountain (Kingsborough 1831-1848)

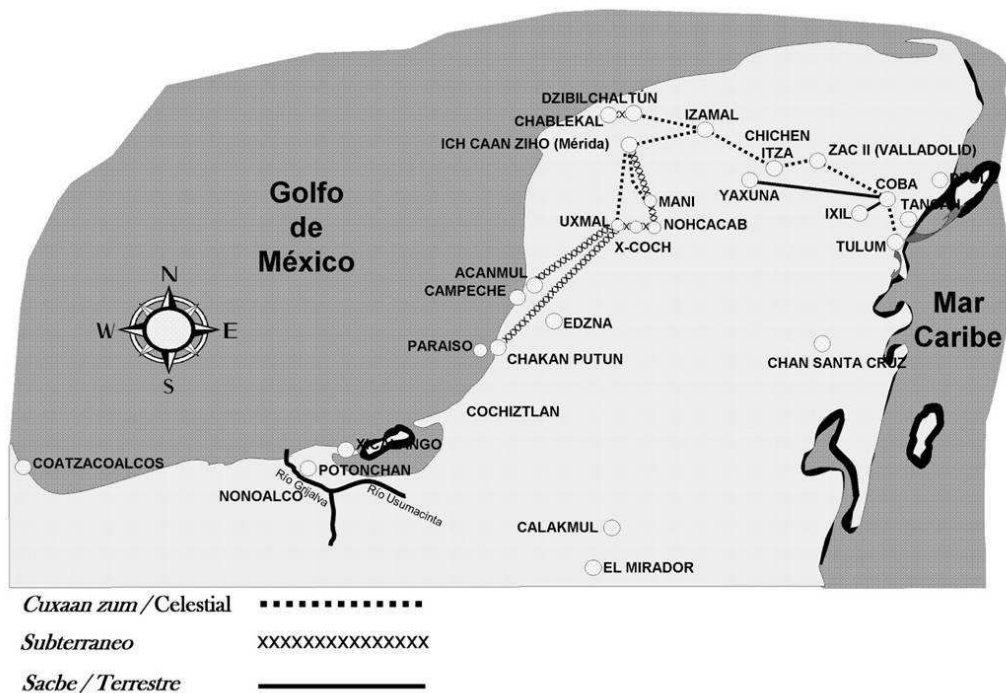


Figure 6: Celestial, Subterranean, and Terrestrial routes followed by Quetzal Coatl / Kukulcan between Champotón and Tulum
 Drawing by Juan J. Cosgaya

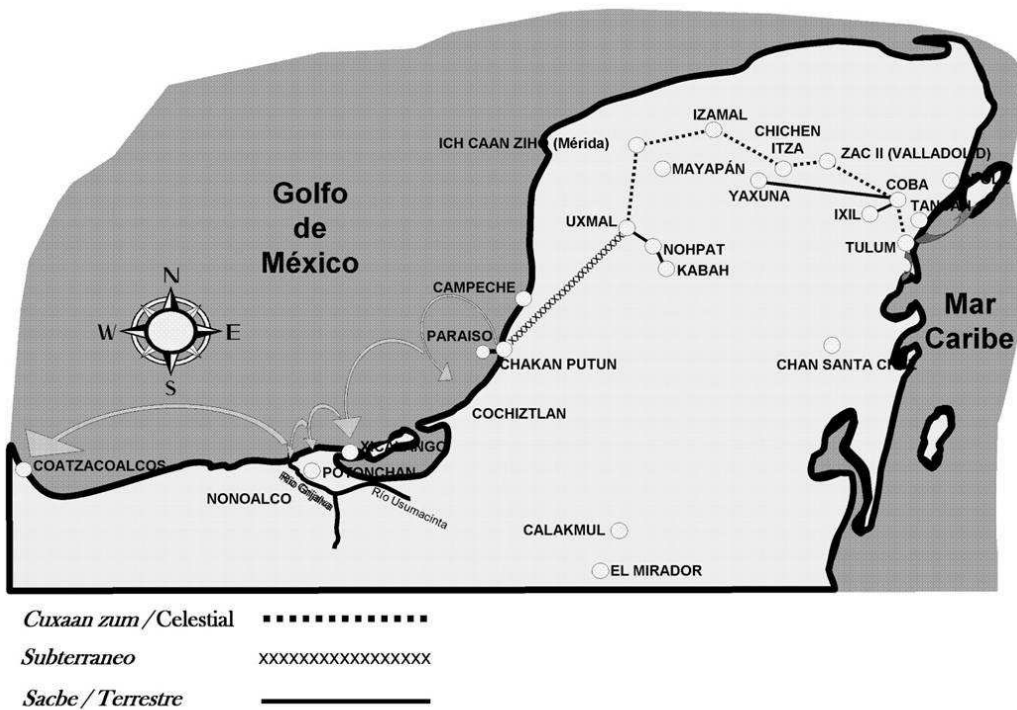


Figure 7: Celestial, Subterranean, and Terrestrial routes followed by Quetzal Coatl / Kukulcan between Tulum, Champotón and Coatzacoalcos
 Drawing by Juan J. Cosgaya

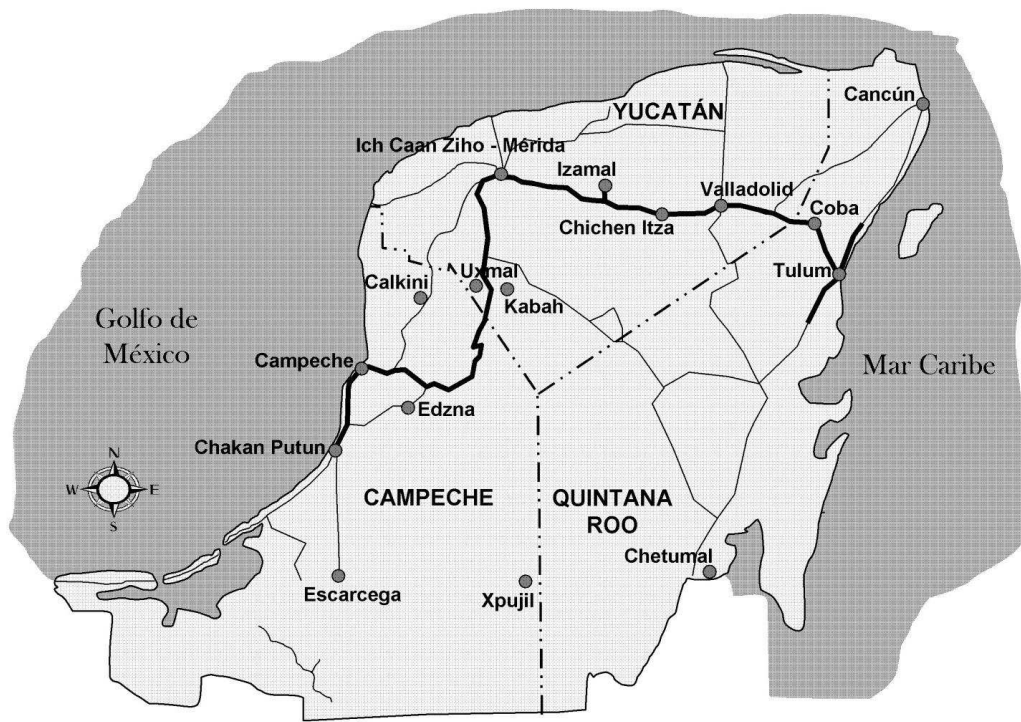


Figure 8: The modern highway system of the Yucatan Peninsula from Chakan Putun to Tulum. These thoroughfares follow earlier routes taken by Montejo in the Contact Period and the earlier mythical routes of Quetzal Coatl / Kukul Can outlined in this work.

Drawing by Juan J. Cosgaya