The deity GIII was one of the hearthstone gods and one of three patron gods of Palenque. He also had numerous roles in the calendar system. He was the patron of the month Wo in the solar haab calendar (Thompson 1950). As noted, the tzolk'in calendar is composed of a thirteen-day cycle and a twenty-day cycle. Each day in the thirteen-day cycle was ruled by a particular god (the number gods), as was each day in the twenty-day cycle (the day lords). GIII was the god of the seventh day in the thirteen-day cycle and the day lord for the sixteenth day (Kib) in the twenty-day cycle. GIII was also a lunar patron god. In the lunar calendar, the lunar synodic month was grouped into periods of six lunations. Each six lunar month cycle was thought to be ruled by one of three patron gods: GIII, One Ixim, and a skeletal deity.

The widespread worship of GIII is demonstrated not only by his usage in the calendar system but also by the numerous portraits of him on incensarios and war shields across the Maya realm (figure 2.1). Rulers also took on the guise of GIII during battles. As noted in the introduction, Yaxchilán Lintel 12 illustrates the ruler Shield Jaguar IV with four bound captives kneeling in submission at his feet (see figure 0.14). He is dressed in the guise of GIII.

GIII is depicted as an anthropomorphic deity with jaguar features and a cord used to drill fire looped over his nose (Taube 1998:441; Stuart 1998b). In Maya art, jaguars are often marked with ak’bal “night, darkness”
signs to indicate their nocturnal nature, and GIII’s cheek is often so marked. GIII’s nominal phrase includes the adjective *k’inich* “sun-like,” and in one example in the Temple of the Inscriptions narrative he is named K’inich Ajaw “sun-like lord” (middle tablet E4). This name was not exclusive to GIII but was also held by the Sun God and Itzamnaaj (Tozzer 1941:147). Based on GIII’s feline and solar features, J. Eric S. Thompson (1950: 134) coined the term *Jaguar God of the Underworld*, and he speculated that GIII represented the night sun in its journey through the underworld (also see Coe 1973). Despite the fact that there is absolutely no evidence that the Maya thought the sun transformed into a jaguar after sunset, this conjecture is ingrained in the literature. How the Maya perceived the sun, its daily and annual cycle, and the relationship between the ruler and this solar force is a complex subject. This chapter is an attempt to sort through the prior assumptions and interpretations regarding these topics to arrive at a clearer understanding of the role of the deity GIII and his relationship to flint, fire, and the sun.

**SOLAR MODELS AND MYTHS**

For the Maya, the sun defined both space and the agricultural cycle. The solstice sun rose and set at the corners of the quadrilateral world model, and the sun hovered above its center at noon on the two annual zenith passages. The east-west axis of the quadrilateral world represented the daily path of the...
sun, while the north-south axis encompassed the variation in its annual path. The colored quadrants of the world (red-east, black-west, white-north, and yellow-south) were also tied to the sun’s path, with red associated with the rising sun and black with the setting sun. When the sun first enters the northern section of the sun after the late April–early May solar zenith passage in the lowlands, it is a sign that it is time to burn the cornfields and plant. The burning of the cornfields not only turns the landscape white with ash, but the sky is filled with white smoke that often obliterates the sun, hence the association of white with the north. When the sun returns to its zenith position in late August and moves into the southern sky, the corn plants begin to mature, and the green fields slowly turn to yellow.

Although the Maya directional terms \textit{el k'in} and \textit{och k'in} are usually translated as east and west, they literally mean “sun exits” and “sun enters,” respectively, and do not carry the same connotation as English terms that are centered on cardinal directions (Hopkins and Kaufman cited in Josserand and Hopkins 1991; Bassie-Sweet 1996:195; Hopkins and Josserand 2011). \textit{El k'in} refers to the eastern horizon from the point where the summer solstice sun rises in the northeast to the point where the winter solstice sun rises in the southeast. Likewise, \textit{och k'in} refers to the western horizon between the setting points of the summer solstice and winter solstice suns. In Classic period hieroglyphic writing, the directional term \textit{el k'in} is spelled using two signs: the T183 \textit{el} “exit” verb and T544 \textit{k'in} “sun” sign (Houston cited in Stuart 1998b). Similarly, \textit{och k'in} is spelled with the T221 \textit{och} “enter” verb and the T544 \textit{k'in} “sign” sign (Stuart cited in Schele 1992; Stuart 1998b; Stuart and Stuart 2008:175).

The terms \textit{sun exits} and \textit{sun enters} beg the question—from where did the Maya believe the sun was exiting when it rose into the sky and to where was it entering when it set? Researchers often make the assumption that the Maya believed that everything beneath the surface of the earth was the underworld of the death gods and that the setting sun had to transverse the underworld to rise the next morning. Evidence that the underworld played a role in the passage of the sun from its sunset location to its sunrise location is seen in the Popol Vuh where the Hero Twins Hunahpu and Xbalanque underwent a series of trials in the underworld before being able to kill the two underworld rulers and subjugate its remaining population. They then adorned their father, One Hunahpu, who had previously been killed by the underworld rulers, and promised him that he would be the first to be honored by the humans waiting on the surface of the earth for the first rising of the sun (Christenson 2007:191). The Hero Twins Hunahpu and Xbalanque then rose up as sun and full moon. The subjugation of the underworld established not only the hierarchy of the
twins over the underworld but their future safe passage through this territory. The Hero Twins were the quintessential conquerors who used their many skills to defeat their foe.

THE HEAT OF THE SUN

One of the trials the Hero Twins Hunahpu and Xbalanque endured in the underworld was an immolation event (Christenson 2007:191). The rulers of the underworld planned to kill the Hero Twins by forcing them into a pit oven. Anticipating this fiery end, Hunahpu and Xbalanque devised a plan where they would voluntarily jump into the pit and then be resurrected from their bones. This Popol Vuh episode was reenacted during a ritual dance used to commemorate the inauguration of a San Juan Chamelco indigenous ruler and the establishment of this town under Spanish rule (Estrada Monroy 1979:168–174). In this dance, two young men were symbolically burned along with incense offerings and then resurrected to mark the beginning of the new era for this town.

A number of Mesoamerican myths concerning the creation of the sun indicate that the Sun God obtained his fiery heat from a primordial immolation event. In Postclassic Central Mexican mythology, the world was created, destroyed, and re-created a number of times. During each new era, a different god took on the role of the sun (Sahagún 1959–1966:7:4–7; Bierhorst 1992:147–148). In one version of the myth, the current era began when the deities gathered at Teotihuacán and created a great sacrificial fire. The god Nanauatzin jumped into this pyre and through his fiery act of self-sacrifice was transformed into the sun, while the god Tecuciztecatl who followed him into the dying fire became the moon. Nanauatzin did not move after rising into the sky until the wind god Ehecatl blew on him. Ehecatl was an aspect of the morning star god Quetzalcoatl. The rising of the morning star Venus heralds the coming dawn and is featured in many Mesoamerican myths.

In his newly acquired role as the sun, Nanauatzin shot arrows that were said to be like shafts of fire. The notion that the Sun God was a warrior is found consistently across Postclassic Mesoamerica, with the most dramatic example the Aztec patron god Huitzilopochtli. A golden eagle and jaguar also entered the primordial Teotihuacán fire and became the co-essesences of the sun. These creatures were role models for the Aztec eagle-jaguar warriors (cuauhtli ocelotl), who were the most accomplished and highest-ranked soldiers. The Nahuatl term eagle-jaguar is a metonym that contrasts a powerful predator of the sky with a powerful predator of the land. The Aztec eagle-jaguar soldiers were the
best examples of the warrior class. The throne of Moctezuma was composed of an eagle seat and a jaguar back rest, suggesting that the ruler was the quintessential eagle-jaguar warrior (Sahagún 1959–1963:2:123).

THE MORNING STAR AND THE SUN

In the Popol Vuh, the episode that describes the rising of the sun from the perspective of the humans on the surface of the earth begins with the tribes gathered on the tops of their sacred mountains searching the eastern sky for the morning star (Christenson 2007:225–232). The first four K’iche’ lineage heads rejoiced when they saw Venus rise, and they then burned three kinds of incense in its honor. In view of the fact that the Hero Twins promised their father that he would be the first to be revered by humans, it is apparent that Hun Hunahpu was this morning star (Bassie-Sweet 2008:298–300). The Venus Table of the Dresden Codex indicates that the first rising of the morning star occurred on the day 1 Ajaw, and One Hunahpu is the K’iche’ equivalent of this day name. In Mesoamerica, individuals were frequently named for the tzolk’in day name of their birth or transformation. Obviously, One Hunahpu and his son Hunahpu were both so named because they both rose for the first time on this date. Given that the Maya plant at full moon, the primordial rising of the morning star, the sun, and the full moon specifically established the first planting cycle.

The Classic period antecedents for One Hunahpu and the Hero Twins Hunahpu and Xbalanque are the deities One Ixim, One Ajaw, and Yax Bolon, respectively (Mathews cited in Coe 1978:58–60, 1989; Taube 1985). The Late Classic vessel K1892 depicts a cosmogram of the world (figure 2.2). The earth is illustrated as a turtle floating on the waters of the place of duality, with the deity One Ixim standing at the center and the Hero Twins One Ajaw and Yax Bolon flanking him on the edges of the world. The twins face each other on opposite sides of the world, just as sun and full moon stand in opposition in nature (Bassie-Sweet 2008:222). Yax Bolon, who is parallel to the moon deity Xbalanque, is seen emptying a water jar; such actions are identified with moon. It seems apparent that One Ajaw has the role of sun in this scene, just as his Popol Vuh parallel Hunahpu was the sun.

The headdress of One Ajaw was the sak huun headband. When lords were crowned king, they acquired the sak huun headband and took on the guise of One Ajaw (Stuart 1995). Given that One Ajaw was identified with the sun, lords also became identified with the sun when they became king. The accession names of numerous rulers begin with the k’inich “sun-like” apppellative,
such as K’inich Janaab Pakal I and his sons K’inich Kan Bahlam II and K’inich K’an Joy Chitam II and his grandson K’inich Ahkal Mo’ Nahb III. The term k’inich also appears as a noun in some nominal phrases of lords, such as Upakal K’inich, K’awiil Chan K’inich, Nuun Ujol K’inich, Aj Wosal Chan K’inich, K’ahk’ Ujol K’inich, Yajaw Te’ K’inich, Tum Yohl K’inich, and Wi’ Yohl K’inich. These examples demonstrate that lords were closely identified with solar qualities.

There are many examples of a Classic period solar god that doesn’t look anything like One Ajaw. The simplest explanation is that this Sun God represents One Ajaw after his transformation into the sun. Before pursuing this topic further, a review of the Sun God, solar imagery, and the celestial place of duality is in order.

**THE SUN GOD**

The T544 k’in “sun, day” sign represents a red flower with four petals in a plain cartouche (Thompson 1932, 1950:88, 142) (figure 2.3a). In the codices, Paul
Schellhas (1904) identified an anthropomorphic deity with T544 k’in cartouches on his body as a sun god (God G in his alphabetic designation). Bishop Diego de Landa noted that a god named K’inich Ajaw was one of the deities worshiped during the Wayeb ceremonies, and the Dresden Codex Wayeb pages illustrate God G in this context (Tozzer 1941). The adjacent caption text names him using a k’in cartouche and an ajaw sign that appears to be an abbreviated form of the title K’inich Ajaw “sun-like lord.” As will be discussed more fully below, the Classic period Sun God was also called K’ínich Ajaw.

The Sun God was the god of the number four in the thirteen-day cycle of the tzolk’in and the patron of the month Yaxk’ín. The Sun God’s portrait was employed to represent the unit of one day (twenty-four hours) in the Long Count, and it was incorporated in logographs representing the rising sun (see below). In all of these contexts, the T544 sign substitutes for the Sun God’s portrait, indicating that the T544 k’in sign is the pars pro toto sign for the Sun God (figure 2.3b, 2.3c).

In more elaborate depictions of the k’in sign, the cartouche has the form of flint or shell with the maw of a skeletal centipede extending from each corner (figure 2.3d). Some researchers believe the centipedes are metaphors for rays of sunlight (Boot 1999; Taube 2003a; Houston et al. 2017). Following the work of Karl Taube (2004a, 2006), Andrea Stone and Marc Zender (2011:153) noted that the four petals of the T544 k’in sign invoke the four world directions and stated that “the four-petaled flower stood for the bright heavens of the diurnal sun, conceived as a flower- and bird-filled paradise.” Their observation can be extended to the full form of the k’in cartouche with its centipede corners. The Maya believed that the sun rose from the horizon through a cave and that the mouth of that cave took the form of a skeletal centipede mouth (Bassie-Sweet 1996:90–91; Taube 2003a:411–413). In terms of the k’in cartouche, each centipede corner represents the cave from which the sun was thought to rise and set on the solstices. The k’in cartouche is a solar-celestial cosmogram, with the center of the flower representing the position of the sun.
on zenith passage. The implication of the \textit{k'in} flower cosmogram is that the red flower of the T\textsubscript{544} sign was both the quintessential flower and a metaphor for all flowers.

The specific species of red flower that was employed in the T\textsubscript{544} \textit{k'in} sign has not been identified, but its red color suggests an intimate association with hummingbirds. Known by the onomatopoetic term \textit{tz'unun} (the noise of fluttering hummingbird wings), hummingbirds are primary pollinators of red flowers. Hummingbirds sucking nectar from a red flower are illustrated on a number of vessels, and elite headdresses often include a red flower with a hummingbird hovering before it (K\textsubscript{1186}, K\textsubscript{1549}, K\textsubscript{5166}, K\textsubscript{5421}, K\textsubscript{7268}). Hummingbirds also appear in Maya art with the red four-petal flower stuck on their long, slender bills (K\textsubscript{2803}, 5975, K\textsubscript{8008}). In these examples, the red flower functions as a semantic marker, indicating that these long-billed birds are hummingbirds. The inference is that the celestial paradise was inhabited by hummingbirds. While the image of hummingbirds feeding on a field of flowers suggests an idyllic paradise, the Mesoamerican association of hummingbirds with warriors is well-known and is based on these birds' aggressive territorial behavior.

As an aside, it must be kept in mind that the solar paradise was not the only mythological location identified with flowers. A series of Classic period pottery scenes illustrate the deity One Ixim’s adornment in the underworld at the hands of the Hero Twins and a group of underworld goddesses who wear red flowers in their headdresses (see K\textsubscript{4479}, 7268). The Popol Vuh relates an interesting episode that indicates that the underworld rulers One Death and Seven Death had a garden filled with flowers (Christenson 2007). These death lords challenged the Hero Twins Hunahpu and Xbalanque to a ballgame at their underworld court. One Death and Seven Death decided that the prize for winning the game would be four bowls of flowers, and they specified that the first bowl would be of red petals, the second one of white petals, the third one of yellow petals, and the last one of large flowers. The four bowls were metaphors for all flowers. When the Hero Twins lost the game, they were required to produce the flowers by the following morning. The death lords knew that the only source of flowers was their own garden, so they instructed the garden guards (the nocturnal whippoorwills) to spend the night in the garden trees watching for intruders. The Hero Twins were forced to spend the night in the House of Blades, but they called on the leafcutter ants to steal the flowers for them. The ants diligently gathered the flowers without the whippoorwills noticing, and by dawn they delivered them to the Hero Twins, much to the death lords’ annoyance. As punishment for their lapse of duty, the death lords split open the whippoorwills’ beaks.
THE CELESTIAL PLACE OF DUALITY

In the Popol Vuh story of the creation of the earth and human beings, the deities Xpiyacoc and Xmucane were the embodiment of complementary opposition and the paternal grandparents of the Hero Twins. These grandparents resided in a great pool of water, with the three Heart of Sky thunderbolt gods living above them in the sky. In consultation with these three thunderbolt gods, they made the earth rise up from the waters of the place of duality and created humans to reside on its surface. The creator grandparents also had a house at the center of the newly formed earth that was the role model for human houses and specifically for the court of the king. A number of Classic period scenes indicate that a celestial counterpart to this earthly primordial household of the creator grandparents was located at the center of the sky, directly overhead. In these celestial court scenes, Itzamnaaj is seated on a sky band throne (K904, K1883, K3049, K3056).

Numerous monuments illustrate the deceased parents of the current ruler as inhabitants of the celestial place of duality. For example, Yaxchilán Stela 1 depicts the ruler Bird Jaguar IV performing a Period Ending event with an elaborate sky band above his head. A patron god of Yaxchilán is pictured above the sky band, and two flint cartouches flank him (see figure 0.10). The right cartouche that portrays his father is marked with T24 lem “lightning luminescence” signs, while the left cartouche that is marked with a lunar element features his mother. Although many of the Yaxchilán stelae are in fragments or badly eroded, the top portions of Stela 3, Stela 4, Stela 6, Stela 8, Stela 10, and Stela 11 all have this double cartouche motif (Tate 1992:59–63). On Stela 4, the father’s flint cartouche is marked with lem signs, while the mother sits in a moon cartouche. These parents are the epitome of complementary opposition.

A Late Classic vessel first published by Eric Boot (2008) illustrates Itzamnaaj sitting inside his palace at his celestial court. Seated behind Itzamnaaj is his avian manifestation that is based on a laughing falcon, a messenger bird who forecasts the rains (Bassie-Sweet 2002, 2008:140–144; Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins in press). The Itzamnaaj bird perches on a glyphic place name that is composed of the number six, an undeciphered sign, and a chan “sky” sign. I will refer to it simply as the Six Sky place. In many examples of this place name, the sky sign has a T24/T1017 lem sign as a postfix. While this sign is merely part of the logographic sky sign and was not intended to be read, it indicates that the celestial place of duality was identified with the luminous nature of lightning. The association of lightning with the creator deities is well documented by Preclassic portraits of the Itzamnaaj bird that feature the T24 lightning luminosity sign on its wings (Taube et al. 2010:fig. 58).
The base of Itzamnaaj’s house is formed by a sky band of alternating flint signs and k’in signs, and three members of Itzamnaaj’s court sit beneath him on this sky band. They have the form of a dog, an opossum, and a vulture; and they represent the offices of orator, diviner/scribe, and bookkeeper, respectively. These court officials appear individually in other Itzamnaaj court scenes, but this is the only vessel where they are pictured together in a hierarchical display. They were the role models for the secondary lords of royal courts. Itzamnaaj addresses two tiers of gods seated in front of him. The upper tier is composed of the deities GI, the Sun God, and a Chahk, who sit on another flint and k’in sky band. Beneath them are four artisan gods who sit on the ground line of the scene, suggesting they have a lower status than Itzamnaaj’s three primary court officials who are seated across from them.

The so-called Deletaille tripod illustrates another location at the celestial place of duality that is named by a caption text as the Six Wind sky/cave (Taube 2004a). This landscape is filled with different types of flowers, a hummingbird with a red flower on its bill, a heron, a curassow, a pair of male quetzals, and a host of supernatural creatures participating in a ritual dance. While a wind god plays a pair of gourd rattles, other anthropomorphic gods perform acrobatic feats. The Milky Way was viewed by the Maya as a celestial river with a crocodile floating in it (see Bassie-Sweet 2008:36–38 for an overview). This crocodile is frequently depicted in Maya art arching across the sky of a scene or bordering a scene. The Milky Way Crocodile is one of the creatures featured on the Deletaille tripod. The implication is that this celestial river was thought to flow through or past the celestial place of duality.

A series of monuments at Piedras Negras illustrated Period Ending scenes in which the ruler sits in a raised niche framed by sky bands and the Milky Way Crocodile (Stelae 6, 11, 14, 25). Given that these Period Endings occurred at different times in the solar year, it is apparent that the setting was intended to represent an idealized landscape that replicated the celestial place of duality rather than what the sky looked like on these occasions.

THE K’INICH TITLE AND THE K’INICH AJAW TITLE

In a number of contexts, a T544 k’in cartouche, a syllabic T671 chi sign, and a syllabic T116 ni sign are combined in one glyph block to spell the word k’inich (k’in-ni-chi) (Stuart 1995). The T184 sign is the logographic form of k’inich, and it is composed of an elongated k’in cartouche with T23 signs attached to two sides. In many examples, the cartouche also has a T74 sign on one of its sides. As David Stuart noted, the T74 and T23 elements do not function as
phonetic complements as they do in other contexts but are merely elements of the elongated k’inich cartouche. Some examples of the T184 k’inich logograph are elaborated with the T1010 portrait glyph of the Sun God. For instance, the Palace Tablet narrative records the k’inich title nine times. Five times it is spelled using the T184 k’inich logogram (C12, E12, M12, P18, and R17) and four times with the T184 k’inich logograph with a Sun God portrait prefixed to it (G6, J12, K9, and O9).

In the corpus of Maya art, there are over a dozen references to the impersonation of the Sun God, and the title K’inich Ajaw “sun-like lord” appears in his nominal phrase in all of these examples (Knub et al. 2009). The word ajaw “lord” is often represented either by the logographic T168:518 sign or a portrait of the deity One Ajaw. The K’inich Ajaw title is written in a number of ways using either syllabic or logographic signs for the terms k’inich and ajaw. The most interesting variation is a conflated form where the portrait glyph of the Sun God wears the headdress of One Ajaw. Such conflations are common in hieroglyphic writing. Vessel K1398 illustrates the Sun God (figure 2.4). While his arms and legs are marked with T544 k’in signs, he wears the sak huun headband of One Ajaw. This depiction is the embodiment of his K’inich Ajaw title.

As noted above, many rulers acquired the title K’inich when they became king. There is an interesting variation of the K’inich title in K’inich K’an Joy Chitam II’s name on the Dumbarton Oaks Tablet. In this example, the term k’inich is represented by a portrait of the Sun God wearing the sak huun headdress. This nominal phrase was clearly not intended to be read K’inich Ajaw K’an Joy Chitam, but the scribe included the ajaw reference nevertheless. In a similar fashion, a Pomoy stela refers to a secondary lord as four k’atun Ahk’uhuun (Mayer 1995:cat. 5). The logograph used for the number four is a portrait of the Sun God. While most examples of the Sun God in his role as the god of the number four are simply his portrait glyph, the Pomoy example also includes the T671 chi sign of the term K’inich. These examples indicate the Sun God’s intimate relationship with both the K’inich and K’inich Ajaw titles.

SEVENTH CENTIPEDE RAPTORIAL BIRD

The Sun God’s full nominal phrase begins with an appellation composed of uhuk “seventh,” chapat “centipede,” and a raptorial bird wearing the headband of One Ajaw, followed by K’inich Ajaw and the title Bolon Yokte’ K’uh “nine Yokte’ gods” (Boot 2005, 2008). Stuart has observed that a number of
narratives refer to categories of deities, and Bolon Yokte' K’uh was one such grouping (Stuart et al. 1999; Stuart 2017). Although the nature of this category is opaque, Stuart noted that both the Sun God and Itzamnaaj were members. The Palenque Temple XIV Tablet narrative indicates that GII (K’awiil) was also identified as one of the Bolon Yokte’ K’uh gods. In the Popol Vuh, there are nine major creator deities: the three Heart of Sky thunderbolt gods, the creator grandparents Xpiyacoc and Xmucane, their two sons One Hunahpu and Seven Hunahpu, and their grandsons Hunahpu and Xbalanque. It may be that Bolon Yokte’ K’uh refers to the Classic period antecedents of these nine primary deities.

The raptorial bird employed in the Sun God’s nominal phrase is also the god of the fifteenth day of the tzolk’in calendar. In Yucatec lists, the fifteenth day is Men, while in the calendars of the eastern Mayan languages and in the Tzeltal-Tzotzil calendars it is Tz’ikin, a Proto-Mayan word for bird (Thompson 1950:82; Kaufman 2003:618). Some researchers have assumed that Tz’ikin was the name used in the lowlands and have translated the name as Uhuk Chapat Tz’ikin. There are no recorded Ch’olan day name lists, but day names do occur as personal names in Lacandón Ch’ol and Tila-Tumbalá Ch’ol regions, and Men is one of these names. This suggests the possibility that the
fifteenth day in the Classic period inscriptions may have been called Men, not Tz’ikin (Campbell 1984:179, 1988:373–386). Some researchers have identified the Seventh Centipede raptorial bird and, by extension, the Sun God’s avian form as an eagle. I have in the past accepted this identification, but recently I have had significant doubts (Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins in press).

A characteristic of the most common raptorial birds found in the Maya region is their proclivity to soar. The migratory hawks and vultures that ride the thermal currents across the central Maya highlands are indicators of the coming change in season and predicators of rainfall (Tedlock 1985). Whatever avian species the Seventh Centipede raptorial bird was based on, it seems likely that it was directly related to the zenith passage of the sun that marks the beginning of the rainy season and the agricultural cycle.

Despite this Seventh Centipede raptorial bird name, the Sun God is not portrayed wearing an avian headdress or having an avian form, but there are numerous examples of him in a centipede headdress such as on vessel K1398, where he wears a centipede headdress with fire exuding from its head in addition to One Ajaw’s headband (figure 2.4). He also wears a centipede headdress on a number of other vessels where he interacts with supernatural beings and in his portraits as the god of the number four. Rulers imitating the Sun God also wear centipede headdresses.

THE DAWNING SUN

The logograph that represents the sunrise is composed of juxtaposed sky and earth signs with the T544 k’in sign emerging from between them. On a Copán bench from Structure 66c of 8N-11, the concept of dawn is portrayed as the head and torso of the Sun God emerging from a flint cartouche (Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017) (figure 2.5). The bench is a beautiful example of complementary opposition and couplet structure. Beginning on the left, the sky band is composed of an avian sky sign, a T1017 sign, a patron of the lunar cycle, a personified ak’bal “night” god, another T1017 sign, a personified day sign in the form of the Sun God, a patron deity of Venus, another T1017 sign, and finally another avian sky sign. The Sun God is pictured in the act of emerging from his centipede cartouche, which refers to the dawn when the sun is rising. Similarly, the ak’bal god is seen in the reclining pose that is specifically identified with birth. So these two gods contrast not day and night per se but the birth of the day and the birth of the night, that is, dawn and sunset. The poses of these deities are symmetrical, with the dawn and sunset gods facing each other and the moon and Venus patrons facing away from each other.
The central axis of this bilateral symmetry is the T1017 lightning luminosity sign positioned between the dawn and sunset gods. I think it is likely that the use of three T1017 signs in this composition is related to the three primary thunderbolt gods.

More complex versions of the dawn sign are depicted on the legs of a Copán bench from Group 10K–4 (figure 2.6). This bench forms a cosmogram of the eastern horizon, with the legs representing the rise points of the summer solstice sun and the winter solstice sun. These two solstice dawn signs are composed of the head and torso of the Sun God lying on an earth sign with a sky band arching over him. Reclining poses are often used in Maya art and hieroglyphic writing to indicate birth or emergence (Martin 2002).

The narrative on La Corona Element 55 uses an interesting variation of the el k’in east glyph that includes the Milky Way Crocodile. The mouth of the Milky Way Crocodile was identified with the black rift of the Milky Way, which looks like the open mouth of a crocodile (Stuart 1984, 2003a; Schele 1992:136; Freidel et al. 1993:151). La Corona Element 55 illustrates the Kaanul king Took’ K’awiil performing the 9.13.10.0.0 Period Ending ceremony on January 26, AD 702 (Stuart et al. 2015b). His nominal phrase includes the title East Kaloomte’. Rather than use the standard form of the el k’in “east” glyph, the scribe employed a sign composed of a Sun God emerging from the mouth of the Milky Way Crocodile. It does not seem to be a coincidence that in nature the celestial juxtaposing of the black rift and the rising sun at dawn occurs in January when Took’ K’awiil’s Period Ending ritual occurred.
THE T183 K’IN BOWL

As noted above, the logogram for east (el k’ín “the exit of the sun”) is composed of the T183 el “exit” verb and T544 k’ín “sun” sign (Houston cited in Stuart 1998b). The meaning of el as “exit” is attested in a number of Mayan languages, but it also has the meaning “to burn” in Yucatec, Mopán, and Lacandón Maya. The T183 el logograph represents a bowl decorated with a k’ín sign, and such k’ín bowls are seen in Maya art as receptacles for burning offerings. Some examples of the T183 sign even have fire scrolls above the bowl. The T183 k’ín bowl is frequently depicted as a zoomorphic creature. The T183 el verb is used to describe house dedication rituals, and Stuart (1998b) interprets this action as the censing of the structure. Sanctifying a ritual space through the burning of incense is a well-attested Maya ritual.

Based on its k’ín infix, a number of researchers have speculated that the k’ín bowl was the vessel from which the sun was transformed or that it held heart and blood offerings necessary for the sun’s transformation (Schele 1976:18; Freidel et al. 1993:216–217; Taube 1994, 2003a, 2009; Stuart 1998b, 2005b). Karl Taube (2009) drew a parallel between the k’ín infixed bowl and the bowls used by the Aztec for heart offerings directed at the sun. Because the k’ín bowl also appears on the tail of the Milky Way Crocodile, more convoluted explanations about the relationship between the Milky Way and the transformation of the sun have been proposed. Before addressing these interpretations, an overview of the k’ín bowl and its primary context as an element in the headdress of the deity GI is necessary.

THE DEITY GI AND HIS QUADRIPARTITE BADGE HEADDRESS

The portrait glyph of GI illustrates an anthropomorphic deity with swirl-shaped irises, a perforator-like front tooth, and facial scrolls that have been characterized as fish barbels. He often wears the shell earring that designates Chahk deities, and his nominal phrase includes the word Chahk (Bassie–Sweet 2008:111) (see figure 1.1). In a previous publication, I highlighted the attributes of GI that connect him to wind, the hurricanes of the wet season, and the northern storms that regularly descend on the Maya lowlands during the dry season. I proposed that he was the paramount Chahk deity related to storms and that he was parallel to Huracan, the most powerful of the three Heart of Sky thunderbolt gods in the Popol Vuh (Bassie–Sweet 2008). The north Temple of the Cross (GI’s shrine in the Palenque Cross Group) is called the Six Sky place, and GI is named as a lord of Six Sky (Stuart 2005b). As noted above, he is depicted at the Six Sky celestial court of Itzamnaaj on the Boot vessel.
The narrative on the Palenque Temple of the Inscriptions tablets specifically names the headdresses of the gods GI, GII, and GIII. GI’s headdress is represented by a logograph of a motif that was nicknamed the Quadripartite Badge by Merle Greene Robertson (1974). It consists of a k’in bowl containing a stingray spine, a Spondylus shell, and a cross-band foliage element. Numerous examples of Early Classic stone masks and cache vessels feature GI wearing his Quadripartite Badge headdress and attest to his importance in the Classic period pantheon (Hellmuth 1987) (see figure 1.1a). As noted above, the bowl of the Quadripartite Badge is frequently animated as a zoomorphic creature. While the cross-band element is of undetermined meaning, the stingray spine was used in Maya bloodletting rituals as a perforator, and it is a common artifact found in caches and tombs, as are Spondylus shells. The name for this Quadripartite Badge bowl is unknown because there are no syllabic spellings of this logograph.

In Palenque and Seibal examples of his nominal phrase, GI is pictured wearing a fish-eating heron as a headdress, and the ruler K’inich Ahkal Mo’ Nahb III wears such a headdress heron while in the guise of GI (Stuart 2005b) (see figure 0.11). The heron also appears as a headdress element on Early Classic cache vessels depicting GI in his Quadripartite Badge headdress, and it is likely that this heron is the avian avatar of GI (Hellmuth 1987). The association of GI with the north and with the northern storms that descend on the Maya region during the dry season may explain GI’s identification with the fish-eating water bird. The Maya observe that when the north wind begins to blow, the waterfowl return (Escobar 1841:91).

Many kings and queens wear the Quadripartite Badge headdress when taking on the guise of GI (Caracol Stela 1, Yaxchilán Lintel 14; Xultun Stela 24, to name a few). Copán Stela I illustrates the lord wearing not only this insignia of GI but also a mask in the form of GI’s face. There are a number of examples where the Quadripartite Badge bowl is held by deities and humans (for example, K2715). The association of the Quadripartite Badge motif with bloodletting is seen on the Palenque Temple of the Cross Tablet and west jamb where K’inich Kan Bahlam II holds a bloodletter in the form of GI’s Quadripartite Badge bowl with liquid pouring from the mouth of the k’in bowl zoomorph. A Quadripartite Badge bloodletter is illustrated on Piedras Negras Stela 1 with a lithic blade protruding from the zoomorph’s mouth. Whether this means that these humans were imitating a mythological bloodletting by GI or that such blood offerings were destined for GI is unknown.

The Tablet of the Cross narrative recounts the mythological events related to GI and the historical rituals the ruler K’inich Kan Bahlam II performed for...
The central icon of the scene is composed of GI’s Quadripartite Badge bowl juxtaposed with a stylized flowering tree (figure 2.7). A supernatural bird is perched on its upper branch, and a double-headed serpent hangs around its trunk and lower branches. The ground line of the scene is formed by a sky band composed of cartouches in complementary opposition (Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017). On the left side, the cartouches are night, moon, and star (nocturnal) while those on the right are lightning, sun, and an undeciphered sky sign (diurnal). It is a place of duality. The scene represents a location at the Six Sky Place and the location in the local landscape that represented this place where K’inich Kan Bahlam II made his offerings to this god. The tree and bowl icon also appears on the Temple of the Inscriptions sarcophagus lid that depicts K’inich Janaab Pakal I’s apotheosis. K’inich Janaab Pakal I is juxtaposed in a reclining position between the headdress and the tree. K’inich Janaab Pakal I and the Quadripartite Badge bowl are placed in the jaws of a centipede bordering the bottom of the scene.

**Figure 2.7. Palenque Tablet of the Cross (drawing by Linda Schele)**
GI’s Quadripartite Badge bowl is frequently depicted on the tail of the Milky Way Crocodile. Given that the mouth of the Milky Way Crocodile has been identified with the black rift of the Milky Way, the tail of the crocodile and, by extension, GI’s bowl must be identified with some section of this celestial river that rises into the sky after the black rift. While various arguments have been made regarding this placement, there is no consensus as to what this section might be. Nevertheless, the twofold implication of these Milky Way images is that some section of this celestial river was thought to flow through or pass by the Six Sky Place (the court of Itzamnaaj) and that the apotheosis of K’inich Janaab Pakal I was connected with this location.

Stuart (2005b:168) suggested a direct relationship between GI’s Quadripartite Badge bowl on the tail of the Milky Way Crocodile and the rising sun: “One can naturally wonder, therefore, if perhaps the k’in bowl itself was somehow considered a ‘vessel’ for the rising sun in the east. As Tate (1992:66) notes, representations of the crocodile regularly orient the rear end with the k’in bowl toward the east.” Based on the fact that some illustrations of the Milky Way Crocodile’s body are juxtaposed with a solar cartouche, Stuart further argued that GI’s bowl was the anus of the Milky Way Crocodile and that “the sun was consumed by the crocodile during its nightly course beneath the earth and defecated or reborn each morning” (Stuart 2005b:168).

It is highly unlikely that the juxtaposing of the solar cartouche on the body of the Milky Way Crocodile means that this beast had swallowed the sun. For instance, the narrative on the Yaxchilán Structure 44 hieroglyphic staircase (center riser, Step IV) refers to the dedication of Structure 44 and names it as the Four Crocodile House. In this house name, the number four is represented by four dots, while the word crocodile is represented by a portrait of the front head of the Milky Way Crocodile (Plank 2004:58). The scene on the adjacent Step III illustrates a captive lord kneeling on this house name (figure 2.8). In this version, the crocodile head has been replaced with a full-figure rendering of the beast, and the number four is represented by a cartouche containing a bust of the Sun God, who was the god of the number four. The cartouche is superimposed over the body of the crocodile. This is a very common convention in hieroglyphic writing, where one sign is reduced in size and placed in front of (superimposed on) another. It does not indicate that the Sun God resides in the belly of the crocodile, much less that the Sun God is excreted out of the crocodile’s anus each morning. Furthermore, this same Four Crocodile place name is painted on the eastern wall of Río Azul Tomb 1, where it is composed of a portrait glyph of the Sun God stacked on top of the head of the Milky Way Crocodile.
Despite the signs and motifs that illustrate the sun rising from the earth, some researchers have argued that the Maya thought the sun rose and set from water, based on the fact that the Yucatán peninsula is bordered on the east by the Caribbean Sea and on the north and west by the Gulf of Mexico (Finamore and Houston 2010; Taube and Houston 2015). While they follow the Thompson identification of GIII as the “night sun,” they view GI as an aquatic form of the sun as it rises from the Caribbean Sea at dawn. Although they do not explicitly state it, their model would have GI transforming into the Sun God for the day and then transforming into GIII at sunset before transforming back into GI at dawn. They presumably make this identification of GI with the dawn because GI has aquatic features and shares the same anthropomorphic face as the Sun God and because they identify GI’s brazier headdress as the pyre used in mythological times to transform a god into the sun. In an example of circular reasoning, they assert that the swirl eyes of GI and GIII indicate night while the square eye of the Sun God indicates day, based solely on their identification of GIII as the night sun and GI as the dawn. There is no evidence that the shape of supernatural pupils indicates day or night.

Karl Taube and Stephen Houston (2015:214) proposed that the GIII portrait on a stairway of the Copán East Court may have been paired with a portrait of the Sun God on the opposite side of the court and thus would

Figure 2.8. Yaxchilán Four Crocodile House (drawing after Ian Graham)
have represented the complementary opposition of the night sun and the day sun. There is little evidence that such a pairing actually even existed. In fact, the Copán Structure 66c bench, where there is a clear contrasting of day and night, does not employ a portrait of GIII to represent night (Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017). Furthermore, the rising sun on this bench is a standard form of the Sun God, not GI. As discussed above, the Copán Structure 10K-4 bench also illustrates the rising sun, not as GI but as the standard Sun God.

I do not dispute the notion that the *k’in* bowl may have been related to offerings directed at the sun or related to its cyclical renewal, but it does not follow that GI therefore had to be some form of the sun. As the insignia of GI, the Quadripartite Badge motif might just as easily be related to GI’s role as one of the gods who participated in solar fire and bloodletting ceremonies. In fact, his role as one of the hearthstone gods points to that function.

**THE NAMES AND TITLES OF THE DEITY GIII**

Like many of the primary gods, GIII’s name can be represented simply by his portrait, as it is in his calendar contexts (figure 2.9a). However, in the context of his role as a patron god in the Palenque inscriptions, GIII is named using a phrase composed of a *k’inich* “sun-like” sign, an undeciphered T239 sign that illustrates a youthful male in a cartouche, and an undeciphered T594 checkerboard sign (figure 2.9b). The checkerboard pattern of T594 is often found on war shields, suggesting that the name may be related to GIII’s war shield (Bassie-Sweet 2008:117). There are no contexts where this Palenque nominal phrase directly substitutes for GIII’s portrait glyph, so it is unclear whether this nominal phrase represents GIII’s portrait name or is an additional moniker.

The term *k’inich* “sun-like” also appears in several other contexts related to GIII. As noted above, GIII is named as K’inich Ajaw on the central tablet of the Temple of the Inscriptions. The Tablet of the Sun describes the location of GIII’s birth as the K’inich Taj Wayib “sun-like torch structure.” The narratives on the Palenque Temple XIX west platform and the Temple XXI bench refer to a shrine dedicated to GIII in 9.15.4.17 6 Kaban 5 Yaxkin’iin (June 13, AD 736) that was called K’inich O Naah “sun-like owl house” (Stuart 2005b:105).

One of GIII’s titles has been deciphered as K’in Tahn K’eweel “sun-chested pelt,” with the pelt sign appropriately represented by a headless jaguar (Zender et al. 2016). K’in Tahn K’eweel is also used to name a way co-essence character that is illustrated as a standing jaguar with a *k’in* sign on its chest (Stuart 2005b:176). Marc Zender and his collaborators (2016) propose that the K’in Tahn K’eweel title may indicate that animal skins had some special relevance.
to GIII as an item of clothing or a select tribute offering. The title may be directly related to the jaguar pelt that was used to construct GIII’s shield. While Bishop Diego de Landa noted that Postclassic shields were constructed from deerskin, a number of depictions of GIII’s shield, such as the one on the Tablet of the Sun, indicate that they were also made from jaguar skin (Tozzer 1941:121). This should be expected given GIII’s jaguar form.

In the Temple of the Inscriptions narrative, GIII is named by the title Yajawk’ak “vassal of fire” (middle tablet N4) (Stuart 1998b, 2004a:225, 2005b: 123–125, 2006a; López Bravo 2000, 2004; Zender 2004b:195–209). Yajawk’ak’ is usually translated as fire lord, but Zender (2004) noted that the term ajaw “lord” actually means “vassal” when it is stated in a possessed form such as y-ajaw-k’ak’, and thus this title means “the vassal of fire.” It is a subtle but important difference that suggests that GIII is subordinate to whatever entity was identified with fire. I have argued that the owner of the first primordial fire was the creator grandfather Itzamnaaj (Bassie-Sweet 2008).

The office of Yajawk’ak’ was also held by a number of secondary lords, and GIII was clearly their role model. The warrior aspect of a Yajawk’ak’ is well documented in the illustrations and citations of these secondary lords being captured in battle or being buried with trophy bones taken from their victims (Zender 2004b). A headdress worn by GIII on a Palenque Group B incensario has been identified as the headdress of the Yajawk’ak’ office (López Bravo 2000, 2004) (figure 2.10). The Tablet of the Slaves main text (C2a) specifically names the headdress of a Yajawk’ak’ as a k’ak’huun “fire headdress” using the standard T24 fire sign (see figure 5.9). A discussion of the military nature of this headdress is deferred until chapter 5, but suffice it to say for the moment that these fire attributes have suggested to researchers that the Yajawk’ak’ office was related to making incense offerings to the gods as well as maintaining temple fires and elaborate effigy censers (Zender 2004b).
THE FIRE AND FLINT TRAITS OF GIII AND THE JAGUAR PADDLER GOD

GIII is consistently depicted with a looped fire cord over his nose. The importance of the fire cord as his primary diagnostic trait is seen in some examples of his name where just his eye with its twisted cord is used as the *pars pro toto* sign. This abbreviated form of his name is found in hieroglyphic texts and on war shields. Based on his fire cord feature and his Yajawk’ak”“the vassal of fire” title, Stuart (1998b) identified GIII as a fire deity. GIII’s classification as a fire deity fits with his role as one of the three hearthstone gods. The center of the world was defined by the hearth of the creator deities, and the drilling of new fire at the beginning of important time periods replicated...
the initial creation of fire by the gods. New fire rites were thematically parallel to the burning of the milpa at the beginning of the planting season at zenith passage that inaugurated the annual renewal of life. GIII was obviously identified with these primordial and primary fires.

There is another deity that shares fire characteristics with GIII. This elderly deity is most often paired with another old god, and together they are known as the Paddler Gods. A number of inscriptions name the Paddler Gods as Chahk deities and as lords of the mythological location named Na Ho Chan “first five sky.” On Copán Stela 2 they have the title mam k’uh “grandfather gods,” which clearly reflects their aged nature. The Paddler Gods acquired their nickname from a scene on a carved bone (MT-38a) from Tikal Burial 116 that illustrates them as elderly oarsmen transporting a canoe containing One Ixim and a group of other supernatural passengers down a turbulent river (Stuart 1988:189; Freidel et al. 1993:90) (figure 2.11). The bow oarsman is depicted wearing a jaguar headdress, while the stern oarsman has a stingray spine piercing his septum. The Paddler Gods are named together in many hieroglyphic texts using portrait glyphs, and in these contexts the Jaguar Paddler is consistently named first. In his portrait glyph on Copán Stela P, the Jaguar Paddler wears GIII’s twisted fire cord in addition to his jaguar headdress. In contrast, the Stingray Spine Paddler wears a Xok headdress. The close association of this Paddler God with stingray spines is seen on an effigy stingray spine that is inscribed with a text indicating that it was thought to belong to him (Stuart et al. 1999:II:46) (see chapter 7 for a further discussion of the canoe association of these deities). It has been suggested that the Jaguar Paddler is an elderly manifestation of GIII, although this is by no means certain. It is possible that when the Jaguar Paddler dons the twisted fire cord of GIII, he is merely taking on the guise of GIII.

The juxtaposing of the fire cord with the faces of GIII and the Jaguar Paddler implies that their bodies were thought to be a fire stick (Bassie-Sweet 2008:119). In a few scenes, GIII and Jaguar Paddler impersonators carry
staffs that have been identified as stylized fire drilling sticks, such as the rulers featured on Sacul Stela 9, Naranjo Stela 11, and Naranjo Stela 30 (Houston and Stuart 1996; Stuart 1998b) (figure 2.12). These ceremonial fire staffs are often adorned with a knotted motif, similar to the knots found on bloodletters. In Late Classic examples, the main rod of the staff is flanked by stiff material bent at right angles (for examples, see Tikal Stela 11, Stela 21, Stela 22, and Stela 30). A looted vessel currently housed in the Honolulu Museum of Art illustrates GIII sitting on a sky band throne in his role as a lunar patron (he has the moon sign attached to his body that identifies lunar patrons) (Robicsek and Hales 1981:fig. 9b). He carries such a staff that terminates in a centipede head. This same type of centipede staff is also carried by rulers who take on the guise of GIII and the Jaguar Paddler God, and it appears as a headdress element across the Maya region at such sites as Copan, Naranjo, Quiriguá, Palenque, Yaxchilán, and Bonampak (for example, see Naranjo Stela 8). In some of these instances, a flint blade emerges from the mouth of the centipede, such as on Yaxchilán Stela 5. In other examples, the staff has centipede-flints at either end (see figure 6.4). They are, in effect, double-headed flint spears much like the double-headed spear carried by Lady Ohl on Yaxchilán Lintel 25 (see figure 6.3) (see chapter 6 for a discussion of this lintel).

The association of GIII with flint blades is also seen on the Palenque Tablet of the Sun, which focuses on the mythological events related to GIII.
and the historical ceremonies performed by the ruler K’inich Kan Bahlam II in honor of this god. The central icon of the panel to which K’inich Kan Bahlam II directs his ritual actions is placed on a femur ceremonial bar decorated with a jaguar (see figure 2.13). The icon is composed of two crossed spears and a war shield emblazoned with GIII’s face. The flint blade of each spear emerges from the mouth of a centipede. The centipede-flint spears and shield are the *tok’-pakal* of GIII, and this motif demonstrates his direct identification not only with the war shield but with flint spears. Numerous war scenes depicted on public monuments and pottery vessels indicate that spears were the primary weapon of choice used by the Classic Maya. I propose that GIII was specifically identified with the flint blades used for warfare.

On the left side of the Tablet of the Sun, the six-year-old prince K’inich Kan Bahlam II holds his *tok’-pakal*, which he has just acquired during his heir designation ceremony. His *tok’-pakal* touches the feathers of GIII’s effigy. On the right side, the king K’inich Kan Bahlam II is illustrated performing a ceremony on the occasion of his accession. He wears the royal *sak huun* headdress.

*Figure 2.13. Palenque Tablet of the Sun (drawing by Linda Schele)*
The king K’ínich Kan Bahlam II holds an effigy of the deity GII, who was the personification of a thunderbolt axe. Lords were frequently depicted holding GII effigies, which represented the belief that they had the ability to manipulate this supernatural force. K’ínich Kan Bahlam II’s effigy touches GIII’s flint spear. These actions of K’ínich Kan Bahlam II appear to sanctify his effigies or imbue them with the power of GIII.

**FLINT BLADES AND JAGUAR CLAWS**

Jaguar claws (*ich’aak*) were important symbols of power and are frequently found as grave goods. On Yaxchilán Lintel 6, both Bird Jaguar IV and his assistant Sajal hold jaguar claw objects (https://www.peabody.harvard.edu/cmhi/detail.php?num=6&site=Yaxchilan&type=Lintel). The name of the Seibal ruler Yich’aak Bahlam literally means “the claw of the jaguar.” The names of the Kaanul ruler Yuknoon Yich’aak K’ahk’ (the claw of fire) and the Tikal king Chak Tok Ich’aak (great burning claw) evoke the fiercely painful result of an encounter with a jaguar claw. In some rare examples of the centipede–flint staff, three blades protrude from the centipede’s mouth (see Ek’ Balam Stela 1 and Yaxha Stela 31). On Naranjo Stela 30, the ruler K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaak, who is in the guise of the Jaguar Paddler God, clutches in his left hand an unusual object in the form of a trident flint (see figure 2.12). Such instruments are held by impersonators on Tikal Temple III Lintel 2, Tikal Altar 5, Naranjo Stela 33, and Caracol Stela 6. A looted example of this type of flint object was offered for sale at the Merrin Gallery in New York (http://merringallery.com/photo-archive/pre-columbian/). Francis Robicsek and Donald Hales (1984:73) suggested that the intent of the trident flint was to inflict jaguar claw–like wounds, which would certainly fit with the jaguar nature of GIII and the Jaguar Paddler God. Evidence that this might be the case is seen on Dos Pilas Stela 2 and Aguateca Stela 2, which illustrate the ruler wearing a necklace of jaguar feet composed of three claws, and on Tikal Temple I Lintel 2, where the standing jaguar has three prominent claws (see figures 0.7, 0.8).

**FLINT, CENTIPEDES, AND VOLCANIC FIRE**

One of the reasons the Maya associated fire with flint was the belief that lightning (a natural source of fire) was created by the flint weapons of the thunderbolt gods. Erupting volcanoes are also a natural source of fire, and they are closely related to lightning because in addition to spewing fire, smoke, and ash, they create dramatic lightning displays. In fact, it is likely that the
Maya believed the fire of the lightning bolt originated from the fire of a volcano (Bassie-Sweet 2008:251). Volcanic fires were also the role model for the primordial fires of the creator gods.

Despite the fact that flint is not found in volcanic rock formations, flint was associated with volcanic fire in highland mythology. Volcán Santa María is located beside a major trade route between the Pacific coast and the Guatemalan highlands. The mountain has an extremely long history of volcanic activity and is still considered by the modern Maya to be a sacred location. The *Annals of the Cakchiquels* relates a myth concerning the erupting volcano, centipedes, and flint (Brinton 1885:99; Akkeren 2000:158–159). In this story, a centipede resided in the Santa María crater. The maw of a centipede is often used to represent an earth portal, such as a cave or cenote (Grube and Nahm 1994; Boot 1999; Carrasco and Hull 2002; Taube 2003a; Hull and Carrasco 2004; Kettunen and Davis 2004). I have proposed that centipede mouths were also specifically identified with volcanic craters and their fire (Bassie-Sweet 2008:249). The association is a natural one, for centipedes have poisonous glands and can inflict painful bites. Stepping on a centipede or stepping into the crater of an active volcano creates a burning sensation on the feet. The *Annals* narrative states that thirteen colored stones were contained in the Santa María crater, and the white flint stone (*saqchoq*) was thought to be the heart of the volcano and the source of its fire.

According to the *Annals*, all the warriors of the highland groups gathered at the base of the volcano in an attempt to put out its destructive eruption, but only the Kaqchikel warrior Q’aq’awitz and his assistant Zakitzunun were brave enough to climb the mountain and enter the crater. While Zakitzunun poured water on the inferno, Q’aq’awitz descended into the fire and retrieved the white flint.14 Q’aq’awitz’s name literally means “fire mountain,” and it surely reflects his role in this event. There is a thematic parallel between the cultural heroes Q’aq’awitz and Zakitzunun entering the volcanic fire and the Aztec myth concerning the creation of the sun and moon from the primordial fire at Teotihuacán. Q’aq’awitz and Zakitzunun were emulating these immolation actions with their descent into the crater. In Mesoamerican mythology, sun and moon are viewed as a complementary pair, with sun having the senior role and moon being junior, as in the case of the Hero Twins Hunahpu and Xbalanque, who became the sun and full moon of the new era after succeeding at their trials in the underworld (Christenson 2007:191). The moon is consistently associated with water and is often viewed as a jug of water that is tipped over to create rain. These lunar beliefs suggest that the water-pouring assistant Zakitzunun was identified with the moon. Q’aq’awitz’s fiery flint is
analogous to Nanauatzin’s flaming arrow and suggests that he was identified with the sun.

The *Annals of the Cakchiquels* indicates that the descent of Q’aq’awitz into the crater fire was immortalized in the Dance of the Centipedes. The association of fire with the Dance of the Centipedes is also found in the Popol Vuh, where it was one of the dances performed by the Hero Twins after they had been resurrected from the pit oven. While little is known about this Postclassic dance performance, a colonial dictionary indicates that the participants (presumably dressed as centipedes) placed daggers in their mouths (Christenson 2007:180). While this is evocative of the white flint stone in the centipede crater of Volcán Santa María, it is also reminiscent of GIII’s staff and spear that have a flint blade protruding from a centipede mouth.

**CENTIPEDES AND FIERY TRANSFORMATIONS**

The association of a centipede with fire is reminiscent of the Sun God’s Seventh Centipede raptorial bird name and his portraits that feature a fiery centipede headdress. It may be that his centipede imagery refers to the fiery crater from which he emerged as a raptorial bird. A fiery transformation into an avian form was not restricted to the sun. In the *Annals of Cuauhtitlan*, the cultural hero Quetzalcoatl, who was identified with the morning star, jumped into a funeral pyre: “And as soon as his ashes had been consumed, they saw the heart of a quetzal rising upward. And so they knew he had gone to the sky, had entered the sky” (Bierhorst 1992:36).

The transformation of entities into other forms is key to understanding the scene on the Temple of the Inscriptions sarcophagus lid that illustrates K’inich Janaab Pakal I emerging from the jaws of a centipede (see figure 1.19). The reclining K’inich Janaab Pakal I is dressed in the jade skirt of One Ixim, and a number of Late Classic vessels illustrated the apotheosis of the deity One Ixim in a similar reclining pose (K2723). What celestial identity K’inich Janaab Pakal I acquired after his death has long been debated. Many researchers compare his apotheosis to the rising sun. Given that One Ixim was the antecedent for One Hunahpu of the Popol Vuh, I am partial to the notion that One Ixim and by extension K’inich Janaab I became the morning star after their resurrections (Bassie-Sweet 2008:113; Bassie-Sweet et al. 2015:113).

A key element of K’inich Janaab Pakal I’s portrait is that he has the celt of K’awiil in his forehead, and he is clearly depicted as a thunderbolt. There are a number of illustrations that show One Ixim with this same motif in his forehead. The fact that rulers retained their association with lightning in the
afterlife matches the ethnographic evidence that ancestors had thunderbolt forms. The nominal phrases of several Pusilhá rulers contain the title Uhuk Chapat Chan K’awiil “seventh centipede sky K’awiil” (Prager 2013). This suggests that the term Uhuk Chapat might have been a reference to a specific centipede location where these various supernatural transformations took place.

SUMMARY

In the Popol Vuh, the deity Hunahpu and his brother were transformed into new beings after their immolation in the underworld oven, and the underworld rulers did not recognize the twins when they next encountered them. After defeating these underworld lords, Hunahpu rose up and became the sun of the new era. There is significant evidence that this first rising occurred on the day One Ajaw and that it inaugurated the first planting season of the new era. Hunahpu’s Classic period antecedent was One Ajaw, and this deity appears in contexts that indicate that he, too, was identified with the sun. While Classic period lords took on the guise of a variety of deities during their lifetimes, they received One Ajaw’s sak huun headdress when they became king and acquired his persona. They also became identified with the Sun God, and this suggests that the Sun God was the transformed One Ajaw in his role as the sun of the new era. The sak huun headdress is another example of a cosmologically authenticated object (Kovacevich and Callaghan 2013).

GIII had martial qualities that match the powerful predatory nature of the jaguar and a direct identification with flint weapons. GIII has been identified as a god who created fire through drilling (Houston and Stuart 1996; Stuart 1998b:408; Taube 1998:441). This function is reminiscent of the principal K’iche’ patron god named Tohil (a thunder deity) who provided fire for the first K’iche’ lords by pivoting in his shoe like a drill stick (Christenson 2007:211–214). GIII’s direct relationship to flint suggests that he was thought to be a type of thunderbolt god, and in the Palenque inscriptions, he was grouped together with the thunderbolt deities GI and GII as the third member of the hearthstone gods. Based on GIII’s role as a hearthstone and fire deity, it could easily be argued that he was the deity who drilled the first fire of the current era and from whom the Sun God obtained his heat and flint weapons.

Alternatively, GIII might have been an avatar of the Sun God. The Temple of the Inscriptions details the rituals performed in honor of GI, GII, and GIII on three major Period Endings (9.10.0.0.0, 9.11.0.0.0, and 9.12.0.0.0).
Although GIII is consistently named using his K’inich T239:594 moniker, he is named as K’inich Ajaw in one instance in the passage referring to the 9.11.0.0.0 Period Ending. This name is expressed using a portrait of the Sun God wearing One Ajaw’s headdress. In light of his K’inich Ajaw title and GIII’s obvious war associations, it could be argued that GIII was the Sun God in a jaguar warrior manifestation. There is, however, no evidence to support Thompson’s notion that the Sun God transformed into GIII at sunset to traverse the underworld and then transformed back again at sunrise, and I think the term *Jaguar God of the Underworld* should be permanently retired.

A prominent deity associated with warfare in the Maya region is the deity Tlaloc. Rulers carrying GIII’s war shield are often dressed in the costume of Tlaloc, carry obsidian weapons identified with Tlaloc, or both. In a previous publication (Bassie-Sweet 2008:119), I argued that GIII was associated with meteors, a phenomenon the Maya identify as a type of thunderbolt, but there is better evidence that it was Tlaloc who was identified with meteors and by extension obsidian weapons. The following chapters explore the nature of Tlaloc and his role as an obsidian and meteor deity.