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K'uk'ulkan is a figure of importance in Mesoamerican mythology, specifically seen in the Yucatec Maya as the feathered serpent god. This creator god was seen as a wise figure, above the conflicts of humans but working in their favor as a patron. The feathered serpent god continues to be a symbol of Mesoamerican indigenous cultural heritage today, which we can see in pop culture. In *Wakanda Forever*, K'uk'ulkan (Also called Namor) rules over Talokan, an underwater civilization inspired by several Mesoamerican cultures. Although a threat, he is not the villain in the story, but rather an anti-hero. K'uk'ulkan is taking care of his community, and everything he does is to keep them safe. This reflects both new and old Mesoamerican cultural values, as individualism and the pursuit of power is less important than family values and protecting the people. I will be using both the original and modern versions of K'uk'ulkan to show the familial importance and value of life in Yucatec Maya culture to compare what we see today in the cultures that have stemmed from it.

K'uk'ulkan is a figure of importance in Mesoamerican mythology, specifically seen in the Yucatec Maya as the feathered serpent god. In the myths, K'uk'ulkan is considered a creator god and a bringer of rain and winds. K'uk'ulkan, along with Tepeu, were the Creators who decided to preserve their legacy by creating a species in their own image. The first man they made from mud, but he crumbled. Next was man from wood, but he had no soul and turned away from the gods, so they were destroyed by rain. At last, man was constructed from maize, and this was the version K'uk'ulkan and Tepeu were happy with. After this creation, he was seen as a wise figure,

above the conflicts of humans but working in their favor as a patron god of priests and merchants as well as god of learning, science, and the arts, and as the discoverer of maize, one of the most important foods in Maya culture. Not much is written about his origin, but from what we know, he is the sympathetic creator of humanity. The feathered serpent god continues to be a symbol of Mexican indigenous cultural heritage today, which we can see in pop culture. In *Wakanda Forever*, K'uk'ulkan (also referred to as Namor) rules over the kingdom of Talokan. It was created as the indigenous people fled Spanish conquistadores, taking a supernatural blue plant that transformed them to be able to live underwater. Namor was a baby at the time, the first born under the water, and so he was the one who raised the culture and brought light to his people as a young boy. As he learns of the horrors brought by the Spanish, he swears to keep Talokan a secret, and protects it from the outside world. When they are threatened, Namor plans for world destabilization, beginning a master plot that begins with gaining Wakanda as an ally, which he does by personally yielding to the Black Panther. By the end of the film, Namor takes personal loss in the interest of having Wakanda as a protector of Talokan. This iteration of K'uk'ulkan is one that reflects the values held in many Hispanic cultures, specifically in the way he puts his people and his family above all else, but also the cunning and resourcefulness he uses to do so.

In the original myths, K'uk'ulkan creates and protects humans. He is satisfied with his creation, and so he helps them by guiding them to the discovery of maize (Cartwright). Maize, or corn, was one of the most important aspects of Yucatec Mayan culture and was held almost in sacred regard. K'uk'ulkan also created the calendar, allowing humans to measure time, seasons, and everything that comes with that specific to religion and agriculture. Making K'uk'ulkan the creator of all of this shows the regard the Yucatec Mayas held for it. *Wakanda Forever's* Namor does similar things: after being born in Talokan, he leads them into a flourishing society. He

creates their underwater sun out of vibranium, bringing light to the depths of the ocean in a way that reflects K'uk'ulkan's creation. Once they have light, Talokan is able to develop as a society, shown in the film by art, sports, food, and language reflecting Mesoamerican culture. Namor continues to protect his people as one of them, not a detached king but a sympathetic god who lives among his people. Both of these versions show the values of Hispanic cultures: the hero is a part of the people, holding them close as family. Both K'uk'ulkan and Namor live in the societies they help create. With Namor, we even see the personal affection he holds as he plays with a group of children, knows his soldiers by name, and addresses the people personally as "my child." Family is valued highly, and so when Namor's comes under threat, he goes to great lengths to protect them.

First, some background on K'uk'ulkan's identity as a serpent god. It carries certain connotations, but different than ones we usually think of. In Mesoamerica, snakes were a symbol for life above and below the earth, because of its habits of living above and below ground and its abilities of camouflage and snake fasting (Cartwright). This made the snake a connection point between the gods and humanity, making Kukulcan a more accessible god. We see the influence of the serpent in the film as well, as Namor sacrifices his own well-being in a master plot to gain Wakanda, the biggest world power, as an ally to Talokan. Talokan is under threat of discovery, as they intervened to keep humans from discovering a source of vibranium, a dangerous material in their hands. Because of this threat, Namor wants to destroy all humans, and attempts to recruit Wakanda, who refuses. However, he had a personal plan all along: in the final battle between Talokan and Wakanda, Namor yielded to the Black Panther strategically, using his personal loss to gain protection for his people. Again, this mirrors the value of self-sacrifice for one's family,

but it also showed the wit and cunning of the snake in the way Namor played both sides in the interest of Talokan.

K'uk'ulkan was an important figure for the Yucatec Maya, and this importance continues in Namor for Hispanic cultures today. We still hold the values of the cultures we came from: family and resourcefulness just being a few examples. Although Namor and K'uk'ulkan have their differences because of their different time periods, both are important in showing our shared cultural values.

Works Cited

Cartwright, Mark. "Kukulcan." World History Encyclopedia, World History Foundation, 3 Mar. 2023, <https://www.worldhistory.org/Kukulcan/>.