

POPOL

VUH

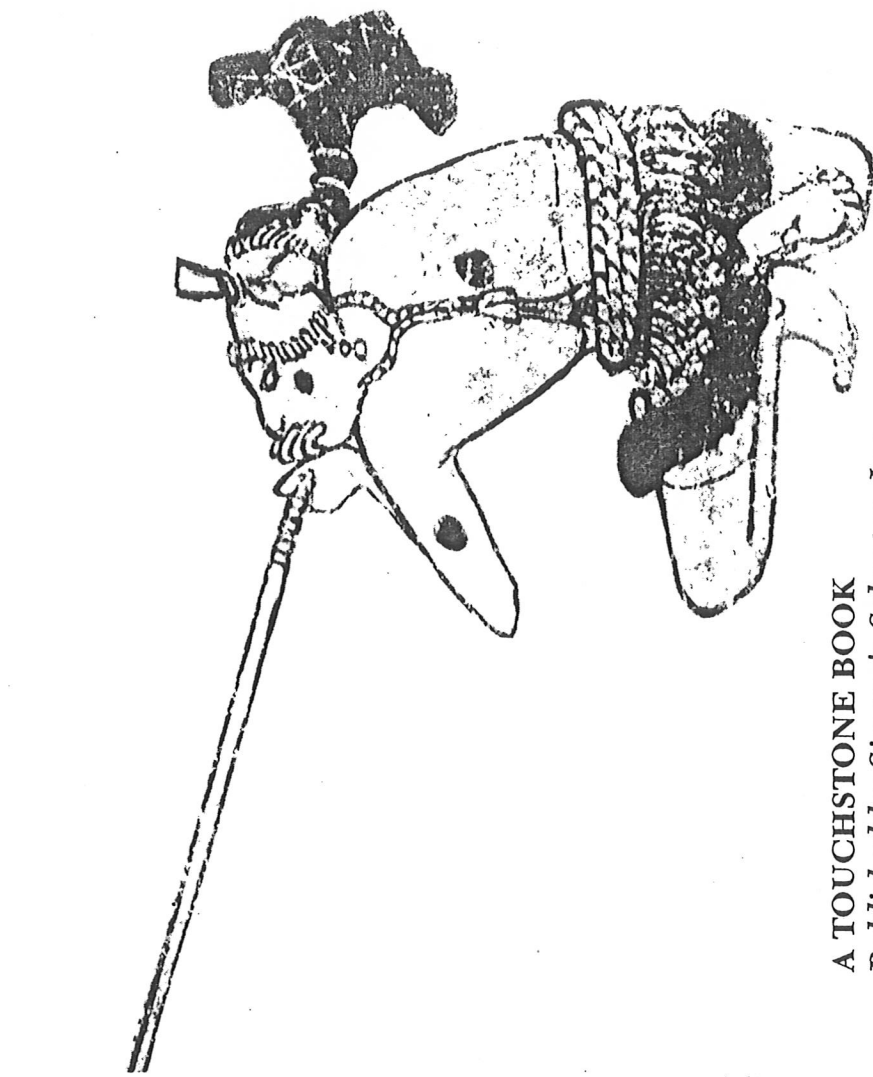


The Mayan Book
of the Dawn of Life

Translated by

DENNIS TEDLOCK

with commentary based on the
ancient knowledge of the modern Quiché Maya



A TOUCHSTONE BOOK

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mu4hulic uleu, mu4hulic poklai, mu4hulic bak.

"Sacrifice yet again, even do it to yourselves!"
 "Morning has come for the provider, nurturer"
 They were givers of praise, givers of respect
 "They've come to ask for your fire"
 The mountain is called Patohil today
 And now they bowed down before their stones,
 there in the forest
 And they also built houses for the gods
 A mountain of stones is there today
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PREFACE

You cannot erase time.

—ANDRÉS XILOJ

THE TRANSLATOR of the Popol Vuh, as if possessed by the story the Popol Vuh tells, must wander in darkness and search long for the clear light. The task is not a matter of deciphering Maya hieroglyphs, since the only surviving version of the Popol Vuh is a transcription into alphabetic writing, but the manuscript nevertheless abounds with ambiguities and obscurities. My work took me not only into dark corners of libraries but into the forests and tall cornfields and smoky houses of highland Guatemala, where the people who speak and walk and work in the pages of the Popol Vuh, the Quiché Maya, have hundreds of thousands of descendants. Among them are diviners called "daykeepers," who know how to interpret illnesses, omens, dreams, messages given by sensations internal to their own bodies, and the multiple rhythms of time. It is their business to bring what is dark into "white clarity," just as the gods of the Popol Vuh first brought the world itself to light.

The Quiché people speak a Mayan language, say prayers to Mayan mountains and Mayan ancestors, and keep time according to the Mayan calendar. They are also interested citizens of the larger contemporary world, but they find themselves surrounded and attacked by those who have yet to realize they have something to teach the rest of us. For them it is not that the time of Mayan civilization has passed, to be followed by the time of European civilization, but that the two have begun to run alongside one another. A complete return to conditions that ex-

isted before Europeans first arrived is unthinkable, and so is a complete abandonment of indigenous traditions in favor of European ones. What most worries daykeepers about people from Europe, and specifically about missionaries, is that they confuse the Earth, whose divinity is equal to that of the celestial God, with the devil. As daykeepers put it, "He who makes an enemy of the Earth makes an enemy of his own body."

In the western part of what was once the Quiché kingdom is a town called Chuua 4.ak or "Before the Building." It is listed in the Popol Vuh as one of the citadels that were added to the kingdom during the reign of two great lords named Quicab and Cauzimah. When they sent "guardians of the land" to occupy newly conquered towns, Before the Building was assigned to nobles whose descendants still possess documents that date from the period of the Popol Vuh manuscript. Among contemporary Guatemalan towns it is without rival in the degree to which its ceremonial life is timed according to the Mayan calendar and mapped according to the relative elevations and directional positions of outdoor shrines. Once each 260 days, on the day named Eight Monkey, daykeepers converge from all over the Guatemalan highlands for the largest of all present-day Mesoamerican ceremonies that follow the ancient calendar. That Before the Building was already a religious center before the fall of the Quiché kingdom is indicated by the Nahuatl name that Pedro de Alvarado's Mexican-Indian allies gave it: Momostenango, meaning "Citadel of Shrines." It was in this town that I began my search for someone who might be able to light my way through some of the darker passages of the Popol Vuh. At the same time I began making sound recordings of contemporary narratives, speeches, and prayers, looking for passages that might resemble the Popol Vuh.

For fieldworkers in a Citadel of Shrines, visiting sacred places, listening to prayers and chants, and learning how to reckon time according to the continuing rhythms of the Mayan calendar can be a dangerous business. Barbara Tedlock and I almost came to the point of giving up our various research projects and leaving town when a daykeeper named Andrés Xiloj divined that we had not only annoyed people at shrines but had entered the presence

of these shrines without even realizing that we must be ritually clean in order to do so. But it was this same daykeeper, a man who is also the head of his patrilineage, who took on the task of answering all our inquiries about the shrines, the people who went there, the calendar, and the process by which he had divined the nature of our offense. One day, when we had come to the point of asking for a detailed description of the training and initiation of daykeepers, he dropped what seemed to be a broad hint that the best way to find out the answer to such questions would be to undertake an actual apprenticeship. After debating the meaning of his remarks all night, we asked him the next day whether he had meant that he would in fact be willing to take us on as apprentices, and he said, "Of course." There followed four and a half months of formal training, timed according to the Mayan calendar, that left us much more knowledgeable than we had ever intended to be.

Diviners are, by profession, interpreters of difficult texts. They can even start from a nonverbal sign, such as an ominous invasion of a house by a wild animal, and arrive at a "reading," as we would say, or *ub'it'ic*, "its saying" or "its announcement," as is said in Quiché. When they start from a verbal sign such as the name of a day on the Mayan calendar, they may treat it as if it were a sign from a writing system rather than a word in itself, arriving at "its saying" by finding a different word with similar sounds. It should therefore come as no surprise that a diviner might be willing to take on the task of reading the Popol Vuh, whose text presents its own intriguing difficulties of interpretation.

When Andrés Xiloj was given a chance to look at the text of the Popol Vuh, he produced a pair of spectacles and began reading aloud, word by word. His previous knowledge of alphabetic reading and writing was limited to Spanish, but he was able to grasp the orthography of the Popol Vuh text with very little help. When he was puzzled by archaic words, I offered definitions drawn from Quiché dictionaries compiled during the colonial period; in time, of course, he readily recognized the more frequent archaic forms. He was never content with merely settling on a Quiché reading of a particular passage and then offer-

ing a simple Spanish translation; instead, he was given to frequent interpretive asides, some of which took the form of entire stories. In the present volume the effects of the three-way dialogue among Andrés Xiloj, the Popol Vuh text, and myself are most obvious in the Glossary and the Notes and Comments, but they are also present in the Introduction and throughout the translation of the Popol Vuh itself.

My work in Guatemala took me not only to the town called Before the Building (Momostenango), but to the ruins of Rotten Cane (Utatlán), to the mountain called Patohil, to the pile of broken stones at Petatayub, and to towns such as Santa Cruz Quiché, Spilt Water (Zacualpa), Above the Nettles (Chichicas-tenango), Above the Hot Springs (Tonicapán), Willow Tree (Santa María Chiquimula), and Under Ten Deer (Quezaltenango). To the patron saints and earthly spirits of all these places I pay my respects, especially to Santiago and his scribe, San Felipe, at Momostenango; to San Juan and to the divine Uhaal and Roz Utz stones at Agua Tibia; and above all to Uhaal Zabal, 4huti Zabal, and Nima Zabal.

Library pilgrimages have taken me to nearby Cambridge, Massachusetts, to the Tozzer Library at Harvard; to the National Anthropological Archives at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.; to the Latin American libraries at Tulane in New Orleans and the University of Texas in Austin; to the special-collections library at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah; to the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City; to the Archivo General de Centroamérica in Guatemala City; and to the Newberry Library in Chicago, where I saw, felt, smelled, and heard the rustle of the manuscript of the Popol Vuh.

Such is the magnitude of the present project that it stretched over nine years; except for one of these years and part of another, it necessarily took a backseat to the countless complexities of university life. Most of the Guatemalan fieldwork was carried out during the summer of 1975 and throughout 1976. Much of my effort to transform masses of research and multiple trial runs at translation into a book was made during evenings and week-

ends at home, and it was also carried on during all-too-brief retreats to such places as Tepoztlán, south of Mexico City; Panajachel, on the shore of Lake Atitlán in Guatemala; and in the woodlands and rocks near Cerrillos, New Mexico, south of Santa Fe. But even when one is confined to Massachusetts, there are ways in which the world of the Popol Vuh makes itself felt. During the months in which I completed the manuscript for the book you now hold in your hands, I could see Venus as the morning star if I looked out the window of my study early enough.

Thinking back over my work on the Popol Vuh brings a great many people to mind; I apologize in advance to those who should have been remembered here but were not. Having learned my lessons about ancestors from my Quiché master, I will begin with persons who are now deceased. Robert Wauchope, when I first began my graduate work at Tulane in 1961, soon became convinced that I should eventually go to Guatemala to do archaeological fieldwork; he lived long enough to know that fourteen years later I finally did get to Guatemala, but as an ethnologist, linguist, and translator rather than an archaeologist. My first lessons in how to read and interpret manuscript sources from Spanish America were given to me by France V. Scholes in the Coronado Library at the University of New Mexico, during the summer of 1964. He and Wauchope enjoyed full careers, but the career of Thelma Sullivan, the finest of all scholars working with texts in the Nahuatl language, was cut short; she stood out among Americanists in general as one of those rare individuals who realize and demonstrate that precision in translation is not to be confused with mechanical literalness. Also cut short was the career of Fernando Horcasitas, who gave a splendid lecture on Nahuatl theater one fine warm evening in Cuernavaca when Barbara Tedlock and I were waiting for the Guatemalan border to reopen after the great earthquake of 1976.

And then there is Abelino Zapeta y Zapeta, who in 1979 became the first Quiché to serve as mayor of Santa Cruz Quiché in centuries. He offered gracious words of greeting to an interna-

tional conference on the Popol Vuh that took place in his town. For the time being it must also be said that he was the last Quiché to serve as mayor. A year after the conference, while he was riding home from work on his bicycle, he was assassinated by gunmen who were seen driving away in an army jeep. The day may come when the Popol Vuh will be entirely at home in Santa Cruz Quiché, the town where it was written, but that day may not be soon.

Turning to those who are still living, and beginning with graduate school, I first think of Munro S. Edmonson. I have come to disagree with him about a great many matters affecting the Popol Vuh, as he well knows, but I have not forgotten his seminar on the Maya at Tulane, which I took more than twenty years ago. When he offered a list of possible research topics to the students in that seminar, I was the one who chose to do a class presentation and term paper on the Popol Vuh. But my first fieldwork in anthropology took me closer to my home in New Mexico: I went to the Zuni, who live on the northern frontier of Mesoamerica. When it came, at long last, to doing field research among the people whose ancestors wrote the Popol Vuh, it was Robert M. Carmack, of the State University of New York at Albany, who introduced Barbara Tedlock and myself to the western highlands of Guatemala. He did this with a generosity that is rare among ethnographers—and with a wisdom, still rarer, that led him to abandon us to our fate once he had gotten us into the field.

Among the people of Guatemala, I give special thanks to Andrés Xiloj Peruch, who not only traveled with me through the Quiché text of the Popol Vuh but taught me how to read dreams, omens, and the rhythms of the Mayan calendar. Thanks also go to his daughter María, who has boundless patience and kindness; to Santiago Guix, who showed the way down many a path; to Gustavo Lang, who offers a steady hand in any emergency; to Lucas Pacheco Benítez, who combines a warm heart with an intimate knowledge of the spiritual properties of stones; to Celso Akabal, who offers genial toasts at his home near the shrine called the Great Place of Declaration; to Vicente de León Abac,

who knows how the ancient customs originated; to Esteban Ajub, who eloquently prays and sings for others; and to Flavio Rojas Lima, who knows how to make foreigners feel welcome at the Seminario de Integración Social Guatemalteca.

In matters of Native American linguistics and poetics, I am especially thankful for more than fifteen years of unceasing dialogue with Dell Hymes. Others who come to mind here are Allan Burns, the first to reveal that conversation is the root of all Mayan discourse; Lyle Campbell, who went beyond his normal duties in providing myself and others with an introductory course in Quiché at the State University of New York at Albany in the fall of 1975 and who taught me the value of Cakchiquel sources; Ives Goddard, who convinced me that even the most intractable manuscript materials on Native American languages may conceal moments of great accuracy; T. J. Knab, who helped me with Nahuatl loanwords in the Popol Vuh and with Nahuatl metaphors; and James L. Mondloch, who answered some of my questions about Quiché syntax.

In matters of ethnography, ethnohistory, and archaeology I think of Duncan Earle, who revealed that the "mushroom head" of the Popol Vuh is in fact an herb; Gary Gossen, who knows that in trying to comprehend the contemporary highland Maya we are dealing with nothing less than a civilization; Doris Heyden, the first to reveal the full meaning of the secret cave at Teotihuacan; Alain Ichon, who excavated the site called Thorny Place in the Popol Vuh; David H. Kelley, who personally convinced me in far-off Calgary that classic Maya vase paintings do indeed illustrate scenes from the Popol Vuh; J. Jorge Klor de Alva, who knows that the "spiritual conquest" of Mesoamerica has in fact never taken place; Linda Schele, who brought the hieroglyphic texts of Palenque closer than ever to the Popol Vuh at the eighth Workshop on Maya Hieroglyphic Writing in Austin; and Nathaniel Tarn, who in earlier times played the role of anthropologist among neighbors of the Quiché and later returned as a poet.

Anthony Aveni, John B. Carlson, and Floyd G. Lounsbury have heard out my ideas concerning the calendrical and astro-

nomical interpretation of the Popol Vuh. Michael D. Coe, who well knows what a calabash tree is, not only provided welcome praise for the translation but generously permitted the use of the vase drawings reproduced here. Peter T. Furst and Jill Leslie Furst are steady friends who can be counted upon to do unexpected things, like raising toads, cooking sharks, and praising the fertility of skeletons. But above all I am grateful to my wife-colleague Barbara Tedlock, scholar and artist, who has meanwhile been telling her own story about places and times in Guatemala.

At various times over the years I have discussed portions of this work with four past and present colleagues in the University Professors' Program at Boston University, all of whom have views on the subject of translation: William Arrowsmith, Rodolfo Car-dona, D. S. Carne-Ross, and Herbert Mason. Others who have lent patient ears include the poets Robert Kelly, George Quasha, Jerome Rothenberg, and Charles Stein, along with the book-rancher Gus Blaisdell and the apple-farmer Jeff Titon. Thanks also go to Richard Lewis, of the Touchstone Center in New York, who provided me with the opportunity to do a public performance of parts of the translation at the American Museum of Natural History.

My fieldwork in Guatemala in 1976 was done with the aid of a Fellowship for Independent Study and Research from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Released time for the continuation of the translation of the Popol Vuh was provided, during the academic years 1979-80 and 1980-81, by a grant from the Translations Program at the National Endowment for the Humanities, which is ably and thoughtfully administered by Susan Mango. During 1980-81 I received additional aid in the form of a sabbatical leave from Boston University.

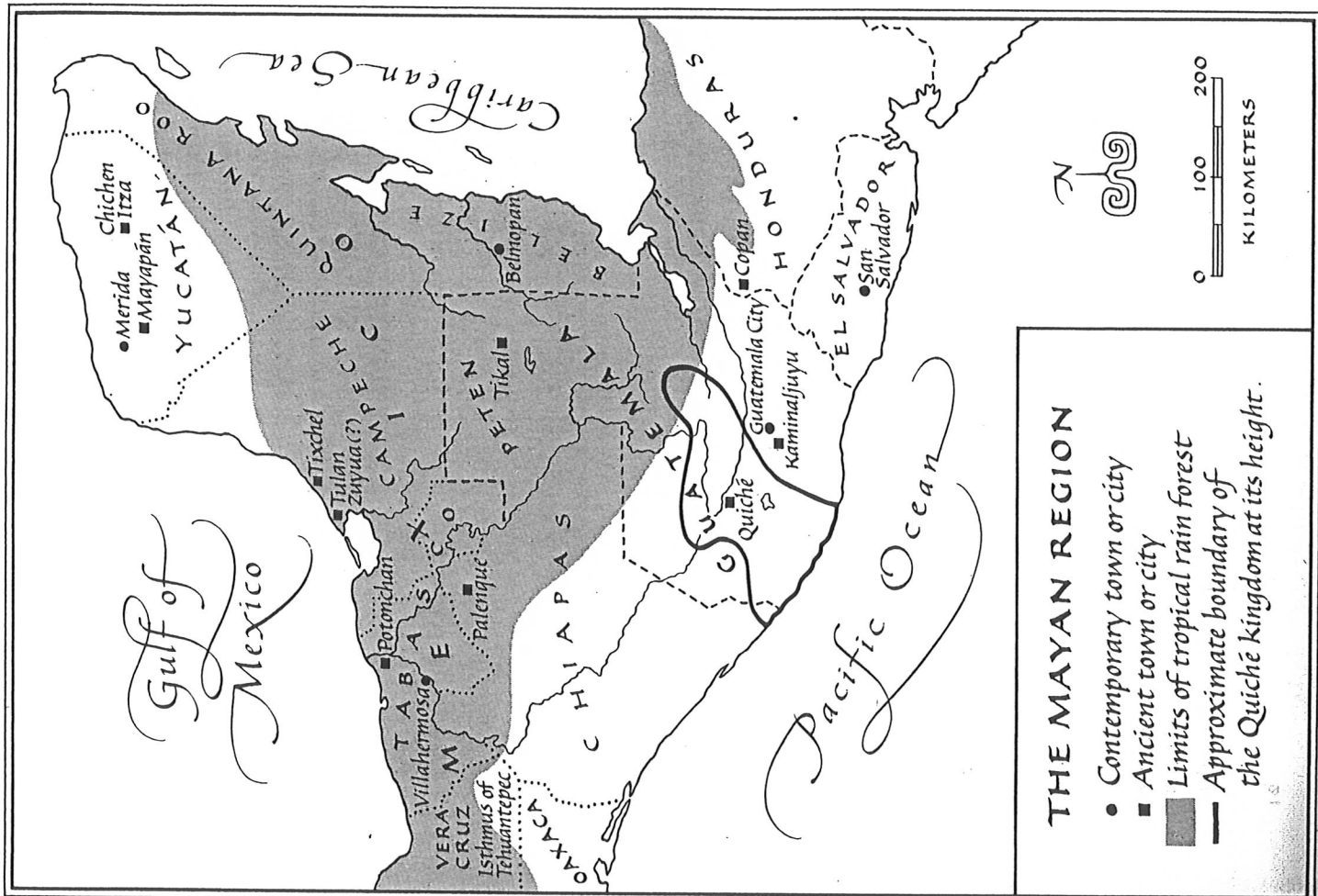
From the beginning of our work on the Popol Vuh, Andrés Xiloj felt certain that if one only knew how to read it perfectly, borrowing the knowledge of the day lords, the moist breezes, and the distant lightning, it should reveal everything under the sky and on the earth, all the way out to the four corners. As a help to my own reading and pondering of the book, he suggested an addition to the prayer that daykeepers recite when they go to public shrines. It goes like this:

Make my guilt vanish,
Heart of Sky, Heart of Earth;
do me a favor,
give me strength, give me courage
in my heart, in my head,
since you are my mountain and my plain;
may there be no falsehood and no stain,
and may this reading of the Popol Vuh
come out clear as dawn,
and may the sifting of ancient times
be complete in my heart, in my head;
and make my guilt vanish,
my grandmothers, grandfathers,
and however many souls of the dead there may be,
you who speak with the Heart of Sky and Earth,
may all of you together give strength
to the reading I have undertaken.

INTRODUCTION

THE FIRST FOUR HUMANS, the first four earthly beings who were truly articulate when they moved their feet and hands, their faces and mouths, and who could speak the very language of the gods, could also see everything under the sky and on the earth. All they had to do was look around from the spot where they were, all the way to the limits of space and the limits of time. But then the gods, who had not intended to make and model beings with the potential of becoming their own equals, limited human sight to what was obvious and nearby. Nevertheless, the lords who once ruled a kingdom from a place called Quiché, in the highlands of Guatemala, once had in their possession the means for overcoming this nearsightedness, an *ilbal*, a "seeing instrument" or a "place to see"; with this they could know distant or future events. The instrument was not a telescope, not a crystal for gazing, but a book.

The lords of Quiché consulted their book when they sat in council, and their name for it was Popol Vuh or "Council Book." Because this book contained an account of how the forefathers of their own lordly lineages had exiled themselves from a faraway city called Tulan, they sometimes described it as "the writings about Tulan." Because a later generation of lords had obtained the book by going on a pilgrimage that took them across water on a causeway, they titled it "The Light That Came from Across the Sea." And because the book told of events that happened before the first sunrise and of a time when the forefa-



thers hid themselves and the stones that contained the spirit familiars of their gods in forests, they also titled it "Our Place in the Shadows." And finally, because it told of the first rising of the morning star and the sun and moon, and of the rise and radiant splendor of the Quiché lords, they titled it "The Dawn of Life."

Those who wrote the version of the Popol Vuh that comes down to us do not give us their personal names but rather call themselves "we" in its opening pages and "we who are the Quiché people" later on. In contemporary usage "the Quiché people" are an ethnic group in Guatemala, consisting of all those who speak the particular Mayan language that itself has come to be called Quiché; they presently number over half a million and occupy most of the former territory of the kingdom whose development is described in the Popol Vuh. To the west and northwest of them are other Mayan peoples, speaking other Mayan languages, who extend across the Mexican border into the highlands of Chiapas and down into the Gulf coastal plain of Tabasco. To the east and northeast still other Mayans extend just across the borders of El Salvador and Honduras, down into the lowlands of Belize, and across the peninsula of Yucatán. These are the peoples, with a total population of about four million today, whose ancestors developed what has become known to the outside world as Maya civilization.

The roots of Maya civilization may lie in the prior civilization of the Olmecs, which reached its peak on the Gulf coastal plain about three thousand years ago. Maya hieroglyphic writing and calendrical reckoning probably have antecedents that go back at least that far, but they did not find expression in the lasting form of inscriptions on stone monuments until the first century B.C., in a deep river valley that cuts through the highlands of Chiapas. From there, the erection of inscribed monuments spread south to the Pacific and eastward along the Guatemalan coastal plain, then reached back into the highlands at the site of Kaminaljuyu, on the western edge of what is now Guatemala City. During the so-called classic period, beginning about A.D. 300, the center of literate civilization in the Mayan region shifted northward into the lowland rain forest that separates the mountain pine forest of Chiapas and Guatemala from the low and thorny scrub forest

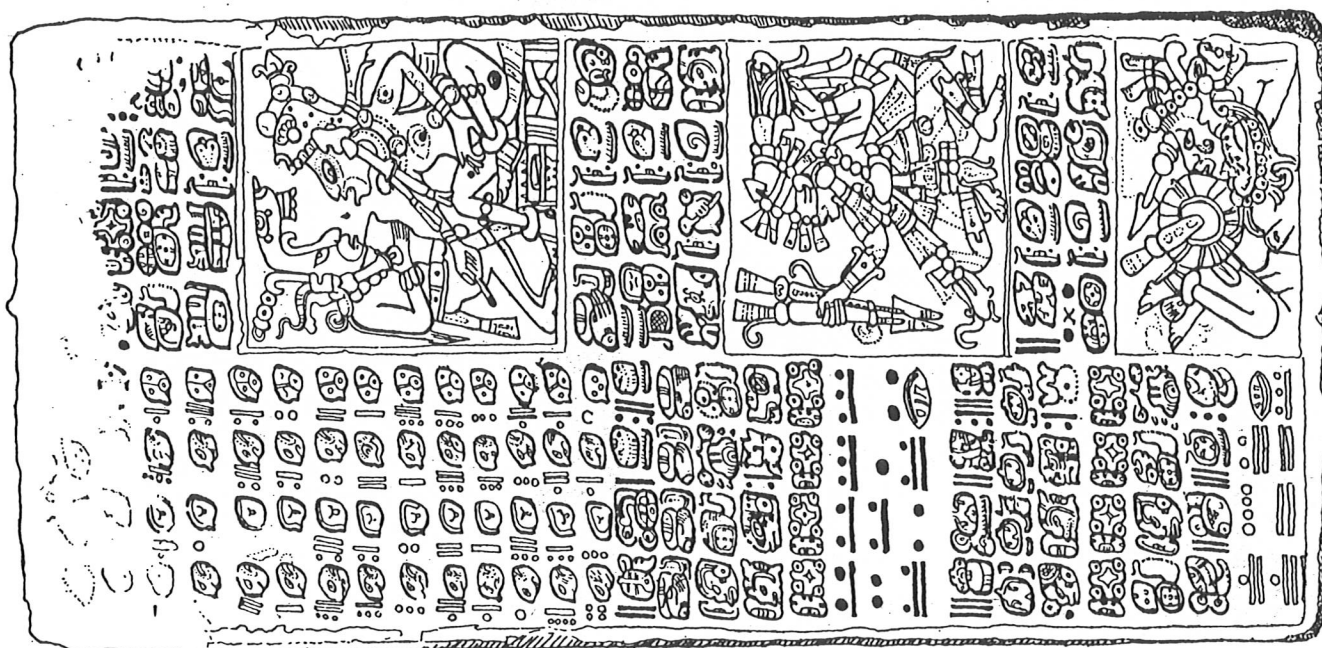
of northern Yucatán. Swamps were drained and trees were cleared to make way for intensive cultivation. Hieroglyphic texts in great quantity were sculpted in stone and stucco, painted on pottery and plaster, and inked on long strips of paper that were folded like screens to make books. This is the period that accounts for the glories of such sites as Palenque, Tikal, and Copan, leaving a legacy that has made Maya civilization famous in the fields of art and architecture. The Mayan languages spoken at most of these sites probably corresponded to the ones now known as Cholan, which are still spoken by the Mayan peoples who live at the extreme eastern and western ends of the old classical heartland.

Near the end of the classic period, the communities that had carved out a place for themselves in the rain forest were caught in a deepening vortex of overpopulation, environmental degradation, and malnutrition. The organizational and technological capacities of Maya society were strained past the breaking point, and by A.D. 900 much of the region had been abandoned. That left Maya civilization divided between two areas that had been peripheral during classic times, one in northern Yucatán and the other in the Guatemalan highlands. The subsequent history of both these areas was shaped by invaders from the western end of the old classical heartland, from Tabasco and neighboring portions of the Gulf coastal plain, who set up militaristic states among the peoples they conquered. The culture they carried with them has come to be called Toltec; it is thought to have originated among speakers of Nahuatl languages, who are presently concentrated in central Mexico (where they include the descendants of the Aztecs) and who once extended eastward to Tabasco. In the Mayan area, Toltec culture was notable for giving mythic prominence to the god-king named Plumed Serpent, technical prominence to the use of spear-throwers in warfare, and sacrificial prominence to the human heart. Those who carried this culture to highland Guatemala brought many Nahuatl words with them, but they themselves were probably Gulf-coast Maya of Cholan descent. Among them were the founders of the kingdom whose people have come to be known as the Quiché Maya.

Mayan monuments and buildings no longer featured inscriptions after the end of the classic period, but scribes went right on making books for another six centuries, sometimes combining Mayan texts with Toltecan pictures. Then, in the sixteenth century, Europeans arrived in Mesoamerica. They forcibly imposed a monopoly on all major forms of visible expression, whether in drama, architecture, sculpture, painting, or writing. Hundreds of hieroglyphic books were tossed into bonfires by ardent missionaries; between this disaster and the slower perils of decay, only four books made it through to the present day. Three of them, all thought to come from the lowlands, found their way to Europe in early colonial times and eventually turned up in libraries in Madrid, Paris, and Dresden; a fragment from a fourth book was recovered more recently from looters who had found it in a dry cave in Chiapas. But the survival of Mayan literature was not dependent on the survival of its outward forms. Just as Mayan peoples learned to use the symbolism of Christian saints as a mask for ancient gods, so they learned to use the Roman alphabet as a mask for ancient texts.

There was no little justice in the fact that it was the missionaries themselves, the burners of the ancient books, who worked out the problems of adapting the alphabet to the sounds of

SCRIBES WENT RIGHT ON MAKING BOOKS: This is a page from the Maya hieroglyphic book known as the Dresden Codex, which dates to the thirteenth century. The left-hand column describes the movements of Venus during one of five different types of cycles reckoned for that planet. The right-hand column describes the auguries for the cycle and gives both pictures and names for the attendant deities. The top picture, in which the figure at right is seated on two glyphs that name constellations, may have to do with the position of Venus relative to the fixed stars during the cycle. In the middle picture is the god who currently accounts for Venus itself, holding a dart-thrower in his left hand and darts in his right; in the bottom picture is his victim, with a dart piercing his shield. The Venus gods of the Popol Vuh are more conservatively Mayan than those of the Dresden Codex; they are armed with old-fashioned blowguns rather than Toltecan dart-throwers.



Mayan languages, and while they were at it they charted grammars and compiled dictionaries. Their official purpose in doing this linguistic work was to facilitate the writing and publishing of Christian prayers, sermons, and catechisms in the native languages. But very little time passed before some of their native pupils found political and religious applications for alphabetic writing that were quite independent of those of Rome. These independent writers have left a literary legacy that is both more extensive than the surviving hieroglyphic corpus and more open to understanding. Their most notable works, created as alphabetic substitutes for hieroglyphic books, are the Chilam Balam or "Jaguar Priest" books of Yucatán and the Popol Vuh of Guatemala.

The authors of the alphabetic Popol Vuh were members of the three lordly lineages that had once ruled the Quiché kingdom: the Cauecs, the Greathouses, and the Lord Quichés. They worked in the middle of the sixteenth century, shortly before the end of one of the fifty-two-year cycles measured out by their own calendar. The scene of their writing was the town of Quiché, northwest of what is now Guatemala City. The east side of this town, on flat land, was new in their day, with buildings in files on a grid of streets and the bell towers of a church at the center. The west side, already in ruins, was on fortified promontories above deep canyons, with pyramids and palaces clustered around multiple plazas and courtyards. The buildings of the east side displayed broad expanses of blank stone and plaster, but the ruined walls of the west side bore tantalizing traces of multicolored murals. What concerned the authors of the new version of the Popol Vuh was to preserve the story that lay behind the ruins.

During the early colonial period the town of Quiché was eclipsed, in both size and prosperity, by the neighboring town of Chuui La or "Above the Nettles," better known today as Chichicastenango. The residents of the latter town included members of the Cauec and Lord Quiché lineages, and at some point a copy of the alphabetic Popol Vuh found its way there. Between 1701 and 1703, a friar named Francisco Ximénez happened to get a look at this manuscript while he was serving as the parish

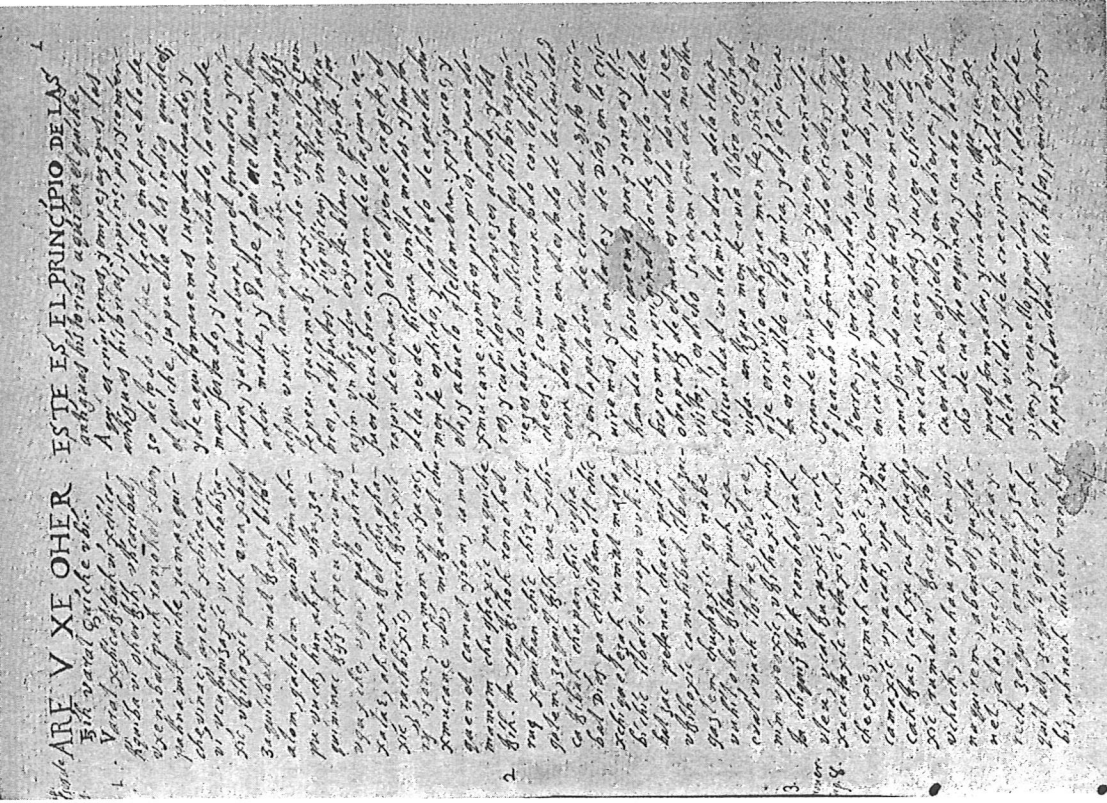


PHOTO COURTESY NEWBERRY LIBRARY

THE ONLY SURVIVING COPY OF THE QUICHÉ TEXT OF THE POPOL VUH: The first page of the copy of the alphabetic Popol Vuh made by Francisco Ximénez in Chichicastenango; the Quiché text is on the left and his own Spanish translation is on the right.

priest for Chichicastenango. He made the only surviving copy of the Quiché text of the Popol Vuh and added a Spanish translation (see the illustration on p. 29). His work remained in the possession of the Dominican order until after Guatemalan independence, but when liberal reforms forced the closing of all monasteries in 1830, it was acquired by the library of the University of San Carlos in Guatemala City. Carl Scherzer, an Austrian physician, happened to see it there in 1854, and Charles Etienne Brasseur de Bourbourg, a French priest, had the same good fortune a few months later. In 1857 Scherzer published Ximénez' Spanish translation under the patronage of the Hapsburgs in Vienna, members of the same royal lineage that had ruled Spain at the time of the conquest of the Quiché kingdom, and in 1861 Brasseur published the Quiché text and a French translation in Paris. The manuscript itself, which Brasseur spirited out of Guatemala, eventually found its way back across the Atlantic from Paris, coming to rest in the Newberry Library in 1911. The town graced by this library, with its magnificent collection of Native American texts, is not in Mesoamerica, but it does have an Indian name: Chicago, meaning "Place of Wild Onions."

The manuscript Ximénez copied in the place called "Above the Nettles" may have included a few illustrations and even an occasional hieroglyph, but his version contains nothing but solid columns of alphabetic prose. Mayan authors, in general made only sparing use of graphic elements in their alphabetic works, but nearly every page of the ancient books combined writing (including signs meant to be read phonetically) and pictures. In the Mayan languages, as well as in Nahuatl, the terms for writing, and painting were and are the same, the same artisans practiced both skills, and the patron deities of both skills were twin monkey gods born on the day bearing a name translatable (whether from Mayan or Nahuatl) as One Monkey. In the books made under the patronage of these twin gods there is a dialectical relationship between the writing and the pictures: the writing not only records words but sometimes has elements that picture or point to their meaning without the necessity of a detour through words. As for the pictures, they not only depict what they mean

but have elements that can be read as words. When we say that Mesoamerican writing is strongly ideographic relative to our own, this observation should be balanced with the realization that Mesoamerican painting is more conceptual than our own.

At times the writers of the alphabetic Popol Vuh seem to be describing pictures, especially when they begin new episodes in narratives. In passages like the following, the use of sentences beginning with phrases like "this is" and the use of verbs in the Quiché equivalent of the present tense cause the reader to linger, for a moment, over a lasting image:

This is the great tree of Seven Macaw, a nance, and this is the food of Seven Macaw. In order to eat the fruit of the nance he goes up the tree every day. Since Hunahpu and Xbalanque have seen where he feeds, they are now hiding beneath the tree of Seven Macaw, they are keeping quiet here, the two boys are in the leaves of the tree.

It must be cautioned, of course, that "word pictures" painted by storytellers, in Quiché or in any other language, need not have physical counterparts in the world outside the mind's eye. But the present example has an abruptness that suggests a sudden still picture from a story already well under way rather than a moving picture unfolded in the course of the events of that story. The narrators do not describe how the boys arrived "in the leaves of the tree"; the opening scene is already complete, waiting for the blowgun shot that comes in the next sentence, where the main verb is in the Quiché equivalent of the past tense and the still picture gives way to a moving one.

More than any other Mayan book, whether hieroglyphic or alphabetic, the Popol Vuh tells us something about the conceptual place of books in the pre-Columbian world. The writers of the alphabetic version explain why the hieroglyphic version was among the most precious possessions of Quiché rulers:

They knew whether war would occur; everything they saw was clear to them. Whether there would be death, or whether there would be famine, or whether quarrels would occur, they knew it for certain, since there was

a place to see it, there was a book. "Council Book" was their name for it.

When "everything they saw was clear to them" the Quiché lords were recovering the vision of the first four humans, who at first "saw everything under the sky perfectly." That would mean that the Popol Vuh made it possible, once again, to sight "the four sides, the four corners in the sky, on the earth," the corners and sides that mark not only the earth but are the reference points for the movements of celestial lights.

If the ancient Popol Vuh was like the surviving hieroglyphic books, it contained systematic accounts of cycles in astronomical and earthly events that served as a complex navigation system for those who wished to see and move beyond the present. In the case of a section dealing with the planet Venus, for example, there would have been tables of rising and setting dates, pictures of the attendant gods, and brief texts outlining what these gods did when they established the pattern for the movements of Venus. When the ancient reader of the Popol Vuh took the role of a diviner and astronomer, seeking the proper date for a ceremony or a momentous political act, we may guess that he looked up a specific passage, pondered its meaning, and rendered an opinion. But the authors of the alphabetic Popol Vuh tell us that there were also occasions on which the reader offered "a long performance and account" whose subject was the emergence of the whole *cahuleu* or "sky-earth," which is the Quiché way of saying "world." If a divinatory reading or pondering was a way of recovering the depth of vision enjoyed by the first four humans, a "long performance," in which the reader may well have covered every major subject in the entire book, was a way of recovering the full cosmic sweep of that vision.

If the authors of the alphabetic Popol Vuh had transposed the ancient Popol Vuh directly, on a glyph-by-glyph basis, they might have produced a text that would have made little sense to anyone but a fully trained diviner and performer. What they did instead was to quote what a reader of the ancient book would say when he gave a "long performance," telling the full story that lay behind the charts, pictures, and plot outlines of the an-

cient book. Lest we miss the fact that they are quoting, they periodically insert such phrases as "This is the account, here it is," or "as it is said." At one point they themselves take the role of a performer, *speaking directly to us* as if we were members of a live audience rather than mere readers. As they introduce the first episode of a long cycle of stories about the gods who prepared the sky-earth for human life, they propose that we all drink a toast to the hero.

At the beginning of their book, the authors delicately describe the difficult circumstances under which they work. When they tell us that they are writing "amid the preaching of God, in Christendom now," we can catch a plaintive tone only by noticing that they make this statement immediately after asserting that their own gods "accounted for everything—and did it, too—as enlightened beings, in enlightened words." What the authors propose to write down is what Quichés call the *Oher Tzih*, the "Ancient Word" or "Prior Word," which has precedence over "the preaching of God." They have chosen to do so because "there is no longer" a Popol Vuh, which makes it sound as though they intend to re-create the original book solely on the basis of their memory of what they have seen in its pages or heard in the "long performance." But when we remember their complaint about being "in Christendom," there remains the possibility that they still have the original book but are protecting it from possible destruction by missionaries. Indeed, their next words make us wonder whether the book might still exist, but they no sooner raise our hopes on this front than they remove the book's reader from our grasp: "There is the original book and ancient writing, but he who reads and ponders it hides his face." Here we must remember that the authors of the alphabetic Popol Vuh have chosen to remain anonymous; in other words, they are hiding their own faces. If they are protecting anyone with their enigmatic statements about an inaccessible book or a hidden reader, it could well be themselves.

The authors begin their narrative in a world that has nothing but an empty sky above and a calm sea below. The action gets under way when the gods who reside in the primordial sea, named Maker, Modeler, Bearer, Begetter, Heart of the Lake,

Heart of the Sea, and Sovereign Plumed Serpent, are joined by gods who come down from the primordial sky, named Heart of Sky, Heart of Earth, Newborn Thunderbolt, Raw Thunderbolt, and Hurricane. These two parties engage in a dialogue, and in the course of it they conceive the emergence of the earth from the sea and the growth of plants and people on its surface. They wish to set in motion a process they call the "sowing" and "dawning," by which they mean several different things at once. There is the sowing of seeds in the earth, whose sprouting will be their dawning, and there is the sowing of the sun, moon, and stars, whose difficult passage beneath the earth will be followed by their own dawning. Then there is the matter of human beings, whose sowing in the womb will be followed by their emergence into the light at birth, and whose sowing in the earth at death will be followed by dawning when their souls become sparks of light in the darkness.

For the gods, the idea of human beings is as old as that of the earth itself, but they fail in their first three attempts (all in Part One) to transform this idea into a living reality. What they want is beings who will walk, work, and talk in an articulate and measured way, visiting shrines, giving offerings, and calling upon their makers by name, all according to the rhythms of a calendar. What they get instead, on the first try, is beings who have no arms to work with and can only squawk, chatter, and howl, and whose descendants are the animals of today. On the second try they make a being of mud, but this one is unable to walk or turn its head or even keep its shape; being solitary, it cannot reproduce itself, and in the end it dissolves into nothing.

Before making a third try the gods decide, in the course of a further dialogue, to seek the counsel of an elderly husband and wife named Xpiyacoc and Xmucane. Xpiyacoc is a divine matchmaker and therefore prior to all marriage, and Xmucane is a divine midwife and therefore prior to all birth. Like contemporary Quiché matchmakers and midwives, both of them are *ahz'ib* or "daykeepers," diviners who know how to interpret the auguries given by thirteen day numbers and twenty day names that combine to form a calendrical cycle lasting 260 days. They are older than all the other gods, who address them as grandpar-

ents, and the cycle they divine by is older than the longer cycles that govern Venus and the sun, which have not yet been established at this point in the story. The question the younger gods put to them here is whether human beings should be made out of wood. Following divinatory methods that are still in use among Quiché daykeepers, they give their approval. The wooden beings turn out to look and talk and multiply themselves something like humans, but they fail to time their actions in an orderly way and forget to call upon the gods in prayer. Hurricane brings a catastrophe down on their heads, not only flooding them with a gigantic rainstorm but sending monstrous animals to attack them. Even their own dogs, turkeys, and household utensils rise against them, taking vengeance for past mistreatment. Their only descendants are the monkeys who inhabit the forests today.

At this point the gods who have been working on the problem of making human beings will need only one more try before they solve it, but the authors of the Popol Vuh postpone the telling of this episode, turning their attention to stories about heroic gods whose adventures make the sky-earth a safer place for human habitation. The gods in question are the twin sons of Xpiyacoc and Xmucane, named One Hunahpu and Seven Hunahpu, and the twin sons of One Hunahpu, named Hunahpu and Xbalanque. Both sets of twins are players of the Mesoamerican ball game, in which the rubber ball (an indigenous American invention) is hit with a yoke that rides on the hips rather than with the hands. In addition to being ballplayers, One and Seven Hunahpu occupy themselves by gambling with dice, whereas Hunahpu and Xbalanque go out hunting with blowguns.

The adventures of the sons and grandsons of Xpiyacoc and Xmucane are presented in two different cycles, with the episodes divided between the cycles more on the basis of where they take place in space than when they take place in time. The first cycle deals entirely with adventures on the face of the earth, while the second, though it has two separate above-ground passages, deals mainly with adventures in the Mayan underworld, named Xibalba. If the events of these two cycles were combined in a single chronological sequence, the above-ground episodes would probably alternate with those below, with the heroes de-

scending into the underworld, emerging on the earth again, and so forth. These sowing and dawning movements of the heroes, along with those of their supporting cast, prefigure the present-day movements of the sun, moon, planets, and stars.

Hunahpu and Xbalanque are the protagonists of the first of the two hero cycles (corresponding to Part Two in the present translation), and their enemies are a father and his two sons, all of them pretenders to lordly power over the affairs of the earth. Hurricane, or Heart of Sky, is offended by this threesome, and it is he who sends Hunahpu and Xbalanque against them. The first to get his due is the father, named Seven Macaw, who claims to be both the sun and moon. In chronological terms this episode overlaps with the story of the wooden people (at the end of Part One), since Seven Macaw serves as their source of celestial light and has his downfall at the same time they do. The twins shoot him while he is at his meal, high up in a fruit tree, breaking his jaw and bringing him down to earth. Later they pose as curers and give him the reverse of a face-lift, pulling out all his teeth and removing the metal disks from around his eyes; this puts an end to his career as a lordly being. His earthly descendants are scarlet macaws, with broken and toothless jaws and mottled white patches beneath their eyes. He himself remains as the seven stars of the Big Dipper, and his wife, named Chimalmat, corresponds to the Little Dipper. The rising of Seven Macaw (in mid-October) now marks the coming of the dry season, and his fall to earth and his disappearance (beginning in mid-July) signal the beginning of the hurricane season. It was his first fall, brought on by the blowgun shot of Hunahpu and Xbalanque, that opened the way for the great flood that brought down the wooden people. Just as Seven Macaw only pretended to be the sun and moon, so the wooden people only pretended to be human.

Hunahpu and Xbalanque next take on Zipacna, the elder of Seven Macaw's two sons, a crocodilian monster who claims to be the maker of mountains. But first comes an episode in which Zipacna has an encounter with the gods of alcoholic drinks, the Four Hundred Boys. Alarmed by Zipacna's great strength, these boys trick him into digging a deep hole and try to crush him by

dropping a great log down behind him. He survives, but he waits in the hole until they are in the middle of a drunken victory celebration and then brings their own house down on top of them. At the celestial level they become the stars called Motz, the Quiché name for the Pleiades, and their downfall corresponds to early-evening settings of these stars. At the earthly level, among contemporary Quichés, the Pleiades symbolize a handful of seeds, and their disappearance in the west marks the proper time for the sowing of crops.

Zipacna meets his own downfall when Hunahpu and Xbalanque set out to avenge the Four Hundred Boys. At a time when Zipacna has gone without food for several days, they set a trap for him by making a device that appears to be a living, moving crab. Having placed this artificial crab in a tight space beneath an overhang at the bottom of a great mountain, they show him the way there. Zipacna goes after the crab with great passion, and his struggles to wrestle himself into the right position to consummate his hunger become a symbolic parody of sexual intercourse. When the great moment comes the whole mountain falls on his chest (which is to say he ends up on the bottom), and when he heaves a sigh he turns to stone.

Finally there comes the demise of the younger son of Seven Macaw, named Earthquake, who bills himself as a destroyer of mountains. In his case the lure devised by Hunahpu and Xbalanque is the irresistibly delicious aroma given off by the roasting of birds. They cast a spell on the bird they give him to eat: just as it was cooked inside a coating of earth, so he will end up covered by earth. They leave him buried in the east, opposite his elder brother, whose killing of the Four Hundred Boys associates him with the west (where the Pleiades may be seen to fall beneath the earth). Seven Macaw, as the Big Dipper, is of course in the north. He is near the pivot of the movement of the night sky, whereas his two sons make the earth move—though they cannot raise or level whole mountains in a single day as they once did.

Having accounted for three of the above-ground episodes in the lives of Hunahpu and Xbalanque, the Popol Vuh next moves back in time to tell the story of their father, One Hunahpu, and his twin brother, Seven Hunahpu (at the beginning of Part

Three). This is the point at which the authors treat us as if we were in their very presence, introducing One Hunahpu with these words: "Let's drink to him, and let's just drink to the telling and accounting of the begetting of Hunahpu and Xbalanque." The story begins long before One Hunahpu meets the woman who will bear Hunahpu and Xbalanque; in the opening episode, he marries a woman named Xbaquiyalo and they have twin sons named One Monkey and One Artisan. One Hunahpu and his brother sometimes play ball with these two boys, and a messenger from Hurricane, a falcon, sometimes comes to watch them. The boys become practitioners of all sorts of arts and crafts, including flute playing, singing, writing, carving, jewelry making, and metalworking. At some point Xbaquiyalo dies, but we are not told how; that leaves Xmucane, the mother of One and Seven Hunahpu, as the only woman in the household.

The ball court of One and Seven Hunahpu lies on the eastern edge of the earth's surface at a place called Great Abyss at Car-chah. Their ballplaying offends the lords of Xibalba, who dislike hearing noises above their subterranean domain. The head lords are named One Death and Seven Death, and under them are other lords who specialize in causing such maladies as lesions, jaundice, emaciation, edema, stabbing pains, and sudden death from vomiting blood. One and Seven Death decide to challenge One and Seven Hunahpu to come play ball in the court of Xibalba, which lies at the western edge of the underworld. They therefore send their messengers, who are monstrous owls, to the Great Abyss. One and Seven Hunahpu leave One Monkey and One Artisan behind to keep Xmucane entertained and follow the owls over the eastern edge of the world. The way is full of traps, but they do well until they come to the Crossroads, where each of four roads has a different color corresponding to a different direction. They choose the Black Road, which means, at the terrestrial level, that their journey through the underworld will take them from east to west. At the celestial level, it means that they were last seen in the black cleft of the Milky Way when they descended below the eastern horizon; to this day the cleft is called the Road of Xibalba.

Entering the council place of the lords of Xibalba is a tricky

business, beginning with the fact that the first two figures seated there are mere manikins, put there as a joke. The next gag that awaits visitors is a variation on the hot seat, but after that comes a deadly serious test. One and Seven Hunahpu must face a night in Dark House, which is totally black inside. They are given a torch and two cigars, but they are warned to keep these burning all night without consuming them. They fail this test, so their hosts sacrifice them the next day instead of playing ball with them. Both of them are buried at the Place of Ball Game Sacrifice, except that the severed head of One Hunahpu is placed in the fork of a tree that stands by the road there. Now, for the first time, the tree bears fruit, and it becomes difficult to tell the head from the fruit. This is the origin of the calabash tree, whose fruit is the size and shape of a human head.

Blood Woman, the maiden daughter of a Xibalban lord named Blood Gatherer, goes to marvel at the calabash tree. The head of One Hunahpu, which is a skull by now, spits in her hand and makes her pregnant with Hunahpu and Xbalanque. The skull explains to her that henceforth, a father's face will survive in his son, even after his own face has rotted away and left nothing but bone. After six months, when Blood Woman's father notices that she is pregnant, he demands to know who is responsible. She answers that "there is no man whose face I've known," which is literally true. He orders the owl messengers of Xibalba to cut her heart out and bring it back in a bowl; armed with the White Dagger, the instrument of sacrifice, they take her away. But she persuades them to spare her, devising a substitute for her heart in the form of a congealed nodule of sap from a croton tree. The lords heat the nodule over a fire and are entranced by the aroma; meanwhile the owls show Blood Woman to the surface of the earth. As a result of this episode it is destined that the lords of Xibalba will receive offerings of incense made from croton sap rather than human blood and hearts. At the astronomical level Blood Woman corresponds to the moon, which appears in the west at nightfall when it begins to wax, just as she appeared before the skull of One Hunahpu at the Place of Ball Game Sacrifice when she became pregnant.

Once she is out of the underworld, Blood Woman goes to

Xmucane and claims to be her daughter-in-law, but Xmucane resists the idea that her own son, One Hunahpu, could be responsible for Blood Woman's pregnancy. She puts Blood Woman to a test, sending her to get a netful of corn from the garden that One Monkey and One Artisan have been cultivating. Blood Woman finds only a single clump of corn plants there, but she produces a whole netful of ears by pulling out the silk from just one ear. When Xmucane sees the load of corn she goes to the garden herself, wondering whether Blood Woman has stripped it. On the ground at the foot of the clump of plants she notices the imprint of the carrying net, which she reads as a sign that Blood Woman is indeed pregnant with her own grandchildren.

To understand how Xmucane is able to interpret the sign of the net we must remember that she knows how to read the auguries of the Mayan calendar, and that one of the twenty day names that go into the making of that calendar is "Net." Retold from a calendrical point of view, the story so far is that Venus rose as the morning star on a day named Hunahpu, corresponding to the ballplaying of Xmucane's sons, One and Seven Hunahpu, in the east; then, after being out of sight in Xibalba, Venus reappeared as the evening star on a day named Death, corresponding to the defeat of her sons by One and Seven Death and the placement of One Hunahpu's head in a tree in the west. The event that is due to come next in the story is the rebirth of Venus as the morning star, which should fall, as she already knows, on a day named Net. When she sees the imprint of the net in the field, she takes it as a sign that this event is coming near, and that the faces of the sons born to Blood Woman will be reincarnations of the face of One Hunahpu.

When Hunahpu and Xbalanque are born they are treated cruelly by their jealous half-brothers, One Monkey and One Artisan, and even by their grandmother. They never utter a complaint, but keep themselves happy by going out every day to hunt birds with their blowguns. Eventually they get the better of their brothers by sending them up a tree to get birds that failed to fall down when they were shot. They cause the tree to grow tall enough to maroon their brothers, whom they transform into

monkeys. When Xmucane objects they give her four chances to see the faces of One Monkey and One Artisan again, calling them home with music. They warn her not to laugh, but the monkeys are so ridiculous she cannot contain herself; finally they swing up and away through the treetops for good. One Monkey and One Artisan, both of whose names refer to a single day on the divinatory calendar, correspond to the planet Mars, which thereafter begins its period of visibility on a day bearing these names, and their temporary return to the house of Xmucane corresponds to the retrograde motion of Mars. They are also the gods of arts and crafts, and they probably made their first journey through the sky during the era of the wooden people, who were the first earthly beings to make and use artifacts and who themselves ended up as monkeys.

With their half-brothers out of the way, Hunahpu and Xbalanque decide to clear a garden plot of their own, but when they return to the chosen spot each morning they find that the forest has reclaimed it. By hiding themselves at the edge of the plot one night, they discover that the animals of the forest are restoring the cleared plants by means of a chant. They try to grab each of these animals in turn, but they miss the puma and jaguar completely, break the tails off the rabbit and deer, and finally get their hands on the rat. In exchange for his future share of stored crops, the rat reveals to them that their father and uncle, One and Seven Hunahpu, left a set of ball game equipment tied up under the rafters of their house, and he agrees to help them get it down. At home the next day, Hunahpu and Xbalanque get Xmucane out of the house by claiming her chili stew has made them thirsty; she goes after water but is delayed when her water jar springs a leak. Then, when Blood Woman goes off to see why Xmucane has failed to return, the rat cuts the ball game equipment loose and the twins take possession of it.

When Hunahpu and Xbalanque begin playing ball at the Great Abyss they disturb the lords of Xibalba, just like their father and uncle before them. Once again the lords send a summons, but this time the messengers go to Xmucane, telling her that the twins must present themselves in seven days. She sends a louse to relay the message to her grandsons, but the louse is

swallowed by a toad, the toad by a snake, and the snake by a falcon. The falcon arrives over the ball court and the twins shoot him in the eye. They cure his eye with gum from their ball, which is why the laughing falcon now has a black patch around the eye. The falcon vomits the snake, who vomits the toad, who still has the louse in his mouth, and the louse recites the message, quoting what Xmucane told him when she quoted what the owls told her when they quoted what the lords of Xibalba told them to say.

Having been summoned to the underworld, Hunahpu and Xbalanque go to take leave of their grandmother, and in the process they demonstrate a harvest ritual that Quichés follow to this day. They "plant" ears of corn in the center of her house, in the attic; these ears are neither to be eaten nor used as seed corn but are to be kept as a sign that corn remains alive throughout the year, even between the drying out of the plants at harvest time and the sprouting of new ones after planting. They tell their grandmother that when a crop dries out it will be a sign of their death, but that the sprouting of a new crop will be a sign that they live again.

The twins play a game with language when they instruct their grandmother; only now, instead of a quotation swallowed up inside other quotations we get a word hidden within other words. The secret word is "Ah," one of the twenty day names; the twins point to it by playing on its sounds rather than simply mentioning it. When they tell their grandmother that they are planting corn ears (*ah*) in the house (*ha*), they are making a pun on Ah in the one case and reversing its sound in the other. The play between Ah and *ha* is familiar to contemporary Quiché daykeepers, who use it when they explain to clients that the day Ah is portentous in matters affecting households. If the twins planted their corn ears in the house on the day Ah, then their expected arrival in Xibalba, seven days later, would fall on the day named Hunahpu. This fits the Mayan Venus calendar perfectly: whenever Venus rises as the morning star on a day named Net, corresponding to the appearance of Hunahpu and Xbalanque on the earth, its next descent into the underworld will always fall on a day named Hunahpu.

Following in the footsteps of their father and uncle, Hunahpu and Xbalanque descend the road to Xibalba, but when they come to the Crossroads they do things differently. They send a spy ahead of them, a mosquito, to learn the names of the lords. He bites each one of them in turn; the first two lords reveal themselves as mere manikins by their lack of response, but the others, in the process of complaining about being bitten, address each other by name, all the way down the line. When the twins themselves arrive before the lords, they ignore the manikins (unlike their father and uncle) and address each of the twelve real lords correctly. Not only that, but they refuse to fall for the hot seat, and when they are given a torch and two cigars to keep lit all night, they trick the lords by passing off a macaw's tail as the glow of the torch and putting fireflies at the tips of their cigars.

The next day Hunahpu and Xbalanque play ball with the Xibalbans, something their father and uncle did not survive long enough to do. The Xibalbans insist on putting their own ball into play first, though the twins protest that this ball, which is covered with crushed bone, is nothing but a skull. When Hunahpu hits it back to the Xibalbans with the yoke that rides on his hips, it falls to the court and reveals the weapon that was hidden inside it. This is nothing less than the White Dagger, the same instrument of sacrifice that the owls were supposed to use on Blood Woman; it twists its way all over the court, but it fails to kill the twins.

The Xibalbans consent to use the rubber ball belonging to the twins in a further game; this time four bowls of flowers are bet on the outcome. After playing well for awhile the twins allow themselves to lose, and they are given until the next day to come up with the flowers. This time they must spend the night in Razor House, which is full of voracious stone blades that are constantly looking for something to cut. In exchange for a promise that they will one day have the flesh of animals as their food, the blades stop moving. This leaves the boys free to attend to the matter of the flowers; they send leaf-cutting ants to steal them from the very gardens of the lords of Xibalba. The birds who guard this garden, poorwills and whippoorwills, are so oblivious that they fail to notice that their own tails and wings are being

trimmed along with the flowers. The lords, who are aghast when they receive bowls filled with their own flowers, split the birds' mouths open, giving them the wide gape that birds of the nightjar family have today.

Next, the hero twins survive stays in Cold House, which is full of drafts and falling hail; Jaguar House, which is full of hungry, brawling jaguars; and a house with fire inside. After these horrors comes Bat House, full of moving, shrieking bats, where they spend the night squeezed up inside their blowgun. When the house grows quiet and Hunahpu peeks out from the muzzle, one of the bats swoops down and takes his head off. The head ends up rolling on the ball court of Xibalba, but Xbalanque replaces it with a carved squash. While he is busy with this head transplant the eastern sky reddens with the dawn, and a possum, addressed in the story as "old man," makes four dark streaks along the horizon. Not only the red dawn but the possum and his streaks are signs that the time of the sun (which has never before been seen) is coming nearer. In the future a new solar year will be brought in by the old man each 365 days; the four streaks signify that only four of the twenty day names—Deer, Tooth, Thought, and Wind—will ever correspond to the first day of a solar year. Contemporary Quiché daykeepers continue to reckon the solar dimension of the Mayan calendar; in 1986, for example, they will expect the old man to arrive on February 28, which will be the day Thirteen Deer.

Once Hunahpu has been fitted out with a squash for a head, he and Xbalanque are ready to play ball with the Xibalbans again. When the lords send off Hunahpu's original head as the ball, Xbalanque knocks it out of the court and into a stand of oak trees. A rabbit decoys the lords, who mistake his hopping for the bouncing of the ball, while Xbalanque retrieves the head, puts it back on Hunahpu's shoulders, and then pretends to find the squash among the oaks. Now the squash is put into play, but it wears out and eventually splatters its seeds on the court, revealing to the lords of Xibalba that they have been played for fools. The game played with the squash, like the games played with the bone-covered ball and with Hunahpu's severed head, corre-

sponds to an appearance of Venus in the west, the direction of evening and death. If these events were combined in chronological order with those that take place entirely above ground, they would probably alternate with the episodes in which the twins defeat One Monkey and One Artisan, Seven Macaw, Zipacna, and Earthquake, with each of these latter episodes corresponding to an appearance of Venus in the east, the direction of morning and life.

At this point we are ready for the last of the episodes that prefigure the cycles of Venus and prepare the way for the first rising of the sun. Knowing that the lords of Xibalba plan to burn them, Hunahpu and Xbalanque instruct two seers named Xulu and Pacam as to what they should say when the lords seek advice as to how to dispose of their remains. This done, the twins cheerfully accept an invitation to come see the great stone pit where the Xibalbans are cooking the ingredients for an alcoholic beverage. The lords challenge them to a contest in which the object is to leap clear across the pit, but the boys cut the deadly game short and jump right in. Thinking they have triumphed, the Xibalbans follow the advice of Xulu and Pacam, grinding the bones of the boys and spilling the powder into a river.

After five days Hunahpu and Xbalanque reappear as catfish; the day after that they take human form again, only now they are disguised as vagabond dancers and actors. They gain great fame as illusionists, their most popular acts being the ones in which they set fire to a house without burning it and perform a sacrifice without killing the victim. The lords of Xibalba get news of all this and invite them to show their skills at court; they accept with pretended reluctance. The climax of their performance comes when Xbalanque sacrifices Hunahpu, rolling his head out the door, removing his heart, and then bringing him back to life. One and Seven Death go wild at the sight of this and demand that they themselves be sacrificed. The twins oblige—and, as might already be imagined, these final sacrifices are real ones. Hunahpu and Xbalanque now reveal their true identities before all the inhabitants of the underworld. They declare that henceforth, the offerings received by Xibalbans will be limited

to incense made of croton sap and to animals, and that Xibalbans will limit their attacks on future human beings to those who have weaknesses or guilt.

At this point the narrative takes us back to the twins' grandmother, telling us what she has been doing all this time. She cries when the season comes for corn plants to dry out, signifying the death of her grandsons, and rejoices when they sprout again, signifying rebirth. She burns incense in front of ears from the new crop and thus completes the establishment of the custom whereby humans keep consecrated ears in the house, at the center of the stored harvest. Then the scene shifts back to Hunahpu and Xbalanque, who are about to establish another custom.

Having made their speech to the defeated Xibalbans, the twins go to the Place of Ball Game Sacrifice with the intention of reviving Seven Hunahpu, whose head and body still lie buried there. The full restoration of his face depends on his own ability to pronounce the names of all the parts it once had, but he gets no further than the mouth, nose, and eyes, which remain as notable features of skulls. They leave him there, but they promise that human beings will keep his day (the one named Hunahpu), coming to pray where his remains are. To this day, Hunahpu days are set aside for the veneration of the dead, and graveyards are called by the same word (*hom*) as the ball courts of the Popol Vuh.

At the astronomical level the visit of Hunahpu and Xbalanque to their uncle's grave signals the return of a whole new round of Venus cycles, starting with a morning star that first appears on a day named Hunahpu. As for the twins themselves, they rise as the sun and moon. Contemporary Quichés regard the full moon as a nocturnal equivalent of the sun, pointing out that it has a full disk, is bright enough to travel by, and goes clear across the sky in the same time it takes the sun to do the same thing. Most likely the twin who became the moon is to be understood specifically as the full moon, whereas Blood Woman, the mother of the twins, would account for the other phases of the moon.

With the ascent of Hunahpu and Xbalanque the Popol Vuh returns to the problem the gods confronted at the beginning: the making of beings who will walk, work, talk, and pray in an artic-

ulate manner. The account of their fourth and final attempt at a solution is a flashback, since it takes us to a time when the sun had not yet appeared. As we have already seen, the gods failed when they tried using mud and then wood as the materials for the human body, but now they get news of a mountain filled with yellow corn and white corn, discovered by the fox, coyote, parrot, and crow (at the beginning of Part Four). Xmucane grinds the corn from this mountain very finely, and the flour, mixed with the water she rinses her hands with, provides the substance for human flesh, just as the ground bone thrown in the river by the Xibalbans becomes the substance for the rebirth of her grandsons. The first people to be modeled from the corn dough are four men named Jaguar Quitze, Jaguar Night, Mahucutah, and True Jaguar. They are the first four heads of Quiché patrilineages; as in the case of the men who occupy such positions today, they are called "mother-fathers," since in ritual matters they serve as symbolic androgynous parents to everyone in their respective lineages.

This time the beings shaped by the gods are everything they hoped for and more: not only do the first four men pray to their makers, but they have perfect vision and therefore perfect knowledge. The gods are alarmed that beings who were merely manufactured by them should have divine powers, so they decide, after their usual dialogue, to put a fog on human eyes. Next they make four wives for the four men, and from these couples come the leading Quiché lineages. Celebrated Seahouse becomes the wife of Jaguar Quitze, who founds the Cauec lineage; Prawn House becomes the wife of Jaguar Night, who founds the Greathouse lineage; and Hummingbird House becomes the wife of Mahucutah, who founds the Lord Quiché lineage. True Jaguar is also given a wife, Macaw House, but they have no male children. Other lineages and peoples also come into being, and they all begin to multiply.

All these early events in human history take place in darkness, somewhere in the "east," and all the different peoples wander about and grow weary as they go on watching and waiting for the rising of the morning star and the sun. Jaguar Quitze, Jaguar Night, Mahucutah, and True Jaguar decide to change their situ-

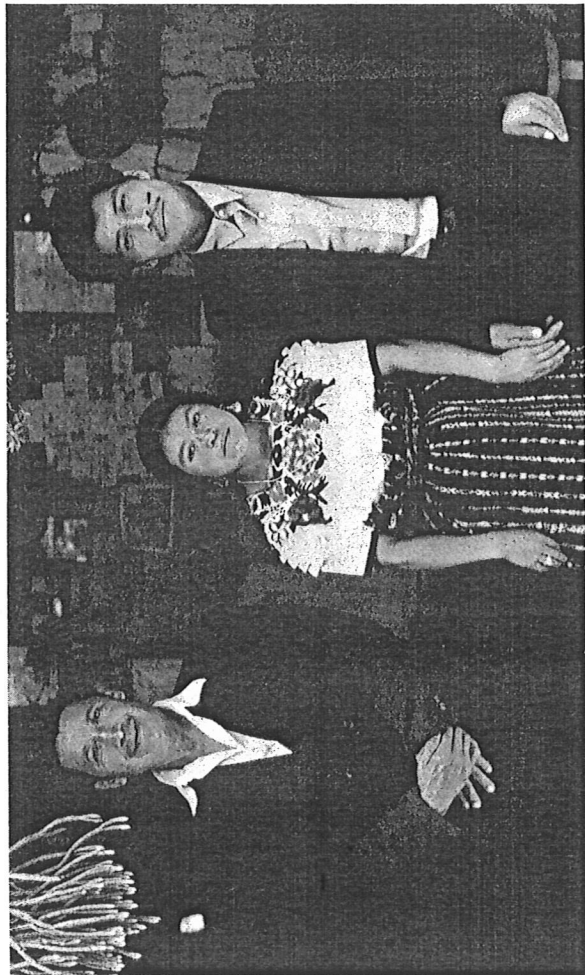


PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR

THEY ARE CALLED "MOTHER-FATHERS": Andrés Xiloj (at left), who read through the Popol Vuh text with the present translator and provided numerous comments, is himself a mother-father, or patrilineage head. He is shown here at his house in Momostenango, with his son Anselmo and his daughter-in-law Manuela.

ation by acquiring patron deities they can burn offerings in front of, and it is with this purpose in mind that they go to a great eastern city bearing the names Tulan Zuyua, Seven Caves, Seven Canyons. These are grand names that call up broad reaches of the Mesoamerican past. Tulan (or Tollan) means "Place of Reeds" or more broadly "metropolis" in Nahuatl, and it was pre-fixed to the names of many different towns during Toltec times. The particular Tulan called Zuyua was probably near the Gulf coast in Tabasco or Campeche, "eastern" because it was east of the principal Tulan of the Toltecs, near Mexico City at the site now known as Tula. But in giving Tulan Zuyua the further name Seven Caves, the Popol Vuh preserves the memory of a metropolis much older and far grander than any Toltec town.

This ultimate Tulan was at the site now known as Teotihuacan, northeast of Mexico City. It was the greatest city in Mesoamerican history, dating from the same period as the classic Maya. Only recently it has been discovered that beneath the Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacan lies a natural cave whose main shaft and side chambers add up to seven.

Countless lineages and tribes converge on the Tulan Zuyua of the Popol Vuh, and each of them, starting with the Quiché, is given a god. The Cauques receive the god named Tohil, the Greathouses receive Aulix, and the Lord Quiché receive Hanc'auitz. Ultimately the patronage of the first-ranking god, Tohil, extended to all three of these lineages, and to two other Quiché lineages of lesser rank, the Tams and Illocs. The worship of Tohil has recently been traced back to the classic period; in the inscriptions at Palenque, he bears the name Tahil, a Cholan word meaning "Obsidian Mirror," and he is shown with a smoking mirror in his forehead.

The Popol Vuh tells us that although "all the tribes were sown and came to light in unity," their languages differentiated while they were at Tulan. The cause of this was that some peoples were given patron deities whose names differed from that of the god of the Quiché. The language of the Rabinal became only slightly different, since they were given a god named One Toh rather than Tohil, but others, who received gods with completely distinctive names, ended up speaking distinctive languages, including the Cakchiquels, the Bird House people, and the Yaqui people. Today, indeed, the Rabinals, who live to the northeast of the Quiché proper, speak a dialect of Quiché, whereas the Cakchiquels (still known by this name) and the Bird House people (better known as the Tzutuhils) speak related but separate languages. What the Popol Vuh calls the Yaqui people are the speakers of Nahuatl languages, in Mexico. Those languages belong to a family that not only stands apart from Quiché, Cakchiquel, and Tzutuhil, but from Mayan languages in general.

Tohil is the source of the first fires kept by human beings, making it possible for them to keep warm in the cold of the pre-dawn world. When a great hailstorm puts all these fires out,

Tohil restores fire to the Quichés by pivoting inside his sandal, which is to say that he originates the technology whereby fire is started by rotating a drill in the socket of a wooden platform. The other tribes, shivering with cold, come to the Quichés to beg for fire, but Tohil refuses to let them have it unless they promise to embrace him someday, allowing themselves to be suckled. They agree, not realizing that when the time comes for the Quiché lords to subjugate them, being "suckled" by Tohil will mean having their hearts cut out in sacrifice. Only the Cakchiquels, who get their fire by sneaking past everyone else in the smoke, escape this fate.

At the suggestion of Tohil the Quichés leave Tulan. They sacrifice their own blood to him, passing cords through their ears and elbows, and they sing a song called "The Blame Is Ours," lamenting the fact that they will not be in Tulan when the time comes for the first dawn. Packing their gods on their backs and watching continuously for the appearance of the morning star, they begin a long migration. At a place called Rock Rows, Furrowed Sands they cross a "sea" on a causeway; this would be somewhere in Tabasco or Campeche, perhaps at Potonchan or Tixchel, both lowland Maya sites where causeways pass through flooded areas. They also pass the Great Abyss, the location of the eastern ball court used by the sons and grandsons of Xmucane, a long way east and a little south of any likely location for Rock Rows, Furrowed Sands. Next they enter the highlands, turning west and continuing at a slight southward angle until they reach a mountain called Place of Advice, not very far short of the site where they will one day reach their greatest glory. With them at Place of Advice, having accompanied them ever since they left Tulan, are the Rabinals, Cakchiquels, and Bird House people.

Jaguar Quitze, Jaguar Night, Mahucutah, and True Jaguar, together with their wives, observe a great fast at Place of Advice. Tohil, Auilix, and Hacautitz speak to them, asking to be given hiding places so that they will not be captured by enemies of the Quichés. After a search through the forest, each of these gods is hidden at the place that bears his name today. They are not yet placed in temples atop pyramids, but merely in arbors decorated

with bromelias and hanging mosses. At the place of Hacautitz, on a mountaintop, the Cauecs, Greathouses, and Lord Quichés weep while they wait for the dawn; the Tams and Ilocs wait on nearby mountains, while peoples other than the Quichés wait at more distant places. When, at last, they all see the daybringer, the morning star, they give thanks by burning the incense they have kept for this occasion, ever since they left Tulan.

At this point we reach the moment in the account of human affairs that corresponds to the final event in the account of the lives of the gods: the Sun himself rises. On just this one occasion he appears as an entire person, so hot that he dries out the face of the earth. His heat turns Tohil, Auilix, and Hacautitz to stone, along with such pumas, jaguars, and snakes as had existed until now. A diminutive god called White Sparkstriker escapes petrification by going into the shade of the trees, becoming the keeper of the stone animals. He remains to this day as a gamekeeper, with stone fetishes (volcanic concretions and meteorites) that resemble animals, together with flesh-and-blood game animals, in his care. He may be encountered in forests and caves, or on dark nights and in dreams; he appears in contemporary masked dramas dressed entirely in red, the color of the dawn.

At first the Quichés rejoice when they see the first sunrise, but then they remember their "brothers," the tribes who were with them at Tulan, and they sing the song called "The Blame Is Ours" once again. In the words of this song they wonder where their brothers might be at this very moment. In effect, the coming of the first sunrise reunites the tribes, despite the fact that they remain widely separated in space; as the Popol Vuh has it, "there were countless peoples, but there was just one dawn for all tribes." The orderly movements of the lights of the sky, signs of the deeds of the gods, enable human beings to coordinate their actions even when they cannot see one another. In point of fact Mesoamerican peoples in general shared a common calendar, consisting of the 260-day cycle, whose auguries were first read by Xpiyacoc and Xmucane, and the cycles of Mars, Venus, and the sun and moon, as measured off by the movements of their sons and grandsons and by Blood Woman.

Having seen the first sunrise from the mountain of Hacautitz,

the Quichés eventually build a citadel there. But at first, even while the people of other tribes are becoming thickly settled and are seen traveling the roads in great numbers, the Quichés remain rustic and rural, gathering the larvae of yellow jackets, wasps, and bees for food and staying largely out of sight. When they go before the petrified forms of Tohil, Aulix, and Hacautz, they burn bits of pitchy bark and wildflowers as substitutes for refined incense and offer blood drawn from their own bodies. The three gods are still able to speak to them, but only by appearing in spirit form. Tohil tells them to augment their offerings with the blood of deer and birds taken in the hunt, but they grow dissatisfied with this arrangement and begin to cast eyes on the people they see walking by in the roads. From hiding places on mountain peaks, they begin imitating the cries of the coyote, fox, puma, and jaguar.

Finally Tohil tells the Quichés to go ahead and take human beings for sacrifice, reminding them that when they were at Tulan the other tribes promised to allow him to "suckle" them. They begin to seize people they find out walking alone or in pairs, taking them away to cut them open before Tohil, Aulix, and Hacautz and then rolling their heads out onto the roads. At first the lords who rule the victimized tribes think these deaths are the work of wild animals, but then they suspect the worshipers of Tohil, Aulix, and Hacautz and attempt to track them down. Again and again they are foiled by rain, mist, and mud, but they do discover that the three gods, whose spirit familiars take the form of adolescent boys, have a favorite bathing place. They send two beautiful maidens, Xtah and Xpuch, to wash clothes there, instructing them to tempt the boys and then yield to any advances. They warn the maidens to return with proof of the success of their mission, which must take the form of presents from the boys.

Contrary to plan, the three Quiché gods fail to lust after Xtah and Xpuch, but they do agree to provide them with presents. They give them three cloaks with figures on the inside, one painted with a jaguar by Jaguar Quitze, another painted with an eagle by Jaguar Night, and the third painted with swarms of yellow jackets and wasps by Mahucutah. When the maidens re-

turn the enemy lords are so pleased with the cloaks that they cannot resist trying them on. All is well until the wasps painted on the inside of the third cloak turn into real ones. Xtah and Xpuch are spurned; despite their failure to tempt Tohil, Aulix, and Hacautz they become the first prostitutes, or what Quichés call "barkers of shins." As for the enemy lords, they resolve to make war and launch a massive attack on the Quiché citadel at Hacautz.

The enemy warriors come at night in order to get as far as possible without resistance, but they fall into a deep sleep on the road. The Quichés not only strip them of all the metal ornaments on their weapons and clothes, but pluck out their eyebrows and beards as well. Even so the enemy warriors press on the next day, determined to recover their losses, but the Quichés are well prepared. What the enemy lookouts see all around the citadel of Hacautz is a wooden palisade; visible on the parapet are rows of warriors, decked out with the very metal objects that were stolen during the night. What the lookouts do not see is that these warriors are mere wooden puppets, and that behind the palisade, on each of its four sides, is a large gourd filled with yellow jackets and wasps, put there at the suggestion of Tohil. As for the Quichés on the inside, what they see, once the attack begins, is more than twenty-four thousand warriors converging on them, bristling with weapons and shouting continuously. But Tohil has made them so confident that they treat the attack as a great spectacle, bringing their women and children up on the parapet to see it. When they release the yellow jackets and wasps their enemies drop their weapons and attempt to flee, so badly stung they hardly even notice the blows they receive from conventional Quiché weapons. The survivors become permanent payers of tribute to the Quiché lords.

After their great victory, Jaguar Quitze, Jaguar Night, Mahucutah, and True Jaguar begin preparing, with complete contentment, for what they know to be their approaching death. First they sing "The Blame Is Ours," and then they explain to their wives and successors that "the time of our Lord Deer" has come around again. This is a reference to the day named Deer, one of the four days on which a new solar year can begin, and

specifically to the first day of a longer period, lasting fifty-two years, which falls on One Deer. Such a major temporal transition is an occasion for rites of renewal; the Quiché forefathers declare that their time as lords among the living has been completed and that they intend to return to the place where they came from, far in the east. Jaguar Quitze leaves a sacred object called the "Bundle of Flames," a sort of cloth-wrapped ark with mysterious contents, as a "sign of his being." He and the others "die" by simply departing; they are never seen again, but their descendants burn incense before the Buñdle of Flames in remembrance of them, just as Xmucane burned incense before the ears of corn in remembrance of Hunahpu and Xbalanque.

The Quiché lords of the second generation, following the instructions of their departed fathers, go on a pilgrimage to the east (at the beginning of Part Five). Unlike their fathers, they do this with the intention of returning in the flesh. Cocaib, the firstborn son of Jaguar Quitze, goes on behalf of the Cauac lineage; Coacutec, the second son of Jaguar Night, represents the Greathouses; and Coahau, the only son of Mahucutah, represents the Lord Quichés. They go all the way back down into the lowlands, to the other side of the same "sea" their fathers once crossed on the way up to the highlands. If they were retracing their fathers' route in detail, they must have descended into the lowlands by way of the Great Abyss. They do not go to Tulan Zuyua, which may have been in ruins by this time, but they do come before the ruler of a great kingdom. His name is Nacxit, one of the epithets Nahua speakers give to the god-king Plumed Serpent. He gives them the emblems that go with the two highest titles of Mayan nobility, Keeper of the Mat and Keeper of the Reception House Mat. Both these titles, the one belonging to a head of state and the other to an overseer of tribute collection, go to the Cauacs. From other sources we know that the Greathouse and Lord Quiché lineages also receive emblems at this time, with the title of Lord Minister (ranking third) going to one and that of Orior to the People (ranking fourth) to the other.

Cocaib, Coacutec, and Coahau return "from across the sea" with the regalia given them by Nacxit, including canopies, thrones, musical instruments, cosmetics, jewelry, the feet and

feathers of various animals and birds, and "the writings about Tulan." Since one of the titles of the Popol Vuh is "The Light That Came from Across the Sea," we may guess that it was the Popol Vuh they brought back, and that the hieroglyphic version of the book contained not only writings about the gods whose movements prefigured those of celestial lights, but about such human affairs as those of Tulan. The sovereign lordship of the returned pilgrims is recognized not only by the Quichés themselves, but by the Rabinals, Cakchiquels, and Bird House people as well. Only now do the Quiché lords begin to have what the Popol Vuh calls "fiery splendor." It seems likely that their pilgrimage was conceived as a reenactment of the adventures of Hunahpu and Xbalanque in Xibalba, who had only the planet Venus to their credit when they first descended in the east at the Great Abyss, but who eventually returned with the greater splendor of the sun and full moon.

Later, after the death of the widows of Jaguar Quitze, Jaguar Night, and Mahucutah, the Quichés leave Hacautitz and settle at a succession of other sites. The Popol Vuh mentions only one of these by name, Thorny Place, settled at some point after the deaths of Cocaib, Coacutec, and Coahau. The ruins of Thorny Place, which are divided into four parts just as the Popol Vuh indicates they should be, are some distance east and a little north of Hacautitz, in the direction of the Great Abyss. This location may have been chosen because it was a step backward on the Quiché migration route, placing the ruling lords closer to their forefathers than they were before. But when the Quichés move again, two generations later, they go west and a little south again, ending up even farther in that direction than Hacautitz. This time, with Cotuha as Keeper of the Mat and Iztayul as Keeper of the Reception House Mat, they found the citadel of Bearded Place, directly across a canyon to the south from the site of what will one day be their greatest citadel.

At Bearded Place there is great harmony among the Cauacs, Greathouses, and Lord Quichés; these three lineages, each with its own palace, are tied together through intermarriage. At Thorny Place women were married off in exchange for modest favors and gifts, but now, at Bearded Place, wedding arrange-

ments are accompanied by elaborate feasting and drinking. The only disturbance during this period comes when the Illocs not only try to get Iztayul involved in a plot to assassinate Cotuha, but come to the point of making a military attack on Bearded Place. They are defeated, and some of their own number are sacrificed before the gods of their intended victims. The Cauec, Greathouse, and Lord Quiché lineages now rise to greater and greater power, defeating some tribes in direct attacks and terrorizing still others by having them witness the sacrifice of prisoners of war.

In the next generation the Keeper of the Mat bears the divine name Plumed Serpent, while the Keeper of the Reception House Mat is Cotuha, named after the previous Keeper of the Mat. They build a new and larger citadel across the canyon from Bearded Place, at Rotten Cane. The three leading lineages, faced with increased numbers and torn by quarrels over inflation in bride prices, break apart into smaller groups. The Cauecs divide into nine segments, the Greathouses into nine, and the Lord Quichés into four, with each of these segments headed by a titled lord and occupying its own palace. In addition, the inhabitants of Rotten Cane include the Zaquics, a lineage not previously mentioned in the Popol Vuh, divided into two segments but occupying only a single palace, making twenty-three palaces in all. Along with all these palaces, Rotten Cane is provided with three pyramids that bear the temples of Tohil, Aulix, and Hancuiz, ranged around a central plaza; elsewhere is a fourth pyramid for Cornassel, the god of the Zaquics.

The Popol Vuh identifies Plumed Serpent, who holds the titles of both Keeper of the Mat and Keeper of the Reception House Mat during at least part of his reign at Rotten Cane, as "a true lord of genius." He has the power to manifest his personal spirit familiars, putting on performances in which he transforms himself into a snake, an eagle, a jaguar, or a puddle of blood, climbing to the sky or descending to Xibalba. As the Popol Vuh explains it, his displays are "just his way of revealing himself," but they have the effect of terrorizing the lords of other tribes. The next Quiché lords to manifest genius, coming two generations later, are Quicab, who serves as Keeper of the Mat, and

Cauzimah, who serves as Keeper of the Reception House Mat. Under their rule the dominion of the Quichés reaches its greatest extent. Where Plumed Serpent gained power through spectacular displays of shamanic skill, Quicab now gains it by military force. Not content with merely overpowering the citadels of surrounding peoples, he sends out loyal vassals, called "guardians of the land" or "lookout lineages," to serve as forces of occupation. The stationing of these guardians is conceived as analogous to the construction of a palisade; they turn the entire Quiché kingdom into one great fortress.

During this period the settlement at the center of the Quiché kingdom embraced a cluster of four citadels, with Rotten Cane at the focal point. Together with the ordinary houses that occupied the lower ground around them, these four sites made up a larger town that took the name Quiché. It was perhaps the most densely built-up area that had existed in highland Guatemala since early in the classic period, and it took on the stature of the place where Coacuib, Coacutec, and Coahau had gone to receive the titles and emblems of truly glorious lordship. Five generations after their pilgrimage a new conferring of titles took place, only now it was not Quichés but the heads of the leading "look-out" lineages who were ennobled, and it happened not under the authority of Nacxit, lord of a domain in the mythic "east," but under Quicab, who ruled from Quiché.

The town of Quiché not only took on the status of the place visited by the pilgrims who saw Nacxit, but of the Tulan visited by their forefathers as well. When the founders of the ruling Quiché lineages and their closest allies left Tulan Zuyua before the first sunrise, they had come away with tribal gods whose names were "meant to be in agreement," and they were "in unity" when they passed the Great Abyss and convened at Place of Advice. Now, in this latter day, "the word came from just one place" again, and the allies convened in a town and "came away in unity" again, but this time they came away "having heard, there at *Quiché*, what all of them should do." It was probably during this period that the Quiché lords went so far as to have a branching tunnel constructed directly beneath Rotten Cane, a tunnel that brought the Seven Caves of Tulan Zuyua, or of the

ultimate Tulan that was Teotihuacan, to the time and place of their own greatest glory.

It is in the course of explaining the greatness of lords like Plumed Serpent and Quicab that the writers of the alphabetic Popol Vuh tell us how its hieroglyphic predecessor was put to use, serving as a way of seeing into distant places and times. Greatness also came to the lords through their participation in religious retreats. For long periods they would stay in the temples, praying, burning incense, bleeding themselves, sleeping apart from their wives, and abstaining not only from meat but from corn products, eating nothing but the fruits of various trees. The shortest fast lasted 180 days, corresponding to half the 360-day cycle (separate from the solar year) that was used in keeping chronologies of historical events, and another lasted 260 days, or one complete run of the cycle whose days were counted by Xpiyacoc and Xmucane when they divined for the gods. The longest fast, 340 days, corresponded to a segment of the Mayan Venus calendar, beginning with the departure of Venus as the morning star and continuing through its stay in the underworld and its period of reappearance as the evening star, leaving just eight days to go before its rebirth as the morning star. This fast probably commemorated the heroic adventures of Hunahpu and Xbalanque in Xibalba, the long darkness endured by the first generation of lords as they watched for the appearance of the morning star, and the lowland pilgrimage undertaken by Co-cailb, Coacutec, and Coahau.

The Quiché lords sought identification with the very gods, not only in their pilgrimages, shamanic feats, limitless vision, and long fasts, but in the requirements they set for their subjects. Just as the gods needed human beings to nurture them with offerings, so human lords required subjects to bring them tribute. As the Popol Vuh points out, the "nurture" required by the Quiché lords consisted not only of the food and drink that were prepared for them, but of turquoise, jade, and the iridescent blue-green feathers of the quetzal bird. Apparently such precious objects as these were considered the ultimate fruits of the earth and sky, which were themselves described as the "blue-green plate" and "blue-green bowl."

Near the end, the Popol Vuh lists all the noble titles held by the various segments of the Cauec, Greathouse, and Lord Quiché lineages (in rank order), and it gives the names of those who held the highest titles (in the order of their succession). In the case of the two leading segments of the Cauec lineage, those whose heads held the titles of Keeper of the Mat and Keeper of the Reception House Mat, the text lists four generations after Quicab and Cauzimah, who were in the seventh generation, without comment. Then, in the twelfth generation, the names Three Deer and Nine Dog are followed by two sentences whose combination of gravity and brevity gives the reader a chill. The first is, "And they were ruling when Tonatiuh arrived," Tonatiuh or "Sun" being the name given by the Aztecs to Pedro de Alvarado, the man whose forces destroyed Rotten Cane in 1524. And the second sentence about Three Deer and Nine Dog is simply, "They were hanged by the Castilian people."

In the thirteenth generation of Cauecs the Popol Vuh lists Tecum and Tepepul, who were "tributary to the Castilian people." Then, at the end of the list of Cauec generations, come the first lords who adopted Spanish names, Juan de Rojas and Juan Cortés, the living holders of the titles of Keeper of the Mat and Keeper of the Reception House Mat when the alphabetic Popol Vuh was written. Today Quichés ideally list either nine or thirteen generations when they invoke their ancestors in prayer; from this we can see that the thirteen generations of lords named as preceding Juan de Rojas and Juan Cortés need not be taken as constituting an exhaustive genealogy but may simply be a list of the names these two men used in their own prayers.

By giving us the names of Quiché lords who were alive while they were writing, the authors of the alphabetic Popol Vuh also give us the means for dating their work. They could not have finished it any later than 1558, since by that year the name of Juan de Rojas is missing from documents he would have signed had he still been among the living. And since they mention Pedro de Robles of the Greathouse lineage as the current Lord Minister, they could not have finished any earlier than 1554, at which time his predecessor was still in office. This places the writing of the Popol Vuh during the very same decade as the

writing of the majority of the native *títulos* that exist for colonial Guatemala, documents that were composed by indigenous authors for the express purpose of reasserting the rights formerly enjoyed by specific lordly lineages living in specific places. The version of the Popol Vuh that comes down to us does not include a copy of the original title page or of whatever explicitly legal statements might have been appended to the original alphabetic manuscript, but it makes the lineage and place names plain enough, and it contains two different lists of towns that had once been tributary to Quiché.

It may be that the indigenous lords of highland Guatemala chose the 1550s to make their claims because they thought they saw an opening in Spanish policy, but they may also have been preparing for the major temporal transition that Jaguar Quitze, Jaguar Night, Mahucutah, and True Jaguar had once called "the time of our Lord Deer." A new fifty-two-year cycle, with the first day of its first year falling on One Deer, was due to begin on June 2, 1558 (on the Julian calendar). Juan Cortés, whose duties as Keeper of the Reception House Mat would have included tribute collection had he served before the coming of Alvarado, worked constantly to restore tribute rights to the lordly lineages of the town of Quiché. In 1557 he went all the way to Spain to press his case, and it may well be that he took a copy of the alphabetic Popol Vuh with him. He continued to make claims when he returned to Guatemala in 1558, prompting a missionary to warn Philip II that "this land is new and not confirmed in the faith," and that Cortés, "son of idolatrous parents, would need to do very little to restore their ceremonies and attract their former subjects to himself." Quiché rights to collect tribute never were restored, but over the next thirty years Juan Cortés did take a considerable role in appointing and installing the leaders of various towns that had once been under Quiché rule.

By the time the authors of the Popol Vuh have finished giving the rank order of noble titles and the names of the individuals who held the highest titles, they are only a few sentences away from finishing their work. At this point they single out one of the lesser titles for further discussion, a move that seems anticlimactic until we realize that they are giving us a clue to their own

identity. Without naming any individuals, they point out that each of the three leading lineages included one lord bearing the title of Great Toastmaster, also translatable as Great Convener of Banquets. Here we may recall that when the authors introduced the story of One Hunahpu, they themselves proposed a toast to the reader. If we look for a convener of banquets and maker of toasts among the contemporary Quiché, we find the professional matchmaker, who serves as an eloquent master of ceremonies at the feasts where marriage arrangements are completed. If our mysterious authors were themselves the three Great Toastmasters; and if their duties included the convening of wedding banquets, that would help explain why they took a special interest in marriage customs when they recounted the life and times of successive Quiché citadels. Indeed, they specifically noted the point at which feasting and drinking first became a part of the negotiations for a bride.

The authors give us one final clue to their identity when they tell us that the three Great Toastmasters are "Mothers of the Word" and "Fathers of the Word." The combination of "Mother" and "Father" suggests the contemporary daykeepers called mother-fathers, who serve as the ritual heads of patrilineages; it is from their ranks that matchmakers are drawn. The focus on "the Word," coming as it does near the very end of a work whose opening line promised to give us the "Ancient Word," suggests that the Word parented by the Great Toastmasters and the Word written down in the alphabetic Popol Vuh are one and the same. If so, we know the name of at least one of the writers: when Juan de Rojas and Juan Cortés signed a document known as the "Title of the Lords of Totonicapán" in 1554, a man named Cristóbal Velasco signed himself as Great Toastmaster of the Cauces.

At the end of their work the authors repeat the enigma they presented near the beginning, allowing us to wonder whether the hieroglyphic Popol Vuh might still exist somewhere, only now they say it has been "lost" instead of telling us that the reader is hiding his face. They close on a note of reassurance, asking us, in effect, to accept what they have written without demanding a closer look at their sources, since "everything has

been completed here concerning Quiché," meaning the place named Quiché. Then, lest we forget their difficult circumstances, they add the phrase, "which is now named Santa Cruz," or "Holy Cross." Here again they take us back to the beginning, where they told us, "We shall write about this now amid the preaching of God, in Christendom now."

Today, even when Quiché daykeepers go to a remote mountaintop shrine, sending up great clouds of incense for multitudes of deities and ancestors, they sometimes begin and end by running through an "Our Father" and a "Hail Mary" and crossing themselves. It is as if the alien eye and ear of the conqueror were present even under conditions of solitude and required the recitation of two spells, one to ward them off for awhile and the other to readmit their existence. Between these protective spells daykeepers are left to enter, in peace, a world whose obligations they know to be older than those of Christianity, obligations to the mountains and plains where they continue to live and to all those who have ever lived there before them. So it is with the authors of the Popol Vuh, who mention Christendom on the first page, Holy Cross on the last page, and open up the whole sky-earth, vast and deep, within.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the Popol Vuh, considered in its entirety, is the vast temporal sweep of its narrative. It begins in darkness, with a world inhabited only by gods, and continues all the way past the dawn into the time of the humans who wrote it. The surviving Maya hieroglyphic books abound with gods, but they seem to stop short of dealing directly with the acts of mortals. The Dresden book does have one page that shifts the action to the human sphere, but the following pages were torn off at some time in the past. If we wish to find hieroglyphic texts that have the same proportion between divine and human affairs as the alphabetic Popol Vuh, we must leave the time and place in which it was written and go a thousand years back and hundreds of miles away to the classic Maya site of Palenque, in the Gulf-coast lowlands.

At Palenque, in the sanctuary of each temple in what is now known as the Cross Group, is a stone tablet bearing a hieroglyphic narrative. In each case the text is divided into two

panels, one of which begins with the deeds of gods who include the classic equivalents of Hunahpu and Xbalanque, and the other of which ends with the deeds of human lords whose own scribes were the authors of the inscriptions. In the middle of this narrative, where the reader passes from one panel to the other, are characters who are neither fully divine nor quite human. So also with the Popol Vuh: about halfway through, the reader comes to a transition between what might be called "myth" and "history" (at the end of Part Three). The characters in the narrative are still divine at this point, but they are described as performing rituals for the veneration of ripened corn and deceased relatives, rituals that are meant to be followed by future humans rather than by ancient gods. After this episode, in which the gods act like people, comes another in which people act like gods (at the beginning of Part Four). The people in question are the first four humans, the ones who saw and understood everything in the sky-earth. Once their perfect vision has been taken away the narrative begins to sound more like history as it moves along, though human characters continue to aspire to deeds of divine proportions.

We tend to think of myth and history as being in conflict with one another, but the authors of the inscriptions at Palenque and the alphabetic text of the Popol Vuh treated the mythic and historical parts of their narratives as belonging to a single, balanced whole. By their sense of proportion, the Egyptian Book of the Dead would need a second half devoted to human deeds in the land of the living, and the Hebrew Testament would need a first half devoted to events that took place before the fall of Adam and Eve. In the case of ancient Chinese literature the Book of Changes, which is like the Popol Vuh in being subject to divinatory interpretation, would have to be combined with the Book of History in a single volume.

To this day the Quiché Maya think of dualities in general as complementary rather than opposed, interpenetrating rather than mutually exclusive. Instead of being in logical opposition to one another, the realms of divine and human actions are joined by a mutual attraction. If we had an English word that fully expressed the Mayan sense of narrative time, it would have to em-

brace the duality of the divine and the human in the same way the Quiché term *cahuleu* or "sky-earth" preserves the duality of what we call the "world." In fact we already have a word that comes close to doing the job: *mythistory*, taken into English from Greek by way of Latin. For the ancient Greeks, who set about driving a wedge between the divine and the human, this term became a negative one, designating narratives that should have been properly historical but contained mythic impurities. For Mayans, the presence of a divine dimension in narratives of human affairs is not an imperfection but a necessity, and it is balanced by a necessary human dimension in narratives of divine affairs. At one end of the Popol Vuh the gods are preoccupied with the difficult task of making humans, and at the other humans are preoccupied with the equally difficult task of finding the traces of divine movements in their own deeds.

The difference between a fully mythistorical sense of narrative time and the European quest for pure history is not reducible to a simple contrast between cyclical and linear time. Mayans are always alert to the reassertion of the patterns of the past in present events, but they do not expect the past to repeat itself exactly. Each time the gods of the Popol Vuh attempt to make human beings they get a different result, and except for the solitary person made of mud, each attempt has a lasting result rather than completely disappearing into the folds of cyclical time. Later, when members of the second generation of Quiché lords go on a pilgrimage that takes them into the lowlands, their journey is not described as a literal repetition of the journey of Hunahpu and Xbalanque to Xibalba, nor even as a retracing of the journey of the human founders of the ruling Quiché lineages, but is allowed its own character as a unique event, an event that nevertheless carries echoes of the past. The effect of these events, like others, is cumulative, and it is a specifically human capacity to take each of them into account separately while at the same time recognizing that they double back on one another.

In theory, if we who presently claim to be human were to forget our efforts to find the traces of divine movements in our own actions, our fate should be something like that of the wooden

people in the Popol Vuh. For them, the forgotten force of divinity reasserted itself by inhabiting their own tools and utensils, which rose up against them and drove them from their homes. Today they are swinging through the trees.

On the holy day Eight Monkey
in the year Eleven Thought,
June 22, 1984,
Menotomy, Massachusetts

PRONOUNCING QUICHÉ WORDS

VOWELS

a
e
i
o
u
aa, ee, ii,
oo, uu

Like *a* in English "father," or Spanish *a*.
Like *ai* in English "wait," or Spanish *e*.
Like *ee* in English "seed," or Spanish *i*.
Like *o* in English "bone," or Spanish *o*.
Like *oo* in English "hoot," or Spanish *u*.
The doubling of a vowel normally indicates that it is followed by a glottal stop, which is like *tt* in the Scottish pronunciation of "bottle"; when *uu* begins a word or follows another vowel it is pronounced like English "woo."

CONSONANTS

b
c, qu
ch
h
k
l
m
n

Like English *b*, but pronounced together with a glottal stop.
Pronounced without the puff of air that follows *c* in English "cat."
Like English *ch*.
Pronounced deeper in the throat than English *h*, like Spanish *j* or German *ch*.
Pronounced with the tongue farther back in the mouth than for *c* or *qu*, like the Hebrew letter qoph.
Pronounced with the tongue moved forward from the position of English *l* so as to touch the teeth, as in the *ll* of Welsh "Lloyd."
Like English *m*.
Like English *n*.

p	Pronounced without the puff of air that follows <i>p</i> in English "pit."
r	Pronounced with a flap if between two vowels, like Spanish <i>r</i> ; otherwise trilled like Spanish <i>rr</i> .
t	Pronounced without the puff of air that follows <i>t</i> in English "ten."
tt	Like <i>t</i> , but pronounced together with a glottal stop.
tz	Like <i>ts</i> in English "mats."
x	Like English <i>sh</i> .
y	Like English <i>y</i> .
z	Like English <i>s</i> .
3	Like <i>k</i> , but pronounced together with a glottal stop.
4	Like <i>c</i> or <i>qu</i> , but pronounced together with a glottal stop.
4h	Like <i>ch</i> , but pronounced together with a glottal stop.
4,	Like <i>tz</i> , but pronounced together with a glottal stop.

Stress is always on the final syllable of a word.

PART ONE





PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR

MAKER OF THE BLUE-GREEN PLATE, MAKER OF THE BLUE-GREEN BOWL: One of the hundreds of altars used for burning offerings at the shrine called 4huti Zabal, or "Little Place of Declaration," at Momostenango. The potsherds, deliberately made by breaking new vessels into quarters, are used to burn copal incense in the houses of novice daykeepers and are brought here during initiation ceremonies. Pine boughs (along the top) and flowers (lower left) are brought to adorn the altar during the burning of offerings and the saying of prayers. On the flat surface of the altar itself are the coals and ashes of copal; some incompletely burned pieces, about the size and shape of a quarter, may be seen at front center. It is forbidden to touch an altar's surface with the hands; the stick at right is used to stir the burning copal or to move stray pieces of it into the fire.

THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF THE ANCIENT WORD, here in this place called Quiché. Here we shall inscribe, we shall implant the Ancient Word, the potential and source for everything done in the citadel of Quiché, in the nation of Quiché people.

And here we shall take up the demonstration, revelation, and account of how things were put in shadow and brought to light

by the Maker, Modeler, named Bearer, Begetter,
Hunahpu Possum, Hunahpu Coyote,
Great White Peccary, Tapir,
Sovereign Plumed Serpent,
Heart of the Lake, Heart of the Sea,
Maker of the Blue-Green Plate,
Maker of the Blue-Green Bowl,

as they are called, also named, also described as

the midwife, matchmaker
named Xpiyacoc, Xmucane,
defender, protector,
twice a midwife, twice a matchmaker,

as is said in the words of Quiché. They accounted for everything—and did it, too—as enlightened beings, in enlightened words. We shall write about this now amid the preaching of God, in Christendom now. We shall bring it out because there is no longer a place to see it, a Council Book,

a place to see "The Light That Came from
Across the Sea,"

the account of "Our Place in the Shadows,"
a place to see "The Dawn of Life,"

as it is called. There is the original book and ancient writing, but he who reads and ponders it hides his face. It takes a long perfor-

mané and account to complete the emergence of all the sky-earth:

the fourfold siding, fourfold cornering,
measuring, fourfold staking,
halving the cord, stretching the cord
in the sky, on the earth,
the four sides, the four corners,

as it is said,

by the Maker, Modeler,
mother-father of life, of humankind,
giver of breath, giver of heart,
bearer, upbringer in the light that lasts
of those born in the light, begotten in the light;
worrier, knower of everything, whatever there is:
sky-earth, lake-sea.

THIS IS THE ACCOUNT, here it is:

Now it still ripples, now it still murmurs, ripples, it still sighs, still hums, and it is empty under the sky.

Here follow the first words, the first eloquence:

There is not yet one person, one animal, bird, fish, crab, tree, rock, hollow, canyon, meadow, forest. Only the sky alone is there; the face of the earth is not clear. Only the sea alone is pooled under all the sky; there is nothing whatever gathered together. It is at rest; not a single thing stirs. It is held back, kept at rest under the sky.

Whatever there is that might be is simply not there: only the pooled water, only the calm sea, only it alone is pooled.

Whatever might be is simply not there: only murmurs, ripples, in the dark, in the night. Only the Maker, Modeler alone,

Sovereign Plumed Serpent, the Bearers, Begetters are in the water, a glittering light. They are there, they are enclosed in quetzal feathers, in blue-green.

Thus the name, "Plumed Serpent." They are great knowers, great thinkers in their very being.

And of course there is the sky, and there is also the Heart of Sky. This is the name of the god, as it is spoken.

And then came his word, he came here to the Sovereign Plumed Serpent, here in the blackness, in the early dawn. He spoke with the Sovereign Plumed Serpent, and they talked, then they thought, then they worried. They agreed with each other, they joined their words, their thoughts. Then it was clear, then they reached accord in the light, and then humanity was clear, when they conceived the growth, the generation of trees, of bushes, and the growth of life, of humankind, in the blackness, in the early dawn, all because of the Heart of Sky, named Hurricane. Thunderbolt Hurricane comes first, the second is Newborn Thunderbolt, and the third is Raw Thunderbolt.

So there were three of them, as Heart of Sky, who came to the Sovereign Plumed Serpent, when the dawn of life was conceived:

"How should it be sown, how should it dawn? Who is to be the provider, nurturer?"

"Let it be this way, think about it: this water should be removed, emptied out for the formation of the earth's own plate and platform, then comes the sowing, the dawning of the sky-earth. But there will be no high days and no bright praise for our work, our design, until the rise of the human work, the human design," they said.

And then the earth arose because of them, it was simply their word that brought it forth. For the forming of the earth they said "Earth." It arose suddenly, just like a cloud, like a mist, now forming, unfolding. Then the mountains were separated from the water, all at once the great mountains came forth. By their genius alone, by their cutting edge alone they carried out the conception of the mountain-plain, whose face grew instant groves of cypress and pine.

"HOW SHOULD IT BE SOWN, HOW SHOULD IT DAWN?": Cornfields amid pine forests near Momostenango. In this passage sowing and dawning have three meanings: the begetting and bearing of human beings, the sowing and sprouting of plants, and the setting and dawning (or rising) of heavenly bodies.

And the Plumed Serpent was pleased with this:

"It was good that you came, Heart of Sky, Hurricane, and Newborn Thunderbolt, Raw Thunderbolt. Our work, our design will turn out well," they said.

And the earth was formed first, the mountain-plain. The channels of water were separated; their branches wound their ways among the mountains. The waters were divided when the

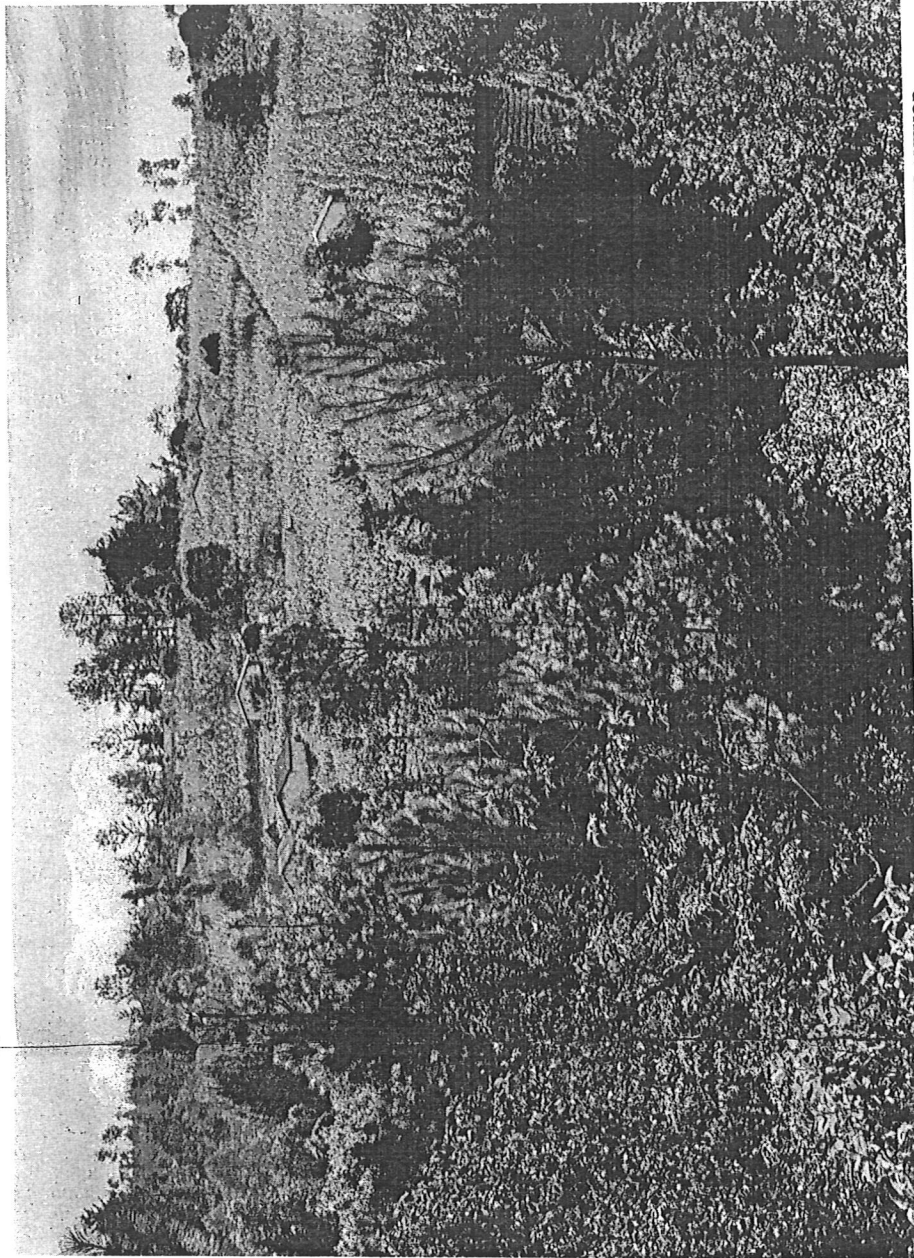


PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR

great mountains appeared.

Such was the formation of the earth when it was brought forth by the Heart of Sky, Heart of Earth, as they are called, since they were the first to think of it. The sky was set apart, and the earth was set apart in the midst of the waters.

Such was their plan when they thought, when they worried about the completion of their work.

THEN THE MOUNTAINS WERE SEPARATED FROM THE WATER: Lake Atitlán, called Nahachel in Quiché, with the volcanoes of Cerro de Oro (in the middle distance) and San Pedro (beyond). The contemporary Quichés of Momostenango reckon Nahachel as the lake of the south; it is one of four sacred lakes that mark the four sides of their world.

PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR

NOW THEY PLANNED THE ANIMALS OF THE MOUNTAINS, all the guardians of the forests, creatures of the mountains: the deer, birds, pumas, jaguars, serpents, rattlesnakes, yellowbites, guardians of the bushes.

A Bearer, Begetter speaks:

"Why this pointless humming? Why should there merely be rustling beneath the trees and bushes?"

"Indeed—they had better have guardians," the others replied. As soon as they thought it and said it, deer and birds came forth. And then they gave out homes to the deer and birds:

"You, the deer: sleep along the rivers, in the canyons. Be here in the meadows, in the thickets, in the forests, multiply yourselves. You will stand and walk on all fours," they were told.

So then they established the nests of the birds, small and great:

So then they dismantled, again they brought down their work and design. Again they talked:

"What is there for us to make that would turn out well, that would succeed in keeping our days and praying to us?" they said. Then they planned again:

"We'll just tell Xpiyacoc, Xmucane, Hunahpu Possum, Hunahpu Coyote, to try a counting of days, a counting of lots," the mason and sculptor said to themselves. Then they invoked Xpiyacoc, Xmucane.

THEN COMES THE NAMING OF THOSE WHO ARE THE MIDMOST SEERS: the "Grandmother of Day, Grandmother of Light," as the Maker, Modeler called them. These are names of Xpiyacoc and Xmucane.

When Hurricane had spoken with the Sovereign Plumed Serpent, they invoked the daykeepers, diviners, the midmost seers:

"There is yet to find, yet to discover how we are to model a person, construct a person again, a provider, nurturer, so that we are called upon and we are recognized: our recompense is in words.

Midwife, matchmaker,
our grandmother, our grandfather,
Xpiyacoc, Xmucane,
let there be planting, let there be the dawning
of our invocation, our sustenance, our recognition
by the human work, the human design,
the human figure, the human mass.

So be it, fulfill your names:

Hunahpu Possum, Hunahpu Coyote,
Bearer twice over, Begetter twice over,
Great Peccary, Great Tapir,
lapidary, jeweler,
sawyer, carpenter,



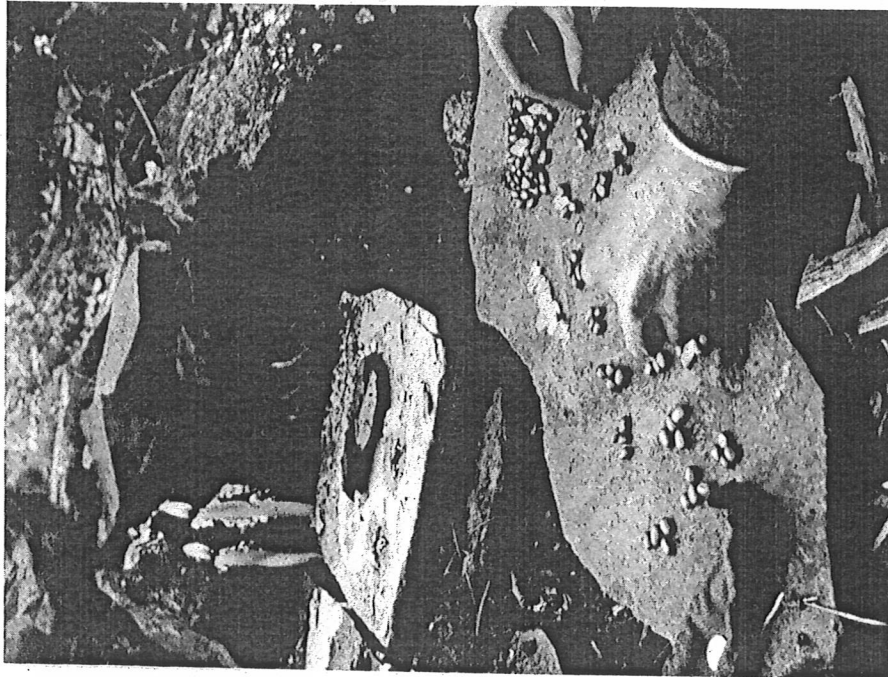
PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR

THEY INVOKED THE DAYKEEPERS, DIVINERS, THE MIDMOST SEERS: All the adults in this picture are daykeepers; in addition, the woman is a midwife and the man wearing a hat is a matchmaker. The two men between them (the one bending down being Andrés Xiloj) serve as mother-fathers, or patri-lineage heads, and the man at right is a singer.

Maker of the Blue-Green Plate,
Maker of the Blue-Green Bowl,
incense maker, master craftsman,
Grandmother of Day, Grandmother of Light.

You have been called upon because of our work, our design. Run your hands over the kernels of corn, over the seeds of the coral tree, just get it done, just let it come out whether we should carve and gouge a mouth, a face in wood," they told the daykeepers.

And then comes the borrowing, the counting of days; the hand is moved over the corn kernels, over the coral seeds, the days, the lots.



THE HAND IS MOVED OVER THE CORN KERNELS, OVER THE CORAL SEEDS, THE DAYS, THE LOTS: A divination in progress in front of burning offerings on top of Patohil, a mountain mentioned in the Popol Vuh. Coral seeds and crystals from a random handful are being set out in lots of four each; once the arrangement is complete the daykeeper will count the days of the 260-day calendar (one day for each lot), starting from the current day or from the day the client's problem began. The seeds and crystals left over from the handful are in the pile at extreme right. At left is the bundle in which the daykeeper carries his paraphernalia; the coin on top of it is the fee paid by the client. The hands are those of the author, who is a trained and initiated daykeeper.

Then they spoke to them, one of them a grandmother, the other a grandfather.

This is the grandfather, this is the master of the coral seeds: Xpiyacoc is his name.

And this is the grandmother, the daykeeper, diviner who stands behind others: Xmucane is her name.

And they said, as they set out the days:

"Just let it be found, just let it be discovered, say it, our ear is listening,

may you talk, may you speak,

just find the wood for the carving and sculpting by the builder, sculptor.

Is this to be the provider, the nurturer

when it comes to the planting, the dawning?

You corn kernels, you coral seeds,

you days, you lots:

may you succeed, may you be accurate,"

they said to the corn kernels, coral seeds, days, lots. "Have shame, you up there, Heart of Sky: attempt no deception before the mouth and face of Sovereign Plumed Serpent," they said. Then they spoke straight to the point:

"It is well that there be your manikins, woodcarvings, talking, speaking, there on the face of the earth."

"So be it," they replied. The moment they spoke it was done: the manikins, woodcarvings, human in looks and human in speech.

This was the peopling of the face of the earth:

They came into being, they multiplied, they had daughters, they had sons, these manikins, woodcarvings. But there was nothing in their hearts and nothing in their minds, no memory of their mason and builder. They just went and walked wherever they wanted. Now they did not remember the Heart of Sky.

And so they fell, just an experiment and just a cutout for humankind. They were talking at first but their faces were dry. They were not yet developed in the legs and arms. They had no blood, no lymph. They had no sweat, no fat. Their complexions

were dry, their faces were crusty. They flailed their legs and arms, their bodies were deformed.

And so they accomplished nothing before the Maker, Modeler who gave them birth, gave them heart. They became the first numerous people here on the face of the earth.

A GAIN THERE COMES A HUMILIATION, destruction, and demolition. The manikins, woodcarvings were killed when the Heart of Sky devised a flood for them. A great flood was made; it came down on the heads of the manikins, woodcarvings.

The man's body was carved from the wood of the coral tree by the Maker, Modeler. And as for the woman, the Maker, Modeler needed the pith of reeds for the woman's body. They were not competent, nor did they speak before the builder and sculptor who made them and brought them forth, and so they were killed, done in by a flood.

There came a rain of resin from the sky.

There came the one named Gouger of Faces: he gouged out their eyeballs.

There came Sudden Bloodletter: he snapped off their heads.

There came Crunching Jaguar: he ate their flesh.

There came Tearing Jaguar: he tore them open.

They were pounded down to the bones and tendons, smashed and pulverized even to the bones. Their faces were smashed because they were incompetent before their mother and their father, the Heart of Sky, named Hurricane. The earth was blackened because of this; the black rainstorm began, rain all day and rain all night. Into their houses came the animals, small and great. Their faces were crushed by things of wood and stone. Everything spoke: their water jars, their tortilla griddles, their plates, their cooking pots, their dogs, their grinding stones, each and every thing crushed their faces. Their dogs and turkeys told them:

"You caused us pain, you ate us, but now it is *you* whom *we* shall eat." And this is the grinding stone:

a revelation to writers
"We were undone because of you.

Every day, every day,
in the dark, in the dawn, forever,
r-r-rip, r-r-rip,
r-r-rub, r-r-rub,
right in our faces, because of you.

This was the service we gave you at first, when you were still people, but today you will learn of our power. We shall pound and we shall grind your flesh," their grinding stones told them.

And this is what their dogs said, when they spoke in their turn: "Why is it you can't seem to give us our food? We just watch and you just keep us down, and you throw us around. You keep a stick ready when you eat, just so you can hit us. We don't talk, so we've received nothing from you. How could you not have known? You *did* know that we were wasting away there, behind you.

"So, this very day you will taste the teeth in our mouths. We shall eat you," their dogs told them, and their faces were crushed.

And then their tortilla griddles and cooking pots spoke to them in turn:

"Pain! That's all you've done for us. Our mouths are sooty, our faces are sooty. By setting us on the fire all the time, you burn us. Since *we* felt no pain, *you* try it. We shall burn you," all their cooking pots said, crushing their faces.

The stones, their hearthstones were shooting out, coming right out of the fire, going for their heads, causing them pain. Now they run for it, helter-skelter.

They want to climb up on the houses, but they fall as the houses collapse.

They want to climb the trees; they're thrown off by the trees.

They want to get inside caves, but the caves slam shut in their faces.

Such was the scattering of the human work, the human design. The people were ground down, overthrown. The mouths and faces of all of them were destroyed and crushed. And it used to be said that the monkeys in the forests today are a sign of this.

They were left as a sign because wood alone was used for their flesh by the builder and sculptor.

So this is why monkeys look like people: they are a sign of a previous human work, human design—mere manikins, mere woodcarvings.

THIS WAS WHEN THERE WAS JUST A TRACE OF EARLY DAWN on the face of the earth, there was no sun. But there was one who magnified himself; Seven Macaw is his name. The sky-earth was already there, but the face of the sun-moon was clouded over. Even so, it is said that his light provided a sign for the people who were flooded. He was like a person of genius in his being.

"I am great. My place is now higher than that of the human work, the human design. I am their sun and I am their light, and I am also their months.

“So be it: my light is great. I am the walkway and I am the foothold of the people, because my eyes are of metal. My teeth just glitter with jewels, and turquoise as well; they stand out blue with stones like the face of the sky.

"And this nose of mine shines white into the distance like the moon. Since my nest is metal, it lights up the face of the earth. When I come forth before my nest, I am like the sun and moon for those who are born in the light, begotten in the light. It must be so, because my face reaches into the distance," says Seven Macaw.

It is not true that he is the sun, this Seven Macaw, yet he magnifies himself, his wings, his metal. But the scope of his face lies right around his own perch; his face does not reach everywhere beneath the sky. The faces of the sun, moon, and stars are not yet visible, it has not yet dawned.

And so Seven Macaw puffs himself up as the days and the months, though the light of the sun and moon has not yet clarified. He only wished for surpassing greatness. This was when the flood was worked upon the manikins, woodcarvings.

And now we shall explain how Seven Macaw died, when the people were vanquished, done in by the mason and sculptor.

PART TWO

