



Fig. 1 - The oldest surviving written account of the Popol Vuh (ms c. 1701 by Francisco Ximénez, O.P.). The parallel columns are: Left—K'iche' Maya, Right—Spanish translation.

The *Popol Vuh* – Maya “BIBLE”



by Cheryl Norman (*The legacy of V. Garth Norman lives on.*)

The ancient Maya Sacred book the *Popol Vuh* is a text recounting the mythology and history of the K'iche' people of Guatemala and near the Izapa Temple Observatory in the state of Chiapas, Mexico (at the star on the map below). As a result, many

of the carved monuments at Izapa's Temple depict subjects described in the *Popol Vuh*. The *Popol Vuh* encompasses a range of subjects that include creation, history, cosmology, and ancestry. Its “Preamble” includes the purpose for writing the *Popol Vuh*, and the measuring of the earth. There are essentially 4 divisions in this sacred book.



Fig. 2 - The Star = Izapa, Chiapas, Mexico is located at 14.8° N. Latitude near where the *Popol Vuh* was recorded (Google Earth Map)

PREAMBLE is an introduction to the piece that introduces Xpiyacoc and Xmucane, the purpose for writing the *Popol Vuh*, and the measuring of the earth.

THE FOUR DIVISIONS OF THE *POPOL VUH* ARE:

(en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popol_Vuh):

BOOK 1:

Book 1 of the first division has an “account of the creation of living beings. Animals were created first, followed by humans. The first humans were made of earth and mud but crumbled. The second humans were created from wood, but they did not function well and were washed away in a flood and killed by animals.”

BOOK 2:

Book 2 includes The Hero Twins plan to kill Vucub-Caquix and his sons, Zipacna and Cabracan. They succeed, "restoring order and balance to the world."

BOOK 3:

1. The father and uncle of The Hero Twins, Hun Hunahpu and Vucub Hunahpu, sons of Xmucane and Xpiyacoc, are murdered at a ball game in Xibalba.
2. Hun Hunahpu's head is placed in a calabash tree, where it spits in the hand of Xquiq, impregnating her.
3. She leaves the underworld to be with her mother-in-law, Xmucane.
4. Her sons then challenge the Lords who killed their father and uncle, succeeding and becoming the sun and the moon.

BOOK 4:

1. Humans are successfully created from maize.
2. The gods give them morality in order to keep them loyal.
3. Later, they give the humans wives to make them content.
4. This book also describes the movement of the

K'iche' and includes the introduction of Gucumatz. (1)

The *Popol Vuh* is of particular importance given the scarcity of early accounts dealing with Mesoamerican mythologies. After the Spanish



Fig. - 3- Tonsured Maize God and Spotted Hero Twin

Dr. Allen Christenson (BYU) translated the *Popol Vuh* from the original written K'iche language into English. His translation is considered the most accurate of this sacred Maya Book that was “originally preserved through oral tradition until approximately 1550 AD . . .” (2)

(1) en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popol_Vuh

(2) **Popol Vuh: The Sacred Book of the Maya.** Translated by Allen J. Christensen 2003



WATCH THIS VIDEO
<https://youtu.be/tPN9UG30JKK>
to learn about the Popol Vuh.

A Reading From The Popol Vuh

THE CREATION OF THE EARTH



Then
Came His word
Heart of the Sky arrived here
with Sovereign and Quetzal serpent in the
Darkness, in the night. He spoke with Sovereign
& Quetzal Serpent. They talked together then. They thought
& they pondered. They reached an accord, bringing together their
words and their thoughts. They gave birth, heartening one another. Beneath
the light, they gave birth to humanity. Then they arranged for the
germination and creation of the trees and the bushes, the germination of all
life and creation in the darkness and in the night, by Heart of Sky,
who is called Huracan.
(Christenson 2003: 70)