INDIGENOUS & ANCESTRAL TRADITIONS

The Popol Vuh

The sacred narrative of the K’iche’ Maya: the creation of the world and of humankind, and the adventures of the Hero Twins Hunahpu and Xbalanque against the lords of the underworld, Xibalba. Presents Lewis Spence's 1908 English-language account of the four books -- not a line-by-line translation (none existed in English at the time), but a synopsis following the original narrative closely.

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The First Book

[1] Over a universe wrapped in the gloom of a dense and primeval night passed the god Hurakan, the mighty wind. He called out "earth," and the solid land appeared. The chief gods took counsel; they were Hurakan, Gucumatz, the serpent covered with green feathers, and Xpiyacoc and Xmucane, the mother and father gods. As the result of their deliberations animals were created. But as yet man was not. To supply the deficiency the divine beings resolved to create mannikins carved out of wood. But these soon incurred the displeasure of the gods, who, irritated by their lack of reverence, resolved to destroy them. Then by the will of Hurakan, the Heart of Heaven, the waters were swollen, and a great flood came upon the mannikins of wood. They were drowned and a thick resin fell from heaven. The bird Xecotcovach tore out their eyes; the bird Camulatz cut off their heads; the bird Cotzbalam devoured their flesh; the bird Tecumbalam broke their bones and sinews and ground them into powder. Because they had not thought on Hurakan, therefore the face of the earth grew dark, and a pouring rain commenced, raining by day and by night. Then all sorts of beings, great and small, gathered together to abuse the men to their faces. The very household utensils and animals jeered at them, their mill-stones, their plates, their cups, their dogs, their hens. Said the dogs and hens, "Very badly have you treated us, and you have bitten us. Now we bite you in turn." Said the mill-stones (metates), "Very much were we tormented by you, and daily, daily, night and day, it was squeak, screech, screech, for your sake. Now you shall feel our strength, and we will grind your flesh and make meal of your bodies." And the dogs upbraided the mannikins because they had not been fed, and tore the unhappy images with their teeth. And the cups and dishes said, "Pain and misery you gave us, smoking our tops and sides, cooking us over the fire, burning and hurting us as if we had no feeling. Now it is your turn, and you shall burn." Then ran the mannikins hither and thither in despair. They climbed to the roofs of the houses, but the houses crumbled under their feet; they tried to mount to the tops of the trees, but the trees hurled them from them; they sought refuge in the caverns, but the caverns closed before them. Thus was accomplished the ruin of this race, destined to be overthrown. And it is said that their posterity are the little monkeys who live in the woods.

[2] THE MYTH OF VUKUB-CAKIX

[3] After this catastrophe, ere yet the earth was quite recovered from the wrath of the gods, there existed a man "full of pride," whose name was Vukub-Cakix. The name signifies "Seven-times-the-colour-of-fire," or "Very brilliant," and was justified by the fact that its owner's eyes were of silver, his teeth of emerald, and other parts of his anatomy of precious metals. In his own opinion Vukub-Cakix's existence rendered unnecessary that of the sun and the moon, and this egoism so disgusted the gods that they resolved upon his overthrow. His two sons, Zipacna and Cabrakan (earth-heaper (?) and earthquake), were daily employed, the one in heaping up mountains, and the other in demolishing them, and these also incurred the wrath of the immortals. Shortly after the decision of the deities the twin hero-gods Hun-Ahpu and Xbalanque came to earth with the intention of chastising the arrogance of Vukub-Cakix and his progeny.

[4] Now Vukub-Cakix had a great tree of the variety known in Central America as "nanze" or "tapal," bearing a fruit round, yellow, and aromatic, and upon this fruit he depended for his daily sustenance. One day on going to partake of it for his morning meal he mounted to its summit in order to espy the

choicest fruits, when to his great indignation he discovered that Hun-Ahpu and Xbalanque had been before him, and had almost denuded the tree of its produce. The hero-gods, who lay concealed within the foliage, now added injury to theft by hurling at Vukub-Cakix a dart from a blow-pipe, which had the effect of precipitating him from the summit of the tree to the earth. He arose in great wrath, bleeding profusely from a severe wound in the jaw. Hun-Ahpu then threw himself upon Vukub-Cakix, who in terrible anger seized the god by the arm and wrenched it from the body. He then proceeded to his dwelling, where he was met and anxiously interrogated by his spouse Chimalmat. Tortured by the pain in his teeth and jaw he, in an excess of spite, hung Hun-Ahpu's arm over a blazing fire, and then threw himself down to bemoan his injuries, consoling himself, however, with the idea that he had adequately avenged himself upon the interlopers who had dared to disturb his peace.

5 But Hun-Ahpu and Xbalanque were in no mind that he should escape so easily, and the recovery of Hun-Ahpu's arm must be made at all hazards. With this end in view they consulted two venerable beings in whom we readily recognise the father-mother divinities, Xpiyacoc and Xmucane4, disguised for the nonce as sorcerers. These personages accompanied Hun-Ahpu and Xbalanque to the abode of Vukub-Cakix, whom they found in a state of intense agony. The ancients persuaded him to be operated upon in order to relieve his sufferings, and for his glittering teeth they substituted grains of maize. Next they removed his eyes of emerald, upon which his death speedily followed, as did that of his wife Chimalmat. Hun-Ahpu's arm was recovered, re-affixed to his shoulder, and all ended satisfactorily for the hero-gods.

6 But their mission was not yet complete. The sons of Vukub-Cakix, Zipacna and Cabrakan, remained to be accounted for. Zipacna consented, at the entreaty of four hundred youths, incited by the hero-gods, to assist them in transporting a huge tree which was destined for the roof-tree of a house they were building. Whilst assisting them he was beguiled by them into entering a great ditch which they had dug for the purpose of destroying him, and when once he descended was overwhelmed by tree-trunks by his treacherous acquaintances, who imagined him to be slain. But he took refuge in a side-tunnel of the excavation, cut off his hair and nails for the ants to carry up to his enemies as a sign of his death, waited until the youths had become intoxicated with pulque because of joy at his supposed demise, and then, emerging from the pit, shook the house that the youths had built over his body about their heads, so that all were destroyed in its ruins.

7 But Hun-Ahpu and Xbalanque were grieved that the four hundred had perished, and laid a more efficacious trap for Zipacna. The mountain-bearer, carrying the mountains by night, sought his sustenance by day by the shore of the river, where he lived upon fish and crabs. The hero-gods constructed an artificial crab which they placed in a cavern at the bottom of a deep ravine. The hungry titan descended to the cave, which he entered on all-fours. But a neighbouring mountain had been undermined by the divine brothers, and its bulk was cast upon him. Thus at the foot of Mount Meavan perished the proud "Mountain Maker," whose corpse was turned into stone by the catastrophe.

8 Of the family of boasters only Cabrakan remained. Discovered by the hero-gods at his favourite pastime of overturning the hills, they enticed him in an easterly direction, challenging him to overthrow a particularly high mountain. On the way they shot a bird with their blow-pipes, and poisoned it with earth. This they gave to Cabrakan to eat. After partaking of the poisoned fare his

strength deserted him, and failing to move the mountain he was bound and buried by the victorious hero-gods.

The Second Book

[1] Mystery veils the commencement of the Second Book of the "Popol Vuh." The theme is the birth and family of Hun-Ahpu and Xbalanque, and the scribe intimates that only half is to be told concerning the history of their father. Xpiyacoc and Xmucane, the father and mother deities, had two sons, Hunhun-Ahpu and Vukub-Hunahpu, the first being, so far as can be gathered, a bi-sexual personage. He had by a wife, Xbakiyalo, two sons, Hunbatz and Hunchouen, men full of wisdom and artistic genius. All of them were addicted to the recreation of dicing and playing at ball, and a spectator of their pastimes was Voc, the messenger of Hurakan. Xbakiyalo having died, Hunhun-Ahpu and Vukub-Hunahpu, leaving the former's sons behind, played a game of ball which in its progress took them into the vicinity of the realm of Xibalba (the underworld). This reached the ears of the monarchs of that place, Hun-Came and Vukub-Came, who, after consulting their counsellors, challenged the strangers to a game of ball, with the object of defeating and disgracing them.

[2] For this purpose they dispatched four messengers in the shape of owls. The brothers accepted the challenge, after a touching farewell with their mother Xmucane, and their sons and nephews, and followed the feathered heralds down the steep incline to Xibalba from the playground at Ninxor Carchah. After an ominous crossing over a river of blood they came to the residence of the kings of Xibalba, where they underwent the mortification of mistaking two wooden figures for the monarchs. Invited to sit on the seat of honour, they discovered it to be a red-hot stone, and the contortions which resulted from their successful trick caused unbounded merriment among the Xibalbans. Then they were thrust into the House of Gloom, where they were sacrificed and buried. The head of Hunhun-Ahpu was, however, suspended from a tree, which speedily became covered with gourds, from which it was almost impossible to distinguish the bloody trophy. All in Xibalba were forbidden the fruit of that tree.

[3] But one person in Xibalba had resolved to disobey the mandate. This was the virgin princess Xquiq (Blood), the daughter of Cuchumaquiq, who went unattended to the spot. Standing under the branches gazing at the fruit, the maiden stretched out her hand, and the head of Hunhun-Ahpu spat into the palm. The spittle caused her to conceive, and she returned home, being assured by the head of the hero-god that no harm should result to her. This thing was done by order of Hurakan, the Heart of Heaven. In six months' time her father became aware of her condition, and despite her protestations the royal messengers of Xibalba, the owls, received orders to kill her and return with her heart in a vase. She, however, escaped by bribing the owls with splendid promises for the future to spare her and substitute for her heart the coagulated sap of the blood-wart.

[4] In her extremity Xquiq went for protection to the home of Xmucane, who now looked after the young Hunbatz and Hunchouen. Xmucane would not at first believe her tale. But Xquiq appealed to the gods, and performed a miracle by gathering a basket of maize where no maize grew, and thus gained her confidence.

[5] Shortly afterwards Xquiq became the mother of twin boys, the heroes of the First Book, Hun-Ahpu, and Xbalanque. These did not find favour in the eyes of Xmucane, their grandmother. Their infantile cries aroused the wrath of this venerable person, and she vented it upon them by turning them out of doors. They speedily took to an outdoor life, however, and became mighty hunters, and expert in the use of their blow-pipes, with which they shot birds and other small game. The ill-treatment which they received from Hunbatz and Hunchouen caused them at last to retaliate, and those who had made their lives miserable were punished by being transformed by the divine children into apes. The venerable Xmucane, filled with grief at the metamorphosis and flight of her ill-starred grandsons, who had made her home joyous with their singing and flute-playing, was told that she would be permitted to behold their faces once more if she could do so without losing her gravity, but their antics and grimaces caused her such merriment that on three separate occasions she was unable to restrain her laughter and the men-monkeys appeared no more. Hun-Ahpu and Xbalanque now became expert musicians, and one of their favourite airs was that of "Hun-Ahpu qoy," the "monkey of Hun-Ahpu."

[6] The divine twins were now old enough to undertake labour in the field, and their first task was the clearing of a milpa or maize-plantation. They were possessed of magic tools, which had the merit of working themselves in the absence of the young hunters at the chase, and those they found a capital substitute for their own directing presence upon the first day. Returning at night from hunting, they smeared their faces and hands with dirt so that Xmucane might be deceived into imagining that they had been hard at work in the maize-field. But during the night the wild beasts met and replaced all the roots and shrubs which the brothers--or rather their magic tools--had removed. The twins resolved to watch for them on the ensuing night, but despite all their efforts the animals succeeded in making good their escape, save one, the rat, which was caught in a handkerchief. The rabbit and deer lost their tails in getting away. The rat, in gratitude that they had spared its life, told them of the glorious deeds of their great fathers and uncles, their games at ball, and of the existence of a set of implements necessary to play the game which they had left in the house. They discovered these, and went to play in the ball-ground of their fathers.

[7] It was not long, however, until Hun-Came and Vukub-Came, the princes of Xibalba, heard them at play, and decided to lure them to the Underworld as they had lured their fathers. Messengers were despatched to the house of Xmucane, who, filled with alarm, despatched a louse to carry the message to her grandsons. The louse, wishing to ensure greater speed to reach the brothers, consented to be swallowed by a toad, the toad by a serpent, and the serpent by the great bird Voc. The other animals duly liberated one another; but despite his utmost efforts, the toad could not get rid of the louse, who had played him a trick by lodging in his gums, and had not been swallowed at all. The message, however, was duly delivered, and the players returned home to take leave of their grandmother and mother. Before their departure they each planted a cane in the middle of the house, which was to acquaint those they left behind with their welfare, since it would wither if any fatal circumstance befel them.

[8] Pursuing the route their fathers had followed, they passed the river of blood and the river Papuhya. But they sent an animal called Xan as avant courier with orders to prick all the Xibalbans with a hair from Hun-Ahpu's leg, thus discovering those of the dwellers in the Underworld who were made of wood--those whom their fathers had unwittingly bowed to as men--and also learning the names of

the others by their inquiries and explanations when pricked. Thus they did not salute the mannikins on their arrival at the Xibalban court, nor did they sit upon the red-hot stone. They even passed scatheless through the first ordeal of the House of Gloom. The Xibalbans were furious, and their wrath was by no means allayed when they found themselves beaten at the game of ball to which they had challenged the brothers. Then Hun-Came and Vukub-Came ordered the twins to bring them four bouquets of flowers, asking the guards of the royal gardens to watch most carefully, and committed Hun-Ahpu and Xbalanque to the "House of Lances"--the second ordeal--where the lancers were directed to kill them. The brothers, however, had at their beck and call a swarm of ants, which entered the royal gardens on the first errand, and they succeeded in bribing the lancers. The Xibalbans, white with fury, ordered that the owls, the guardians of the gardens, should have their lips split, and otherwise showed their anger at their third defeat.

9 Then came the third ordeal in the "House of Cold." Here the heroes escaped death by freezing by being warmed with burning pine-cones. In the fourth and fifth ordeals they were equally lucky, for they passed a night each in the "House of Tigers" and the "House of Fire" without injury. But at the sixth ordeal misfortune overtook them in the "House of Bats." Hun-Ahpu's head being cut off by Camazotz, "Ruler of Bats," who suddenly appeared from above.

10 The beheading of Hun-Ahpu does not, however, appear to have terminated fatally, but owing to the unintelligible nature of the text at this juncture, it is impossible to ascertain in what manner he was cured of such a lethal wound. This episode is followed by an assemblage of all the animals, and another contest at ball-playing, after which the brothers emerged uninjured from all the ordeals of the Xibalbans.

11 But in order to further astound their "hosts," Hun-Ahpu and Xbalanque confided to two sorcerers named Xulu and Pacaw that the Xibalbans had failed because the animals were not on their side, and directing them what to do with their bones, they stretched themselves upon a funeral pile and died together. Their bones were beaten to powder and thrown into the river, where they sank, and were transformed into young men. On the fifth day they reappeared like men-fishes, and on the sixth in the form of ragged old men, dancing, burning and restoring houses, killing and restoring each other to life, with other wonders. The princes of Xibalba, hearing of their skill, requested them to exhibit their magical powers, which they did by burning the royal palace and restoring it, killing and resuscitating the king's dog, and cutting a man in pieces, and bringing him to life again. The monarchs of Xibalba, anxious to experience the novel sensation of a temporary death, requested to be slain and resuscitated. They were speedily killed, but the brothers refrained from resuscitating their arch-enemies.

12 Announcing their real names, the brothers proceeded to punish the princes of Xibalba. The game of ball was forbidden them, they were to perform menial tasks, and only the beasts of the forest were they to hold in vassalage. They appear after this to achieve a species of doubtful distinction as plutonic deities or demons. They are described as warlike, ugly as owls, inspiring evil and discord. Their faces were painted black and white to show their faithless nature.

13 Xmucane, waiting at home for the brothers, was alternately filled with joy and grief as the canes grew green and withered, according to the varying fortunes of her grandsons. These young men were busied at Xibalba with paying fitting funeral honours to their father and uncle, who now mounted to

heaven and became the sun and moon, whilst the four hundred youths slain by Zipacna became the stars. Thus concludes the second book.

The Third Book

[1] The beginning of the third book finds the gods once more in council. In the darkness they commune concerning the creation of man. The Creator and Former made four perfect men. These beings were wholly created from yellow and white maize. Their names were Balam-Quitzé (Tiger with the Sweet Smile), Balam-Agab (Tiger of the Night), Mahucutah (The Distinguished Name), and Iqi-Balam (Tiger of the Moon). They had neither father nor mother, neither were they made by the ordinary agents in the work of creation. Their creation was a miracle of the Former.

[2] But Hurakan was not altogether satisfied with his handiwork. These men were too perfect. They knew overmuch. Therefore the gods took counsel as to how to proceed with man. They must not become as gods (note here the Christian influence). Let us now contract their sight so that they may only be able to see a portion of the earth and be content, said the gods. Then Hurakan breathed a cloud over their eyes, which became partially veiled. Then the four men slept, and four women were made, Caha-Paluma (Falling Water), Choimha (Beautiful Water), Tzununiha (House of the Water), and Cakixa (Water of Aras or Parrots), who became the wives of the men in their respective order as mentioned above.

[3] These were the ancestors of the Kichés only. Then were created the ancestors of other peoples. They were ignorant of the methods of worship, and lifting their eyes to heaven prayed to the Creator, the Former, for peaceable lives and the return of the sun. But no sun came, and they grew uneasy. So they set out for Tulan-Zuiva, or the Seven Caves, and there gods were given unto them, each man, as head of a group of the race, a god. Balam-Quitzé received the god Tohil. Balam-Agab received the god Avilix, and Mahucutah the god Hacavitz. Iqi-Balam received a god, but as he had no family his god is not taken into account in the native mythology.

[4] The Kichés now began to feel the want of fire, and the god Tohil, the creator of fire, supplied them with this element. But soon afterwards a mighty rain extinguished all the fires in the land. Tohil, however, always renewed the supply. And fire in those days was the chief necessity, for as yet there was no sun.

[5] Tulan was a place of misfortune to man, for not only did he suffer from cold and famine, but here his speech was so confounded that the first four men were no longer able to comprehend each other. They determined to leave Tulan, and under the leadership of the god Tohil set out to search for a new abode. On they wandered through innumerable hardships. Many mountains had they to climb, and a long passage to make through the sea which was miraculously divided for their journey from shore to shore. At length they came to a mountain which they called Hacavitz, after one of their gods, and here they rested, for here they had been instructed that they should see the sun. And the sun appeared. Animals and men were transported with delight. All the celestial bodies were now established. But the sun was not as it is to-day. He was not strong, but as reflected in a mirror.

[6] As he arose the three tribal gods were turned into stone, as were the gods--probably totems--connected with the wild animals. Then arose the first Kiché city.

[7] As time progressed the first men grew old, and, impelled by visions, they began to offer human sacrifices. For this purpose they raided the villages of the neighbouring peoples, who retaliated. But by the miraculous aid of a horde of wasps and hornets the Kichés utterly routed their enemies. And the aliens became tributory to them.

[8] Now it came nigh the death-time of the first men, and they called their descendants together to hearken unto their last counsels. In the anguish of their hearts they sang the Kamucu, the song "We see," that they had sung when it first became light. Then they took leave of their wives and sons, one by one. And suddenly they were not. But in their place was a huge bundle, which was never unfolded. And it was called the "Majesty Enveloped." And so died the first men of the Kichés.

The Fourth Book

[1] The Fourth Book brings us down to what is presumably history. We say "presumably," because we have only the bare testimony of the "Popol Vuh" to go upon. We can note therein the evolution of the Kiché people from a comparatively simple and pastoral state of society to a political condition of considerable complexity. This account of the later periods is extremely confused, and as the names of many of the Kiché monarchs are the same as those of the gods, it is often difficult to discriminate between saga and history. Interminable conflicts are the subject of most of this book, and by the time the transcriber reached the twelfth chapter he seems to have tired of his labours and to have made up his mind to conclude with a genealogical list of the Kiché kings. He here traces the genealogies of the three royal houses of Cavek, Nihaib, and Ahau-Kiché. The state of transition and turmoil in which the country was for many years after the conquest must have tended to the disappearance of native records of any kind, and our author does not appear to have been as well versed in the history of his country which immediately preceded his own time as he was in her mythology and legends. According to a tradition recited by Don Domingo Juarros in his "History of the Kingdom of Guatemala," the Toltecs emigrated from the neighbourhood of Tula in Mexico by direction of an oracle, in consequence of the great increase of population in the reign of Nimaquiché, fifth King of the Toltecs. "In performing this journey they expended many years and suffered extraordinary hardships." Nimaquiché was succeeded by his son Aexopil, from whom was descended Kicab Tanub, the contemporary of Montezuma II. This does not at all agree with the "Popol Vuh" account.

[2] COSMOGONY OF THE "POPOL VUH"

[3] The cosmogony of the "Popol Vuh" exhibits many signs of Christian influence, but it would be quite erroneous to infer that such influence was of a direct nature; that is, that the native compiler deliberately infused into the original narrative those outstanding features of the Christian cosmogony, which were undoubtedly quite familiar to him. The resemblance which is apparent between the first few chapters of the "Popol Vuh" and the creation-myth in Genesis is no more the result of design than was the metamorphosis of King Arthur's Brythonic warriors into Norman knights by the jongleurs. The inclusion of obviously Christian elements was undoubtedly unconscious. A native Guatemalan, nurtured in the Christian faith, could, in fact, quite be expected to produce an incongruous blending of Christian and pagan cosmogony such as is here dealt with.

[4] But another and more important question arises in connection with the initial chapters of the "Popol Vuh"--those which give an account of the Kiché creation-myth. Under the veneer of Biblical cosmogony the original myth would appear to be the sum of more than one native creation-story. We have here a number of beings, each of whom appear in some manner to exercise the function of a creator, and it might be gathered from this that the account now before us was produced by the fusion and reconciliation of more than one legend connected with the creation--a reconciliation of early rival faiths. We have to guide us in this the proved facts of a composite Peruvian cosmogony. The ruling Inca caste skilfully welded together no less than four early creation-myths, reserving for their own divine ancestors the headship of the heavens. And it is not unreasonable to believe that the diverse ethnological elements of which the Maya-Kiché people were undoubtedly composed possessed divergent cosmogonies, which were reconciled to one another in the later traditional versions of the "Popol Vuh."

[5] This would lead to the further supposition that the "Popol Vuh" is a monument of very considerable antiquity. The fusion of religious beliefs is, even with savages, a work of many generations. It would be rash to attempt to discover any approximate date for the original conception of the "Popol Vuh." The only version which we possess is that now under review, and as the lack of an earlier version makes comparison impossible, we are thus without the guidance with which the criteria of philology would undoubtedly furnish us. That the Mayan civilisation was of very considerable antiquity is possible, although no adequate proof exists for the assumption. This much is certain: that at the period of the Conquest written language was still in a state of transition from the pictographic to the phonetic-ideographic stage, and that therefore no version of the "Popol Vuh" which had been fixed by its receiving literary form could have long existed. It is much more probable that it existed for many generations by being handed down from mouth to mouth--a manner of literary preservation exceedingly common with the American peoples. The memories of the natives of America were and still are matter for astonishment for all who come into contact with them. The Conquistadores were astounded at the ease with which the Mexicans could recite poems and orations of stupendous length, and numerous instances of Indian feats of mnemonics are on record.

[6] It is worthy of notice that the Kiché myth embodies the general aboriginal idea of creation which prevailed in the New World. In many of them the central idea of creation is supplied by the brooding of a great bird over the dark primeval waste of waters. Thus the Athapascans thought that a mighty raven, with eyes of fire and wings whose clapping was as the thunder, descended to the ocean and raised the earth to its surface. The Muscokis believed that a couple of pigeons, skimming the surface of the deep, espied a blade of grass upon its surface, which slowly evolved into the dry land. The Zuñis imagined that Awonawilona, the All-father, so impregnated the waters that a scum appeared upon their surface which became the earth and sky. The Iroquois said that their female ancestor, expelled from heaven by her angry spouse, landed upon the sea, from which mud at once arose. The Mixtecs imagined that two winds--those of the Nine Serpents and the Nine Caverns--under the guise of a bird and a winged serpent respectively, caused the waters to subside and the land to appear. The Costa Rican Guaymis related, according to Melendez, that Noncomala waded into the water and met the water-nymph Rutbe, who bore him twins, the sun and moon. In all these accounts, from widely divergent nations, it is surprising to note such unanimity of belief; and when the tenacity of legend is borne in mind, it is perhaps not too rash to state a belief in an original American creation-myth,

which seems none the less possible when the fact of the ethnological unity among the American tribes is remembered.

[7] It is by no means difficult to satisfactorily prove the genuine American character of the "Popol Vuh." In its case reading is believing. Macpherson, in his preface to the first edition of the poems of Ossian, says of an "ingenious gentleman" that ere he had read the poems he thought and remarked that a man diffident of his abilities might well ascribe these compositions to a person living in a remote antiquity; but when he had perused them his sentiments were changed. He found they abounded too much with those ideas that only belong to an early state of society to be the work of a modern poet. However this may apply to the reputed compositions of the Goidelic bard, there can be no doubt that it can be used with justice as regards the "Popol Vuh." To any one who has given it a careful examination it must be abundantly evident that it is a composition that has passed through several stages of development; that it is unquestionably of aboriginal origin; and that it has only been influenced by European thought in a secondary and unessential manner. The very fact that it was composed in the Kiché tongue is almost sufficient proof of its genuine American character. The scholarship of the nineteenth century was unequal to the adequate translation of the "Popol Vuh"; the twentieth century has as yet shown no signs of being able to accomplish the task. It is, therefore, not difficult to credit that if modern scholarship is unable to properly translate the work, that of the eighteenth century was unable to create it; no European of that epoch was sufficiently versed in Kiché theology and history to compose in faultless Kiché such a work as the "Popol Vuh," breathing as it does in every line an intimate and natural acquaintance with the antiquities of Guatemala.

[8] The "Popol Vuh" is not the only mythi-historical work composed by an aboriginal American. In Mexico Ixtlilxochitl, and in Peru Garcilasso de la Vega, wrote exhaustive treatises upon the history and customs of their native countrymen shortly after the conquests of Mexico and Peru, and hieroglyphic records, such as the "Wallam Olum," are not unknown among the North American Indians. In fact, the intelligence which fails to regard the "Popol Vuh" as a genuine aboriginal production must be more sceptical than critical.

[9] KICHÉ AND MEXICAN MYTHOLOGY

[10] The connection of Kiché and Mayan mythology with that of Mexico is obvious, but not altogether proven. It is possible that the main lines of the three systems were similar; that certain great deities like Gucumatz were common to all, but that the inclusion of local gods lent a very different complexion to the three mythologies. It also seems not unreasonable to suppose that the Kiché people must have been more liable to influence from the south, that is, from the north of South America. The inclusion of an Antillean deity (Hurakan) in their pantheon practically proves that they were, and their relative proximity to the Caribs--the great maritime race of America--leads to the assumption that they may have been influenced by those roving merchants and sailors more or less profoundly. This, however, can only be matter for surmise, and, however strong the probabilities seem in favour of such a theory, proof is wanting to strengthen it.

[11] THE PANTHEON OF THE "POPOL VUH"

[12] It must be remembered that we are dealing with Kiché and not with Mayan mythology. Although the two had much in common, it would be most unsafe in the present state of knowledge to attempt to identify Kiché with Mayan deities; such an attempt would, indeed, assume the bulk of a formidable treatise. Scholarship at the present time hesitates to designate the representations of

Mayan gods on the walls of "buried" cities otherwise than by a letter of the alphabet, and it is therefore wise to thoroughly ignore the question of Mayan affinities in dealing with myths purely Kiché. This does not apply to the Kiché-Mexican affinities. Mexican and Kiché deities are mostly known quantities, but this cannot be said of their Mayan congenors. The reason for this is that until Mayan myth is reconciled with the evidence of the Mayan monuments no certitude can be arrived at. This cannot well be achieved until the Mayan hieroglyphs give up their secret, a contingency of which there is no immediate likelihood. Bearing this in mind, we may proceed to a brief consideration of the Kiché pantheon and its probable Mexican affinities.

[13] Almost at the beginning we encounter a pair of masculine-feminine beings of a type nearly hermaphroditic, named Xpiyacoc and Xmucane, who are credited with a considerable share of the creation of organic life in the Kiché cosmogony. These, we will remember, appeared in the myth of Vukub-Cakix and elsewhere. The first appears to apply to the paternal function, whilst the name Xmucane is derived from words signifying "feminine vigour." The Mexican equivalents of these gods were probably Cipactonatl and Oxomoco, the "father and mother gods."

[14] Deities who early arrest our attention are Tepeu, Gucumatz and Hurakan. The name of the first signifies "king." According to Brinton this in Kiché applies to rulership chiefly, inasmuch as the conjugal prowess often ascribed to monarchs by savage people is concerned. A creative faculty is obviously indicated in the name, but Brinton assumes that this Kiché generic name for king can also be rendered "syphilitic," especially as the name of the Mexican sun-god Nanahuatl has a similar significance.

[15] That Tepeu was a generative force, a creative deity, there can be no doubt, but strangely enough in certain passages of the "Popol Vuh" we find him praying to and rendering homage to Hurakan, the "Heart of Heaven." We also find the latter along with Xpiyacoc, Xmucane and Tepeu jointly and severally responsible for the creation of the mannikins, if not for the whole cosmological scheme. This, of course, bears out the assumption of a composite origin of the creation-myth in the "Popol Vuh," but it is nevertheless strange to find Hurakan, whom we must reckon an alien deity, at the head of these Olympic councils.

[16] Cucumatz is one and the same with the Nahuatlacan--or, more properly speaking, Toltecan Quetzalcohuatl. The name is compounded from two Kiché words signifying "Feathered Serpent," and its meaning in the Nahuatl is precisely the same. Concerning the nature of this deity, there is probably more difference of opinion than in the case of any other known to comparative mythology. Strangely enough, although unquestionably an alien in the mythology of the Aztecan branch of the Nahuatlacâ, he bulks more largely in the myths of that people than in the legends of the Kichés. To the Aztecâ he seems to have appeared as a half-friendly Baal, to worship or revile according to the opportunism of national fortune. If he were here to be dealt with as his importance demands the limits of this monograph would speedily be surpassed. Although unquestionably the same god to both Mexicans and Kichés, he had acquired a significance in Aztecan eyes quite out of all proportion to his Kiché or Mayan importance. To the Aztecan mind he was a culture-hero, unalterably associated with the sun, and with the origins of their civilisation. To the Toltecs he was the "Man of the Sun," the traveller, who, with staff in hand, symbolised the daily journey of the Sun-god. In all likelihood Quetzalcohuatl was evolved upon Mexican soil by the Toltecs, perhaps adopted from some older cultus by them. He was at least worshipped sedulously by aboriginal or pre-Aztecan tribes in

Anahuac. Mr. Payne writes: "The fact that the worship of Quetzalcohuatl under the name of Cuculcan or Gucumatz was extensively prevalent in Yucatan and Central America, while no trace is found of the worship of Tezcatlipoca, strongly suggests that the founders of the Central American pueblos (the Toltecs) were, in fact, devotees of Quetzalcohuatl, who preferred exile and adventure in strange lands to accepting a religious innovation which was intolerable to them."

[17] That Quetzalcohuatl was not an aboriginal Maya-Kiché deity is proved by the relative importance granted him by a people--the Aztecâ--to whom he was alien; and that they regarded him as the aboriginal god of Anahuac par excellence is indisputable.

[18] Hurakan, the winged creative power, is the wind of the tempest. In the "Popol Vuh" he is designated "The Heart of Heaven." He is parallel with if not identical to the Aztecan deity Tezcatlipoca, who in his variant of Yoalli-ehecatl (the Wind of Night) was supplicated by the Aztecâ as the life-breath. Elsewhere we have hinted that Tezcatlipoca may have been an ice-god. Mr. Payne sees in him an elaboration of the vision of death in a polished "scrying"-stone, which seems possible but scarcely probable. Hurakan was in all likelihood derived from an original deity of the Antilles. The term "hurricane" is said to have originated from the name of this god, and although the direct evidence for this is scanty, other circumstances place the connection beyond reasonable doubt. Hurakan is also alluded to in the "Popol Vuh," as "The Strong Serpent," and "He who hurls below," referring to his presence in the lightning. Brinton is of opinion that the name Hurakan signifies "giant," but the sequence of proof is not altogether convincing. Hurakan had the assistance of three demiurges, named respectively Cakulha-Hurakan (lightning), Chipi-Cakulha (lightning-flash), and Raxa-Cakulha (track-of-the-lightning).

[19] Hun-Ahpu and Xbalanque, who appear in the first myth proper--that of the destruction of Vukub-Cakix, are certainly "of the gods," but seem to be only demi-gods. They are constantly alluded to as "young men." Brasseur de Bourbourg, who saw in the Vukub-Cakix myth the struggle between the Toltecs and the invading Nahuatlacâ, believed these hero-gods to be equivalents of Tezcatlipoca and Nanahuatl, but the resemblance appears to exist merely in the martial character of the deities, and is hardly noticeable in other details. Hun-Ahpu would appear to signify "The Master," but Brinton translates the name as "Magician." It may have a reconciliatory translation as "Adept." A variant is the name of his father Hun-Hun-Ahpu, "Each-one-a-Magician," and some confusion is apparent in the Vukub-Cakix myth between the two names; but as the Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg so justly observes, "these names are so symbolic in character that their absolute elucidation is impossible." Xbalanque signifies "Little Tiger."

[20] "The gods of the Kichés were legion," but the foregoing list embraces practically all the deities proper with whom we have to deal in the "Popol Vuh."