A Photographic Essay
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THE

POPopOL VUH

THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF THE ANCIENT TRADITIONS of this place called Quiche. Here we shall write. We shall begin to tell the ancient stories of the beginning, the origin of all that was…
The Popol Vuh or The Book of Council was transcribed in the sixteenth century by an anonymous Quiché Maya writer living in or near the city of Chichicastenengo in the highlands of Guatemala. Taught by Spanish friars, the unknown author had learned to write his Quiché language in Latin characters.

The author says:...*we shall bring it to light because the Popol Vuh, as it is called, cannot be seen any more,*....

*And from a new translation by Allan Christenson*

“*Because there is not now Means of seeing of Popol Vuh, Means of seeing clearly Come from across sea, Its account our obscurity, Means of seeing light life, as it is said. There is original book anciently written also, Merely hidden his face*”
An Offering—Burning Copal
Bundles of COPAL, The incense that was used from earliest times till now
Worship in Chichicastenango mixing Maya and Christian concepts.
Habiendo amanecido llamaron los Señores a Hun Hunahpú y a Vucub Hunahpú y les preguntaron:
—“¿Dónde está el tabaco y el ocote que os mandamos?”
—“Se acabó todo, Señores”, respondieron.
—“Ya se cumplieron vuestros días y habéis de morir”, sentenciáronles los Ahaub de Xibalbá, los Señores del Infierno.

XXVI*
C. T.
A page from the Grolier Codex, one of the 4 surviving Maya Books
THE HERO TWINS
This is the account of how all was in suspense, all calm, all motionless, still and the expanse of the sky was empty. This is the first account, the first narrative. There was neither man, nor animals, birds, fishes, crabs, trees, stones, caves, ravines, grasses, nor forests; there was only the sky.
Thus let it be done! Let the emptiness be filled! Let there be light, let there be dawn in the sky and on the earth.
The Forefathers Create The Animals--- The DEER,
The BIRDS,
And the Other Animals
They made Humans from MUD
...and then they tried WOOD...
...but these creatures had no souls—so they were turned into MONKEYS...
Women were made of rushes...
Vucub Caquix speaks...

I shall now be great above all beings created and formed. I am the sun, the light, the moon. Great is my splendor. Because of me men shall walk and conquer. For my eyes are of silver, bright, resplendent as precious stones, as emeralds; my teeth shine like precious stones, like the face of the sky. My nose shines afar like the moon, my throne is of silver, and the face of the earth is lighted when I pass before my throne. So, then I am the sun, I am the moon, for all mankind. So shall it be, because I can see very far.
This is the beginning of the defeat and the ruin of the glory of Vucub-Caqui brought about by two youths, the first of whom was called Hunahpú and the second, Xbalanqué. They were really gods.' When they saw the harm which the arrogant one had done, and wished to do, in the presence of the Heart of Heaven, the youths said: "It is not good that it be so, when man does not yet live here. on earth. Therefore, we shall try to shoot him with our blowgun when he is eating. We shall shoot him and make him sicken, and then that will be the end of his riches, his green stones, his precious metals, his emeralds, his jewels of which he is so proud. And this shall be the lot of all men, for they must not become vain, because of power and riches."
Hunahpú

Xbalanqué
The shooting of Vucub Caquix
One of the sons of Vucub Caquix--- Zipacna
The 400 boys have a drunken party to celebrate the killing of Zipacna.
The Twin’s Father and Uncle play ball which rouses the ire of the Lords of the Otherworld
God K and God L Conspire to bring the Players to Xibalba.
…so they can steal the father’s ball game equipment.
... they lose and grovel before a major deity...

Itzamna
They are tortured in the House of Flame
They have to smoke cigars throughout the night, but return them un-burnt in the morning.
The Father is decapitated...
The rat carries the decapitated head...
And the head is Hung in a Cacao Tree
A daughter of a Xibalban Lord is impregnated by the Head in the Tree
The Girl’s name is Xquic; she is disgraced and thrown out of Xibala and makes her way to the surface of the Earth to give birth to Twin Boys.
One of Twins as a Child, they are Hunters...
They are also Scribes.
Grandmother hides the ball game equipment in the rafters of her house.
The Twins send Grandmother for water so they can search for the ball game equipment.
They find the ball game equipment and like their Father, play ball and rouse the ire of the Lords of the Otherworld.
The Lords of the Otherworld send a messenger Toad to tell the Twins to come to Xibalba to play ball with them.
The Twins meet with the Lord Itzamna, who shows them their father’s head as a skull.
After they lose one of the games, they...
They suffer tortures in the House of Knives and...
The house of Flames, and...
The House of Bats.
A Bat takes off the head of one of the Hero Twins, but
An Agouti brings a squash which turns into a head and regrows
They lose the last game. Their bones are ground up and thrown into the river.

The Twins regenerate and turn into catfish.
The Twins are now disguised as Dancers
As masked Magicians, they perform in the court of God L. They cut themselves up and put themselves back together again. Now they cut up one of the Lords of the Otherworld.
Although Masked, We can recognize Hunahpú cutting the neck of the Lord, while Xbalanqué holds his ax in readiness.
The Twins now control the Lords of the Otherworld. God N is pulled from his shell by one of the Twins who holds a stone knife.
Xbalanqué brings jewels for the ladies to dress his Father for his rebirth
The Twins, on the right, assist the Ladies in the dressing of the Twin’s Father, the Maize God, for his resurrection.
The Maize God is Reborn
After his Resurrection, The Maize God humiliates God L and other deities. A dwarf holds God L’s cloak, staff and hat, symbols of his power.
God L pleads to get his hat back, but the Rabbit tells him that his pleas will go unanswered.
After the defeat of the Lords of the Otherworld, the Twins and their father ride the Celestial Caiman to set the sky in place.
Hunahpú as the SUN GOD
A NEW DAY DAWNS FOR THE MAYA