

Popol Vuh The Sacred Book Of The Maya

An inspired and urgent prose retelling of the Maya myth of creation by acclaimed Latin American author and scholar Ilan Stavans, gorgeously illustrated by Salvadoran folk artist Gabriela Larios and introduced by renowned author, diplomat, and environmental activist Homero Aridjis. The archetypal creation story of Latin America, the Popol Vuh began as a Maya oral tradition millennia ago. In the mid-sixteenth century, as indigenous cultures across the continent were being threatened with destruction by European conquest and Christianity, it was written down in verse by members of the K'iche' nobility in what is today Guatemala. In 1701, that text was translated into Spanish by a Dominican friar and ethnographer before vanishing mysteriously. Cosmic in scope and yet intimately human, the Popol Vuh offers invaluable insight into the Maya way of life before being decimated by colonization—their code of ethics, their views on death and the afterlife, and their devotion to passion, courage, and the natural world. It tells the story of how the world was created in a series of rehearsals that included wooden dummies, demi-gods, and eventually humans. It describes the underworld, Xibalba—a place as harrowing as Dante's hell—and relates the legend of the ultimate king, who, in the face of tragedy, became a spirit that accompanies his people in their struggle for survival. Popol Vuh: A Retelling is a one-of-a-kind prose rendition of this sacred text that is as seminal as the Bible and the Qur'an, the Ramayana and the Odyssey. Award-winning scholar of Latin American literature Ilan Stavans brings a fresh creative energy to the Popol Vuh, giving a new generation of readers the opportunity to connect with this timeless story and with the plight of the indigenous people of the Americas. Praise for Popol Vuh: A Retelling: "Salvadoran illustrator Larios provides lush images to accompany stories of the Earth and the underworld, Xibalba, and the animals and gods that inhabit them.... A beautiful interpretation of pivotal Central American history told through contemporary illustration and language." —Kirkus Reviews "In these pages you will find an adroit retelling of a complex and often confusing tale with a vast and bewildering cast of characters. Approaching the Popol Vuh with a fresh eye and the necessary erudition, Ilan Stavans, the distinguished scholar of Hispanic culture, nimbly conveys the content and the sense of the original, retaining its magic and fascination, while rendering it more accessible to a wider readership. Popol Vuh: A Retelling artfully presents the case for the centrality of this magisterial story to the cultural consciousness of the Americas and for the urgency of its message." —Homero Aridjis, from the foreword "At a time when so many of us ask ourselves about the end of the world as we know it, few books could be more relevant than this sacred text of the Maya. In a mesmerizing, illuminating new translation, Ilan Stavans brings to contemporary readers this lyrical epic, with its messages from a lost civilization obsessed, as ours should be, with the inevitable cycles of catastrophe and change. The Popol Vuh encourages us to contemplate the

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perpetual conflict between truth and falsehood, light and darkness, so that we may find the wisdom to emerge as better people." —Ariel Dorfman, author of *Death and the Maiden* "Popol Vuh is one of the seminal foundational 'texts' of the Americas before it became 'America'—and one so few of us really know much about. Again, Ilan Stavans is infusing the US of A with the cultures and stories that have been traditionally erased or ignored and forgotten. All I can say is, another amazing Stavans project!" —Julia Alvarez "The Popol Vuh is the great book of creation of the Maya K'iche' culture, and Ilan Stavans has embarked on an intrepid adventure of recreation; he returns to a myth of origin to endow it with vibrant topicality, proving that rewriting a legend is a way of bewitching time." —Juan Villoro, author of *God Is Round* "Many translators, scholars, and poets have brought us close to the radiant eminence of our Mayan origin story, the Popol Vuh. None touch its wondrous dynamism and epic elegance like Stavans and Larios. Free of the formal constraints of the K'iche' original, Stavans's delivers a masterful retelling that invites us into chimeric dreams: from the mischievous first peoples and the quests of those grown from seeds, to hybrid creatures and demi-god twins with battles lost and won. Larios's dexterous admixture of cool washes and vibrant color palettes along with a K'iche'-inspired line-work aesthetic, further unzip our minds to a shared ancestral imaginary. Only my Guatemalan abuelita could cast such storytelling spells over me. Together, Stavans and Larios invite us all to dance as the children we once were and will become. A gift!" —Frederick Luis Aldama, author of *Long Stories Cut Short: Fiction from the Borderlands* "Ilan Stavans's retelling of this ancient and sacred story of the Mayan people is as exquisitely written as it is necessary." —Eduardo Halfon, author of *Mourning Praise for Ilan Stavans*: "Ilan Stavans is an inventive interpreter of the contemporary cultures of the Americas.... Cantankerous and clever, sprightly and serious, Stavans is a voracious thinker. In his writing, life serves to illuminate literature—and vice versa: he is unafraid to court controversy, unsettle opinions, make enemies. In short, Stavans is an old-fashioned intellectual, a brilliant interpreter of his triple heritage—Jewish, Mexican, and American." —Henry Louis Gates, Jr. "...in the void created by the death of his compatriot Octavio Paz, Ilan Stavans has emerged as Latin America's liveliest and boldest critic and most innovative cultural enthusiast." —The Washington Post "Ilan Stavans has done as much as anyone alive to bridge the hemisphere's linguistic gaps." —The Miami Herald "A canon-maker." —The Chronicle of Higher Education "Ilan Stavans is a maverick intellectual whose canonical work has already produced a whole array of marvels... His incisive essays are redefining Jewish literature." —The Forward "Ilan Stavans is the rarest of North American writers—he sees the Americas whole. Not since Octavio Paz has Mexico given us an intellectual so able to violate borders, with learning and grace." —Richard Rodriguez "In the multicultural rainbow that is contemporary America, no one may be more representative of the state of the union than Ilan Stavans." —Newsday "Ilan Stavans may very well succeed in becoming the Octavio Paz of our age." —The San Francisco Chronicle "A virtuoso critic with an exuberant,

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encyclopedic, restless mind.” —The Forward “Ilan Stavans has the sharp eye of the internal exile. Writing about the sometimes reluctant reconquista of North America by Spanish-speaking cultures or the development of his own identity, he deals with both the life of the mind and the life of the streets.” —John Sayles “Lively and intelligent, eclectic, sharp-tongued.” —Peter Matthiessen “I think Stavans has one of the best grips around on what makes Spanish America tick.” —Gregory Rabassa “Ilan Stavans is a disciple of Kafka and Borges. He accepts social identity broadly, in the most cosmopolitan terms... His impulse is to broaden, not to narrow; he finds understanding through complication of identity, not through the easy gestures of ethnic politics.” —The New York Times “Ilan Stavans has established himself as an invaluable commentator of literature.” —Phillip Lopate

This is the first complete version in English of the "Book of the People" of the Quiche Maya, the most powerful nation of the Guatemalan highlands in pre-Conquest times and a branch of the ancient Maya, whose remarkable civilization in pre-Columbian America is in many ways comparable to the ancient civilizations of the Mediterranean. Generally regarded as America's oldest book, the Popol Vuh, in fact, corresponds to our Christian Bible, and it is, moreover, the most important of the five pieces of the great library treasures of the Maya that survived the Spanish Conquest. The Popol Vuh was first transcribed in the Quiche language, but in Latin characters, in the middle of the sixteenth century, by some unknown but highly literate Quiche Maya Indian—probably from the oral traditions of his people. This now lost manuscript was copied at the end of the seventeenth century by Father Francisco Ximénez, then parish priest of the village of Santo Tomás Chichicastenango in the highlands of Guatemala, today the most celebrated and best-known Indian town in all of Central America. The mythology, traditions, cosmogony, and history of the Quiché Maya, including the chronology of their kings down to 1550, are related in simple yet literary style by the Indian chronicler. And Adrian Recinos has made a valuable contribution to the understanding and enjoyment of the document through his thorough going introduction and his identification of places and people in the footnotes.

The Popol Vuh is one of the world's greatest creation stories, comparable to the power and beauty of Genesis. The fruit of ten years of research, this great classic of central American spirituality is now available in an authoritative, scholarly and accessible translation.

Offers a strong critique of traditional anthropological studies from an Indigenous and postcolonial perspective. In *Mayalogue*, Native Mayan scholar Victor Montejo provides an alternative reading and interpretation of cultures, challenging Western ethnocentric approaches that have marginalized Native knowledge and worldviews in the past. He proposes instead a methodology for studying culture as a unified whole, a radical departure from the compartmentalized sections of knowledge recognized by Western scientific tradition. Offering a strong critique of traditional anthropological

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studies, with its terms and categories that have denigrated Indigenous cultures throughout the centuries, Montejo's postcolonial work aims to dismantle the colonialist construction of Indigenous cultures, giving way to a Native approach that balances insider and outsider descriptions of a particular culture. Developed from an Indigenous Maya perspective, *Mayalogue* is a contribution to the dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, students, and general audiences in the social sciences and humanities, and will be an essential text in decolonizing the minds of those who engage in the study of cultures anywhere in the world in the twenty-first century. Victor Montejo is Professor Emeritus of Native American Studies at the University of California, Davis. His previous books include *Popol Vuh: A Sacred Book of the Maya*; *Maya Intellectual Renaissance: Identity, Representation, and Leadership*; and *Voices from Exile: Violence and Survival in Modern Maya History*.

Her story reflects the experiences common to many Indian communities in Latin America today. Rigoberta suffered gross injustice and hardship in her early life: her brother, father and mother were murdered by the Guatemalan military. She learned Spanish and turned to catechist work as an expression of political revolt as well as religious commitment. The anthropologist Elisabeth Burgos-Debray, herself a Latin American woman, conducted a series of interviews with Rigoberta Menchu. The result is a book unique in contemporary literature which records the detail of everyday Indian life. Rigoberta's gift for striking expression vividly conveys both the religious and superstitious beliefs of her community and her personal response to feminist and socialist ideas. Above all, these pages are illuminated by the enduring courage and passionate sense of justice of an extraordinary woman.

In graphic novel format, retells the Mayan myth of the twin brothers, Hunahpu and Xbalanque, who are challenged to play a game of pok-ta-pok after they anger the Lords of Xibalba, rulers of the land of the dead.

The *Popol Vuh* is the most important example of Maya literature to have survived the Spanish conquest. It is also one of the world's great creation accounts, comparable to the beauty and power of *Genesis*. Most previous translations have relied on Spanish versions rather than the original K'iche'-Maya text. Based on ten years of research by a leading scholar of Maya literature, this translation with extensive notes is uniquely faithful to the original language. Retaining the poetic style of the original text, the translation is also remarkably accessible to English readers. Illustrated with more than eighty drawings, photographs, and maps, Allen J. Christenson's authoritative version brings out the richness and elegance of this sublime work of literature, comparable to such epic masterpieces as the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* of India or the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Greece. The Precolumbian ballgame, played on a masonry court, has long intrigued scholars because of the magnificence of its archaeological remains. From its lowland Maya origins it spread throughout the Aztec empire, where the game was so popular that sixteen thousand rubber balls were imported annually into Tenochtitlan. It endured for two thousand years, spreading as far as to what is now southern Arizona. This new collection of essays brings together research from field archaeology, mythology, and Maya hieroglyphic studies to illuminate this important yet puzzling aspect of Native American culture. The authors demonstrate

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that the game was more than a spectator sport; serving social, political, mythological, and cosmological functions, it celebrated both fertility and the afterlife, war and peace, and became an evolving institution functioning in part to resolve conflict within and between groups. The contributors provide complete coverage of the archaeological, sociopolitical, iconographic, and ideological aspects of the game, and offer new information on the distribution of ballcourts, new interpretations of mural art, and newly perceived relations of the game with material in the Popol Vuh. With its scholarly attention to a subject that will fascinate even general readers, *The Mesoamerican Ballgame* is a major contribution to the study of the mental life and outlook of New World peoples.

Retells the stories from the mythology of the Quichê Indians which were written down and preserved after the Spanish conquest of Guatemala.

Includes three bonus chapters on Mythology and Religion of Ancient Mexico. When the Spanish took over Central America in the 16th and 17th centuries they destroyed the writings and holy books of the native Mayans in an effort to convert them to Christianity. Few texts survived, yet one did. It is called *The Popol Vuh*, the creation story of the Mayan culture. This was the first English rendering of that text. Tells the story of a great flood, gods who created mankind, and a number of other interesting parallels to mythologies from around the world. All of the gods and deities are fully explained and at times compared to those from Greece, Rome and Egypt. A fascinating collection of mythology from Central America and Mexico.

This book is a study of a major piece of modern Mayan religious art.

Thanks to powerful innovations in archaeology and other types of historical research, we now have a picture of everyday life in the Mayan empire that turns the long-accepted conventional wisdom on its head. * Includes numerous illustrations and drawings plus depictions of important artifacts such as the murals of Bonampak and the hieroglyphic stairway of Copan * Provides detailed maps of major Maya cities as well as other research sites

The K'iche' Maya creation story preserved in the sixteenth-century manuscript *Popol Vuh* describes the origin of the world and its people in a setting long assumed to be the Guatemalan central highlands. Now a scholar with a deep knowledge of Maya history shows that all of these mythological events occurred at specific locations and that this landscape was the template for the Maya worldview. Examining the primary Maya deities, Karen Bassie-Sweet links geographic features to gods and beliefs. She reconstructs key elements of the *Popol Vuh* to argue that the three volcanoes around Lake Atitlan were the three thunderbolt gods and that the lake was the center of the world. She also shows that the Maya view of the creation of humans is centered on corn and examines core beliefs about the corn cycle to propose that the creation myth was established much earlier in Maya history than previously supposed. Generously illustrated, *Maya Sacred Geography and the Creator Deities* is a detailed ethnohistorical analysis of Maya religion, cosmology, and ritual practice that convincingly links mythology to the land. A comprehensive treatment of Maya religion, it provides an essential resource for scholars and will fascinate any reader captivated by these ancient beliefs.

Popol Vuh The Sacred Book of the Maya University of Oklahoma Press

Note: Proceeds of this book will be donated to the funding of the N.G.O STEPS's educational initiatives in their mission to

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conserve native legends and provide educational activities for underprivileged children in native communities. Travel back many creations ago as Artist Emanuel Carballo takes you on a neon-saturated visual journey through the mythological Mayan creation story. Swim through the empty universe with the Gods and witness their several attempts at creation. Race through the jungles with the epic Hero Twins as they transverse through the underworld and up into the heavens. Shine among the stars with the creation of the sun and the moon seen through shades of neon. The Popol Vuh, meaning "Book of the People", is an epic saga that recounts the creation myth and history of the K'iche Mayan ancestors. This short story version is a visual representation of one of the very few recorded Mayan legends we have left today. The majority of their literature in science and the arts were burnt in an instant by the Spanish invaders and lost forever. Luckily, this epic journey was stowed away and found years later offering us a glimpse into a culture shrouded in mystery. Emanuel Carballo puts his own artistic flavor to the drawings and converts one of the oldest stories known to mankind into a digitally illustrated, neon laden futuristic storybook. Written in collaboration with the N.G.O STEPS in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico. Their aim is to provide education in native communities through the preservation of their very own endangered legends and myths. Many of their traditions and customs are passed down orally from generation to generation and now face the risk of being lost forever in an ever-increasing globalized world. Proceeds of this book will be donated to the funding of their educational initiatives.

This volume offers an integrated and comparative approach to the Popol Vuh, analyzing its myths to elucidate the ancient Maya past while using multiple lines of evidence to shed light on the text. Combining interpretations of the myths with analyses of archaeological, iconographic, epigraphic, ethnohistoric, ethnographic, and literary resources, the work demonstrates how Popol Vuh mythologies contribute to the analysis and interpretation of the ancient Maya past. The chapters are grouped into four sections. The first section interprets the Highland Maya worldview through examination of the text, analyzing interdependence between deities and human beings as well as the textual and cosmological coherence of the Popol Vuh as a source. The second section analyzes the Precolumbian Maya archaeological record as it relates to the myths of the Popol Vuh, providing new interpretations of the use of space, architecture, burials, artifacts, and human remains found in Classic Maya caves. The third explores ancient Maya iconographic motifs, including those found in Classic Maya ceramic art; the nature of predatory birds; and the Hero Twins' deeds in the Popol Vuh. The final chapters address mythological continuities and change, reexamining past methodological approaches using the Popol Vuh as a resource for the interpretation of Classic Maya iconography and ancient Maya religion and mythology, connecting the myths of the Popol Vuh to iconography from Preclassic Izapa, and demonstrating how narratives from the Popol Vuh can illuminate mythologies from other parts of Mesoamerica. *The Myths of the Popol Vuh in Cosmology, Art, and Ritual* is the first volume to bring together multiple perspectives and original interpretations of the Popol Vuh myths. It will be of interest not only to Mesoamericanists but also to art historians, archaeologists, ethnohistorians, iconographers, linguists, anthropologists, and scholars working in ritual studies, the history of religion, historic and Precolumbian literature and historic linguistics. Contributors: Jaime J. Awe, Karen Bassie-Sweet, Oswaldo Chinchilla Mazariegos, Michael D. Coe, Iyaxel Cojtí

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Ren, Héctor Escobedo, Thomas H. Guderjan, Julia Guernsey, Christophe Helmke, Nicholas A. Hopkins, Barbara MacLeod, Jesper Nielsen, Colin Snider, Karl A. Taube

Popol Vuh, the Quiché Mayan book of creation is not only the most important text in the native language of the Americas, it is also an extraordinary document of the human imagination. It begins with the deeds of Mayan Gods in the darkness of a primeval sea and ends with the radiant splendor of the Mayan Lords who founded the Quiché Kingdom in the Guatemalan highlands. Originally written in Mayan hieroglyphs, it was translated into the Roman alphabet in the 16th century. The new edition of Dennis Tedlock's unabridged, widely praised translation includes new notes and commentary, newly translated passages, newly deciphered hieroglyphs, and over 40 new illustrations.

*Includes pictures *Includes excerpts of the Popol Vuh *Includes online resources and a bibliography for further reading Many ancient civilizations have influenced and inspired people in the 21st century. The Greeks and Romans continue to fascinate the West today. But of all the world's civilizations, none have intrigued people more than the Mayans, whose culture, astronomy, language, and mysterious disappearance all continue to captivate people. In 2012 especially, there was a renewed focus on the Mayans, whose advanced calendar led many to speculate the world would end on the same date the Mayan calendar ends. The focus on the "doomsday" scenario, however, overshadowed the Mayans' true contribution to astronomy, language, sports, and art. Unlike most of the world's sacred books - the Quran, the Bible or the I-Ching for example - nobody knows the universal name, if there ever was one, for the Maya's collection of myths. Instead, the title that has been passed down, the "Popol Vuh," appears to be the specific title given to a particular copy of these tales. Its meaning, roughly translated as the Council Book, refers to the special role of this text: it was the shared property of the council of lords that ruled the Quich kingdom and was apparently regularly consulted by that body for advice to guide their rule. However, in the opening sections, the scribes who penned the text also give it several other names, including "the Light That Came from Beside the Sea," "Our Place in the Shadows" and "The Dawn of Life" (pg 63). All of these names were originally in K'ichean Maya, the language spoken by the Maya of the Quich Kingdom and its neighboring regions. The first of these names refers to a pilgrimage by the second generation of Quich lords in Part V to the Yucatan coast to acquire a copy of at least a portion of the original text. The second refers to Part IV, the period before the first Dawn (the "Shadows") when the ancestral Quich earned their particular right to rule. The final name refers to Part I, when the first gods created all of the various parts of life. This multiplicity of names and titles for sacred works is not uncommon, and perhaps comparable to the Bible being referred to as "the Good Book" or (in reference to the New Testament) "the Good News" or the "Gospel." The name Popol Vuh is itself controversial as the original text actually spells the name three different ways: "Popol Vuh", of course, but also "Pop Wuj" and "Popol Wuj." In general, the most correct form in contemporary Quiche spelling is probably "Popol Wuj", but as the text is best known in English with the word "Vuh", this convention will be maintained here (Eenriik 2014). There are a number of translations and editions of the Popol Vuh, which vary considerably in quality. Many early editions were not informed by the latest scholarship in Maya linguistics and sometimes the ways they translate names in particular can

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vary. This text will use the Second Edition (1996), translated by Dennis Tedlock and published by Simon and Schuster, for all of its quotations and page citations. The Popol Vuh: The History and Legacy of the Maya's Creation Myth and Epic Legends examines what's contained within and how the Popol Vuh survived to the present day. Along with pictures depicting important people, places, and events, you will learn about the Popol Vuh like never before.

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