

CHAPTER 8: CHICHICASTENANGO (House of Popol Vuh)

Popol Vuh (Introduction)

The following is the source of the ancient legendary lore of the land which is called Quiche.

Here we shall begin the story of other days, the primal cause and origin of all that has been done in the City of Quiche, and among the tribes of the Quiche nation. We shall now set forth the outbreathing, the manifestation, and the illumination of all that was in the Darkness, the energizing of its Aurora by the Will of the Creator and the Former, of Him-who-engenders, of Him-who-gives-being, whose names are: The air-tube Hunter of the Sleeping Animal; the air-tube Hunter of the unsleeping Animal; the Great White-rayed One; the Dominator; the Plumed Serpent; the Heart of the Lakes; the heart of the Sea; the Master of the green-waving Planisphere; the Lord of the Azure Expanse.

It is thus that we invoke, we pean and we glorify together those who are the Great Mother and the Great Father, whose name is Sun-God, Moon-Goddess, Guardian and Protectress; twice Great Mother, twice Ancestor; as it is told in the Quiche legends, in which is related all that they did together for the brightening of the Life, for the enlightenment of the Word.

The following is what we shall write, and we place it in writing because, since the "Word of God" has been promulgated, and hereafter during the cycle of Christianity, the Book of the Azure-green-veil is no longer to be seen, in which it could be clearly perceived that it had come from the further shore of the Sea; which Book has been called "The Record of our existence in the Overshadowing World, and how we there beheld Light and Life."

[The Book of the Azure Veil, James M. Pryse]



[Popol Vuh \(wikipedia\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popol_Vuh)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popol_Vuh

The road to Chichicastenango ascended from Lake Atitlan northward to the highlands. We passed the waterfall that flowed into Rio Panajachel. The road went through Solola (“Water from the Oldest Tree”). The shuttle van was full of young and old tourists heading for the famous Sunday market, where the indigenous people gathered – some to peddle their wares, and others to buy necessary produce or products. Whereas the locality of the lake was inhabited mostly by the Tz’utujil and Kaqchikel Maya groups, the territory around Chichicastenango was inhabited mostly by the Quiche Maya group.

Chichicastenango (“Place of the Nettles”) was affectionately called Chichi, for short. The nettles in the name were from the prickly purple plant (chichicaste) that grew in the vicinity and was used as a medicinal plant, especially for arthritis; the plant was also considered sacred by the shamans, who used the tiny spines of the nettles to detoxicate and bring out the unclean substances of the body. Sounded like a natural form of acupuncture.

A wall mural near the southern entrance to the western highland city welcomed us with a painting of the cofrades (brotherhoods or guilds) and a scripture: “Jehová es mi pastor; nada me faltará. En lugares de delicados pastos me hará descansar. (Salmo 23:1-2) The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.” I thought of the next few two verses

that followed: He restoreth my soul . . . though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. The valley of the shadow of death reminded me of Xibalba, the land of shadows and phantoms.

We were dropped off across from the Hotel Santo Tomas. Our driver told us to meet at the same spot at three o'clock. We would have five hours to shop and to see the sights of the place that the Quiche Maya called Siguan Tinamit ("Place surrounded by Ravines or Canyons"). We watched as Maya shoppers were loading their goods into the confined bed of a pick-up truck. They looked like they had come early to the marketplace and were ready to go home.



We were told that the Quiche of ChiChi called themselves "Mashenos" – a name that I later learned was derived from Max (I instantly thought of Maximon). Furthermore, Max also referred to the patron saint of the town – Santo Tomas. That was a curious blend that caused me to reflect on the identity of the patron saint. To most people of the Christian religion, Thomas was known as "doubting Thomas" because he needed physical proof of the resurrection of Christ. For me, Thomas was a mysterious apostle whose name and writings caused me to reevaluate a lot of things I had learned as I became a student of comparative religions. When I discovered that Santo Tomas Chichicastenango was the other name for the town, well, that definitely meant that I needed to find out more about the patron saint.

The Hotel Santo Tomas was the first place that attracted our attention. The colonial-style building – with a large courtyard – made Elsa feel like going to Spain; plants in sun-baked pots adorned the two-story hotel. The fountain was not working at the moment, but it was still worth a picture, with the ladies gracing the former monastery. My delight was in seeing the exotic birds. A green parrot had his feet wrapped around a feeding bowl. Behind him was a crucifix – one of the many art figures in the museum-like surroundings.



In another section of the large courtyard was my favorite macaw, perched on an iron bar. Behind him were deer heads with antlers. The macaw reminded me of the story of Seven Macaw in the Popol Vuh, the egoistic and prideful bird who thought he was the sun and the moon. The beautiful red, yellow, and blue feathers were something to be proud of. Another parrot sounded off, begging for attention. When I came close to him or her, I whistled and made a few bird sounds. The parrot turned its head toward me at an angle so I could see the red, yellow, and blue colors on its head. However, it was not the colorful head that caught my eye, but the solar-like ring in its eye that dazzled me. That was such a beautiful orange ring.



But the most exotic bird was the one that I saw last. I had never seen such a beautiful blue-and-gold macaw before. It was perched on a large metal bar, with its long blue feathers hanging down. His front was golden, his face white with black lines around the eyes, and his large black beak curved down like a hook. I would have loved to see him in flight, with the golden underside beaming like the rays of the sun. I thought of this bird as the embodiment of the Maya deity Feathered (Plumed) Serpent, Heart of Sky, the sovereign of the heavens.



I was so enthralled with the exotic birds that I had almost forgotten the purpose of our trip to Chichicastenango. We came for the most colorful indigenous market in the country. I was definitely distracted from the goal by those heavenly birds.

One other thing always distracts me – beautiful art. I guess the artist has achieved the artistic goal if the eyes of the beholder stop to admire the work of art. That is what I did when I saw a colorful painting of a Maya woman carrying a large round basket full of vegetables – corn, avocados, carrots, onions, cabbage – on the top of her head. Her black hair was braided in the back, she was wearing a multi-colored geometric-patterned huipil (blouse), and in her hands were two bouquets of white lilies. You could not see her face, which was as mysterious as the veiled Isis, but you just knew that she was a beautiful personification of the bountiful Mother Earth in her prime.



We headed down the streets where the market was in full swing. Susie had been here before, so we just followed her lead. The sights and sounds of humanity in motion was a feast for the eyes and ears. It was like being at a grand fair, where life with its infinite array of color combinations and vocal sounds flowed like a kaleidoscopic river through the mind's eye.

The traje (attire) of the women was especially mesmerizing, with their variety of geometric designs and rainbow-colors. I heard that the clothing identified which group the women were from, a color-coded scheme that had been established by the Spaniards to keep track of where the Mayas lived. The Mayas preserved that tradition as a link with their past and as a way of identifying the numerous Maya groups – like the Kaqchikel, Ixil, Mam, and Quiche – that inhabited Guatemala. It was also great for tourism. The bird images on their clothes attracted me the most, and so did the different kinds of tapestry that had the bird images on them.



Elsa was interested in seeing all the different kinds of wares that were set up in booths and along the sides of the streets: textiles, hand-made crafts, shawls, bags, hats, carved masks, pots and pans, chickens for sacrifice, medicinal herbs, and cheap plastic trinkets. Her mind, however, was set on finding, and buying, some jewelry. We walked through a maze of vendors' stalls on the cobbled streets of a town that seemed to be one vast marketplace. I noticed men selling grindstones for preparing tortillas, copal incense, machetes, and other tools.



At times it was hard to keep track of each other. The narrow streets were so crowded that it felt like one boundless sea of humanity moving with and against the tide, seeking a path of least resistance, rubbing shoulders and bumping into bodies, with one eye turned towards the attractive textiles and handicrafts and the other eye towards the incessant flow of people. I found some steps in front of a small church, and I walked up the steps to see how vast the area of the marketplace was. Silvery-white tarps covered the entire plaza, and the red-tiled roofs of the adobe houses adorned the edges of the expansive view. Directly across the plaza was the Santo Tomas Church, the heart and soul of Chichicastenango.

It suddenly dawned on me that the facades of the two churches – El Calvario (Calvary, or the Place of the Skull), and Santo Tomas (the patron saint of the town) – stood directly opposite one another, with the plaza in the center. Just like the roof-combed temple-pyramids at Tikal with the grand plaza between them. If my hunch was right, I was standing on the steps of the remains of the temple-pyramid of the moon (the feminine aspect), and directly opposite me was the temple-pyramid of the sun (the masculine aspect).



I stepped inside the church of El Calvario (Place of the Skull), and I saw a simple interior with a wooden altarpiece at the front. The altarpiece seemed to be created in the same style as the ones I had seen at the church in Santiago Atitlan.

The serpent columns on the sides seemed to coil upwards in imitation of the Sovereign Plumed Serpent, giving an impression of the overarching vault of heaven supported by the dual masculine-feminine energy that flowed through the universe, and through the human being. In front of the altarpiece was Senor Sepultado, an image of Christ in the Sepulchre, lying in repose. I knew I was standing in the temple of the west, where the sun set, the black road that one traveled on the way to Xibalba, the underworld. As the sun made its daily journey through the underworld, so each person made a journey of the small sleep (in the darkness of night), and then the dawn of life and light brought a new day (in the light of the rising sun).

I stopped to reflect on a painting on the wall of the cross that the Christ had to carry. "Take your cross and follow me," were the words that echoed in my mind. The burden of life and its cyclical journey was shared by the sun, the Son, the solar system, the Milky Way, and every human being. The cross was the World Tree that connected all life to the earth and to the heavens.



When I exited the small chapel and looked again across the plaza to the Church of Santo Tomas, I realized I was facing the temple of the rising sun. I would have to make my way eastward to that temple-pyramid and see what was there.

Making one's way through the vast labyrinth of the plaza was not easy. At every step, the walking hawkers tried to sell us various forms of goods, and they followed us persistently and displayed each tapestry in their possession. Old women and young girls kept pleading with us to buy something. I finally succumbed to an older woman's persistent statements that she needed to feed her family, and if she didn't sell something her children would go hungry. When she

unfurled a beautiful tapestry with the bicephalic (double-headed) bird that symbolized the dual nature (masculine-feminine) of man and the universe, I stopped walking and looked intently at the tapestry that even had my favorite quetzal designs on both sides of the three-tiered handicraft. I bought it, even though Elsa insisted that it was probably machine manufactured.



Just as I finished paying for the tapestry, I noticed a procession of men maneuvering their way through the narrow street. They were wearing black knee-length breeches, dark short-waisted jackets, a woven sash, and colorful embroidered kerchiefs round the head. I stepped aside to let the procession go by. I marveled at the ceremonial silver staffs that some of the men were carrying in their hands. They were probably the leaders of the fourteen *cofradías* (religious brotherhoods) in Chichicastenango. The silver staffs were topped by an emblem of the sun, with a different amount of rays on each staff; I counted staffs with symmetrically-designed 14, 20, 24, 28, 30, and 34 rays. Within the silver orb were various symbols of saints, probably the particular saint that the *cofradía* was devoted to.

My wonderment at the sight of the procession turned to complete awe as I beheld the deity carried by four men on an *anda* (walking altar). It was like watching sacred royalty lifted up in a carriage for people to admire, a royalty which seemed to float above the earth in a heavenly procession. The deity was wrapped in a golden solar-rayed cloth with about seven or more levels of golden fringes. The backside of the cloth was a royal purple. The head of the deity was crowned with a golden kerchief and two silver crowns. The face was dignified, with a white beard and white moustache. It was at the moment that I beheld the face that I realized I was looking at the patron saint, Santo Tomas.



Saint Thomas, the patron saint, was the deity of the sun in that bright dazzling moment. I saw him as a personification of the Christian savior and the Mayan Hunahpu, the deities who were the solar deity descending into the underworld of Xibalba to defeat the lords of death and ascending as the dawn of life and light. They were both twins: Hunahpu as a solar being (masculine current) was a twin of Xbalanque (lunar, feminine current); Judas Didymus (“twin”) Thomas (“twin”) was the twin brother of Jesus the Nazarene (Matt. 13:55).



Suddenly it dawned on me that the pantheon of disciples (apostles) – and the brothers and sisters of the biblical Jesus – and the pantheon of Maya deities were woven together into the Mayan tapestry of syncretistic cofradías:

Distribución de cofradías en el Municipio

Cofradías	Mayordomos (No.)	Fechas de la festividad
1. Padre Eterno	6	1 de Enero (January)
2. Santo Tomás	6	21 de diciembre (December)
3. San José	6	19 de marzo (March)
4. San Sebastián	6	20 de enero (January)
5. El Sacramento	8	9 de junio (June)
6. Virgen del Rosario	8	7 de octubre (October)
7. San Miguel	8	29 de septiembre (September)

8. Santa Cruz	6	3 de mayo (May)
9. Jesús Nazareno	6	1er. viernes cuaresma
10. Virgen de Dolores	6	Viernes de Dolores
11. Virgen de la Concepción	6	2do. Domingo octubre (October)
12. San Pedro Mártir	6	29 de junio (June)
13. San Jerónimo doctor	6	30 de septiembre(September)
14. Encarnación	6	14 de julio (July)

Fuente: SERJUS 2003

The 14 cofradias (religious brotherhoods) were like the 14 stations of the cross in the Via Dolorosa (Way of Sorrow), and the 14 holy helpers of the Catholic religion. And the procession of 14 cofradias commenced with:

(1) Eternal Father, (2) Saint Thomas, (3) Saint Joseph, (4) Saint Sebastian, (5) The Sacrament (Eucharist), (6) Virgin of the Rosary, (7) Archangel Michael, (8) Holy Cross, (9) Jesus the Nazarene, (10) Our Lady of Sorrows, (11) Virgin of Immaculate Conception, (12) Saint Peter the Martyr, (13) Saint Jerome the Doctor, (14) Mystery of the Incarnation.

Now it made sense to me how the procession around Lake Atitlan in a counter-clockwise fashion was tantamount to the procession of the 12 apostles (masculine and feminine) around the sacred wheel in the heavens, beginning with Saint James (also a brother of Jesus):

(1) Santiago Atitlan, (2) San Lucas Toliman, (3) San Antonio Palopo, (4) Santa Catarina Palopo, (5) Panajachel (San Francisco), (6) San Jorge la Laguna, (7) Santa Cruz la Laguna, (8) San Marcus la Laguna, (9) San Pablo la Laguna, (10) San Juan la Laguna, (11) Santa Clara la Laguna, (12) San Pedro la Laguna.

The circle of life revolved continuously around the seasons, around the agricultural cycle, around the festivals and feast days, and around the concepts of life-death-rebirth. In Chichicastenango, the weeklong Fiesta of Santo Tomas, the patron saint, took place during the season of the winter solstice. That was when the sacred Palo Volador (“flying pole”) ceremony occurred. I had witnessed the symbolical descent of the birdmen from the heavens in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. It was a mystical experience of the fertility and union of God with human beings. I remembered watching five men climb the symbolical tree of life, with one man playing the sacred flute and drum – symbolizing the song of the birds and the thunderous voice of God – on top of a four-sided revolving structure representing the four cardinal directions. Then the four voladores (birdmen) descended, with a rope tied to each of the four ankles, making thirteen

spins around the post that connected the earth to the heavens. Four men making thirteen spins made 52 spins all together, a number representing the cycles of time. The four men also represented the sacred seed descending from the heavens and being sown into the ground.



Elsa and Susie were ready for a lunch break. They wanted to rest their feet and replenish their energy for the final round of shopping. We went up to the second floor of the Los Cofrades restaurant. We found a small table alongside a narrow outside balcony and enjoyed the food and the view. I had the typical frijoles, platanos (plantains), and tortillas plate. The view below was of the corner of 5a Avenida and 6a Calle, right across from the Mercado (Market).



There were a couple of items in the restaurant that caught my eye. One, of course, was the picture of the cofrades (the name of the restaurant) procession down the street from the Iglesia Santo Tomas. The other was a pair of costumes (male and female) hanging on a brick wall.



Once we left Los Cofrades, it was back to shopping, again. This time it was a hammock that caught my attention. I had always wanted to string up a hammock between two trees in my backyard. I thought this would be a perfect way to enjoy my retirement, and to remember Guatemala.

With a hammock in my arms, we continued up 5a Avenida to El Arco de Gucumatz (Gucumatz's or Kukulcan's Arch). Through the picturesque mural-painted arch I could see northward towards Santa Cruz de Quiche, the capital of the El Quiche department (state or province). The mural on the arch depicted Gucumatz (Kukulcan, "the sovereign plumed serpent"). The overarching design resembled a large serpent whose beautiful blue-green feathers floated above the primordial sea, just like in the Popol Vuh story. The date 1932 was painted in white on the stones of the arch doorway. From the top of the arch, I could see the market below and the southern hills in the distance. The hills south of town contained the Pascual Abaj shrine, which was a sacrifice stone (or stone tree, like the stela) that embodied the divine essence of the earth spirit. I wish I would have known about that site earlier, for I would have made it a point to visit that sacred shrine.



As I was standing on the top of the arch, overlooking the town of Chichicastenango in both directions, I noticed the group of men from the cofradias walking back home. Their task for the day had been accomplished, and they were returning as one brotherhood to their place of origin.



Now it seemed that Susie at last would lead us to the heart and soul of Chichicastenango, where we would see the famous Iglesia de Santo Tomas, the place where the Popol Vuh was discovered in the nearby Dominican monastery. I was beginning to think that Susie was doing this deliberately, saving the best for last.

We passed by the shops again. This time I was attracted by the paintings on what seemed to be animal hide. The paintings were of Maya deities. I settled on a painting that depicted the Maya Calendar, with the glyphs for the 19 Maya months (18 months with 20 days each, and 1 month with 5 extra days). The figure in the center was the personification of the God of Time carrying the bundle of months on his shoulders.



The Mercado (Market) loomed ahead of us. I followed the ladies inside to see the vast assortment of fruits and vegetables in the large hall. We took a look inside the cavernous building and left.



Finally, I could see the white church as we passed by the main plaza. The colonial church had a four-pillared façade, which resembled the four Pawahtuns supporting the cosmic house in Maya cosmology. On the steps were ladies selling colorful white, yellow, and all the hues of the rainbow flowers. Smoke flowed from the altar at the bottom of the steps up to the entrance door. Beyond the uneven steps of the ancient Maya temple-pyramid was the adjacent convent of the church, where the Popol Vuh was preserved until its rediscovery by a Dominican priest.

A Maya woman and her son were walking up the temple steps, and I decided to follow them to the top. As I climbed up the steps, I counted the steps and thought of the Maya calendar that I had bought with the names of the 18 months (and the extra five-day month) and their meanings: Pop (chief), Uo (night jaguar), Zip (cloud serpent), Zotz (bat), Tzec (sky and earth), Xul (dog), Yaxkin (first sun), Mol (collection), Chen (cave of the moon), Yax (new), Zac (frog), Ceh (red deer), Mac (enclosure), Kankin (dog of underworld), Muan (bird), Pax (great puma), Kayab (turtle), Cumhu (underworld dragon). I had reached the top step. I took one last step forward for the five-day month Uayeb (days of danger), and I was at the threshold of the House of the Popol Vuh – the House of the Book, the House of the Assembly, the House of the Tree (from which the book is made), the House of the Dawn of Life, and the other numerous names that have been applied to the Sacred Book of the Ancient Quiche (“trees”) Maya.



I stepped through the entrance into the dwelling place of the Maya gods, where rectangular stone altars were established down the middle aisle as centers for communicating with the divine. Diaphanous red and white silk banners ascended from the sides of the church to the ceiling, connecting the worshippers to the heavens above. Candles on the altars blazed with the light of ancestral souls. It appeared that a mass or service was going on. People were sitting in old wooden pews.



As I stood and watched from the back of the church, I thought of the church that had been built by Dominican priests more than 450 years ago on top of an ancient Maya pyramid-temple. The priests were trying to convert the indigenous Maya people, but it ended up that the Maya people were still able to perform their traditional ceremonial services on top of their ancient temple. The ancestral spirits still lived here.

In my mind's eye, I could see Francisco Ximenez, the priest who discovered the Popol Vuh among the convent's archives in the early 1700s, reading the Maya scriptures to the Maya parishioners:

THE MAKING OF MAN

Here then are the names of the first men who were made and formed: this is the first man: Balam-quitze (sweet-smiling tiger); the second is Balam-agab

(nocturnal-tiger); the third is Mahucutah (well-known name), and the fourth Iqi-balam (lunar tiger); these are the names of our first mothers and fathers.

1. They were called simply “fashioned and formed beings”; they had neither mother, nor father, and we call them simply human beings. No woman gave birth to them; neither were they begotten by the builder and former, the begetter (alom) and existence-giver (Qaholom).

2. But their creation and fashioning was a miracle, a true enchantment (effected) by the creator and former, by the begetter and existence-causer, Tepeu and Gucumatz. Appearing as men, men therefore they became, they spoke and they reasoned, they saw and they heard, they walked and they touched; perfect and beautiful human beings, whose figure was that of a man.

3. Thought was and existed (in them), they saw: and straightway they lifted up their eyes: their glance took in everything; they cognized the whole world, and when they contemplated it, their glance turned in a moment from the vault of the sky to look again at the surface of the earth.

4. At will they saw the most hidden things, without the need of first moving; and when, later, they directed their glance on this world, they likewise saw all it contained.

5. Great was their wisdom; their genius (symbol or glance) extended over the forest, over the lakes and the oceans, over the mountains and valleys; men really worthy of admiration were Balam-quitze, Balam-agab, Mahucutah, and Iqi-balam.

6. Then were they questioned by the builder and former: “What do you think about your existence? Do you not see, do you not hear, is not your language good, as well as your walk? Look, and see if under the sky if the mountains and the plains manifest; try to see them now,” was said to them.

7. Hereupon they saw the “ensemble,” the grouping of all that existed under the sky: then they thanked the creator and former, (saying): “Truly, we offer you all manner of gratitude (really in two times, in three times) thanks (be given you). We have received existence, we have received a mouth, a face, we speak, we hear, we think, we walk; we feel and likewise we know both what is afar and near.

8. We see all the great and small things in the sky and on the earth. We exist, O our grandmother and grandfather, in giving thanks for our existence and formation.”

9. And they finished measuring and seeing everything that exists in the four corners and the four angles in the sky and on the earth.

[The Dawn of Civilization and the Giving of Fire, According to the Popol Vuh, by Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie, p. 6-7]

To me, the reading of this passage reminded me of the making of the Divine Man or the Archetypal Man in Plato, the Heavenly Man Adam Qadmon, the Son of Man and Son of God Jesus Christ, and the Messenger of the Gods Quetzalcoatl. This was Melchizedec, King of Salem (King of Peace), “...without

father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life...” (Hebrews 7:1-3)

So this was what the Popol Vuh was all about – it was the ancient word which contained the light and life of the Maya consciousness. It was the secret knowledge that was passed down generation after generation about what the ideal world was like at the dawn of time; it was the story of the ideal human being who was like the gods, but was thereafter diminished in his divine nature by an act of the gods. And yet, the hero twins showed mankind how to return to the original divine nature by descending into the depths of the underworld of Xibalba and defeating the lords of death.

When I stepped out of the temple-pyramid (church) into the light of day, I saw the smoke and smelled the sweet-smelling copal incense coming from the perpetual fire of the altar at the bottom of the steps. I saw the El Calvario (Place of the Skull) church across the main plaza, on the western side. I saw the hill to the south where the Pascual Abaj shrine was located. I realized the three sites were established by the Maya people as a triangular formation of the three hearth stones, based on the Cosmic hearth stones in the Orion (the hunter, Hunahpu) constellation. “On earth, as it is in heaven,” were the words that resounded in my mind. And between the Cosmic hearth stones was the cosmic fire and smoke from the center of the Orion Nebula. My consciousness soared into the heavens on the cosmic canoe, once again, across the celestial sky to the place where the on-going process of creation takes place. The deification of the Hero Twins was complete in my mind as I began to understand the Maya cosmic world-view. The Hero Twins were the redeemers of mankind, linking humanity to divinity through their death and resurrection, just like the Christian savior. The entire story of the Popol Vuh now made sense. It was the story of Hunab Ku (the Supreme Being of the Maya) incarnating at dawn on the winter solstice, becoming the Maize-God and Sun-God simultaneously; the substance of this Maize-God (Hunahpu) was used in the formation of human beings, and by eating maize humans make themselves consubstantial with deity itself.

Susie was waiting for me near the fire at the bottom of the steps. The rectangular stone altar housed the god of fire, the primordial Promethean fire given to mankind at the beginning of the dawn of life and light. I warmed my hands beside the fire, just like I would do at a campfire, and I inhaled the pleasant odor of the copal incense. It seemed to be the eternal flame that was representative of the divine fire that burned in the central column within the human being and at the center of our galaxy, the Milky Way. The words of Jesus spoken to Santo Tomas came to mind: “When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside, and the above like the below, and when you

make the male and the female one and the same...then will you enter the kingdom (of heaven).” [Gospel of Thomas, v. 22] The visible and the invisible become one, and all opposites (dualism) are reconciled in the cosmic unity.



Elsa had found her jewelry finally, and we were ready to make our way back to our meeting place with the shuttle van. We passed by the side of the Mercado where two large murals were painted on the walls. The wall to the right of the entrance had the image of the Pascual Abaj shrine, and to the right of the sacred shrine were helicopters with an image of a crucified Mayan and a devastating fire behind him (symbolizing the civil war). The wall to the left of the entrance had an image of a happy couple with a corn field beside their home, and to the left of the corn field were men from the cofradias and beside them was the sacred tree. There were many more images on those two walls which told the past and present story of the Maya people.



As we turned onto another street on our way back to our rendezvous point, a funeral procession was coming down the street. Several boys were carrying bouquets of flowers in front of the coffin, which was raised on the shoulders of several strong men. We watched the procession go by. When I looked down the street towards the horizon, I saw the cemetery where the people of Chichicastenango laid their weary bones to rest. Even from a distance, I could

see colorful mausoleums the size of small houses painted in brilliant shades of blue, teal, yellow and orange. It was a colorful resting place.



Susie noticed that we still had almost half-an-hour before we were scheduled to finish our tour. So she took us through the marketplace one more time, just in case there was something else that caught our eyes. As I meandered slowly through the marketplace this one last time, I put my digital camera in movie mode and took a couple of videos of the sights and sounds of the famous market of Chichicastenango.

[Market day at Chichicastenango, Guatemala](https://youtu.be/_0IS2kyGHbM)

https://youtu.be/_0IS2kyGHbM

[Video 2 of Market Day at Chichicastenango, Guatemala](https://youtu.be/ZonBMMno0LE)

<https://youtu.be/ZonBMMno0LE>

Just as I saw our shuttle van pull up to the curve, a little girl approached me and asked if I would buy a little doll from her. She was such a cute little Maya girl, and her humble attitude and plaintive face melted my heart instantly. I bought two little handmade dolls from her to remind me that the little children in Guatemala also had to make a living for the family.



The shuttle van passed by the same wall that we had passed when we entered Chichicastenango (The House of the Popol Vuh), and I recalled the last verse from Psalm 23: “And I will dwell in the House of the Lord forever.” To me, the House of the Lord was our galaxy, the Milky Way, and all the galaxies of the universe. I had made a quantum leap from the historic to the cosmic.

BONUS:

**THE BOOK OF THE AZURE VEIL
(Explanatory)**

Least known of all scriptures accessible in the west is The Popol Vuh. A Red man wrote it, some few centuries ago, in Guatemala. He had knowledge. Like most men who have knowledge, his name is unknown in the west. . . .

The author of Popol Vuh belonged to a cultured people, who built great cities of hewn stone, with temples vast and imposing, the ruins of which still stand, though for long centuries the destructive elements of a tropical clime have sought to devour them; in a land where volcanoes of fire are ever aflame, the volcano of water ever a perpetual fountain; where the ground is ever a-tremble with earthquake shocks; a land of unfathomable lakes, of subterranean rivers, and rivers that come and go in periods of years; of wondrous caverns unexplored; where the earth yields rubies, silver and gold; a land where rains are deluges, and the lightning carves into fantastic shapes the iron-bearing mountains. Such a country can be mother only to men who have souls, lovers of the mysterious, the illimitable; men who look upon nature in a large way; men to whom the sword of the Christian invader brought death and downfall, but never submission or servitude. A few of these people still survive in a part of their country which the foot of no white man has ever pressed; there they follow in freedom and peace their priests who have the soul-sight, cling to the religion of their forefathers, and practice the magic of old. . . .

Of the written literature of this murdered nation hardly a fragment remains. The Christian priests burned the manuscripts by the thousand; and the survivors of Quiche concealed the rest. . . .

The numerous nations and tribes of both Americas are offshoots of a single race. The forefathers of that race dwelt in a land over which the waves of the morose Atlantic now intone a dirge. So say the traditions of the Red men, and no books are needed to confirm the story – the waves will tell it to any man who will

but still his thoughts and listen. Nature is not dumb even when man is unhearing. Always she will speak to the listening ear. . . .

The Red “Children of the Sun” do not worship the One God. For them that One God is absolutely impersonal, and all the Forces emanated from that One God are personal. This is the exact reverse of the popular western conception of a personal God and impersonal working forces in nature. Decide for yourself which of these beliefs is the more philosophical. These Children of the Sun adore the Plumed Serpent, who is the messenger of the Sun. He was the God Quetzalcoatl in Mexico, Gucumatz in Quiche; and in Peru he was called Amaru. From the latter name comes our word America. Amaruca is, literally translated, “Land of the Plumed Serpent.” The priests of this God of Peace, from their chief center in the Cordilleras, once ruled both Americas. All the Red men who have remained true to the ancient religion are still under their sway. One of their strong centers was in Guatemala, and of their Order was the author of the book called Popol Vuh. In the Quiche tongue Gucumatz is the exact equivalent of Quetzalcoatl in the Nahuatl language; quetzal, the bird of paradise; coatl, serpent – “the Serpent veiled in plumes of the paradise-bird.” . . .

Unless the nature of this Bird-Serpent is understood, the Popol Vuh remains a sealed book. For the present, let us look no further for the meaning of the symbols than the Bible.

“Behold, I send you as sheep [neophytes] into the midst of wolves [the profane]: be ye therefore wise as serpents [magicians], and guileless as doves [mystics].” (Matt. x. 16)

The serpent symbolizes the electric fire, in nature and in man, and therefore, also, the ascetic in whom it is active. . . .

Even as the Serpent is the symbol of the divine electric Fire, so the Dove stands for the solar and lunar magnetic radiance of the pure-souled man, or Mystic.

*“Will ye lie among the sheepfolds [circles of neophytes],
As the wings of a dove covered with silver [lunar],
And her pinions with yellow gold [solar]?” (Psalms, lxxviii.13)*

*“I have beheld the Breath descending out of the heavens as a Dove,
and it abode upon him.” (John, i. 32)*

Now the quetzal, the sacred bird of the Guatemalans, is a symbol identical with that of the Christian Dove; and between the Quetzal-plumed Serpent, who is the “Heart of the Heavens,” and the Christ who saw the serpent falling as lightning from the Heavens, and upon whom the Holy Breath descended from the heavens as a Dove, abiding upon him, there is no difference: alike they express the sacred truth of the soul and spirit of Nature, the soul and spirit of Man.

[The Book of the Azure Veil, James M. Pryse]

BONUS:
[Popol Vuh Film \(You Tube - by Patricia Amlin\)](#)

<http://wigowsky.com/travels/maya/chichi/video.htm>