

Popol Vuh

The Popol Vuh is the creation story of the Maya. Below is one part of this story that recounts the first attempts of the creator, Heart of Sky to make humans. The story goes on to explain that the final attempt, that resulted in the "True people" was accomplished by constructing people with maize. This is a very reasonable explanation since, in essence, it was the cultivation of maize that gave the early Maya culture the means to change from hunters gatherers to their highly advanced civilization.

THE CREATION

Here is the story of the beginning,
when there was not one bird,
not one fish,
not one mountain.
Here is the sky, all alone.
Here is the sea, all alone.
There is nothing more
–no sound, no movement.
Only the sky and the sea.
Only Heart-of-Sky, alone.
And these are his names:
Maker and Modeler,
Kukulkan,
and Hurricane.
But there is no one to speak his names.
There is no one to praise his glory.
There is no one to nurture his greatness.



And so Heart-of-Sky thinks,
"Who is there to speak my name?
Who is there to praise me?
How shall I make it dawn?"
Heart-of-Sky only says the word,
"Earth,"

and the earth rises,
like a mist from the sea.
He only thinks of it,
and there it is.

He thinks of mountains,
and great mountains come.
He thinks of trees,
and trees grow on the land.

And so Heart-of-Sky says,
"Our work is going well."

Now Heart-of-Sky plans the creatures of the forest
-birds, deer, jaguars and snakes.
And each is given his home.
"You the deer, sleep here along the rivers.
You the birds, your nests are in the trees.
Multiply and scatter," he tells them.

Then Heart-of-Sky says to the animals,
"Speak, pray to us."
But the creatures can only squawk.
The creatures only howl.
They do not speak like humans.
They do not praise Heart-of-Sky
And so the animals are humbled.
They will serve those who will worship Heart-of-Sky.

And Heart-of-Sky tries again.
Tries to make a giver of respect.
Tries to make a giver of praise.



Here is the new creation,
made of mud and earth.
It doesn't look very good.
It keeps crumbing and softening.
It looks lopsided and twisted.
It only speaks nonsense.
It cannot multiply.
So Heart-of-Sky lets it dissolved away.

Now Heart-of-Sky plans again.
Our Grandfather and Our Grandmother are summoned.
They are the most wise spirits.
"Determine if we should carve people from wood,"
commands Heart-of-Sky.

They run their hands over the kernels of corn.
They run their hands over the coral seeds.
"What can we make that will speak and pray?
asks Our Grandfather.
What can we make that will nurture and provide?"
asks Our Grandmother.
They count the days,
the lots of four,
seeking an answer for Heart-of-Sky.

Now they give the answer,
"It is good to make your people with wood.
They will speak your name.
They will walk about and multiply."
"So it is," replies Heart-of-Sky.

And as the words are spoken, it is done.
The doll-people are made
with faces carved from wood.
But they have no blood, no sweat.
They have nothing in their minds.
They have no respect for Heart-of-Sky.
They are just walking about,
But they accomplish nothing.

"This is not what I had in mind,"
says Heart-of-Sky.
And so it is decided to destroy

these wooden people.

Hurricane makes a great rain.
It rains all day and rains all night.
There is a terrible flood
and the earth is blackened.
The creatures of the forest
come into the homes of the doll-people.

"You have chased us from our homes
so now we will take yours,"
they growl.
And their dogs and turkeys cry out,
"You have abused us
so now we shall eat you!"
Even their pots and grinding stones speak,
"We will burn you and pound on you
just as you have done to us!"

The wooden people scatter into the forest.
Their faces are crushed,
and they are turned into monkeys.
And this is why monkeys look like humans.
They are what is left of what came before,
an experiment in human design.