

mayan creation story pdf

mayan creation story pdf and its rich narrative have captivated scholars and enthusiasts for generations. This article delves deep into the captivating origins of the Maya civilization, exploring the profound mythological accounts that explain the creation of the cosmos and humanity. We will uncover the key deities and forces involved, dissect the sacred texts that preserve these ancient tales, and examine the enduring significance of the Maya creation myths in understanding their worldview. Whether you're seeking to download a Mayan creation story PDF for in-depth study or simply wish to understand these fascinating origins, this comprehensive guide offers valuable insights.

Understanding the Mayan Creation Story

The Mayan creation story, most famously documented in the Popol Vuh, is a complex tapestry woven with intricate symbolism and profound philosophical concepts. It provides a framework for understanding the Maya's perception of the universe, their place within it, and the cyclical nature of existence. Unlike single, definitive accounts, the Popol Vuh represents a compilation and synthesis of various traditions and oral histories, offering a rich and multifaceted view of their cosmology. Exploring this narrative is crucial for anyone interested in Mesoamerican history, mythology, and ancient religions. The search for a Mayan creation story PDF often leads to this seminal text, considered the most complete surviving record of their creation beliefs.

The Sacred Text: Popol Vuh Explained

The Popol Vuh, meaning "Book of the People" or "Book of Counsel," is the most significant surviving document detailing the Mayan creation narrative. Originally written in the K'iche' Maya language using hieroglyphs, it was later transcribed into the Latin alphabet by Dominican friars in the 18th century. This transcription, however, preserved much of the original poetic and symbolic richness of the ancient text. The Popol Vuh is not merely a creation myth; it is also a historical account, a religious text, and a guide to proper conduct and understanding the cosmos for the Maya people. Its availability in various Mayan creation story PDF formats has made it accessible to a global audience seeking to understand these ancient narratives.

Key Deities and Their Roles in Creation

The Mayan pantheon is vast and complex, with numerous deities playing specific roles in the act of creation. Central to the creation narrative are the primordial creator deities, often depicted as a duality or a supreme creative force. These powerful beings conceived the earth, the sky, and all living creatures through their thoughts, words, and actions. Understanding the interplay between these divine entities is fundamental to grasping the Mayan worldview and the intricate relationships they believed governed the universe. The primary creators are often presented as having the desire to be praised and worshipped, which drives much of the subsequent creative process.

The Process of Creation: From Nothingness to Existence

The Mayan creation story begins in a state of primordial darkness and silence, a vast, empty expanse where only the Sky Father and Earth Mother existed. These primordial forces, through immense effort and deliberation, began to shape the cosmos. They envisioned, planned, and then spoke into existence the mountains, valleys, plants, and animals. The narrative emphasizes the importance of speech and thought as creative tools, highlighting the power of intention and divine will. Early attempts at creating beings who could worship them proved unsuccessful, leading to further refinements and the eventual creation of humans, who could finally offer proper reverence.

The Genesis of Humanity in Mayan Mythology

The creation of humans is a pivotal and multi-stage process within the Mayan creation story, reflecting a profound understanding of the challenges involved in creating beings capable of true reverence and consciousness. The deities experimented with different materials and methods, encountering significant hurdles before achieving their ultimate goal. These early attempts, while ultimately unsuccessful in their original form, provide invaluable insights into the Maya's perception of life, consciousness, and the divine purpose of humanity.

First Attempts: Mud and Wood Beings

According to the Popol Vuh, the first attempts at creating humans were made from mud. These beings were soft, formless, and unable to speak or think properly. They could not remember their creators and failed to offer the required praise. Dissatisfied, the gods dissolved this creation and attempted a new approach, this time using wood. The wooden people were more substantial and could speak, but they lacked souls and genuine understanding. They were incapable of gratitude and reverence, leading the gods to destroy them with a great flood and gallows. These failed attempts underscore the complexity the Maya perceived in crafting beings with true sentience and devotion.

The Successful Creation: Maize and Blood

The final and successful creation of humanity involved the use of maize, a staple crop deeply sacred to the Maya. The gods ground yellow and white maize and mixed it with water to form a dough. From this dough, they fashioned the flesh and blood of the first true humans. These beings were intelligent, articulate, and capable of understanding and praising their creators. They were blessed with foresight and speech, embodying the ideal human form as envisioned by the gods. This creation, born from the very sustenance of their civilization, cemented the inextricable link between humanity, nature, and the divine in Mayan belief.

The Role of the Hero Twins: Hunahpu and Xbalanque

While not directly involved in the initial creation of the world, the Hero Twins, Hunahpu and Xbalanque, play a crucial role in the Mayan creation narrative by overcoming the forces of death and darkness that threatened the cosmic order. Their trials and ultimate victory in the underworld, Xibalba, are essential for establishing the current cycle of day and night and ensuring that creation could continue. Their journey represents the triumph of life over death and light over darkness, a theme that resonates deeply within the Mayan understanding of the universe. Their adventures are often seen as a metaphorical continuation of the initial creative act, bringing balance and renewal.

Interpreting and Accessing Mayan Creation Story PDFs

The enduring fascination with the Mayan creation story has led to numerous translations and interpretations, making it accessible to a wider audience through various mediums, including digital formats. Researchers and enthusiasts often seek Mayan creation story PDF versions to facilitate study and engagement with this complex mythology. Understanding how to best access and interpret these documents is key to appreciating their depth and significance.

Where to Find Mayan Creation Story PDF Downloads

Numerous online repositories and academic archives offer downloadable Mayan creation story PDF files. These can range from academic translations with extensive annotations to simpler versions for general audiences. Educational institutions, cultural heritage sites, and dedicated mythology websites are common sources for these materials. When searching for a Mayan creation story PDF, it's advisable to look for reputable sources that provide accurate and scholarly translations to ensure a genuine understanding of the original text.

Scholarly Translations vs. Popular Adaptations

It is important to distinguish between scholarly translations and popular adaptations of the Mayan creation story. Scholarly versions, often found in academic journals or books, provide meticulous translations, contextual analysis, and notes on linguistic nuances, offering the most faithful representation of the original text. Popular adaptations, while sometimes more accessible, may simplify complex concepts or omit certain details for narrative flow. When seeking a Mayan creation story PDF for serious study, prioritizing academic translations is recommended.

The Significance of the Creation Myth Today

The Mayan creation story continues to hold profound significance, offering insights into the worldview, values, and cosmology of this ancient civilization. It speaks to themes of divine intention, the cyclical nature of existence, the interconnectedness of all things, and the importance of balance and

reverence. Even today, these narratives serve as a cultural touchstone, informing contemporary Maya communities and providing a rich source of inspiration for art, literature, and spiritual practices. The enduring appeal of the Mayan creation story ensures its continued relevance for understanding human history and the universal quest for meaning.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the most common themes explored in Mayan creation stories found in PDFs?

Common themes in Mayan creation stories, often found in PDF resources, include the role of primordial beings (like the 'Maker' and 'Shaper'), the creation of humans from maize, the importance of dualism and cyclical time, and the establishment of the cosmos through divine effort and sacrifice.

Where can I find reliable PDFs of the Popol Vuh for studying Mayan creation?

Reliable PDFs of the Popol Vuh, a significant Mayan creation epic, can often be found through academic repositories, university library websites, and reputable online archives of ancient texts. Searching for 'Popol Vuh PDF translation' on academic search engines like Google Scholar or JSTOR is a good starting point.

How do Mayan creation stories differ from other ancient creation myths, and what makes them unique?

Mayan creation stories are unique in their intricate cosmology, the concept of multiple attempts at human creation (with failures and successes), and the central role of maize as the very substance of humanity. Their emphasis on cyclical time and the interconnectedness of the divine, natural world, and human destiny also sets them apart.

What are the key deities or primordial forces involved in the Mayan creation narrative as depicted in PDFs?

Key deities and forces in Mayan creation narratives often include the Heart of Sky (Gukumatz/Kukulkan) and the Earth Maker, who are portrayed as co-creators. Other important figures might include various gods and ancestral heroes who participated in the shaping of the world and the creation of humans, often through trials and transformations.

What modern interpretations or scholarly analyses of Mayan creation stories are available in PDF format?

Modern interpretations and scholarly analyses are available in PDF format through academic journals, e-books from university presses, and conference proceedings. These often delve into comparative mythology, linguistic analysis of ancient texts, and anthropological perspectives on the cultural significance of these creation narratives.

Additional Resources

Here are 9 book titles related to Mayan creation stories, with descriptions:

1. *The Popul Vuh: The Mayan Book of Creation*

This is a foundational text for understanding Mayan cosmology and the origins of the world and humanity. It details the struggles and triumphs of the hero twins, Hunahpu and Xbalanque, as they overcome the lords of the underworld and lay the groundwork for the current creation. The narrative is rich with mythological figures and symbolic events that shaped Mayan beliefs.

2. *Echoes of the Underworld: A Study of Mayan Creation Myths*

This academic work delves into the various interpretations and scholarly analyses of the Mayan creation narratives. It explores the cultural and historical context surrounding these stories, examining their significance within Mayan society. The book likely investigates the symbolism of the underworld, the role of deities, and the cyclical nature of existence as depicted in their myths.

3. *Lords of the Maize: The Birth of Humanity in Mayan Tradition*

Focusing on the creation of humans, this book likely examines the specific passages in Mayan creation stories where the gods attempt to fashion humanity. It would explore the materials used (such as maize) and the divine intentions behind their creation. The book might also discuss the ethical and spiritual implications of this creation for the Mayan people.

4. *The Feathered Serpent's Genesis: Mayan Myths of Origins*

This title suggests an exploration of creation stories that feature prominent deities like Kukulcan or Quetzalcoatl in their role as creators. It would likely analyze the symbolism associated with feathered serpents in Mayan culture and their connection to cosmic events. The book could also touch upon the influences of other Mesoamerican cultures on these origin myths.

5. *Whispers from the Deep: Pre-Classic Mayan Creation Narratives*

This book would focus on the earliest known forms and interpretations of Mayan creation stories, potentially drawing from archaeological evidence and glyphic inscriptions from the Pre-Classic period. It aims to trace the evolution of these myths before they were widely codified. The research would likely involve examining early artistic representations and fragmented texts.

6. *The First Dawn: Unraveling the Mayan Cosmic Egg*

This title implies a focus on the initial stages of creation as described in Mayan mythology, possibly exploring concepts of primordial chaos and the emergence of the ordered universe. It might interpret symbolic imagery related to cosmic eggs or primordial waters. The book could also discuss the role of celestial bodies and their creation.

7. *Sacred Threads of Time: Mayan Cosmology and the Genesis Narrative*

This work likely connects the Mayan creation story to their sophisticated understanding of time and astronomy. It would explore how myths of origin are intertwined with their calendar systems and cyclical views of history. The book might analyze the divine order and the establishment of cosmic cycles within the creation narratives.

8. *Beyond the Horizon: Post-Classic Mayan Creation Tales*

This book would examine how Mayan creation stories were preserved, adapted, and transmitted during the Post-Classic period, perhaps influenced by interactions with other cultures or shifts in political power. It could highlight variations and new interpretations that emerged. The research might involve analyzing codices and later historical accounts.

9. *The Heart of the Jaguar: Mythical Ancestors and Mayan Origins*

This title suggests a focus on the ancestral figures and deities who played a crucial role in the creation of the world and its inhabitants within Mayan mythology. It would likely explore the divine lineage and the establishment of social and spiritual order. The book could also delve into the symbolic significance of the jaguar in relation to these creation events.

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Unveiling the Mysteries: A Deep Dive into the Mayan Creation Story

This ebook provides a comprehensive exploration of the Mayan creation myth, examining its diverse interpretations, its significance within Mayan culture, and its enduring relevance in contemporary understanding of mythology and cosmology. We'll analyze the different versions of the story, explore its symbolic language, and consider its impact on art, religion, and societal structures. The ebook will also delve into recent scholarly research and interpretations, offering a fresh perspective on this ancient narrative.

Ebook Title: The Popol Vuh and Beyond: Deciphering the Mayan Creation Myth

Contents:

Introduction: A brief overview of Mayan civilization and the importance of creation myths in their worldview.

Chapter 1: The Popol Vuh – The Primary Source: An in-depth analysis of the Popol Vuh, the K'iche' Mayan text detailing the creation story.

Chapter 2: Key Figures and Symbols: Examination of significant characters (Hero Twins, Heart of Sky, etc.) and their symbolic meanings within the myth.

Chapter 3: Variations and Interpretations: Exploration of regional differences in the Mayan creation narratives and their interpretations by scholars.

Chapter 4: The Creation Process: Cosmos, Humans, and Sacrifice: A detailed examination of the stages of creation, focusing on the creation of the cosmos, humanity, and the role of sacrifice.

Chapter 5: The Mayan Creation Myth in Art and Architecture: An analysis of how the creation story is depicted in Mayan art, architecture, and iconography.

Chapter 6: The Enduring Legacy: Modern Interpretations and Relevance: A discussion of how the Mayan creation myth continues to resonate today and its influence on contemporary perspectives on creation myths and cosmology.

Conclusion: Summary of key themes and a reflection on the lasting impact of the Mayan creation narrative.

Detailed Breakdown of Contents:

Introduction: This section sets the stage by providing a concise background on the Mayan

civilization, its rich history, and the pivotal role that mythology played in shaping its culture and worldview. It will highlight the significance of understanding creation myths within the context of a civilization's beliefs and practices.

Chapter 1: The Popol Vuh – The Primary Source: This chapter will provide a thorough examination of the Popol Vuh, the most well-known and extensively studied text detailing the Mayan creation narrative. We'll analyze the text's structure, its key episodes, and the narrative's progression, exploring its literary and theological aspects.

Chapter 2: Key Figures and Symbols: This chapter delves into the symbolic language employed in the Mayan creation myth. We'll analyze the roles and significance of key figures like the Hero Twins, the Heart of Sky, and other deities, explaining their symbolic representations and the deeper meaning behind their actions.

Chapter 3: Variations and Interpretations: The Mayan civilization wasn't monolithic; different regions and groups had their own variations of the creation myth. This chapter explores these variations, highlighting regional differences and interpreting the diverse versions of the narrative, acknowledging the complexities and nuances within the Mayan creation stories. It will also include a discussion of different scholarly interpretations of the myth.

Chapter 4: The Creation Process: Cosmos, Humans, and Sacrifice: This chapter breaks down the creation process as depicted in the Popol Vuh and related texts. We'll explore the creation of the cosmos, the multiple attempts to create humankind, the roles of different deities, and the central theme of sacrifice in shaping the world and humanity's place within it.

Chapter 5: The Mayan Creation Myth in Art and Architecture: This chapter explores the visual representation of the Mayan creation myth. We'll analyze Mayan art, sculptures, and architectural features, showing how the creation story is depicted through iconography, symbolism, and artistic styles, demonstrating the integral role of the myth in their visual culture.

Chapter 6: The Enduring Legacy: Modern Interpretations and Relevance: This chapter examines the lasting impact of the Mayan creation myth. We'll discuss its continued relevance in contemporary society, exploring its influence on modern interpretations of mythology, cosmology, and cultural studies. It will also discuss the ongoing research and new perspectives on the myth.

Conclusion: The conclusion summarizes the key themes and arguments presented throughout the ebook, emphasizing the importance of understanding the Mayan creation myth within its cultural and historical context. It will reiterate the enduring power and significance of this ancient narrative.

Keywords: Mayan creation myth, Popol Vuh, Mayan cosmology, Mayan mythology, Hero Twins, creation story, ancient mythology, Mesoamerican mythology, Mayan religion, Mayan culture, archaeology, anthropology, symbolic interpretation, religious studies, cultural studies, pdf download

FAQs:

1. What is the Popol Vuh? The Popol Vuh is a K'iche' Mayan text that recounts the Mayan creation myth and other important narratives.
2. Who are the Hero Twins in the Mayan creation story? The Hero Twins are central figures in the Popol Vuh, overcoming challenges and ultimately triumphing over the underworld lords.
3. What is the significance of sacrifice in the Mayan creation myth? Sacrifice plays a crucial role, often representing the necessary cost to create and maintain the cosmos and human existence.
4. How does the Mayan creation story differ from other creation myths? The Mayan creation story emphasizes cyclical time, duality, and the importance of overcoming challenges to achieve balance.
5. Where can I find a reliable translation of the Popol Vuh? Several reputable translations exist; it is best to consult scholarly editions and compare different versions.
6. What are some modern interpretations of the Mayan creation myth? Modern interpretations focus on its themes of struggle, perseverance, and the cyclical nature of existence.
7. How is the Mayan creation myth reflected in Mayan art and architecture? The myth is depicted through intricate carvings, murals, and architectural designs, illustrating key events and figures.
8. What is the role of the gods in the Mayan creation myth? The gods actively participate in the creation process, often acting as both creators and challengers.
9. What is the current state of research on the Mayan creation myth? Ongoing research focuses on deciphering the texts, understanding the cultural context, and exploring new interpretations.

Related Articles:

1. Decoding Mayan Glyphs: Unveiling the Secrets of Mayan Writing: This article explores the complexities of Mayan hieroglyphic writing, essential for understanding the Popol Vuh and other related texts.
2. The Mayan Calendar: A Cosmic Clock and its Significance: An examination of the Mayan calendar system and its relation to their cosmology and understanding of time.
3. Mayan Gods and Goddesses: A Pantheon of Power and Influence: A detailed overview of the Mayan pantheon, their roles, and their significance in the creation myth.
4. Mayan Rituals and Ceremonies: Connecting with the Supernatural: An exploration of Mayan religious practices and their connection to the creation story.

5. The Mayan Underworld: Xibalba and its Symbolic Representation: An in-depth look at the Mayan underworld, its importance in the creation myth, and its significance in Mayan beliefs.
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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 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, 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

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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.

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of Chiapas, Mexico, the Lacandon Maya constitute one of the smallest language groups in the world. Although their language remains active and alive, their traditional culture was abandoned after the death of their religious and civic leader in 1996. Lacking the traditional contexts in which the culture was transmitted, the oral traditions are quickly being forgotten. This collection includes creation myths that describe the cycle of destruction and renewal of the world, the structure of the universe, the realms of the gods and their intercessions in the affairs of their mortals, and the journey of the souls after death. Other traditional stories are non-mythic and fictive accounts involving talking animals, supernatural beings, and malevolent beings that stalk and devour hapless victims. In addition to traditional narratives, Xurt'an presents many songs that are claimed to have been received from the Lord of Maize, magical charms that invoke the forces of the natural world, invocations to the gods to heal and protect, and work songs of Lacandon women, whose contribution to Lacandon culture has been hitherto overlooked by scholars. Women's songs offer a rare glimpse into the other half of Lacandon society and the arduous distaff work that sustained the religion. The compilation concludes with descriptions of rainbows, the Milky Way as "the white road of Our Lord," and an account of the solstices. Transcribed and translated by a foremost linguist of the northern Lacandon language, the literary traditions of the Lacandones are finally accessible to English readers. The result is a masterful and authoritative collection of oral literature that will both entertain and provoke, while vividly testifying to the power of Lacandon Maya aesthetic expression.

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