

## TWO CREATION TEXTS FROM CHAMULA, CHIAPAS,<sup>1</sup>

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The two texts which make up the body of this article are from the municipio of Chamula, which is located in the Chiapas Highlands of Southern Mexico. The Chamulas make their living as subsistence maize farmers and as craftsmen, and as day-laborers in Chamula and in the Mexican mestizo community. They speak Tzotzil, which is a member of the Tzotzil-Tzeltal family of Maya languages. Although some Chamulas are bilingual in Spanish and Tzotzil (mostly men who have worked on the coffee plantations near the Pacific coast of Chiapas), the community is predominantly monolingual and culturally conservative in its sense of separateness from Mexican national culture. The municipio of 40,000 persons consists of over one hundred scattered patrilocally organized hamlets which are politically and ritually dependent upon a single ceremonial center, which is in turn the community's point of articulation with Mexican government agencies and the Catholic Church. Chamula is thus the syncretic product, like most Indian communities in the country, of over four centuries of contact with Spanish and Mexican customs and institutions.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I collected the texts transcribed in this paper in 1968 and 1969 as a participant in the Harvard University Chiapas Project, directed by Professor Evon Z. Vogt. I am grateful to him for help and encouragement throughout the various stages of my field work. My field work was supported by a fellowship and research grant from the N.I.M.H. division of the U.S. Public Health Service. This support is gratefully acknowledged. I received immeasurable help in transcription and interpretation of Maya narrative material from Victoria R. Bricker, Robert M. Laughlin, Miguel León-Portilla and Munro Edmonson. To them and to Manuel López Calixto and Salvador López Castellanos, both of Chamula, go my special thanks.

<sup>2</sup> Other ethnographic data on Chamula may be found in Ricardo Pozas' two books, *Juan Pérez Jolote* (1952, and in the English edition, 1962) and *Chamula: un pueblo indio en los Altos de Chiapas* (1959; recently reissued, 1977). My book, *Chamulas in the World of the Sun: Time and Space in a Maya Oral Tradition* (1974a), has background information on Chamula ethnography, cosmology and oral tradition.



The oral traditions of the Chamulas reflect this mixed background of native and Hispanic motifs, yet it is important to recognize that Chamula narratives make up a composite whole that is neither Hispanic nor pre-Columbian. The two texts which follow contain both Western and pre-conquest Mayan motifs in great abundance, yet I feel that the texts may be most profitably read and understood together with their own ethnographic background, which is to say contemporary Chamula. This is not to deny the importance of the historical backdrop —Maya, Spanish and Mexican— of contemporary Chamula, but texts in translation become intelligible in many ways. One way of “making sense” of these texts is to read them with some understanding of Indian assumptions about the nature of the world, the cosmos, its inhabitants, life forms and supernatural beings.

#### *Chamula Cosmology and Historical Perspective*

Chamulas believe that they live in the Fourth Creation, the most successful and most recent of four successive attempts on the part of the primary Sun/Christ deity to establish an ordered universe with proper beings. The sun deity *htotik* (“Our Father”) is one and the same as Jesus Christ, just as the moon deity *hme'tik* (“Our Mother”) is the same as the Virgin Mary, and the saints are the sun deity's younger kinsmen. Chamulas believe that they are the only truly successful beings (speaking *baq'i k'op*, “the true language”, or Tzotzil) created by the deities, and that they inhabit the very center of the square island which is the earth. This gives Chamulas an advantageous position in dealing with the Sun/Christ deity, for they believe that they occupy the only place on earth which benefits from the full direct rays of the Sun/Christ when he is at his zenith. The Sun/Christ is ultimately responsible, as the texts below testify, for all life and land forms on the earth, as well as for the primary categories of time and space. In fact, the boundaries of the universe are delimited by the sun's vertical path over (day) and under (night) the earth.

As heirs to their own Maya past, and to colonial



missionization, Chamulas believe that the Sun/Christ began the temporal scheme of things when he first ascended into the sky to fix in place all of the temporal cycles: days, years and seasons. He did this after being killed by the monkeys, demons and Jews, only to be resurrected as the sun on the fourth day after his death. The Sun/Christ then began to establish all order on earth. He did this in various stages. His first three creations were failures, for the human beings made by him did not get along well among themselves and simply could not cope with life in many ways. For these reasons, he destroyed each of the first three creations in order to try another. The most recent one, the Fourth, in which we live, was the only one which pleased the Sun/Christ. Even the Fourth Creation continues precariously at the Sun/Christ's whim, ever in danger of destruction if people behave in a manner disapproved by the Sun/Christ.

Thus, the four-creation historical scheme comprises the largest temporal entity which Chamulas recognize. Although it is a cyclical scheme, it is important to keep in mind that the more recent stages are not mere repetitions of earlier stages. Rather, the stages, or creations, have a pattern of cumulative development; each consecutive creation has turned out somewhat better than its predecessor. In this sense, Chamulas view historical development with some optimism, not unlike nineteenth century positivism in our own intellectual tradition, in which there was general commitment to the idea that things were getting better and better through reason and science. In the Chamula view, things are getting better and better only because people know better how to do the bidding of the Sun/Christ. Both improved knowledge about proper human behavior and genuine fear of destruction if people misbehave keep the Fourth Creation on an even keel. Yet people are aware that this creation is full of evil and that they must do what they can to defend it from the perverse and evil ones who would destroy it.

Chamulas do not assign specific durations to the successive creations. For example, people's opinions about the beginning of the First Creation vary from 80,000 to 300 years ago. Some say that the Fourth Creation started 400



years ago: others say it is only 120 years old. There is similar variation in people's views of the age in years of the Second and Third Creations. Absolute age does not appear to matter. It is the position of the creations in relation to each other that matters.

The four-creation scheme is often used by Chamulas to place narrative events in a temporal framework. Time is, in fact, the criterion which they most frequently use to classify narratives. Narratives which refer to the events of the first three creations are called *baq'i 'antivo k'op*, "true ancient words" or "true ancient narratives". Generally, the events of the First Creation center on the Sun/Christ deity. They tell of his adventures with the forces of evil, of his ascent into the sky and of his many decisions about creating the cosmos, land forms and life forms of the earth. It is to this time period that the two texts presented in this paper belong. The Second and Third Creations form a kind of "heroic age" in Chamula history, in which the Sun/Christ twice again recreates the world and all its contents and life forms, only to destroy them twice again in dissatisfaction, as he did at the end of the First Creation. This "heroic period" contains many narratives of what we would call myth, legend and tale. It tells of the Sun/Christ's adventures with the saints, of their joint creative efforts, of the creation of domestic plants and animals, and of animals' adventures with each other. The Fourth Creation is the present era in Chamula history and represents the fourth attempt of the Sun/Christ to establish a satisfactory social order. This period contains what we might call oral history, anecdote, legend and gossip.

#### *Chamula Narrative Tradition*

The texts which follow are classified by Chamulas as "True Ancient Narrative" and belong to the First Creation, the earliest period of the Chamula historical record. True ancient narratives are told as true accounts of the past, a bundle of true events which the teller has heard and which he will probably retell as a unit. There are no particular social and physical settings which are more or less appropriate for



narrative performance. Narratives may be told at home, in the cornfields, while traveling, at mealtimes or during other leisure time. Neither are there sex, age or occupational group restrictions as to who may tell or listen to true ancient narratives. About the only performance imperative is that there be a reason for the performance. Chamulas do not have tale-telling sessions as social events in themselves. Narratives tend to be told for a specific purpose, either as supporting evidence or as explanation. For instance, the first text below, about the primeval flood which covered the earth, was originally told by an old man who was watching a river rise to flood stage. He and his audience were concerned and scared; hence he told the story of the earliest times when the earth was covered by a great sea.

This brings us to the style of the narratives themselves. The elementary stylistic structure of Ancient Maya narrative as well as Modern Maya oral tradition seems to be the couplet, with several variant forms. Munro Edmonson describes this form for the Ancient Quiché Maya language, as it appears in the *Popol Vuh*:

“a close rendering of the Quiché inevitably gives rise to semantic couplets, whether they are printed as poetry or as prose. In no case, so far as I can determine, does the Quiché text embellish this relatively primitive poetic device with rhyme, syllabification or meter, not even when it is quoting songs. The form itself, however, tends to produce a kind of ‘keying’, in which two successive lines may be quite diverse but must share key words which are closely linked in meaning (Edmonson 1971:xii).

J. Eric S. Thompson has noted a similar “antiphonal” repetitive structure as a general characteristic of Ancient Maya poetics (1954: 201; 1960: 61-63):

“These [forms] are often antiphonal in the sense that the second line or sentence often answers or expands or is a variation of the first, an arrangement familiar to us in the Old Testament...



The antiphonal character of Maya verse is, I feel fairly certain, present also in the hieroglyphic texts. Glyphs which seem to be redundant probably represent this responsive quality. The prayers of the present-day Maya similarly display literary qualities of a high order, and tend to have this same form of antiphony (1954: 200-201).

In the modern Chamula narrative tradition, a very similar set of poetic devices is used. After Edmonson (1971), I call this elementary structure the metaphoric couplet. It is so common, in fact, that it can be taken for granted whenever Chamulas speak formally, in whatever genre, for whatever reason. There are two types of metaphoric couplet. The *non-parallel metaphoric couplet*, simply divided by a caesura (usually indicated in Tzotzil by a final inclitic "e", without grammatical significance), contains a statement and a restatement of one idea. Similar sound and parallel syntax are not present. The semantic element, the idea, is stated once and then repeated, affirmed or answered in a phrase of approximately the same length. These forms are not usually stable from one performance to the next. The non-parallel metaphoric couplet is the most frequent stylistic form found in Chamula narratives. The second type, the *parallel metaphoric couplet*, is found often in narrative, but also, most commonly, in prayers and songs. It is "bound", where the non-parallel form is not, in that the two parts of the couplet usually remain together from one performance to the next and recombine as a unit. The first part implies and requires the second part. They resemble the fixed dyadic formulas that are used in traditional poetry, narrative and song in many parts of the world, including the Ancient Maya. The following example, which tells of the removal of the primeval oceans in the First Creation by the hand of the Sun/Christ deity, includes both forms of the metaphoric couplet:

*nonparallel metaphoric couplets*

1. *lik la sbek'batel ti nab.*

*k'alal la ti sbek'batel ti nab, ta huhot šokon  
banamil.*



2. **puru ša la banamil kom ta 'ora.**  
**pero puru la stenleh.**

1. He began to sweep away the sea.  
 When he swept away the sea, the earth was empty in all directions.
2. Now only the land remained, nothing more.  
 Only the open plains, nothing more.

*parallel metaphoric couplets*

3. **mu'yuk la viĕetik,**  
**mu'yuk la kirsano.**

4. **mu'yuk la ton,**  
**mu'yuk la te'tik.**

3. No mountains,  
 No people.
4. No stones,  
 No woods.

5. **puru la baĕ'i banamil.**

5. Only the earth itself.

Needless to say, poetic scansion of narratives is very difficult to translate, but I have attempted in the sample fragment above and in the full texts below to indicate the first part of a couplet by number and by placing it flush with the left margin of the text. The second, and semantically related, part is indented to the right and is not numbered. Usually the terminal clitic "e" which occurs at the end of a phrase is the key to breaking the first from the second part of the couplet. Sometimes it is very clear, from parallel syntax, where the break occurs. In other cases (as above, 1 and 2) there is neither syntax nor clitic "e" to use as a sure key. In this case, the break is intuitive (my decision) and, therefore, uncertain. It is also important to note in the texts below that some couplets have more than two parts, often reaching three and four parts. (These third and fourth parts are not numbered and are also indented to the right.) In these cases, I have made the decision to include them as extended parts of a couplet because they are semantically related very closely to the first part. These extended forms usually occur at points in the story which the narrator wishes to emphasize



by means of redundancy. I have elsewhere called this repetitive device "metaphoric stacking", the purpose of which seems to be to call special attention to a passage because its content is particularly important. Metaphoric stacking is also used in sequences of couplets whose meanings are essentially the same, the narrator's goal being to call particular attention to the content of the passage. (See Gossen, 1974b.)

### *The Texts*

The two texts which follow were told to me in taped sessions in 1968 and 1969. Because of this I am sure that the transcriptions and translations lack some of the spontaneity and vigor of a tale told in a natural performance context. The transcriptions also lack another important element. This is audience participation. It takes an audience to generate a tale-telling session. Someone must ask for an explanation or someone, often a child, must "need" to have something explained. Just as often, some unusual natural or supernatural event, such as a flood or a work or witchcraft needs to be illuminated through some precedent. Thus, any tale-telling is preeminently social and a transcription can offer only a partial portrait of the social setting. Furthermore, Tzotzil story-telling requires frequent feedback from the audience in the form of affirmative phrases of encouragement, such as *heč ?un bi* ("So that's the way it is"), *tana li ?un e* ("Really!"), or *mi melel* ("Is that true?"). These "audience involvement signals" can occur as often as each of the narrator's couplets ends, particularly at moments of high interest. Thus, I think it is important to emphasize that the following texts are not complete in that they lack the picture of the whole social transaction that characterizes Tzotzil story-telling.

The first text was told by Manuel López Calixto, of Peteh hamlet, San Juan Chamula. He was around 30 years old in 1968 and had never been to school. The text tells clearly the original setting in which he heard the tale. He and a group of Chamulas were resting by a riverbank in the lowlands where they had gone to work on a coffee plantation. The river was rising to flood stage, and so the tale began.



TEXT 1: THE FLOOD.<sup>3</sup>

1. hun kuento ta vo'ne...  
    ʔoy hun mol ta šlo'ilah.
2. ʔa ti k'alal lik slo'il ti mole,  
    yu'un ʔo te muk'ta ʔuk'um ta sɛ'el na.
3. ti yo' lik yal slo'ile,  
    yu'un noh tal ti ʔuk'ume.
4. heč ti mole ši' tahmek ti mole k'alal la ti noh ti  
    ʔuk'ume.  
    ʔentonse heč' ʔo la šal ti yo' lik yal slo'ile ti mole.
5. "ʔay ta šnoh ti ʔuk'ume, hlikel čihnohutik ta ʔora ta  
    ʔuk'um," ši.  
    "ha' la heč to'oš vo'ne'e," ši ti mole ta slo'ilah  
    ta k'išin ʔosil ti mole.  
    "ha' heč lahyalbun ka'i ti ʔanima hmuk'tote," ši  
    ti mole.

*Translation*

1. A story about long ago...  
    There was an old man who was talking.
2. When the old man started to talk,  
    It was because there was a large river near his house.
3. Thus he started to tell his tale,  
    For the river was rising to flood stage.
4. It seems that the old man was scared when he saw the river  
    rising.  
    That is the reason the old man started to tell his story.
5. "Ay, if the river rises, we'll all drown in the river in no  
    time," he said.  
    "That is just how it still was long ago," said the old  
    man when he was talking in Hot Country.  
    "That is just what my late grandfather told me," said  
    the old man.

<sup>3</sup> This title and that of Text 2 are my own inventions. Chamulas do not by preference give stories names. They are accustomed to saying simply, "the story about..."



6. "ʔa ti voʔneʔe čʔabal toʔoš la sbe ti ʔuk'umetike."  
"heč noʔoš la tanihem ta banamil ti ʔuk'umetike."
7. "heč la ti kirsanoʔetike ta la šnohik ta nab,"  
"ti hnakleh ti voʔneʔe."
8. ʔentonse la la snop ti htotik ta vinahele,  
yuʔun puru la nab ti banamil čile.
9. "ʔa pere k'usí ta škut li nabe," ši la ti htotike.  
ʔentonse la la shakʔbe sbaʔik ščiʔuk ti ʔanheletike.
10. "pere mi šakʔane ta hpastik sbe li ʔuk'ume,"  
šut la sbaʔik ščiʔuk ti ʔanheletike.
11. "veno, lek ʔoy," ši la ti ʔanhele.

6. "Long ago there were still no pathways for the rivers."  
"The rivers were just spread out over the earth."
7. "The people were just drowning in the great lake,"  
"Those who lived long ago."
8. Then Our Holy Father Sun in Heaven thought about things,  
For he saw that the earth was nothing but a great lake.
9. "Ay, but what shall I do with this great lake?" asked Our  
Holy Father.  
Then he consulted with the Earth Lords.<sup>4</sup>
10. "But do you want us to make pathways for the rivers?"  
So he discussed it with the Earth Lords.
11. "That's fine," said the Earth Lords.  
Together they came to an agreement about where to

<sup>4</sup> This consultation was necessary because the Sun-Creator did not then, nor does he now, control the affairs of the Earth Lords, whose domain is the whole region under the surface of the earth, which includes caves, waterholes, sink-holes and crevices, which give access to the "inner earth" (see note 13 in Text 2) and the underworld. The inner earth is also associated with the whole Mexican mestizo cultural sphere, which is expressed by the fact that Indians usually produce a fat cowboy-clad Mexican when asked to draw an Earth Lord. All of this must also be a symbolic way of acknowledging Ladino economic and political dominance in the world beyond their municipal boundaries, for indeed the very goods (manufactured items made of metal, money, books, calendars, etc.) which come from the Mexican mestizo world as trade items are also believed to arrive in the Chiapas Highland trade zone via demons who bring them to mestizos from the western horizon, where the Sun/Christ leaves them, but where Indians cannot go. The routes which the demons follow in bringing these trade goods are believed by many Chamulas to be precisely the underground passages and tunnels which are the domain of the Earth Lords. Even the highways, which visibly are the routes by which many trade goods come to the Chiapas Highlands, come from the Lowlands in all directions. And the Lowlands are also known by Indians to be almost entirely in Ladino hands. Thus, in a sense, the Sun/Christ's consultation with the Earth Lord in this passage is a consultation with the Mexican/mestizo world, on which Indians depend to a great extent for their trade goods and wages.



la la skomon nopik ti k'u la ši ta škom sbe ti  
ʔuk'ume.

ʔentonse koʔol la la snopik ščiʔuk ti htotik ta  
vinahele ti ʔanhele.

12. "pere mi šak'ane haʔ čahom be yok ʔanaʔe," ši la ti  
htotik ta vinahele.

heč la ti ʔancheletike hlikel ta sč'unbik smantal ti  
htotik ta vinahele.

13. ʔentonse hlikel ta shombik sbe ti ʔuk'ume.

k'alal la melčah sbe ti ʔuk'ume hlikel la ʔul ti  
nabe.

14. ʔentonse k'ot la ti htotik ta vinahele ta yok'omale.

"mi melčah ša ʔavuʔunik," ši la k'otel ti htotik ta  
vinahele.

15. k'ot la sk'opon sbaʔik ščiʔuk ti ʔancheletike.

"veno, lek ša ʔoy ʔun," šut la sbaʔik.

16. "veno, heč ša me ta skomʔo kuʔuntik li sbeʔoʔetike,"  
ši la komel ti htotik ta vinahele.

17. "veno," ši la ti ʔancheletike.

put the pathways of the rivers.

So it was that Our Father Sun in Heaven and the Earth  
Lords were of one mind.

12. "Do you want to open the way at the foot of your  
houses?" asked Our Father Sun in Heaven.<sup>5</sup>

Thus the Earth Lords quickly obeyed the order of Our  
Father Sun in Heaven.

13. Quickly they scooped out the pathways of the rivers.

When the riverbeds were set in order the great lake  
quickly began to shrink.

14. Then Our Father Sun in Heaven arrived on the following  
day.

"Is your part all ready?" asked Our Father in Heaven  
when he arrived.

15. He came to talk to the Earth Lords.

"Well, now it's fine," they said to each other.

16. "Well, now we shall leave the river beds just like this,"

So ordered Our Father Sun in Heaven.

<sup>5</sup> "At the foot of your houses" means at the base of the hills and mountains,  
i.e., the valleys, for hills and mountains are the dwelling places of the Earth Lords.



"veno, hečun ?ek ?un."

18. "ta š?eč' kules li nabeke," ši la ti htotik ta vinahele.

"k'alal mi lilok'talele, ta š?eč' kules ti nabe," ši la.

19. "k'alal mi liyal?ele, ta š?eč' kules li nab ta maleb k'ak'ale," ši la ti hč'ultotike.

"?entonse mu ša šnoh ti nab ti banamile."

20. "ha? mas lek ha? heč ta hnoptik."

17. "All right," said the Earth Lords.

"That's fine with us too."

18. "I am going to evaporate the sea," said Our Father Sun in Heaven.

"When I rise, I shall cause the (Eastern) sea to evaporate," he said.

19. "When I set, I shall cause the Sea of the Setting Sun to evaporate," said Our Holy Father.

"Then the earth will no longer be covered by the sea."<sup>6</sup>

20. "It is better that we are thinking along these lines."

<sup>6</sup> This passage (verses 18 and 19) and the several verses which follow have complex cosmological referents. The basic assumption involved here is that the sun's vertical orbit goes through the eastern sea in the morning (coming from the underworld) and through the western sea in the late afternoon (returning to the underworld). As the sun comes up, it causes the eastern sea ("Sea of the Morning" in Tzotzil) to boil and evaporate, leaving a giant, empty basin. Similarly, the sun causes the western sea ("Sea of the Setting Sun" in Tzotzil) to boil and evaporate as it passes through that body of water on its way to the underworld. In the meantime, a great Chiapas river, the Grijalva ("Great River" in Tzotzil), which drains the Central Highlands, replenishes the eastern sea by day, running west to east, and the western sea by night, running east to west, according to Chamula belief, thus changing its direction of flow twice each day. This is the way fresh water reaches the empty basins of the eastern and western seas, and it makes of the "Great River" something like a connecting canal between the two seas. (According to Western reckoning, the Grijalva River has its source in the Cuchumatán Mountains near the Guatemalan border, and flows generally west to east, emptying into the Gulf of Mexico near the city of Villahermosa.) Other Chamulas (here sounding like Western empiricists) say that, because of the prevailing topography, the "Great River" could not possibly reverse its flow from west-east to east-west. According to their explanation, then, the western basin would fill up from the overflow of the eastern basin, finding a path via the northern and southern seas. Thus, at dusk, as the sun evaporates the western sea, overflow would reach the empty basin from the north and south, its ultimate origin being the flow of the Great River from west to east, into the eastern sea. Whichever of the two explanations Chamulas offer, the arrival of the fresh water in the two basins causes a gradual rise of water level in the empty basin, which is the Chamula explanation for tides. Here it is interesting to note that few Chamulas have seen either of the oceans which surround Mexico, and yet they have an explanation for tides, which, as noted above, are associated with the movement of the sun.



šut la sba'ik šči'uk la ti 'anhele ti htotik la ta  
vinahele.

21. "ʔentonse ha' la me heč kom sbe ti 'uk'um vo'ne'e,"  
ši ti mole.  
"heč' ʔo la me šal ti yo' la ʔoy li yočobe."  
"yuʔun sbe la me ʔuk'um," ši.
22. "ti yo' la mu šnoh ta ʔo' ti banamile," ši ti mole.  
"heč' ʔo la šal ti mu la bu ta šnoh ti nabe."
23. "yuʔun ta la šʔul huhun k'ak'al li nabe," ši ti mole.  
"k'alal la mi lok'talel ti htotike, ta šʔeč' yules ti  
nabe."  
"k'alal la mi bat ti htotike, ta la šʔeč' yules ti bu la  
ta šyal ti htotike."
24. "yuʔun ʔoy la nab ta slok'eb k'ak'al."  
"yuʔun ʔoy la nab ta maleb k'ak'al," ši ti mole.

So they discussed it, Our Father Sun in Heaven and  
the Earth Lords.

21. "So it was that the river beds were left that way long  
ago," said the old man.  
"That's why there are sinkholes."  
"They, too, are the pathways of the rivers," he  
said.<sup>7</sup>
22. "That is why the earth is not covered with water," said  
the old man.  
"That is why the sea does not flood."
23. "It is because the sea evaporates every day," said the  
old man.  
"When Our Father Sun rises, he evaporates the sea."  
"When Our Father Sun sets, he evaporates (the water)  
when he goes down."
24. "For there is a Sea of the Rising Sun."  
"There is also a Sea of the Setting Sun," said the  
old man.

<sup>7</sup>This refers to the many subterranean streams which drain the Chiapas Highlands. These are visible only where the limestone crust has collapsed, forming sinkholes or waterholes. Many of these water sources have a swift current which testifies to the fact that they are in fact formed by underground streams.



25. "pere mu hna'tik shayibal ša 'avil," ši ti mole.  
 "heč' 'o la me šal ti yo' la 'oy sbe ti  
 'uk'umetike;"  
 "pere yu'un ta la š'ul ti bu ta šk'ote," ši ti mole.
26. "htotik la'e šči'uk la 'anheletik la snopik."  
 "'entonse 'ak'o la mi šnoh ti 'uk'ume, pere yu'un  
 ta la š'ul  
 ti bu ta šk'ote," ši ti mole.
27. "'entonse 'ak'o la mi šnoh ti nabe, pere mu ša la  
 šnoh."  
 "mu šavil yu'un ta la š'ul ti bu la ta sk'ot ta  
 muk'ta nabe."
28. "heč ti nabe ha' la ti bu la ta šč'ai ti htotike."  
 "pere ha' la ti ta nome," ši ti mole.  
 "mu hna'tik bu 'oy ti nabe," ši.
29. "'a pere 'o'on škale na' mu ta yok vinahel ša," ši ti  
 mole.  
 "ha' ti bu ta šyal ti htotike."
30. "heč' 'o šal ti yo' la ta š'ul ti nabe."

25. "But who knows how many years ago all of this  
 happened," said the old man.  
 "But this is the reason why the rivers have their  
 pathways;"  
 "For they evaporate at their destination," said the  
 old man.
26. "Our Father planned this with the Earth Lords."  
 "Thus, although the rivers become full, they evaporate  
 where they go," said the old man.
27. "So, also, although the seas fill up, they do not flood."  
 "Don't you see that it is because water evaporates  
 when it reaches the great sea?"
28. "So, thus there is a sea where Our Father Sun in Heaven  
 disappears."  
 "But it's very far away," said the old man.  
 "We don't really know where it is," he said.
29. "But I think it is at the foot of the sky," said the old  
 man.  
 "It is there where Our Father Sun goes down."
30. "That is why the sea evaporates."



**"na' mu ta slaheb ša banamil," ši ti mol vo'ne'e.**

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"I think it might even be at the end of the earth,"  
said the old man.<sup>8</sup>

The second text refers to a series of events in the First Creation which partially coincide with the flood text, above. However, the bulk of the text refers to events which come after the flood. It discusses the Sun/Christ's first experiment with people. Called Adam and Eve, the first people in the text reflect some Biblical indoctrination in Chamula at some point in the past. However it is interesting to note that Adam and Eve are just "starters". They in turn make clay dolls which become their children. It is these dolls who are the ones who receive most of the Sun/Christ's attention in human education. These clay image motifs recall much of what is traditionally Maya in content (cf. J. E. S. Thompson 1965, 1967, 1970). Thus the text is clearly an amalgam of Christian and Ancient Maya motifs.

The narrator, Salvador López Castellanos of Milpoleta hamlet, was about 35 in 1968. He had been to school for three years and was literate in Spanish. Salvador became a close friend and my compadre, and over a period of time I taught him to write Tzotzil using a standard phonetic alphabet. He has since 1968 held an important religious office in Chamula and has remained traditional in spite of his literacy in Spanish and Tzotzil and his great skill as a native observer of his culture.

He first heard the following story from his grandmother when they were sitting in front of her house at dusk. He was then about ten years old. The subject of mountains came up as they watched the day fade. This made the silouettes of the mountains stand out, and the grandmother observed that there had not always been mountains on the earth. So the story began.

<sup>8</sup> The "end of the earth" literally means "where the earth ends", for the eastern and western cardinal points (as well as those of north and south) are found at the physical limits of the square earth island. For this reason "the end of the earth" and "the foot of the sky" are sometimes used to refer to the location of the cardinal points.



## TEXT 2. ABOUT THE FIRST PEOPLE.

1. kuento ba'yel kirsano.  
    veno, ti k'alal tal ti ba'yel kirsano'e, hč'ultotik la.
2. hun la vinik hun la 'anç.  
    sbi la 'aran la 'eva la ti ba'yel kirsono'e.
3. 'entonse ti 'arane ti 'eva'e muyuk la sna'ik.  
    ta yolon la te' ta švayik komo ti vo'ne'e.
4. č'abal la viç,  
    č'abal la na'ilč'en,  
    č'abal la tonetik.
5. solel la pariho ti banumile;  
    muyuk la viç,  
    muyuk la be'o'.  
    solel la pariho ti banumile.
6. heč'ošal ti 'arane ti 'eva'e ta yolon te' ta švayik,  
    komo 'a' ba'yel kirsano ti 'arane ti 'eva'e.
7. 'entonse ti 'arane ti 'eva'e na'tik k'uši snopik:

*Translation*

1. A story about the first people.  
    Well, when the first people came they were like gods.
2. There was one man and one woman.  
    The first people were called Adam and Eve.
3. Well, Adam and Eve didn't have houses.  
    They slept under a tree, for this was long ago.
4. There was not a mountain,  
    Not a cave,  
    Not a rock.
5. The earth was just flat;  
    No hills,  
    No valleys.  
    The earth was just level.
6. So it was that Adam and Eve slept under a tree,  
    For Adam and Eve were the first people.
7. Well, who knows just what Adam and Eve were thinking  
    about:



- lik la spasik 'ač'el,  
lik la spasik ti 'ač'ele.
8. lik la yak'bik sk'ob, shol, sni?, yok, ščikin, sat.  
skotol lahyak'bik.
9. lek la spasik  
'entonse ti 'ač'ele lik la hoibihuk ta kirsano.
10. ta ša la šk'opoh.  
ta 'ora ti 'ač'ele to'oše pas la ta kirsano.
11. 'entonse ti htotik ta vinahele čopol la čil  
ti muyuk viče,  
ti muyuk tone,  
ti muyuk be'o'e,
12. muyuk la bu šu? šanav ti 'o'e.  
č'abal la yočob.
13. mu la šu? šnaki to šnič'nabe.  
ta la šnohik ta 'o'.
14. 'a? ti č'abal be'o'e,  
ti č'abal vičetike.

- They started to make clay,  
They started to shape the clay.
8. They started to give the clay hands, head, nose, feet, ears  
and eyes.  
They put all of these on.
9. They did it very well.  
Then the clay began to turn into people.
10. Now it spoke.  
Quickly that which was clay turned into people.
11. Then Our Father in Heaven saw that it was wrong  
That there were no mountains,  
That there were no rocks,  
That there were no valleys.
12. That there was no place for the water to go.  
There were no sinkholes.<sup>9</sup>
13. His children could not survive.  
They would be covered with water.
14. For there were no valleys,  
There were no mountains.
15. Then came an earthquake,

<sup>9</sup> Sinkholes are a common physical feature in this limestone area.



15. k'alal ta štal nikel,  
toḥ ɕoɕ la.
16. ta š'eč' ti nikel 'a' la ti č'abal tone.  
'entonse ti hč'ultotik ta vinahele lik la slomes ti  
banumile.
17. tal la hun nikel,  
pero toḥ ɕoɕ la tahmek ti nikel 'eč'e.
18. 'entonse lom la skotol ti banumile:  
'eč'olašal 'oy viɕetik,  
'oy be'o'etik,  
'oy na'ilč'en,  
'oy tonetik.
19. k'alal to'oš č'abal tone, toḥ toyol la š'eč' nikel.  
huhun la k'ak'al ta š'eč' ti nikele.
20. muyuk la 'ol ti banumile.  
'eč'olašal lahyak' ton ti hč'ultotik ta vinahele.
21. lahyak' ton,  
lahyak' viɕetik,
22. lahyak' be'o'etik,

And it was a strong one.

16. The earthquake happened because there were no rocks.  
Then Our Holy Father Sun in Heaven began to cause  
the earth to collapse.
17. There was an earthquake,  
But the earthquake which happened was very, very  
strong.
18. Then all the earth sank:  
That is why there are mountains,  
Why there are valleys,  
Why there are caves,  
Why there are rocks.
19. When there were still no rocks, earthquakes were very  
strong.  
There was an earthquake every day.
20. The earth was not heavy.  
That is why Our Holy Father Sun in Heaven created  
rocks.
21. He made rocks,  
He made hills,



- lahyak' yočobetik.  
 23. 'entonse šu' ša šanav ti 'o'etike.  
     mu ša šnohik ta 'o' ti kirsano'etike.  
 24. 'eč' la ti nikel štoke.  
     muyuk ša la bu ta ššhelav huhun k'ak'al.  
 25. mu ša la šnik,  
     yu'un ti me' nikele toh 'ol ša la ti banumile.  
 26. pero ti ba'yel to'oše muyuk la 'ol;  
     'a' la ti muyuk to'oš tone.  
 27. 'entonse k'alal lahyak' ton ti hč'ultotike,  
     'a' lom ti banumile.  
 28. ta štal ti nikele,  
     pero hutuk ša.  
 29. muyuk ša ta š'eč' huhun k'ak'al.  
     pero ta vo'ne'e huhun k'ak'al ta š'eč' ti nikele.

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22. He made valleys,  
     He made sinkholes.  
 23. Then the water could run away.  
     No longer were the people covered with water.  
 24. The earthquakes also stopped.  
     They no longer came every day.  
 25. It no longer shook.  
     For the earth now felt very heavy to the "Mother of Earthquakes".<sup>10</sup>  
 26. But in the beginning it was not heavy;  
     The reason was that there were no rocks.  
 27. Then when Our Father Sun in Heaven put down the rocks,  
     The earth collapsed.  
 28. The earthquakes still come,  
     But there are fewer nowadays.  
 29. They no longer come every day.  
     But long ago earthquakes came every day.

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<sup>10</sup> "Mother of Earthquakes" (*me' nikel*) is a supernatural who lives under the earth and apparently looks something like a mermaid. Her tail movements are believed to cause earthquakes. Shalik later pointed out to me a small image in San Cristóbal de las Casas inlaid in the corner-stone of a 17th century Spanish building. The image is known by the Indian community as "Mother of Earthquakes" and frequently one sees flower offerings and candle wax near its base. It appears to be an image of Neptune, complete with flowing beard, fish body and trident. However the image is perceived as feminine by the Indian community. The mestizo residents of the town appear to take little notice of the image.



30. 'entonse ti 'arane ti 'eva'e ti bu nakalike,  
muyuk la bu šlom ti banumile.
31. ti k'alal 'eč' ti nikele,  
te la čotahtik ta yolon te' ti k'alal 'eč' ti nikele.
32. 'eč ti 'ač'el laspasik ti kirsano'e;  
ta la čotahtik ta yolon te'e šči'uk ti 'arane ti  
'eva'e.
33. pero kirsano ša la ti 'ač'el to'oše.  
pasem ša la ta kirsano.
34. hun la vinik,  
hun la 'aņ.
35. pero č'abal la sk'u'ik.  
t'ant'anik la k'ahomal la.
36. makal huteb yatik ščakik.  
ščukohik la ta šč'utik.
37. pero mu la sna' šve'ik.  
mu la sna' šk'ehinik.
38. mu la sna'ik spasik k'in.  
mu la sna'ik š'ak'otahik.
39. mu la sna'ik švayik.

30. Well, at the place where Adam and Eve lived,  
The earth did not collapse.
31. When the earthquake happened,  
There they were sitting under a tree at the time of the  
earthquake.
32. So also the clay from which they had made their children;  
It was sitting under the tree with Adam and Eve too.
33. But that which had once been of clay was now human.  
It has already turned into people.
34. One was a man,  
One was a woman.
35. But they had no clothes.  
They were just naked.
36. Their genitals and asses were covered a little bit.  
The covering has been tied around their waists.
37. But they did not know how to eat.  
They did not know how to sing.
38. They did not know how to have festivals.  
They did not know how to dance.



- te la čotahtik no'oš.
40. muyuk la ta švayik skotol k'ak'al,  
       'eč la ti banumile muyuk la ta š'ik'ub;  
       sak'o la skotol k'ak'al.
41. ta la šbat ti hč'ultotike,  
       ta la štal hč'ulme'tike,
42. pero ko'ol šči'uk hč'ultotike ta la štal hč'ulme'tik;  
       muyuk la ta š'ik'ub.
43. 'entonse ti htotik ta vinahele mu la sk'an ti muyuk ta  
       š'ik'ub ti banumile.  
       mu la šu' švai ti snič'nabe.  
       'a' la ti sak'o skotol k'ak'ale.
44. 'entonse 'ik'ubuk ti banumile.  
       'oy ša la 'ak'obaltik.  
       'oy ša la k'ak'altik.
45. veno, 'entonse ti k'alal makbat sat ti hč'ulme'tike,  
       hlikel la tal pukuhetik.
46. pero mu la bu šilik k'uši tal ti pukuhetike.

39. They did not know how to sleep.  
       They were just sitting there.
40. They didn't sleep during the whole day,  
       For the earth did not darken;  
       There was light all day.
41. Our Holy Father Sun set,  
       Our Holy Mother Moon rose,
42. But Our Holy Mother Moon came out just like Our Holy  
       Father Sun;  
       It did not get dark.
43. Then Our Father in Heaven did not like it that there was  
       no darkness on earth.  
       His children were unable to sleep.  
       There was light all day long.
44. Then the earth started to get dark.  
       Now there was light.  
       Now there was day.
45. Well, when the face of Our Holy Mother Moon was  
       covered,  
       The demons quickly came.
46. But they did not see how the demons came.



te ša 'o no'oš,  
va'ahtik,  
yilik.

47. 'a' la ti makal ša sat ti hč'ulme'tike mu ša la šyil ti yalabe.  
'eč'olašal lok' ti pukuhetike.
48. veno, 'eč la ti kirsano ti 'ač'el to'oše.  
ti laspas ti 'avane ti 'eva'e,
49. vayik la ščibalik.  
muyuk la bu ša'i 'oč svayelik ti ča'vo' kirsano'e.  
'eč la ti 'avane ti 'eva'e vayik la muyuk bu ša'ik  
'oč svayelik.
50. 'a' la ti muyuk to'oš hč'ultotik ta č'ulna'e.  
č'abal la č'ulna.  
č'abal la na'etik.
51. k'ahomal la 'oy hč'ultotik ta vinahele šči'uk  
hč'ulme'tik,  
'a' no'oš.
52. 'eč'olašal 'oy 'ep pukuhetik,

They were just there,  
Standing,  
Watching.

47. Because Our Holy Mother Moon's face was covered, she  
could no longer watch over her children.  
That is why the demons came out.
48. Well, so it was that these people who had recently been of  
clay,  
Those whom Adam and Eve had made,
49. Those two slept.  
But the two people did not realize that they had  
dropped off to sleep.  
Thus also Adam and Eve slept without realizing that  
they were sleeping.
50. There were still no saints in the church.  
There was no church.  
There were no houses.
51. There were just Our Father Sun in Heaven and Our Mother  
Moon in Heaven,  
Nothing more.



- k'ahomal la hun htotik 'oy ta vinahel šči'uk  
hč'ulme'tik.
53. ta k'unto la lahlok'uk'tal ti htotiketik ta č'ulna'etike.  
pero 'oy ša 'oš la vičetik, be'o'etike.
54. 'oy ša'oš skotol  
ti k'alal lahlok'uk ti htotiketike ta č'ulna'e.
55. 'entonse ti 'arane ti 'eva'e lah la sčaksba'ik,  
muyuk la bu ša'ik k'uši sčaksba'ik 'a' la ti vayike.
56. 'eč'olašal muyuk bu ša'ik lasčaksba'ik.  
pero 'a' la ti pukuhetik lahyal mantale ti  
lasčaksba'ik ti ba'yel kirsano'e.
57. 'entonse ti 'arane ti 'eva'e toh lek la ya'ik ti k'alal  
lasčaksba'ike.  
huhun ša la k'ak'al ta sčaksba'ik 'a' la ti toh lek  
ya'ik tahmeke.
58. veno, lik la yalbe ti ča' vo' kirsano'e 'ač'el to'oše:  
"k'alal čavayike šameyaba'ik šabuč'aba'ik."  
"pere toh lek tahmek," ši la ti 'arane ti 'eva'e.

52. That is why there were so many demons,  
For there was just Our Holy Father Sun in Heaven  
with Our Holy Mother Moon.
53. Later the saints in the church appeared.  
At that time, then, there were already mountains and  
valleys.
54. There was already everything  
When the saints came to the church.
55. Then came the time for Adam and Eve to make love,  
But they didn't understand how to start making love  
for they were asleep.
56. That is why they didn't know how to have intercourse.  
Then it happened that the demons ordered the first  
people to make love.
57. Then Adam and Eve felt very happy when they made love.  
Now they made love every day because it felt very  
good.
58. Well, they started to tell to the people who had once been  
of clay:  
"When you are sleeping, embrace and kiss each  
other."



59. porke ti kirsano ti 'ač'el to'oše mu la sna' smeysba'ik,  
 mu la sna' sbuɕ'aba'ik,  
 mu la sna' štahinik,  
 mu la sna' š'abtehik.  
 skotol mu sna'ik.
60. 'entonse lah la šč'unbik smantal ti 'arane ti 'eva'e;  
 lik la smeysba'ik sbuɕ'sba'ik ti 'ač'el to'oše.
61. veno, 'eč la ta k'un'k'un la vok' la yolik.  
 heč la lik bolikuk 'o ti kirsano'etik ta vo'ne'e.  
 ta k'un'k'un lik bolikuk.
62. pero mu la sna'ik spasik k'in,  
 mu la sna'ik šk'ehinik,  
 mu la sna'ik šuč'ik poš,  
 mu la sna'ik š'ak'otahik,  
 muyuk la sna'ik,  
 muyuk la sk'u'ik,  
 skotol mu sna'tik.

"It's very, very nice," said Adam and Eve.

59. For the clay people didn't know how to embrace each other,  
 Nor how to kiss each other,  
 Nor how to play,  
 Nor how to work.  
 They didn't know anything.<sup>11</sup>
60. Then they obeyed the order of Adam and Eve;  
 Those who were once of clay started to embrace and kiss each other.
61. Well, in that way, little by little their children were born.  
 That is how the people of long ago started to reproduce.  
 They multiplied little by little.
62. But they didn't know how to have festivals,  
 They didn't know how to sing,  
 They didn't know how to drink rum,  
 They didn't know how to dance,  
 They didn't have houses,  
 They didn't have clothing,  
 They didn't know anything.

<sup>11</sup> Both "play" and "work" in this passage have a sexual connotation.



63. eč štok mu la snaʔik ʔep šveʔik.  
hbeh la sat ʔišim ta šk'ušik.
64. pero ti baʔyele muyuk la ʔišim  
ʔaʔ noʔoš la ʔoy ʔitah, napuš ščiʔuk la čenek',  
ʔaʔ noʔoš la.
65. ta k'unto la tal ti ʔišime,  
pero ti ʔitahe, ti čenek'e, ti napuše,  
muyuk la bu šilik k'uši tal;  
te ša ʔo noʔoš la.
66. yilik ʔaʔ la baʔyel lok' ti ʔitahe, ti čenek'e;  
ti ʔišime ʔaʔ la ɕ'akal to tal.
67. puru la ʔitah ta sloʔik ti kirsanoʔe ti ʔač'el toʔošē.  
muyuk la bu ta sveʔik vah.
68. ʔaʔ noʔoš la ta sloʔik ʔitah ščiʔuk čenek'.  
pero hutuk noʔoš la ta sloʔik ti ʔitahe ti napuše.
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69. ʔentonse ti pukuhetike lik la smil ti htotik ta vinahele,  
ʔaʔ ti ta toʔoš šanav ta banumil ti htotik ta  
vinahele.

63. Neither did they know how to eat enough.  
They crunched only one uncooked grain of maize.
64. But in the beginning there was no maize.  
There were only cabbage, turnip greens, and beans,  
That was all.
65. Later maize came,  
But as for cabbage, beans and turnip greens,  
No one saw how they came;  
They were just there.
66. They saw that cabbage and beans were  
there first;  
Maize came later.
67. The people who were once made of clay ate only cabbage.  
They didn't eat tortillas.
68. They only ate cabbage and beans.  
They only ate a little bit of cabbage and turnip greens.
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69. Then the demons started to kill Our Father Sun in Heaven,  
For at that time Our Father Sun in Heaven was still  
walking on the earth.



- ta k'unto muy ta vinahel šči'uk hč'ulme'tik.  
 70. ?entonse ti hč'ultotik ta vinahele čam la.  
     lah la smukik pero muyuk la čamem.  
 71. pero ti pukuhetike čamem ša la yilik.  
     lah ša la smukik ?a? to lahyilik kušul la.  
 72. muyuk la čamem.  
     ta la šanav.  
 73. veno, yilik ti muyuk bu ščame,  
     lik la yak'bik poš yuč' kapal la ta sk'ab pukuhetik.  
 74. lah la yuč'ti hč'ultotike,  
     pero kapal la ta k'abil yakub la ti hč'ultotike.  
 75. yal la ta lum hunuk ?ora.  
     ?entonse ti hč'ultotik ta vinahele toh lek la ya'i to  
     poš.

Afterwards, he went up to the sky with Our Holy Mother Moon.

70. Then Our Father Sun in Heaven died.  
     They buried him but he wasn't dead.  
 71. But the demons thought that he was dead.  
     They had already buried him when they saw that he was alive.  
 72. He was not dead.  
     He was walking.  
 73. Well, they saw that he hadn't died,  
     And then they started to give him rum to drink mixed with the demons' urine.<sup>12</sup>  
 74. Our Father Sun drank it,  
     But since it was mixed with urine, Our Father Sun got drunk.  
 75. He passed out there on the ground for an hour or so.  
     Then, coming to, Our Holy Father Sun in Heaven thought the rum tasted very good.

<sup>12</sup> The local alcoholic drink (*poš*) is a clear rum distilled by Chamulas from unrefined cane sugar. It comes in several grades, from weak ("cold") to strong ("hot") to very strong ("the flower of rum"). Several hamlets in Chamula specialize in the distilling of rum and the location of the stills is extremely sensitive information, since none of the stills is licensed or pays state or federal taxes. This rum accompanies nearly all secular and religious transactions in Chamula today. The volume of this liquor which is consumed is extraordinary, although soft drinks—Coca Cola, Fanta (orange) and Pepsi Cola—have recently become acceptable substitutes for rum in many contexts.



76. lahyuč'e.  
 "ʔaʔ lek ʔeč ta škak'be yuč' li hnič'nabe."  
 77. "mi moʔohe, heč ʔo skotol k'ak'al mu snaʔ šk'ehin."  
 "mu snaʔ šʔak'otah,"  
 "mu snaʔ spasik k'in."  
 78. "ʔaʔ lek škak'be yuč' poš."  
 "ta mi lahyuč' poše, ta šispasbun hk'inal."  
 79. "ta ščanik ta stihik vob, ʔarpa," ši la ti hč'ultotik ta  
 vinahele.  
 ʔentonse lik la ščanik yuč'el poš ti kirsano ti ʔač'el  
 toʔoše.  
 80. veno, k'alal lah yuč'ik poš ti kirsano.  
 snaʔ ša la šk'ehinik;  
 snaʔ ša la šʔak'otahik;  
 snaʔ ša la stihik vob ʔarpa;  
 snaʔ ša la spasik k'in;  
 skotol snaʔik ša.  
 81. pero ʔaʔto ti lahyuč'ik poše.
- 

76. He drank some more.  
 "It would be good for me to give this to my children  
 to drink."  
 77. "If I don't, they will forever be unable to sing."  
 "They won't know how to dance,"  
 "They won't know how to have festivals."  
 78. "I had better give them this rum to drink."  
 "If they drink rum they will have festivals in my  
 honor."  
 79. "They will learn to play the guitar and harp," said Our  
 Holy Father Sun in Heaven.  
 Then the people who were once made of clay started  
 to learn to drink rum.  
 80. Well, then the people drank the rum.  
 Then they knew how to sing;  
 Then they knew how to dance;  
 Then they knew how to play the guitar and the harp;  
 Then they knew how to have festivals;  
 Then they knew everything.  
 81. But it was only after they had drunk the rum.  
 If they had not drunk the rum, they would not have



ti mančukuk lahyuč'ik poše muyuk bu laščanik  
stihik vob 'arpa.

82. pero komo lahyuč'ik ti poše,  
'eč'ošal lahščanik stihel vob 'arpa,  
šk'ehinik,  
spasik k'in.

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83. veno, heč la ti ba'yel ti kirsano'e ti 'ač'el to'oše:  
'a li sate ko'ol šči'uk sat č'i'.

84. lek la šil šanav ta 'ak'obaltik.  
ko'ol la šči'uk k'ak'altik ta šil.

85. pero ti hč'ultotik ta vinahele lahyil  
ti ko'ol šči'uk sat č'i' ti šnič'nabe.

86. mu sk'an.

learned to play the guitar and harp.

82. But since they did drink the rum,  
That is why they learned to play the guitar and harp,  
To sing,  
To have festivals.

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83. Well, it was a fact about the first people who were once  
made of clay:

They had eyes just like dogs' eyes.

84. They saw very well to walk at night.

They saw just like during the day.

85. But Our Father Sun in Heaven noticed

That his children had eyes just like dogs' eyes.

86. He didn't like it.

He saw it as wrong that they were able to look at the  
Earth Lord's money in the mountain.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> (See also note 4 in Text 1.) The Earth Lord is known by two names: *yahval banamil* ("owner of the earth") and *'anhel* ("angel"). The angels are familiars of the Earth Lord and sometimes they actually represent him. These supernatural beings are part of a complex set of beliefs concerning the origin of rain and the origin of metallic objects, including money and manufactured goods made of metal. The Earth Lord also has frequent dealings with the demons who inhabit subterranean passages and also the edges of the earth. The demons pick up metallic goods and money which the Sun is believed to leave at the western horizon each day on his trip around the universe. The demons deliver the goods to the Earth Lord, who in turn makes them available to Ladinos, who then sell them to Indians at what they believe to be greatly inflated prices. The Earth Lord himself is represented in Indian drawings as



čopol la ta šil ta la šilbe stak'in 'anhel ta vič.

87. "ʔaʔ lek ta hmakbe sat."

"mo'ohe, mu štun," ši la ti hč'ultotik ta vinahele.

88. veno, ti kirsano'e makbat la sat ta huteb pok'il.

veno, k'alal makbat ti sate, mu ša la šil sbe ta  
ʔak'obaltik.

89. mu ša la šuʔ šanavik ta ʔak'obaltik.

heč'olašal mu šil sbeʔik li kirsano'etik ta  
ʔak'obaltike.

pero ti vo'ne'e toh lek la šilik tahmek.

§ § § § § § §

90. ʔeč štok ti hč'ultotik ta vinahele lahyil ti muyuk ʔep ta  
šveʔ ti kirsano'e.

87. "I had better cover their eyes."

"If I don't, it won't be right," said Our Holy Father  
Sun in Heaven.

88. Well, now the people had their eyes covered with a piece  
of cloth.

Well, when their eyes were covered, they didn't see  
their way at night.

89. They could no longer walk at night.

That is why the people no longer saw their way at  
night.

But long ago they could see very well.

§ § § § § § §

90. So, also, Our Holy Father Sun in Heaven saw that people

an obese macho-type Ladino dressed in a silver-studded Mexican *Charro* costume, of the type worn by Mexico's famed *mariachi* singing groups.

The angels are also part of this complex of beliefs. In Chamula drawings, they look like smaller fat Ladinos but they have great powers surrounding the fact that they supply rain. Thunder is their bellowing and crying as they send forth clouds from their mountain caves and crevices. And from these clouds comes rain. (It has perhaps been the association of Christian angels with clouds in Catholic religious pictures which encouraged the Maya link between Christian angels and precolumbian rain gods.) Through the link of clouds with caves and the Earth Lords' and angels' realm, rain is, by Chamula reckoning, ultimately of subterranean origin. This may be partly explained by the fact that most water supplies in this limestone area do in fact come from water holes and springs, and not from surface sources. Thus, returning to the text, the people's ability to see the Earth Lord's money inside the mountain is to be able to penetrate a great complex of knowledge and power, of both economic and supernatural order. It would not be fitting for ordinary people to possess all of this knowledge; hence, Our Father Sun's concern, which is recorded in this text.



čopol la ta šil.

91. "ʔaʔ lek ʔak'o veʔikuk ʔep."  
       "moʔohe, muyuk ta šʔabtehiḱ ʔep."  
 92. "ti mi veʔik ʔepe, ta šʔabtehiḱ ʔep,"  
       ši la ti hč'ultotik ta vinahele.  
 93. heč'olašal toh ʔep ta šveʔik ti kirsanoʔetik ta čamoʔe.  
       ʔaʔ la ti ta smantal ti hč'ultotik ta vinahele.  
 94. ʔaʔ la čopol ta šil ti k'ahomal hbeh sat ʔišim ta šk'uše.  
       ʔaʔ la čopol ta šil muyuk la ʔep ta šʔabtehiḱ ti  
       kirsanoʔetike.  
 95. veno, ʔeč la k'alal ta sč'unubal li ʔišime ta ʔaʔ la tal ta  
       ʔuk'um la.  
       kahal la tal ta ba ʔoʔ neneʔčobtiḱe.  
 96. bat la sčakik ti neneʔ čobtik.  
       lah la sč'unik te ta tiʔ ʔuk'um.  
 97. lah la yak'bil yaʔlel ti yoʔ la mu štakiḱ ʔoʔe.  
       ʔentonse te la č'i ti neneʔ čobtiḱe.  
 98. mu la bu štakiḱ.  
       te la šč'i.

didn't eat enough.

He thought it was wrong.

- 91 "It would be better, even if they ate a lot."  
       "If not, they will not work a lot."  
 92. "If they eat a lot, they will work a lot,"  
       So said Our Holy Father Sun in Heaven.  
 93. That is why the people of Chamula eat a lot.  
       It was the command of Our Holy Father Sun in  
       Heaven.  
 94. He saw it as wrong that they ate only one grain of maize  
       at a time.  
       He saw it as wrong that the people did not work  
       enough.  
 95. Well, just then a young maize plant came by way of the  
       river.  
       A little maize plant was floating on top of the water.  
 96. They went to catch the little maize plant.  
       They planted it there at the edge of the river.  
 97. They threw water on it so that it would not dry out.  
       Then the little maize plant grew.  
 98. It didn't dry out.



99. 'entonse ta k'unk'un la 'ibol ti čobti<sup>14</sup>ke.

'ibol la 'ep tahmek

'ibol 'ep ti čobti<sup>14</sup>ke.

\$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$

100. 'ibol 'ep ti kirsano'e.

skotol 'ibol tahmek.

101. 'entonse ti kirsano'etike ta k'unk'un lik spas sna'ik.

pero yanalte? la ti san'ike.

102. pero mu la štun.

k'alal la mi tal 'o'e, ta la š'eč'.

mu la smak yu'un 'o? ti yanalte'e.

103. heč la ti sk'u'ik štoke;

spat te? la.

There it grew.

99. So the cornfield grew, little by little.

It increased a great deal.

The cornfield multiplied.

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100. So with the people, they increased a lot.

Everything multiplied.

101. Then, slowly, the people started to make houses.

But their houses were made of the leaves of trees.

102. But they were no good.

When the rains came, they leaked.

The leaves did not keep out the water.

103. So also with their clothes;

They were made of tree bark. <sup>14</sup>

104. A little later, San Juan came with his sheep. <sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> The second part of couplet 103 was added by the narrator, by way of clarification, in an interview that came after the original text was dictated. The point is that clothes made of tree bark also leaked, just like the houses made of leaves.

<sup>15</sup> San Juan (John the Baptist) is the patron saint of Chamula. He is believed to be a younger sibling of the Sun/Christ deity. Furthermore, he did not, according to other narratives, come directly to Chamula. He migrated from the lowlands because his sheep did not like the hot lowland climate. Chamulas explained his association with sheep through popular Roman Catholic pictures which some Chamulas have in their homes. These pictures depict him as a shepherd with a small flock. Furthermore, the image of him in the Chamula church includes a lamb at his feet. Thus he is associated with the whole complex of wool production, which to this day is a Chamula specialty in the Chiapas Highlands. Nearly all Chamula families keep a small flock of sheep. Chamula women are expert weavers, who make not only their families' clothing but also have a small surplus of wool which they sell to other Indians as raw wool and as finished items of clothing.



104. ta k'unk'un la tal 'a' to la ti k'alal tal ti htotik sanhuan.  
       'a' to la tal sk'u'ik ti kirsano'etike.
105. veno, lik spas sk'u'ik ti kirsano'etike.  
       pero ta k'unk'un la lik spasik ti sk'u'ike.
106. mu la sna'ik k'uši ta spasik,  
       porke ti k'alal vok'ike t'ant'anik la.
107. muyuk la sk'u'ik,  
       k'ahomal la pat te' ščukoh ta šč'utik.
108. ti yo' la mu švinah 'o ti sbek'talike.  
       'entonse k'alal la k'ot ti htotik sanhuan šči'uk ščihe.
109. yilik la k'uši k'ot.  
       yilik la k'uši lik spas sna.  
       yilik la k'uši lashines viç.  
       yilik la ti 'oy to'oš nab ti bu la spas ti sna'e.  
       yilik la ti k'uši bat sa'talel ti ton sventa sna'e.  
       yilik la ti k'uši ta stihsba stuk ti kampana ti hok'ol ta  
       te'e.

- Not until that time did people's clothing come.
105. Well, he started to make clothing with his children.  
       Ever so slowly, they started to make their clothing.
106. They had not known how to make it,  
       For when they were created, they were naked.
107. They had no clothes,  
       Just bark tied around their bodies.
108. That was so that they wouldn't notice their bodies.  
       Then Our Lord San Juan arrived with his sheep.
109. They saw how he came.  
       They saw how he started to make his house.  
       They saw how he caused the hill to tumble down.  
       They saw how there remained a lake where he built  
       his house.  
       They saw how he went to look for rocks for his house.  
       They saw how the bell which was hanging in the tree  
       rang all by itself.



pero 'a' ti ba'yel kirsano lahyilike.

110. 'entonse k'alal ti molibe lahyalbe komel ti šnič'nabike ti k'uši č'i'ike.

'eč'ošal sna'ohik skotol kirsano'etike ti k'uši lahč'i'ikuk it ba'yel kirsano'etike.

111. k'alal čam ti moletike,  
yalohbe ša 'oš šnič'nabik ti k'us'elanil te vo'ne'e.

The first people saw all of this.<sup>16</sup>

110. Then, when he grew old, he told his children how they had come to be.

That is why all people know how the first people survived.

111. When the old people died,  
They had already told their children what things were like long ago.

<sup>16</sup> This long sequence (verse 109) refers to San Juan's arrival in Chamula Ceremonial Center. With a small earth tremor, San Juan caused a hill to collapse which created a depression which came to be a lake so that his sheep would have a place to drink. This lake can still be seen in the Ceremonial Center. San Juan's house in the passage refers to the Chamula church. The bell motif refers to an event which happened during the construction of the church: when the building was nearly completed, a bell appeared in a nearby tree and began ringing all by itself. It was later placed in the tower of the Chamula church, where it can be found to this day.



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### *Resumen*

Publica aquí Gary H. Gossen dos textos de contenido cosmogónico, recogidos por él de sus informantes chamulas, Manuel López Calixto y Salvador López Castellanos. En ambos textos hay vestigios de antiguas creencias vigentes en el contexto de la cultura maya. Igualmente son perceptibles otros elementos de procedencia bíblica y, en general, cristiano-europea. Constituyen así estos textos otra muestra del sincretismo religioso que se ha desarrollado específicamente en el ámbito indígena de Chiapas.