

IXIL

The Ixil occupy the northern part of the department of El Quiché, Guatemala, centering around the towns of Nebaj, Chajul, and Cotzal. They number something over 25,000 speakers. The following texts were collected by Raymond and Helen Elliott, who have resided in Nebaj since 1953.

TEXTS

Jesucristo Eludes His Captors
Dangerous Days
Su'mal Mountain
Lightning
The Origin of the Copal Custom
The Unfaithful Wife
The Lazy Boy
The Man Who Was Carried Off by a Buzzard
The Lying Dog
This Younger Generation!
"Godfather" Rock
Fright
Adam, Noah, and the Flood
Adam and the Flood

(For additional pertinent information on Ixil culture and beliefs, see "Ixil Ethnography" by these investigators in Languages of Guatemala.)



JESUCRISTO ELUDES HIS CAPTORS

They killed a rooster and ate it.¹ While they were eating, the rooster flapped its wings in the pot, Chile got into their eyes. They rubbed their eyes, and meanwhile Jesucristo escaped. They cleaned out their eyes. When they could see again Jesucristo was gone. "Well, now, where is Jesucristo? Where is Jesucristo now? Come on, let's hunt for him." They went to hunt Jesucristo, but he didn't appear. Jesucristo didn't appear; they didn't find him. As they went, they separated into groups to hunt him. They hunted him, but they didn't find him.

Jesucristo met a shepherd in the pasture. "Give me a lamb," Jesucristo said to the shepherd. The shepherd gave it to him. Jesucristo removed its entrails, and then left them in the trail.

"What?² Jesucristo removed his intestines! No wonder he goes so fast!³ Now, then, let's remove our intestines so we'll be able to go fast (and lightly) too. Just as Jesucristo did, so that he can go weightlessly, that's how we'll go, since it is clear that he removed his intestines so he could run faster. We'll do the same now, we'll take out our intestines and then we'll go faster-and-lighter also. We'll be just like he is if we take out our intestines. Then we'll be able to catch him. But now we can't because we still have our intestines," they said.

They removed their intestines, and they all died. Instead of catching Jesucristo, death is what they did. They're not thinking about Jesucristo, they just died because they removed their intestines.

-
- 1 Jesucristo has become one of the names of one of the Ixil folk heroes. He is feuding with the Jews, which term is synonymous with devil (the Jews killed Christ, and only a devil would do that). He is astute and deceitful, so one has to stay on the good side of him. He always comes out on top. Somehow the Jews managed to capture him, and they have him tied up in the corner of the hut as they sit down to a celebration feast, the entrée being rooster stew.
 - 2 The Jews have arrived at the spot in the trail where he left the animal's entrails.
 - 3 Note the double meaning of the Ixil here: both "fast" and "light-weight."



DANGEROUS DAYS¹

People talk about the significance of the dangerous (or consecrated?) days. We don't call all days special. Holidays like those of Saint Mary²-- there are lots of them, but they aren't special. Rather, consecrated days we call only those commemorating the death of Our Father. Thus, the consecrated days indicate that, since Our Father died, people can't work because these are important days, as we say. When the time of the special days comes, everyone takes note of the fact that they can't work.

A man can't go to work his cornfield, he can't go to get firewood, he can't cut down a tree, because he well knows that Our Father died. If he goes to get firewood, if he goes to work his cornfield, he is not demonstrating respect and he is guilty. We've heard that if one doesn't show respect, he may be changed into an animal; he may die, because it's dangerous to work on the special days. Because it amounts to the same thing, if someone works on the special days when he knows Our Father died, as if he himself had done it against Our Father, as if he himself had killed Him just like the Jews did long ago, when they beat Our Father and killed Him during the special days. If anyone does that, he may die. You can't work on special days.

A woman, if she weaves, well that's not right, because she knows that it isn't right to weave or wash clothes. Whatever kind of work is ordinarily done --well, in the special days you can't do it, because such a woman knows that if she doesn't show respect, she may die. Because we've heard about a thing that happened a long time ago. There was a girl who was changed into an animal because she wasn't respectful. She went to wash clothes, without her mother thinking; she went to wash; she didn't show respect, and she didn't return to the house. They went to hunt her, and there she was, already turned into an animal, there near the water, they say. So if anyone does that way, they should be aware that that might happen to them all of a sudden, because they don't have respect.

1 The Ixil word txala means "chosen" "set-apart" "special" and thus almost "tabu" in some contexts.

2 This is the day of the Nebaj patron saint, the day of the Assumption of Mary on August 15.

SU'MAL MOUNTAIN

There is a peak called Su'mal that is dangerous for us to climb, because when we climb it it shakes when we go up. But we're afraid, too. We're able to climb it but we wouldn't live--we'd die. That's what one man did that climbed it, that came here long ago.¹ Why, he couldn't get there; he immediately died. It's dangerous to climb the mountain. He doesn't come now, because he died. It's dangerous to climb it because who knows what the peak will do!

Maybe there's a god up on it, or maybe it just moves by itself, but it's dangerous to climb it. It's a hard climb, but we can do it, but we'd be worried while we did it. But we're able to do it. But we wouldn't live anyway. We wouldn't be alive, but we'd die if we went up there. So now we don't go up there because we wouldn't live. We'd just die. What does it do? What does the peak do? Maybe it has a spirit. What does it do, then? Or maybe the souls of our ancestors are up there, but we don't know. What it does isn't good!

-
- 1 This reference alludes to an American ethnologist who died a few days after climbing the mountain.

LIGHTNING

I'll tell something about lightning that flashes in the afternoons. An animal in the sea, they say, comes up and opens its mouth and then lightning flashes, as we hear it.¹ But who knows if it's true, because no one knows. But we've just heard that there are winds, they say, that meet where one wind is a little cold and the other is hot and when they meet, they say, the lightning flashes. And that's the same, they say, with the lights in the town.² But then, we hear any old thing because we're ignorant. We don't know, but that's what happens, they say.

-
- 1 Suggestive of mythological dragons and sea monsters.
 2 The hydroelectric plant on the river; some have no doubt puzzled over how you get electric light out of water.

THE ORIGIN OF THE COPAL CUSTOM

Our Father Jesucristo had a sister who was pregnant. When her time came, two friends of Our Father arrived, they say. It was heard that the sister of Our Father was about to die, and they arrived. "Are you here, Sir?" they said.¹ "Yes, I'm here," said Our Father. "What is your errand?" "Our errand is nothing more than that we came to see you because your sister is sick," they say. Our Father said, "I'm not calling for you," he said, they say. He received no one with his sister.

"What help for it?" they said. "No,² here's what we'll do. One of us will take copal (incense), the other will take diapers." That is how the incense burner³ became established. So, when they went in, they say, they swung the incense. There was a strong wind, they say. The smoke from the incense blew into the face of one of them. And his face remained pure black, the one who carried the incense, because of the smoke of the incense. They went away.

One who was inside with Our Father said,⁴ "What was that that they carried?" he said to Our Father. "All right then, call them," said Our Father to the man. The men returned. They returned and one of them kept rubbing his face. When they went in with Our Father, "What was that you carried?" said Our Father. "No, Father, it was only incense that we carried," they said to Our Father.

As soon as they entered with Our Father, his sister gave birth. Our Father said, "I see that incense is very good! Now a blessing will remain on the incense," said Our Father. "But your face will stay black," said Our Father to them. And that is how it is now. That is why there are black daughters and white sons.⁵

-
- 1 This is part of common greeting formula among the Ixil.
 - 2 "No" is often not a true negative but is used merely as an introductory word much like "well then," "so," etc. (Ed.)
 - 3 This might also be interpreted "burning of incense."
 - 4 Characteristic of the Mayan languages is the use of "said" instead of "asked" when quoting a question. The word "asked" is reserved for use in the sense of "ask for (something)." (Ed.)
 - 5 Mayan languages make use of many compounds--black and white, sons and daughters, fathers and mothers, mountains and plains, etc. Here the narrator breaks with the traditional style by using half of the compound "black and white" with each half of the compound "sons and daughters." (Ed.)

THE UNFAITHFUL WIFE

There was a man, they say, long ago, who had a cat. When the cat came up to him it was injured. They say that when the man's wife came, she beat the cat. "Don't beat the cat," said the man, they say. "No, because the cat's no good," said the woman.

"I've been beaten, Father," said the cat to the man. "Why were you beaten?" "No, but tomorrow you take me to your work, you carry me and take some food for me. I'll do you a favor. I'll free you from the claws of an animal," said the cat. "How could that be, what you say?" said the man. "You mean, am I able to do it?" said the cat to the man. "Who knows if you could, since you're very small; maybe you can't do it," said the man to the cat. "I have claws," said the cat. "What for?" "No, but tomorrow you take me and I'll tell you something in the cornfield," said the cat.

"All right, then." Daybreak came. "I'm going to take my cat," said the man, and he went on his way with the cat. The cat said to him, "No, Father, a man is coming in with my mother," said the cat. "Can that be true, what

you're saying?" said the man to the cat. "Yes, it's true what I'm telling you. There I was seated by the fire when my mother beat me with firewood." "But why? Who is the man?" "No, he's very tall," said the cat. "And there's another thing: (they say) he's going to get the best of you. He'll change himself into an animal and kill you. You'll go on a trip, you'll go to your cornerrib in the cornfield and he'll go and kill you," said the cat to the man. "Why, they haven't fed me but rather I've been beaten by my mother. Well, that's what I'm telling you. Every time you go to your cornfield, this man comes in with my mother; he sleeps in the bed with my mother," said the cat to the man.

"All right, then," said the man. "But don't you say anything to her," said the cat to the man. But he couldn't bear it. He came and said to his wife, "This is what the cat said to me, that a man is coming in with you," said the man to his wife. "Liar! He's just lying!" said the woman. She really got angry; she really got mad at the cat. So another day, the man didn't take his cat, and when he returned, the cat had been beaten. "But Father, why did you speak to my mother?" said the cat to the man. "I said it because perhaps you are lying." "No, it's true what I tell you," said the cat to the man. Ah! Then the man said, "Then you'd better come with me," said the man.

"Why, you devil!" said the woman to the cat. "You're bad because you tattled to your father about me. You'll eat! I'll give you your food! But your food that I'll give you is this stick!" She grabbed a burning stick of firewood. The cat was beaten, its fur was burned. Then the woman said, "Scat! Scat! If you don't get out of here now. . .!" The cat went out; it cried much, they say. It went out of the house, and came to wait for its owner by the door of the house. It was very happy when he arrived.

The man said to his wife, "Fix my food for day-after-tomorrow because I'm going on a trip. I'm going to go to the cornerrib to guard it." Ah! how happy she was! How she liked what he said to her! "Ah! it's all right, then." She killed a chicken, she fixed her husband's food; she put in his tamalitos¹ and away he went. He was to be gone five days, according to what he told her.

"I'm going to take our cat," said the man, according to what the cat had told him: "I'm going with you, Father, because you're in for it now. If you go, you'll die," said the cat to the man. "Let's go, then, I'll take you." "Put me in your shoulder-bag and I'll go with you. You carry me and I'll go. Because tomorrow, when we get there, you go hunt firewood, don't you go to work. A lot of firewood you have to hunt, one load, two loads, even three loads of firewood you'll go hunt," said the cat to the man.

"What's all the firewood for that I'm supposed to hunt? Because my work is what I'm going for," said the man to his cat. "No, because an animal is coming, a lion is coming," said the cat to the man. "Is it true what you're saying?" "Of course. Bring the firewood now because this one that is coming is my mother's companion," said the cat to the man. Ah! So the man believed the cat. "I'm going now, then. If he doesn't come now, if he doesn't come to kill me, then I'm going to kill you, you!" said the man to the cat. "No, because he's coming. Don't you worry because I heard what they said, because

right in front of me they said it, right there by the fire I heard it. You listen to what I say," said the cat to the man. "All right, then."

Away he went; he made six trips with firewood. Ah! Then when he finished night fell. "Let's eat then," said the man to the cat. "All right." The cat sat near the fire. "You're going to make a big fire, then you're going to go inside the corncrib, but I'll stay nearby close to the crib," said the cat to the man. "But you be ready with your machete, and have it sharp! You put a good edge on your machete," he said. "Well, all right," said the man. He was very much afraid. "Now I'll die," he said. "But don't be afraid, even if I'm small and the animal is very big, because this animal is a nagual² lion," said the cat to the man. Ah! "All right, then." "But he's a big one. You'll hear him screeching when he comes up here."

Soon the animal screamed in the mountain. Then--"See, here comes the animal! Be ready, Father, because here comes the animal! See, it's the animal I told you about."

Then the cat began to wash its claws. It washed its face, it licked underneath its face, it washed its face while it was sitting there. It looked at each one of its claws--it looked at its claws. When the nagual lion arrived, it did a flip near the corncrib, and the crib shook because of the nagual lion.

"I'm in for it now! Poor me! Am I brave enough? What god can free me?" said the man, the husband of the woman. "Maybe this is the one the cat told about!"

The cat was sitting near the granary, and soon the nagual was running round and round the granary, running around, running around. The granary shook a lot, (because) the animal was screaming a lot. Then when the cat saw that the animal was about to throw itself into the granary to pull the man outside, it quickly scratched the eyes of the nagual. It planted its claws and the lion was blinded. Then the cat shouted, "Come and help me, Father, come and help me now!"

How the nagual animal was thrashing around! It was very big, and the cat was very little, but it was well fastened to the eyes of the animal by its claws. Ah! The cat had said to the man, "When you see that the animal is almost dead, then you come and slash the nagual," it said. "All right." When the man, then, saw that the animal was almost dead, he came out, raised his machete and slashed at the animal.

"The animal is dead, Father; it's all over! But don't go and tell my mother, because this one was her 'husband'," said the cat to the man. "Ah! All right," said the man. But he couldn't keep quiet. "You'll burn it up--that's what the firewood you gathered is for, because you'll burn the animal," said the cat. "All right." The man burned the nagual. "Ah! Tomorrow we'll go," said the man.

He couldn't bear it. He arrived home with his wife. "Hola, hombre!"³ said the man to his wife, they say. "Sí, hombre, come in! You've come already? I thought you'd come day-after-tomorrow." "No, I came now because

something happened to me so that I almost died!" said her husband to the woman. "What happened to you? What happened to you? Because it isn't that I didn't give you your food, because I did!" "Of course, man! But I thought I was going to die, and I would have if it hadn't been for this little cat, who was able to overcome an animal for me--a lion. Poor little cat of ours, but it won over the animal. So I didn't die. So it was better that I come on now," said the man to his wife.

Ah! The woman began to cry. She took her water-pot, she went to get water, and she cried by the water's edge. "Then it's certain that my husband⁴ died, and all because of that cat! But we'll see tomorrow! I'll kill that cat," said the woman against the cat.

The next morning, then, "I'll be right back, I'm going to get firewood," said the husband to his wife. "All right." The woman wept bitterly for her husband, that is, her second "husband." Ah! Then, when her husband, that is her real husband, left--"You bad one, you, that killed my husband! You bad one, you, that won over my husband!" said the woman to the cat. She raised a stick against the cat and broke a bone in its thigh so that the cat walked limping. The man came back.

"What is it you said, Father, tattling on me to my mother? Because she broke my bone; the bone came out of my thigh. But it's your fault, because here I did you a favor and you tattled on me! I was able to do you a favor and you didn't appreciate it. You'll see that I'm going to die. What memories I'm leaving with you!" said the cat. Eh! That's how it ended.

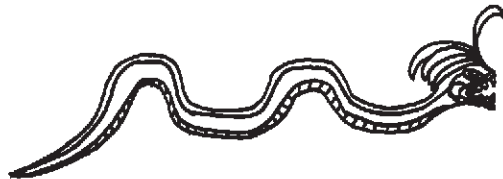
1 Cornmeal balls. (Ed.)

2 A creature who is actually a person in animal form.

Ruth Bunzel states that a nagual can be a stone buried in the earth as well as an animal. She defines it as the form and substance of one's personality incorporated in some animal or sacred object (p. 274). Correa points out that the term represents two different ideas--the individual totem as Bunzel mentions, and the transformation of a man into an animal (p. 42). (Ed.)

3 A good-natured greeting. (Ed.)

4 Paramour. (Ed.)



THE LAZY BOY

There was a man who sent his son to bring firewood. When the boy went to get firewood, he was late getting back. When he came, he was scolded by his father. The boy cried. "All right, father, I'm leaving. You always scold me as if I weren't working, but I am working. But you want me to work all night, too, that's what you want!"

The man answered his son, "Leave it (forget it), son. But don't go. I was angry; I was quite angry when I spoke to you. Leave it. If I'm scolding you, and you want to leave, where will you go? Where will you get to? Who will give you food? Who'll give you clothing? You'll leave me because I correct you, but it's just because you're a bit lazy and won't mind what I tell you. You answer back, you don't want me to advise you, you think of no one but yourself--as if it were such a big thing for me to send you to bring firewood! So you say, 'I'm going!' you say--but it's up to you. If you're going, go ahead!"

The boy became a snake because he didn't want to work. "No, father, I'm going--as a snake, maybe, but I'm going! This is what I want--that I don't have to work," he said. "Even if I go--but that's how it is," he said (but because of laziness). And he changed himself into a snake.

So then he dragged himself around on his belly in the dirt. He went through rivers, he went among the mountains, he went among the forests. He went far, he climbed a lot, he descended a lot, but--for what? Because he didn't want to work. He was disobedient, and was changed into an animal. He has no feet, he bites all the time, but it's because he's lazy. He has no clothes, no clothes at all he has, because he became an animal. "Don't you be like that!" say the others, ever since the world began.

THE MAN WHO WAS CARRIED OFF BY A BUZZARD

When the world first appeared, there was a man who went outside his house. While he was standing outside the house, he began to think.¹ "Where will my food come from? Where will my corn come from?" he said.

An animal came and passing by carried the man in its beak. Away went the man; he arrived at a cliff (a great rock) among the caves. There were lots of animal bones there; there was a terrible stench there among the rocks. He arrived there, and he was sad.

Two nights he slept among the rocks. "What am I doing here?" he said. He began to cry. He looked downward, and he looked at the face of the mountain above, very far. There was no way to get out, there was no way to come back. "Enough of this, I'm going!" he said. "There is only one God if I die," he said. When he went out to look, his soul began to tremble for fear. He

looked downward, and the fear penetrated into his very bones! "What am I going to do?" he said. He was very sad. "How could such a thing happen to me?"

When dawn came, there was a vine dangling toward the ground, and he was happy. "Now, I'm going," he said. So he went down. He grabbed the vine, he broke it and he dangled himself from it. Slowly he went down, he went down the face of the rock. He came to the earth, he folded his hands, he prayed to God.

"Maybe it is because I haven't been thinking about God," he said, "but now I'm going home. I'm going to see my children, I'm going to see my wife. It's a long time since I came," he said. But who knows what he was thinking about before that. So obviously it doesn't pay to think about where our food and drink are coming from. There is only one God. If food arrives at our stomachs (fine!), but if not, well, that's the way it is.

The man came, he came walking. In two nights, he came to his home. "Wait," he said to himself, "I'm going to tell you what I've done." So he came to tell his children, his wife. He told them, "This is what I did, this is what I thought," he said, "but enough of that. Come on! We're going to work. I have a machete, I have a hoe," he said to his sons. "All right then," said his sons. Away they went.

But when a buzzard passed, he immediately grabbed a club, it scared him badly. And even without seeing an animal pass in the sky, he still was afraid. "No, I can't stand trying to work," he said. "Once for all I've lost my nerve because of that animal," he said. "Seeing an animal pass by in the sky, right then I want to grab a club. Am I always going to be like this?" he said. "But that's how it is," he said.

1 In Mayan languages it is not unusual to both open and close a quotation with "he said" or some other such quotative. Here, "think" is equivalent to "he said to himself" and patterns syntactically like the quotative. (Ed.)

THE LYING DOG

A man had a dog that "sinned" (offended) by telling lies. "No, it's that my mother (the owner's wife) has a companion," said the dog.

"Is that so, what you're saying?"

"Of course, it's true what I'm saying," answered the dog to him. "She doesn't feed me, but it's because the man comes. When she sees that you're not here, then the man comes to the house with my mother. I saw it; it isn't as if I didn't see it, because I stay here guarding the house," said the dog to the man. "But don't go making a lot of noise about what I'm saying, don't go tattle on me to my mother," said the dog. "All right, but come on, tomorrow we'll go, because tomorrow the man will come to my mother," said the dog.

When the man was leaving, the dog started to tell him again. But soon the man repeated the lie to his wife about her sin. The man couldn't keep it to himself; he couldn't bear it. The next day, the poor dog was beaten and killed; it died. But whose fault was it? It was the fault of the man.¹

"Enough of that, then, I'll go hunt another dog in place of this one," said the man. He left, and he cried a lot when he left the house. "I'm going now," he said, "I'm going to hunt another dog." He left, and he went a long way off, and he never came back.²

1 It is interesting to note that they blame the husband, not the dog, for the sad turn of events. He presumably should have been man enough to keep quiet.

2 One explanation given for the man's going far away is that he misinterpreted his wife's action. She killed the dog out of righteous anger, but the man thought it was a result of her guilty conscience, and so left her.

THIS YOUNGER GENERATION!

In former times, at three in the afternoon the church bell would sound to announce doctrine class. At five it was time to eat, but only the parents ate, the children were run out. The parents ate first.

"All right," and the children would come in, "but don't anyone make noise. I have my whip here." When it was time for the children to eat, "Good afternoon, Father, good afternoon; if you'll give permission I'll eat," they would say, and that's how they did. "You're just going to eat now, you're not going to make a lot of noise; there's the whip." The children would keep themselves quiet.

While the parents ate, one of the children only, the oldest, would come in with his parents and kneel before them, speaking to them while they ate, saying agreeable things to them: "Eat slowly, Father, slowly, slowly, slowly. Thank God we eat. Thank God that you eat, that you are here with us, that you take care of us, that you stand in the place of God with us," says the child to his father. "Thanks to you that you are here, that you take care of us, that you give us our food. Of whom could we ask food, who would be our father, our mother, if you weren't here with us, if you should die?" says the child. "What fortune that we have you with us!" while the child is there kneeling.¹

Then the parents finish eating, then the rest of the children come in. "Then, the rest of you eat now. Here is my whip." But it was the eldest son who was in charge of the whip, and the younger child that didn't obey, well, that's what the older son was there for! The parents go into the other room and remain there. How different now! Now all of us eat along with the children! There are times when the children even eat first!

There's no respect, there's no respect! It even could happen that a child

orders his parents around! That's why judgment is approaching, we say, because the children don't respect their parents. It was different in the old days, but now it isn't like it was then. When day would break, "Good morning, Father," and it was demanded that the head be bowed. At noon, "Good day, Father," and it was demanded that the head be bowed, like this. When evening came, "Good evening, Father, good evening, Mother," they said, but with the head down. But now, "Good day, Father," they say, but their heads are high, and they don't even take their hats off! Even while they are putting on their hats--"Good day, Father, thank you, Father," we say when finishing the meal. It's a different way now, when "Good evening, Father, good day, Father," we say, without even taking our hats off! We should take the hats off, according to what was said, because first it was necessary to show respect; first we respect God and next we respect our brothers, our parents, so we can have many days on the earth.

So if we don't think about God, if we don't think about our companions, about the other fellow, someone, then we don't qualify, we're not good for anything, we say, and we die. Even though we don't get old now, we have heard about our ancestors, we've heard of our mothers and fathers. When they arrived at two hundred years of age, they say, they got married. At four hundred years old, they say, they died. We don't know if it's true or not but that's what our fathers and mothers tell us. On the contrary, we nowadays, if we get to eighty or a hundred years old, we're worthless, we're weak. They used to get older then, they say--two hundred years old and they got married; they went looking for their women. When they got to four hundred years old, eh! they died. But we, now, we're just like the animals.

-
- 1 The profuse expression of gratitude is reminiscent of the reverent thanks voiced by the first four created beings to their creators (Popol Vuh, part III, ch. 1). (Ed.)



GODFATHER ROCK

Godfather Rock--it's not something I'm just thinking up, but there was a woman who slept there with her compadre.¹ He "visited" her there, but it is an old story. Immediately the man became stone, and that's why we call the stone Godfather Rock. It isn't that we just gave it that name, but that this is really the way it is. The man "spoke" with his comadre, and when he was through "speaking" with her, when it was done, eh! when day came, the man was stone. He had been turned immediately into stone by God.

-
- 1 When a man consents to be godfather of a child, the child's parents thereafter address him as compadre (co-father) and he addresses them as comadre and compadre (co-mother and co-father). The ceremony is considered to bring the individuals involved into actual family relationship. (Ed.)

FRIGHT

It happened, they say, a long time ago.¹ An airplane fell in the mountain near Jich'can.² They went to hunt it, they say, with workers--there were four men that went. They arrived at a mountain, two days out from Jich'can.³ They arrived and went to hunt. On their way back, they went down to sleep under⁴ the mountain. Who knows what time of night it was when a tiger appeared near them, and their blankets were moved on their feet. The animal was seen leaping and it carried away one of the blankets in its claws. The men remained asleep, all of them except for one who was awake and he was frightened. They say that his flesh wasted away and within four or five weeks he died. There was another man who was frightened, they say, but this one is still alive. But he's still sick, they say.

It happened to another man, they say, who saw a ghost. He was frightened, they say, and he also is still living, but sick. The illness asks for its medicines, they say, but nothing alleviates it, except for Our Father, they say, if we pray to Christ in heaven. If we give ourselves up to Him, then He heals us, and the evil leaves our bodies. On the contrary, regardless of how many remedies the fright asks for, only God is able. Let's give ourselves up to Our Father, the Christ that was killed.

-
- 1 Actually it was February 1954.
 - 2 Jich'can is the Ixil name of a town (spelled Ixcán on national maps) located near the Mexico border on or near the Huehuetenango-Quiché departmental border.
 - 3 The terrain is quite rugged; it was only five minutes by air from Ixcán when it went down.
 - 4 At the foot of.

ADAM, NOAH, AND THE FLOOD

At times our ancestors used to go to hear the word (of God). Of course, they had wings to go up to hear the word of God. They'd go up to hear when judgment was going to come. There were always meetings, they say; there were meetings where they announced what God said. There was the session,¹ as we say in Spanish, there among the angels. The ancestors wanted to know how long it would be before the judgment came and if the earth would win or not, they say--whether we would remain, or if judgment was going to come--they say, according to what God said.

They'd go to listen at the window. There is a window and they went to listen at the window. So God said, they say--there were lots of the elders inside--"The sea will have to come out (overflow)," he said. "Ah! What a

mess!" (they protested). "The sea will have to come out," he said. "Oh, no! The century will be lost! The children will be lost! It (the idea?) must end!" they said. But he said, "No, it's going to come out," he said.

So the sea came out, they say. Forty days, they say, it did; forty days and forty nights it did, they say. But the people won out over the famine. They crawled into some gourds and that way they floated, they say, on the water.

He made, they say, a little box; he made a little box and it floated² on the water. He didn't eat. When the judgment had passed, ah! he came down and he didn't die.

But first, God said to Adam--was it a spirit, or was it Adam, or what? --first it was said, they say, "Man, you tell the people, 'Pray to God, pray to God--but if you don't pray to God, then judgment will come,'" he said. But that's how Adam survived--he only was there with God in the sky up above. But not even his word reached in where God was. There from the other side where God was, God just spoke in this direction in the ear of Adam, but Adam's words did not yet return to where God was.

"Tell the people, tell the people, because judgment is coming!" Adam told the people. "God is going to send judgment. Pray to God, pray to God, because he will send the judgment." The people didn't want to. "What a crazy man this is! Why doesn't he just die? What is he saying? He's just crazy," the people said, they say. The people didn't want to.

So God sent a letter to Adam. "All right, you're going to make a house with twelve rooms and twelve windows," he said. "All right," he said. "But you have to make it well." "How can I make it?" he said, they say. God wrote a lot of letters, while the elders listened to what was said. When they listened, they say, "But who knows where God is talking about?"³ Even though they heard the word in a letter, there was always another letter sent. "This is how you'll make it, this is how you'll make it." In the night, they say, the house was made, because when day dawned, there was the house already.

"Then, you send for the animals, all kinds there are, and each kind of animal will have its own room--there's a room for the bird, there's a room for whatever animal, the deer, or the mountain-pig, each animal has its room. Then the animals will go into their rooms so they won't die in the sea," he said. "Because the sea will come," he said to Adam. "I'm going to send the sea," God said, they say. "All right, put the animals in the house," he said, they say. "All right, that's fine." The animals went in.

"How am I going to call the animals?" he said.⁴ "Oh, well! Wait a minute, I'll tell you then." Another letter came, and it was read. The animals were called,⁵ they say; they appeared and each animal knew its proper room. Each animal knew, they say, its own room and apparently Adam put the animals in their rooms, each one in its room. Eh! The door of the house was closed and locked, they say. Eh! "At eleven o'clock tomorrow the sea will appear," he said. "The sea," he said, "at eleven o'clock it will appear," he

said. "That's fine," he said. "At eleven-thirty, this is how you'll be able to do the machine there under the house," he said. Eh! At eleven, "The sea is just about to come," said Adam to Noah. That is how they did,⁶ and slowly the house rose. Eh! It was hardly seen to begin rising when, they say, "Plung!" said the water, "Plun!" said the water, "Pluun!" said the water, "Plun!" said the water. "Man!" the people said, "Noah! Adam! What a mess! Please take us up there! Take us up there!" "How is it you'll come up here if I'm crazy?" said Adam, they say. Up went the house, up it went. Soon it arrived--iiiiiii! --it passed way up there. A cloud passed, they say, and when it appeared, it passed carrying the house still farther up.⁷ It went higher, it passed higher. Now the people were speaking upward, on their knees, "We'll think about God," but judgment was already upon them. At last, Adam's words penetrated their heads. But when at last they were in accord, there was Adam all alone, they say, but who knows where he'd gone?⁸

But then Adam said, "Huuuuunnnnn," said Adam, they say. Adam was very sad, they say. For it wasn't known where God was.⁹ One thing is sure: Adam didn't see God, he just saw the monkey, some birds, some animals, they say, that were all around him; he could only see the animals. Now then. "What's up, Adam? Why are you sad?" asked Our Father, they say, he came to say. But he wasn't seen, but (he was) here in the water, here in the sea-- on the water, he was on the water. Then, "Sir, I'm sad because I have no companion. It isn't as if I had a companion while I'm here." "Ah! Wait, then, I'll give you a companion. Wait a minute, I'll give you your companion," said Our Father. "But I was calling there on one side, and then I called on the other."¹⁰ "Yes, of course," Well, in a little while, he went up; the poor fellow slept a bit, he slept.¹¹ Adam slept. "Adam!" said Our Father, "Adam!" he said. "What?" he said. And standing there was the woman, they say; standing there was the woman, they say. "Look at the companion you were talking about, don't be sad," he said, they say. "Look at your companion there," and standing there was the woman, they say. But Adam wasn't aware, they say, of when she came out, because here the bone came out,¹² they say, of his left side. Soon, they say, God put a soul in the woman and there she was standing there. "Don't sleep, don't sleep, look, here I am," said the woman, they say. "If you're sad, we'll talk," said the woman, they say, to Adam. Oh! What a big woman she was!

So the sea came out, but it didn't win because then the pine-sap came, the pitch-pine that appeared. That was when the men made, they say, some big clay pots; they threw up some small mountains and they hid themselves within the ground.¹³ But when the pine-sap came, it penetrated the ground. Eh! The people died. But there were a few men, the ancestors, who hid themselves where the water is--the cataract, we call it.¹⁴ So, they also entered under the water, they entered under the water. When the pine-sap came, when fire came with the pine-sap, eh! it couldn't get up (to them) at all. Ah! These men didn't die.

When judgment had passed, then they came out. Eh! Either one day or two days later they came out. There were the men, they say; they were walk-

ing. But they were sad, they say; they just chanted; sad songs they made. They were sad, because there were no people. The people had died, this (which I have told) is why the people had died. While they were looking around, a committee arrived; a committee, they say, appeared. "What's this? How is it that you didn't die? How is it that you remain yet?" the committee said, they say. "What paper do you carry? What prayer do you have so that you remained?" they said. It was a committee, they say, that was seen. "We don't have any special prayer, we just are still here, that's all. Many of our companions have already died, though," they said, they say, to the committee. "The word is already written, the word is already written. Now you've got to change your location. You can't stay here, so let's get going!" said the commission.

But it was the pine-sap which came to win over the ancestors, whose remains are the things in the ground, that we call "camaviles," when they take the things that were theirs out of the ground.¹⁵

-
- 1 Sección (section) is the word which the narrator used every time he referred to sesión (session), and the terms sound as much alike in Spanish as they do in English. The Ixil word for session is nuc'u, and he intermixed nuc'u and sección indiscriminately, explaining that "sección is the way we say it in Spanish."

(Council meetings are prestigious and council members are worthy of all honor. It is to the council meetings that items of importance to the Indian community are brought. One Achi text relates that council meetings have been held from the beginning, "...when our ancestors sat down together and planned.") (Ed.)

- 2 It is difficult to distinguish here between singular and plural.
- 3 The elders are anxious to know where God plans for the catastrophe to strike.
- 4 One of several flashbacks occurring in the story.
- 5 Apparently God had explained how he was to call the animals together, but that detail is not stated.
- 6 Adam is turning the crank and the house begins to rise. Something like a car jack, perhaps?
- 7 This idea probably derives from the Biblical account of the ascension of Christ in a cloud.
- 8 It appears that Noah was lost in the tempest.
- 9 There is a constant attempt to localize God. The idea of omnipresence is foreign to the narrator.
- 10 Apparently Adam had been calling out to see if there were any other survivors.

- 11 Has God gone into the ark to make Eve?
- 12 At this point the narrator indicated his own left side in the region of the ribs.
- 13 Thus the people of the area explain the presence of skeletons in clay urns found in ancient burial mounds.
- 14 This is a reference to a good-sized cataract about an hour's walk from Nebaj.
- 15 Camavil is a generic term for things recovered from burial mounds.



ADAM AND THE FLOOD¹

Well, this is what Our Father said to Adam, as we heard it: "Jodido!² You've got to pray to God, you've got to think about God," said Our Father to Adam, they say. Because judgment is coming, rain is coming, the sea is coming," Our Father said to Adam. "So, you say to the people, 'You've got to pray to God,'" said God to Adam. But the people didn't want to. Well, once, twice, maybe even three or four times, Our Father spoke to Adam and Adam spoke to the people, but they didn't want to. So, "Wait, you're going to make a house, it's better that you make a house, because the water will come. Maybe the sea will come," he said. "At eleven o'clock it will come," said Our Father to Adam, when there were only Adam and Noah. "I'm going to think about God, and you people had better think about God," but they didn't want to think about God. So Our Father said, "Judgment will come, it will come because you people don't think about God," but the people didn't want to. So the sea came. But first came the rain, since the rain started first. Later the sea appeared, according to how Our Father did it.

"Well, I'm still going to give you more wisdom, but you've got to build a house. Twelve rooms the house will have that you're going to make. You're going to put the animals inside--some deer, some mountain-pigs, all the birds --they're going in and you'll take care of them," said Our Father to Adam. "And I'll give you wisdom," he said. "Fine, then," he said, because he respected him. Well, it was good that Adam respected God that way. When, then, he was finished giving him his wisdom, "Well, that's fine," he said, and he got up, and then when he made the house, "How am I going to be able to make the house?" he said. "No, there's a book here that I'll give you, and that's how you'll be able to make the house. You'll be able to do it in a hurry." Within a couple of hours, no more, the house was made, because of what God did.

Then, "It's done, you, it's done. How am I going to be able to call the animals?" he said. "No, there's a way you can call all of them. Each animal will know its own room; each one will know its own room. The deer will be separate, the bird will be separate, the mountain-pig will be separate. You'll take care of all of them," he said. "All right, I'll take care of the animals." "At eleven in the morning the sea will appear tomorrow," he said. "When it's almost eleven o'clock, you'll wind the machine under the house," he said. "It's almost time for the judgment to appear," he said.

Then the judgment was almost ready to appear and it was almost eleven o'clock, the time when judgment was going to come. Adam was constantly praying to God, every little bit Adam prayed to God. It was almost eleven o'clock. Adam wound the machine that was under the house and slowly, slowly it went up; the house started and slowly it went up toward the sky. "Adam! Pardon us and take away our sin, so we can come up there with you, so we can come in with you! We see now what you were saying about the judgment!" the people were saying. When Adam first talked to them, he said, "You are all foolish!" he said. The people had said to Adam, "Maybe you're not going to die. You're good for nothing." So that they didn't want to, but when judgment came, "Hombre! Adam! take away our sin!" They started claspng their hands to him, "Take away our sin and let us up there with you!" But the house had already gone up maybe some five or six yards. "How is it that you want to come up here if I'm crazy?" said Adam. The people all went down on their knees, kneeling there all of them, but, look! there is the water coming out!

Well, Adam was up there looking around below him, and there were the people kneeling in the water. The water went on up. Forty days and forty nights the water rose; once and for all the water passed going up. The water passed going up. Our Father sent the cloud, they say, and the cloud came to carry the house up also, with all its strength. There was Adam, too, since Adam had wisdom because of God. God himself had given him wisdom. All right, there it was. But when it arrived there--no one knows how many days it took--but it arrived there in the middle of the sky.

Now, by himself Adam was taking care of the animals, he had no companion. He was very sad. "Haaaaaaah!" he sighed, because he felt himself very much alone. Now, even God remained very far away, even though he hears our words, because that's the way it is. No one knows how many leagues away God is, they say, but God hears our words. God heard that Adam was sad, and he came right away. "What's up, Adam? Why are you sad?" he said, but he hadn't come in with him yet, he was still a long way off from him. "Why are you sad, Adam?" he said. "I'm sad, sir, because I have no companion, I don't hear a single word here!" said Adam to Our Father. "Jodido! Wait, you'll see your companion arrive," he said.

Right away, then, Adam slept a little bit. Then when he woke up, "Adam, don't be sad, look at your companion there," he said. There in front of Adam was the woman standing; Eve, she was standing there in front of him. But Adam was asleep while Eve came out of here, from here where Eve came out.

Our Father is the one who took out a rib, the rib that he took out. Then in a little while the woman arrived, like this, see? She was a big one.³ "Look at your companion," he said. "Wake up! Wake up! Don't go on sleeping!" "I'm here, look!" said Eve.

Well, even though Our Father had already given more wisdom to Adam, this woman, Eve, is the one who made him lose it because she counselled Adam. (God had said,) "Jodido! You're not going to eat from that tree. Some trees here you're not going to eat from because I'm still going to give you more wisdom, now that the judgment has passed." Adam came down, and he made some (altar) tables; he decorated the house--he fixed the house up with incense, or candles, they say. "You're always supposed to do this way, always," said God. "I'm still going to give you more wisdom," he said. Well, when the serpent appeared, "Don't do that, hombre, don't do that! God's just saying that, that's all. Go ahead and eat from the tree," said the serpent to the woman, they say, even though Our Father had already said, "Don't you eat from that tree. Don't you eat that," he said, about the apple. But when Our Father came, they say, when Our Father came, "Ah! Jodido!" They had already hidden, Adam and Eve, because they had lost their wisdom, their wisdom was gone because they didn't obey the law of God. They didn't respect the law of God even though God had told them, "I'm going to give you more wisdom," he said. But they didn't obey and they went to hide themselves. "Adam! Adam!" shouted Our Father but they weren't there. They had run away. Well, "Jodido, hombre!" she said, "but eat the apple," said Eve and she went to offer it in her hand, like this. Then she went to offer it in her hand like this. Well, then Adam ate a little bit even though it was about time for God to come to see him. Well, he took the apple, which stuck a little bit in his poor throat here. But it was the woman, Eve, who counselled him, and that is how he lost his wisdom, because the woman didn't want him to pray to God. The woman didn't want him to think about the way he was going, and it's Adam who had followed God. He respected the law of God, then, see, he respected it.

1 The same individual who related "Adam, Noah, and the Flood" retold the story (this version) one year later.

2 An expletive.

3 Tall, full grown.

