

## The Hollywood Conversion of the Mayas

I didn't intentionally set out to write about Hollywood and Mel Gibson; however, the article that appeared on CNN news (see *New Mel Gibson Film to be in Mayan*) propelled me to respond rather forcefully and furiously. What I read and interpreted was yet another soon-to-be assault on the Mayan indigenous culture. And I can only hope that what I am about to project is a worst-case scenario and will not come to fruition. However, I fear it is most unlikely that I am misreading Gibson's intentions.

My initial reaction to the news was to wonder if the 500-yr old story for Gibson's new "adventure" is going to be based on the Spanish Inquisition, the indigenous murders, the introduction of European disease and the forceful conversion of the Mayas to Catholicism to "save" their souls, with Gibson, of course, sympathetic to the church and the inquisition. There is no info on the plot but I can't imagine that a film called "Apocalypto" is going to be about Mayan cosmology and beliefs. Will Gibson venture to create a storyline about the Mayan culture disappearing because they were heathens who were not saved by Catholic dogma? Or, might there actually be a discourse on the multidimensional shifting and the Mayan (not the Christian) prophecies of the endtimes?

Looking at Gibson's history of making Christian oriented hero-savior pictures, I rather doubt that the latter will be his theme. And what the Mayas and the world least need now is yet another fundamentalist enterprise spewing toxic Catholic dogma and taking advantage of indigenous peoples who have already spilled their blood at the hands of fundamentalist Christianity. Of course, maybe they'll be paid a dollar a day, and feel temporarily honored to be in an American movie; that is of course, until they see the finished product and realize that they were just pawns once again at the hands of the Catholic missionaries.

The Mayas did just fine until the Inquisition, at which time they were stripped of their heritage, their resources, their sacred teachings and their self-respect. The settling Europeans introduced alcohol and disease, and were responsible for more genocide than any civil unrest might have otherwise caused due to their own internal conflicts. But of course, Gibson will never show you how the Inquisition plundered gold and resources for the Catholic Church and how they raped and killed innocent Mayas to gain access to their sacred and plentiful lands; the guilty never show their cards when they are attempting to convert the unconverted or prove their self-righteousness. So, instead, maybe we'll get a love story, sort of a Pocahontas/Capt. Smith pas-de-deux, or more likely the story of Quetzalcoatl transformed into the Christ, with the message that his return (as a Christian of course) will bring salvation to the Mayas and save their heathen souls.

The irony is that the Mayas can and will do just fine without Gibson or the Catholic religion. The Catholic Church in Mexico regularly ignores the homeless, the poor, the old women, and the fatherless children in the streets who regularly beg for food. So with their very restricted resources, the Mayas have had to relearn resourcefulness and even return to some of the old ways. Thus, when the day of reckoning comes, it will be the Mayas who have the last laugh. They have already learned, at a very high price thanks to

their Catholic plunderers, how to live with very little, make something out of nothing, and work with the Earth to grow and create very limited but necessary goods for their survival. And they continue to do so. For those who remember the old ways, and for those who are being reintroduced to them, they are returning to their old practices with patience, fortitude and dignity.

Maybe what Gibson really needs to show the world is a story of a humble people who, when push comes to shove, become the lords of their own survival and the lords of charity when the rest of the world, with their greed and sacrilegious western ideologies and fundamentalism, go directly to Hell. But I suspect that Gibson, in all his self-righteous glory, will never get it. And many will go see the movie and they will never get it either. But what they may get is a lousy commercial product courtesy of Gibson's new movie franchise business. How about a "What Would Jesus Do" teeshirt?