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**PAGAN RITUALS AND BELIEFS AMONG
THE CHONTAL INDIANS OF OAXACA, MEXICO**

BY

PEDRO CARRASCO

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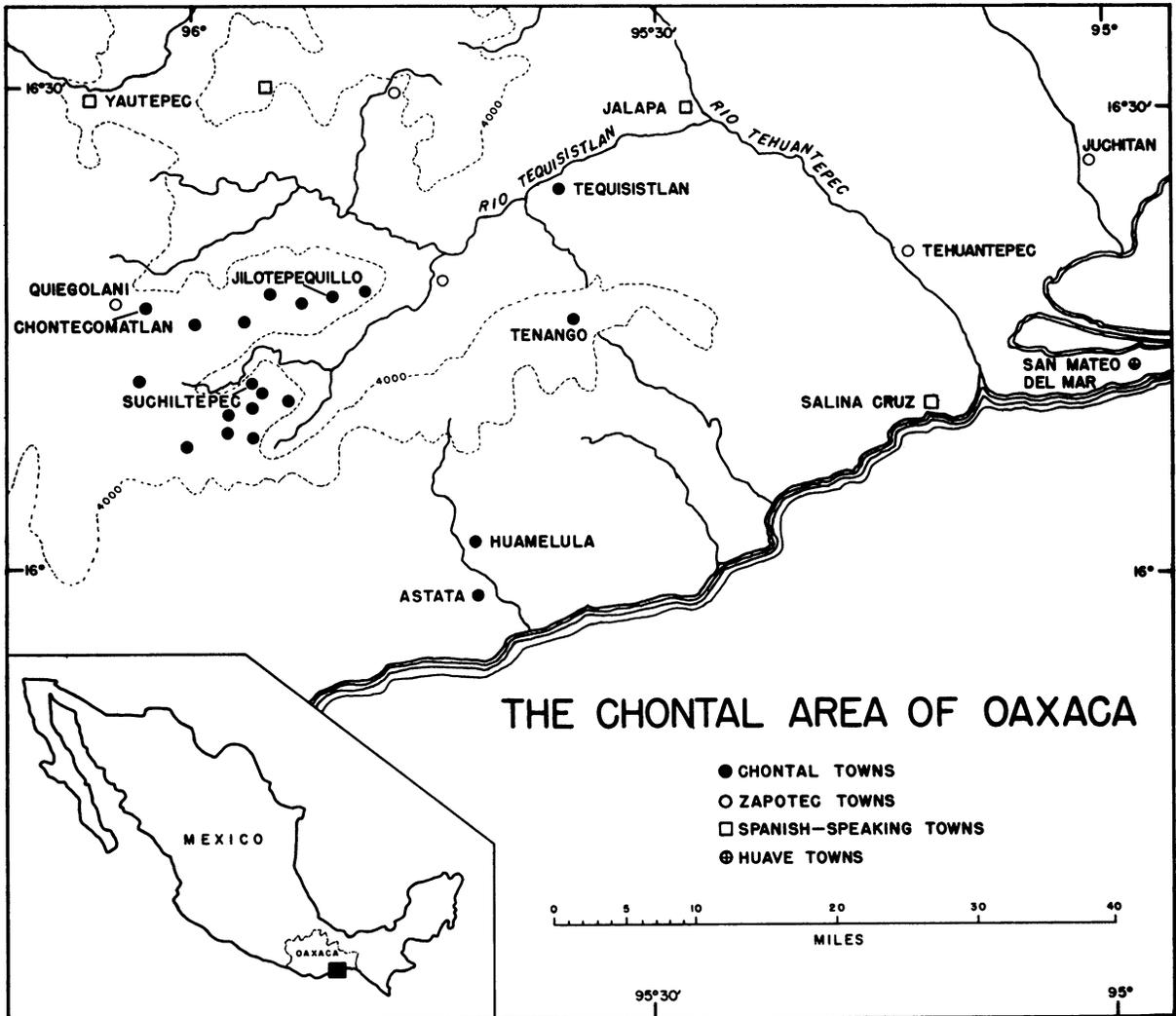
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Map 1. The Chontal Area of Oaxaca

PAGAN RITUALS AND BELIEFS AMONG THE CHONTAL INDIANS OF OAXACA, MEXICO

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PEDRO CARRASCO

I. INTRODUCTION

The Chontal, or Tequixtlatec, are among the least known Indians of Mexico. They live in about twenty villages in the mountains of southeastern Oaxaca, west of Tehuantepec. Chontal-speaking people numbered 8,406 in 1930 (Memoria, 1940, p. 58). The most accessible Chontal villages are Tequisistlan, a lowland village close to the Pan American Highway, and Huamelula and Astata near the coast west of Salina Cruz. Most Chontal villages, however, are in the high mountain area drained by the headwaters of the Tequisistlan River (map 1).

The mountain Chontal call themselves *li hwale sanuk* (Spanish *serranos*, mountain people) as against the people called *laine* which includes all Zapotec and Spanish speakers. The dominant economy is based on the cultivation of corn for local consumption and of maguey, from which they make mescal, their only source of money.

I visited Tequisistlan for a few hours in September, 1949, and gathered some ethnographic data. Tequisistlan, however, is an acculturated village; only the old people still speak Chontal, and the culture is strongly influenced by Tehuantepec. The information on which this paper is based applies to the relatively unacculturated mountain villages and was obtained from a single informant, Sr. Juan Rodriguez, a Chontal now a resident of Tehuantepec but originally from Suchiltepec, a mountain village.

I met this informant for the first time in Tehuantepec in 1949. In the spring of 1951, when he was in Mexico City for medical treatment, he came to the Museo Nacional and served as my informant for a few weeks.

The particular feature of Chontal culture which I found most profitable to work on with Juan Rodriguez is the complex series of private rituals performed on many occasions in connection with farming or events in the life cycle of the individual. Lists of the offerings to be presented to the supernaturals during these rituals, and sometimes also the prayers, have been written down in Chontal by the Indians. Rodriguez had once given to Mr. Thomas McDougall, an American botanist, a little pamphlet containing the ritual for hunting (Mr. McDougall later gave this to the Museo Nacional in Mexico). Rodriguez had also brought to Mexico several sheets of paper on which he had copied a number of other rituals. Most of my time with the informant was devoted to the study of these documents.

The informant was at first reticent and produced his Chontal papers only gradually, perhaps hoping this way to strike a better bargain (he had been hired by the museum to work as an informant at an hourly rate, thus he sold the papers to me as our interview progressed).

The informant and his late parents moved some years ago to the Tehuantepec area; the informant's

father used to grow corn in the archaeological site of Quiengola. The informant thus came to get the job as caretaker of the ruins. The reasons for the family's move to Quiengola were not revealed, but it is probable that the father's activities as curer had something to do with it. Only after a few meetings did the informant admit that both his father and mother had practiced curing and that they were the source of much of his knowledge.

In this paper we follow the order in which the data were obtained from the informant. After some general conversation, during which the informant revealed that he had a collection of written rituals, we proceeded to work on these, the informant providing a translation of the written formulae and an explanation of the ritual. After the rituals had been translated, I obtained additional data regarding religious beliefs that could throw further light upon the rituals.

The material that follows is therefore treated under two heads. Section II ("The Ritual Formulae") gives the written formulae and the rituals to which they pertain. They have been grouped, however, according to subject and not according to the document in which they are written. Section III ("The Supernaturals") contains additional data on Chontal religion and especially material that will help to understand the rituals. My conclusions are found in Section IV, and an appendix provides a description of the documents and the order in which the rituals appear therein.

Most of the material in Sections II and III follows as closely as possible the informant's own words. His statements, however, have often been arranged in a different order from that in which they were recorded, and clarifications or additions obtained later have been incorporated into them. For this reason quotation marks have been used only in literal translations of certain statements in order to stress the informant's way of expressing his ideas.

The length and the subjects covered in each formula vary widely, not necessarily because of the complexity of the ritual, although this is important, but also because of the varying amount of information about a particular ritual that is committed to paper. Since one of the most important elements in the ritual pattern is the precise enumeration of offerings devoted to different supernaturals, the one item that is always written in all formulae is the number of each kind of offerings required. In some formulae this is practically all that is written, all other aspects of the ritual being presumably quite well known to the practitioners and thus not needed to be recorded on paper. This type of prescription, as we might call it, is exemplified in formula number 18. In some other examples, such as numbers 5, 7, 12, 17, not all the supernaturals to whom the offerings are presented have clearly been stated on paper.

Other formulae not only name the different super-

naturals to whom the offerings are presented but also include prayers addressed to them. Prescriptions other than offerings, such as the required number of days of continence, are also written.

Since the main facts recorded in these documents are the appropriate number of offerings to the various supernaturals, the notation of numbers is of special interest. The simplest notation system is that in which the number one (or a line) or a drawing of the object stands for a unit of the things counted. Thus to record nine, nine lines are written: lllllllll. Or to denote five piles of twenty-one sticks, five rows of twenty-one lines each are written.

Since the most common offerings are piles or bundles of sticks, the units counted in most instances are such piles, each of which must include a stipulated number of sticks. In this way 12 9 means twelve piles of nine sticks each, which the informant simply read as twelve nines (doce nueves), or 312 9 means three times twelve piles of nine sticks each.

In some instances the number of times a type of offering is piled up is simply shown by notating the offerings repeatedly. For instance, 999, 999, 999 means three times three piles of nine sticks each. Or 77777777 means nine piles of seven sticks each.

Often a l will stand for a unit offering including a certain number of sticks, and this number is written only as the last symbol in a row depicting such unit offerings. Thus lllllllll9 means nine piles of nine sticks each.

Numbers are also spelled out, whether in Chontal or in Spanish or both. Sometimes combinations of spelled out numbers and figures appear. For instance 21 catorce means twenty-one piles of fourteen sticks each. But other times the spelled out number is not to be combined with the figure but is simply a repetition of it. For instance afane lupa coli I I I (three pine branches I I I), where the three is first spelled out and then repeated as a drawing of three branches. A number may also be repeated by writing it both in Chontal and Spanish. In the document giving a cure for fright we read ciete caichi 7, that is, the number seven, in Spanish, Chontal, and a figure.

Some slight variants and combinations of all these notation systems will be found in the transcribed rituals.

In our transcription of the documents, the spelled out numbers are simply translated, whereas the explanation of figure notations are written in parentheses. The different ways of writing numbers sometimes make the interpretation of a writing not too obvious. In instances where the informant seemed to hesitate and another interpretation than what he gave seems possible, this alternate possibility has been mentioned, also in parentheses and followed by the initials PC.

A few of the documents, when listing the offerings, depict the objects to be offered. In some instances there are crude drawings, such as the dog and turkeys in the ritual for taking office, and the turkeys in the hunting ritual, in the ritual to divine with corn,

and in that for "sowing a child's life" (see number 11). A pine branch is depicted as a vertical line with a few shorter lines on both ends as the leaves. We transcribe this symbol with a capital I. Candles are depicted as a line—the candle—with a dot over it as the candle's flame. We transcribe this as the letter i. When a single stick of wood is represented by a line, we can take this as a picture symbol as well as a figure. In two instances we find pictures that are somewhat conventionalized. In the hunting ritual a ball of copal gum is depicted as a circle with a cross inside whose upper and lower ends extend beyond the circle, the upper one curving toward the left. An egg is symbolized by a circle or ellipse with a few dots inside. In the rituals typed by the informant he used the symbol & where the document he copied had the picture of a turkey. We have followed this transcription.

Most of the written text is in Chontal, although a few Spanish words or phrases are occasionally found. In our transcription of these texts the original spelling has always been kept. Spanish misspellings are common, but Spanish words offer no difficulty of interpretation; a sic has been added only after words whose spelling does not represent the correct pronunciation.

The transcription of Chontal words has presented a few difficulties. Although the handwriting is generally clear, a few mistakes have surely been made in the splitting of the text into separate words that are not clear in the manuscripts and perhaps in the reading of a few words where corrections seem to have been made in the manuscript, or where n and u have been confused one for the other. We have generally transcribed as tl a cluster that sometimes looks more like fl or ll. The Chontal language has several lateral phonemes, but the writing in our documents does not seem to represent them separately or consistently.

I had planned to work on some other aspects of Chontal culture and to obtain linguistic data in order to prepare a phonemic transcription of the Chontal texts in the rituals and a linguistic analysis of them, but the informant had to leave Mexico City before we could attempt it. My translations of Chontal are therefore based on the informant's free renderings into Spanish. Only later in the preparation of this report have some words been checked with the scant published material about the Chontal language, mainly, so far as names of supernaturals are concerned. In most cases Chontal words are given as spelled in the rituals or in other sources used. My few phonetic renderings were made without any knowledge of the language. In terms of the Chontal phonemic system as published by Waterhouse and Morrison, it is clear they are only approximations to what the true Chontal forms should be. Chontal words taken from our documents are underlined when used in English context; our own renderings are not. Spanish words are underlined when quoting from a text or from the informant's statements, the first time they appear.

II. THE RITUAL FORMULAE

Herein I describe each of the ritual formulae made available to me. For the first ritual (number 1), however, no written document was obtained; the description was given to me orally by Juan Rodriguez, who had served as an assistant to his father in performing the ritual. In the remaining descriptions, the writ-

ten formulae are described and translated, and additional data, obtained orally from Rodriguez, are added. These include a description of the ritual, some detailed explanation of points in the formulae, and other brief explanatory notes.

1. Sowing Ritual

For some time before sowing the farmer has been collecting in his house the sticks of copal wood that will be used as offerings. These are sticks the length of a thumb-index span and thick as the thumb, cut from the heart of the copal tree. They are red in color and fragrant. Since the copal tree grows only in the hot country, it is sometimes hard to get, and some people use sticks of pinewood (*ocote*) instead. A written paper lists the number of sticks needed for each supernatural.

Everything is made ready the day before sowing. Each farmer performs the ritual on his own land, and any day is good for it. Nowadays it is done secretly. Formerly the ritual was performed openly, but now the young people no longer believe in it and think that a man who does this is a witch. For this reason people don't want it to be known.

The farmer must be continent for three days. The third day, which will be the day before sowing, he gets up before sunrise and goes with all his things to the center of the field and starts counting out the sticks of copal wood. He lays them on the ground in piles of the number specified in the written paper, leaving some distance between piles. As he puts the offerings down, the farmer repeats the words, written on his paper for this rite, which name the supernaturals to whom the offering is made.

When all the sticks have been laid down, the farmer sets them on fire with matches. He says, "In the name of God, I am going to light them," and lights one corner after another. He then takes a turkey, cuts its head off with a knife or a machete, throws the head into the pile of sticks, and, holding the body, scatters the turkey's blood over the fire. So doing, he names the gods to whom the offering is made: God of the Sky (*lanó kemaá*), God of the Earth (*lano kamats'*), God of the North (*lanó kawá*), God of the East (*liyuf ma'*), God of the West (*lum mih ma'*). No mention is made of a God of the South.

When he is finished, he takes an incense burner and puts copal gum and embers in it. Remaining near the burning offering, he kneels on one knee and censes with copal; first toward the East; then he turns to the West, then to the North, then to the South (*lmaina*, lit. old woman), then he censes the Earth and, finally, the Sky.

He then rises and takes the turkey home for his wife to cook. They invite the relatives of the house for a feast.

The following day the sowing begins. There is no ritual (*costumbre*) this day. Usually both man and wife go to sow, but it is not required that the woman should go. Some people exchange labor for sowing, others hire laborers.

2. Land Clearing Ritual (Tenango)

Para comenzar a rozar
Lligualá qui mucot camax 12 9
tlapouná quiins huiya 12 9
cal achá 3 9
el macheté 3 9
latenii 3 9

lapiquiemá 312 9

FIN

To start a clearing.
Mountain, Woods, Earth: 12 (piles of) 9.
To the Lord of the Clearing: 12 (piles of) 9.
To the ax: 3 (piles of) 9.
To the machete: 3 (piles of) 9.
To the stick: 3 (piles of) 9.
[This is a stick they use to keep the machete from hitting a rock when cutting the bush.]
To the "sense" of the man [i.e., the man doing the clearing]: 3 (times) 12 (piles of) 9.
END

The farmer performs this ritual alone before starting to clear. As in the sowing ritual he mentions the

supernaturals as he lays down their offerings. He should be continent the day he clears the land by burning.

3. Sowing Ritual (Tenango)

PARA SEMBRAR
Lapafia, lo llay ya, la falla
cainaca, ay cuai na ma,
canomna ma, tla no, camas,
llano, qui mucot
calaichufcoama, litiné, agueno,

TO SOW
In order to live, to pass the time,
to sow the cornfield, I came to greet
the God of the Earth,
the God of the Woods.
I will have the life. Good!

cacunama, 12 9 tangaica, lipa, .

llano, camas, 12 9
tlapauna, qui jualá, 12 9
llano qui jualá, 12 9

calpaxi, faunall, 12 9

lla paunalá, uqetumi, 12 9
lenfanunla, quetumi, 12 9
lletumi, cami, 12 9
lletumi, 12 9
copé licuenta quel fanu, 12 9

qui mamá qui alli calfanú, 12 9

llinfapá cainaá, 12 9
quel cuxnu cami, 12 9

llagua cumdemla, 3 9

llagua, cája, 3 9
tlucuillna, cagua, 3 9
calhec, 3 9
calcopé, 3 9
caldencut, 3 9
tlontallá 3 9
tlunchi 3 9
tllicuenta quel huchó, cacué,
calhuchó que maina, 14 7 lolí

FIN

All the offerings in this formula are sticks of pine-wood except when copal gum is specified.

The offerings to the witches are to ward off possible witchcraft.

I will give 12 (piles of) 9 flowers [flower of the wood, i.e., copal gum].
To the God of the Earth: 12 (piles of) 9.
To the Lord of the Mountain: 12 (piles of) 9.
To the God of the Mountain: 12 (piles of) 9 [this is a different supernatural from the Lord of the Mountain].
To Powerful Miracle [spirit of the field]: 12 (piles of) 9.
To the Lords of Thunderbolt: 12 (piles of) 9.
To the Spirits of Thunderbolt: 12 (piles of) 9.
To the Thunderbolt that Burns: 12 (piles of) 9.
To Thunderbolt: 12 (piles of) 9.
To the crow (cacalote), on account of the seed: 12 (piles of) 9.
To the mother and father of the seed: 12 (piles of) 9.
To the sower of the cornfield: 12 (piles of) 9.
To cuxnu cami [spirits the informant does not know]: 12 (piles of) 9.
To the wind of the slope (loma): 3 (piles of) 9.
To the wind of the water: 3 (piles of) 9.
To the whirlwind: 3 (piles of) 9.
To the woods: 3 (piles of) 9.
To the crow (cacalote): 3 (piles of) 9.
To caldencut [?] 3 (piles of) 9.
To the termites (comején): 3 (piles of) 9.
To the ant: 3 (piles of) 9.
On account of the man witch, the woman witch: 14 (piles of) 7 sticks of pinewood.
END.

The offerings to the crow, the termites, and the ant are to keep them from destroying the seed.

4. First Corn Ritual (Tenango)

Lateja quejua
llano camas 12 9
lajutl 12 9
tlin nochí 12 9
tlochinná 3 9
lajá 3 9
tlungá 3 9
cacunamá anulí queltulo
malpú elcandelá de cera.
FIN

To eat green corn.
To the God of the Earth: 12 (piles of) 9.
To the house: 12 (piles of) 9.
To the woman grinder: 12 (piles of) 9.
To the metate: 3 (piles of) 9.
To the water: 3 (piles of) 9.
To the fire: 3 (piles of) 9.
I will give a turkey
and four wax candles.
END.

When the cornfield is ready to yield the first ears, the farmer goes to the field in the morning and prepares the ground for the offering in the middle of the field. After cutting twelve of the largest ears of corn, he lays down the offerings of copal wood to form a square on the ground, and on the eastern side of this square, places the ears of corn in two piles of six ears each. He then lights a candle in each corner of the offering, sets the wood on fire, and kills a turkey,

cutting off its head as in the sowing ritual. The first ears of corn are in this way offered to God or to the Sun. The farmer then takes them to his neighbors who will eat them. Before this rite, corn may not be eaten. The farmer must be continent the day he performs this rite.

An offering is laid down on behalf of the farmer's wife, who grinds the corn, that she be allowed to handle the corn.

5. Harvest Ritual (Tenango)

PARA PISCAR LA MAZORGA
12 12 12 12 doce nueve
39 39 39

anulí maxnú pela lipá

TO PICK THE EARS OF CORN
(Five times twelve piles of nine),
(three times nine piles of three)
(or three times three piles of nine? PC),
one hundred piles of nine flowers
[i.e., copal gum],

anulí llacá
malpú alvela
el envidioso [y la envidiosa]
(o el brujo has been written over
the words in brackets)
14 9 lolí

FIN

a bird [i.e., turkey],
four candles.
To the envious man [and the envious
woman] (or the man witch):

9 (piles of) 14 pinewood sticks (or
fourteen piles of nine sticks? PC).
END.

As the informant himself pointed out, the recipients of the first offerings are not mentioned. The

last offering of pine sticks is the only one in which recipients (the witches) are named.

6. Sowing Ritual (Chontecomatlan)

PARA CEMBRAR
para mofalla leinaca primero
toponoma' lanocamas

11111119.11111119.11111119.
999.

&& un guojolote (sic)
lonocamas

111111111111111119
111111111111111119
111111111111111119
111111111111111119
111111111111111119
111111111111111119
111111111111111119
111111111111111119
111111111111111119
111111111111111119
111111111111111119
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111111111111111119
111111111111111119
111111111111111119
111111111111111119
111111111111111119
111111111111111119
111111111111111119
111111111111111119
111111111111111119
999.999.999.999.999.999.
999.999.999
sigue atras

lijuala. 1111111111111111.14
999999999999.12. 11111119.
11111119.11111119.

licuenta del portillo 1111117.
1111117.1111117.1111117.
1111117.1111117.1111117.
1111117.1111117.1111117.
lajac. afanepel la loli.
A fanepel lá quel pomá
11111119.11111119.
11111119. loli
11111119.11111119.11111119.
quel pomá
FIN

TO SOW

To sow a cornfield, first
one places the offering for the God
of the Earth:
(nine piles of 9, nine piles of 9, nine
piles of 9, three piles of 9
sticks of copal wood),
a turkey.
To the God of the Earth:
(twenty groups of sticks, each including
eighteen piles of nine sticks of
copal wood).

(Nine groups of sticks, each including
three piles of nine sticks of copal wood.)
continue over.

[The word fin (end) had first been written
and then crossed out. There must have
been a page turn in the booklet from which
this was copied P. C.]

To the Mountain: (fourteen piles of
fourteen sticks of copal wood;
twelve piles of nine sticks;
three groups of sticks each with nine
piles of nine sticks).

For the mountain ridge:
(ten groups of sticks each with seven
piles of seven sticks of copal
wood).

To the water: three nines of pinewood
and three nines of copal gum.

(Three groups of nine piles of nine)
sticks of pinewood.

(Three groups of nine piles of nine)
balls of copal gum.

END.

7. Harvest Ritual (Chontecomatlan)

PARA PISCAR!!
para lasnulla toponomá

TO HARVEST!!
To harvest, one puts

11111119.11111119.

qui alli. 11111119.
11111119.11111119.
a malpuonsa quelpoma
anuliquel tulo. &
teminnamalema
calane 14.7

fin.

the ritual]: (nine piles of nine,
three times).
To his father: (nine piles of nine,
three times).
Four ounces of copal gum,
one turkey
buried in the sky.
Beans: (seven piles of fourteen)
(or 14 of 7 ? PC).
End.

They say of the turkey that it is burried in the sky because the blood is thrown into the fire and the flames carry it upward.

9. Ritual of the Blossoming Beans (Chontecomatlan)

licuenta lulama

lipostura
para mipafquilla qui pipa.
lanocalane, 11111119.
11111119.11111119.11111119.
11111119.11111119.11111119.
11111119.11111119.
lanocamas. 11111119.
11111119.11111119.
lontaá faonal. 111117.
111117.111117.
(corrected over 11111119)
quel. quel pachi faunal
11111119.11111119.11111119.
leimafounal. 11111119.
11111119.11111119
quel pate faunal. 11111119.
11111119.11111119.
quel chans camas. 111117.
111117.111117.
anuli, quelconejo.

fin.

The count of the plain [where the
offerings are burned],
the placement [of offerings]
that the flowers may blossom.
To the God of Beans: (nine piles of
nine, nine times).

To the God of the Earth: (nine piles
of nine, three times).
To Devil Powerful: (seven piles of seven,
three times).

To Miracle Powerful:
(nine piles of nine, three times).
To Hunter Powerful: (nine piles
of nine, three times).
To Tree Powerful [a spirit]: (nine piles
of nine, three times).
To man on earth: (seven piles of seven,
three times).
A dog. [It says rabbit but this is a
disguised way of saying dog.]
End.

Although this list of offerings does not have any heading, the informant explained that this ritual takes place when the bean vines are in bloom. The written formula includes first a prayer and then the names of the gods to whom the offerings are made as the sticks of copal wood are laid down. The list of offerings mentions first the god to whom it is given and then the quantity given.

The dog is offered to the Devil or to the witches. When killing the dog they cut its belly open crosswise, scatter the blood over the offering and throw the body onto it.

The man performing this ritual should be content for three days.

10. Deer Hunting Ritual (Tenango)

The hunting ritual from Tenango constitutes the whole of document 1. This is the most interesting document because it has the longest text, including prayers, and makes the most use of pictures and symbols. It is also the best example of a booklet used by the Indians because it once belonged to, and was used by, the informant's father.

The booklet has fourteen pages. The first, or cover, page has the title in Spanish, Posturas para cazadores, i.e., Placings (of offerings) for Hunters, and the last page, or back cover, has the title, also in Spanish, Cuaderno del gran demonio para edificio del hombre—Booklet of the Great Demon for the Edification of Man. Pages 4 to 7 list a first set of offerings stating the required quantities and the supernaturals for whom they are intended. Page 8 has drawings of a deer and of two supernaturals connected with this ritual. Pages 9 and 10 include a prayer to be said during the ritual,

and page 11 lists another set of offerings. On page 13 there is a short inscription, half in Chontal and half in Spanish, whose relation to the rest of the booklet is not clear. Pages 2, 3, and 12 are blank.

The drawings on page 8 consist of three figures. The central figure is a deer since this is a ritual for deer hunting. The figure at the left, with a crown and a cross on his chest, labeled Sesecoteo, is, according to the informant, a good spirit that takes care of the animals, something like a shepherd. The figure to the right, labeled Beoletos, is an evil spirit or devil that defends the animal from the hunter. The evil spirit has an object in his left hand which, according to the informant, he uses like a baseball bat to ward off the bullets from the hunter's gun.

A transcription and explanation of the text of the booklet follows. First there is a list of supernaturals and their offerings on pp. 4-7.

- [4] Limane quel paxi founatl
 caponocotla quel conxi camas
 tancaica el n li caichi loli 7
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 -
 quel paxi icafta tlepalaie
 lia tlamas 7 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 capitoqui imbama caichi 10 7
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 -
 Etlquitope tlanocamas
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 -
 Ni tlipin quequami tlipetu mi
 tojo fecoma aca mepi
 [5] 14. 7 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 y cueita tlipemaya que tlipetumi
 imbama malpu que pulu 14.
 ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒
 tlapouna coxi qui tinle
 y tlan conxi quitine 14 7
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 -
 Y cuinta tlanocamas
 y tltanqui 14 7
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 -
 Y cuaita qui mama qui Alli
 oque nuxas caichi que pulu 40. 7
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
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 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 -
 Licuenta lin neja tan caica
 el caichi 7
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 -
 tlotepa. 7 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 -
 Tloxuapa. 7 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 -
 [7] 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 -
- The hand of Miracle Powerful.
 I will place to Master of the Earth,
 enter: seven pinewood 7
 (seven piles of seven sticks each).
- Miracle Lightning, Light of
 the World: 7 (seven piles
 of seven).
- Capitoqui: ten seven 10 7
 (ten piles of seven).
- . . . [?] God of the Earth:
 (ten piles of seven).
- That the thick wind of the North,
 that Thunderbolt start not as I burn
 14. 7 (fourteen piles of seven).
- The count of Poison of Thunderbolt:
 fourteen balls 14
 (fourteen balls of copal gum).
 The Lord, Master of Life (or Day),
 God Master of Life (or Day): 14 7
 (fourteen piles of seven sticks each).
- The count of God of the Earth
 and the grass: 14 7
 (fourteen piles of seven).
- The count of his mother, his father:
 two score seven 40. 7
 (forty three piles of seven).
 [This is probably an error since
 both the spelled out numbers and the
 arabic numerals give 40 not 43.]
- The count of the animals, enter:
 seven 7
 (seven piles of seven).
- The food [of the animals]: 7
 (seven piles of seven).
- The shoots [of grass or trees
 that the animals eat]: 7
 (seven piles of seven).

Y cuaita quel muncagua
 quel mun quepatl
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 - 1111111 -
 1111111 - 1111111 -
 Y tlitoloxmala . 7 . 9 .
 111111111 - 111111111 - 111111111 -
 111111111 - 111111111 - 111111111 -
 111111111 -
 (drawing of a turkey)
 Amili quel macho

The count of the Spirit of the North,
 the Spirit of Sun Ray:
 (fourteen piles of seven).

The lairs (of the animals): 7 . 9
 (seven piles of nine).

One male (turkey).

The prayer on pages 9 and 10 reads as follows:

[9] Caxlme quicuichufi lopaá
 qui mama qui alli
 li illopa li cacollopa
 qui mane qui mis
 tlita leaja tlemapana

inca malulinufi
 quel mun qui Juala
 quel mun cuntenla
 tlanocamas

caxalme qui cuichufi
 cale contla
 quil xino taipa lela
 li tamqui
 Jatl que ichi
 momtla flaipalela
 litamqui

canif natla
 letl mane
 len fanumla
 cahmaicuf concho xi
 tlel mane
 letu ye fanumla .a
 [10] En el nombre de dios
 cacaxnatla
 quel caima founatl
 cacaxnatla
 tlano no camas
 le caxhema
 quel paxi founatl
 ti munatla xafta
 qui muquito
 ponontla la qui
 teala quixpia
 ti nu natla
 xafta qui muquite
 paifen tle tix mainentle
 nen chila canolle;
 cunchila caponala
 tlaclle conla
 quel mun cagua quepatl
 e calmai cu feonchoxi
 quel peica cumma hani
 tlumi cunmahani

I ask, I demand where are
 the mother, the father,
 where did it grow, where was it,
 his hands, his feet,
 the resting place of the animal,
 the river bank.
 [Here the hunter asks the whereabouts
 of the deer.]

Let them not cross my path,
 Spirit of the Mountain,
 Spirit of the Slope [loma, in Spanish]
 God of the Earth.

[If they cross the hunter's path
 it is bad; a misfortune may happen
 when shooting because the spirit
 defending the deer hits and sends
 back the bullet.]

I ask, I demand
 to take it,
 the young shoots, the grass.

Let me cut
 the young shoots, the grass.

[Here the hunter asks for the deer's
 food. This is a way of asking for
 the deer itself.]

I raise
 the hands of
 len fanumla,
 I turn into
 the hands of
 letuye fanumla.

In the name of God
 stands up
 Powerful Hunter,
 stands up
 God of the Earth.

I ask
 Miracle Powerful
 that he show it
 of a sudden,
 that he place it
 where it can be seen,
 that he show it
 of a sudden,
 that he change, that he put to sleep
 the great gods,
 the great lords.

I am the friend of
 Northern Spirit of Light,
 I turn into
 miraculous mist,
 black mist.

[so that the animal cannot see the
 hunter.]

Now come the additional offerings listed in page 11:

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>[11] Catl mama Catl alli
afane pella
el candela de cera
iiiiiii - iiiiii -
iiiiiii - IIIIIIII -
IIIIIIII - IIIIIIII
las animas afane caichi
el candela de cebo
iiiiiii - iiiiii - iiiiii
IIIIIII - IIIIII - IIIIII
Yndulgencia a los nueve dias
i medio dia de alluno
en cada dia
y nueve belas de sera
iiiiiii
uno en cada dia
En valor de \$ - 6.</p> | <p>Mother, father:
three [groups of] nine
wax candles
(three groups of nine candles)
(three groups of nine branches).

The souls of the dead: three
[groups of] seven tallow candles
(three groups of seven candles)
(three groups of seven branches).
Nine days of continence
and half a day's fast
every day
and nine wax candles
(nine candles)
one every day.
Value: six pesos.</p> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

The additional text in page 13 follows:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>[13] ocale contla tlunga quetumi
tlunga cuaxaflai
En el nombre de Dios
Señor
San Antonio</p> | <p>I am the friend of Fire of Thunderbolt,
Fire of Lightning.
In the name of God,
Lord
Saint Anthony.</p> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

The ritual described in this booklet is intended for deer hunting only. There are other booklets prescribing forty days' continence that describe rituals for the hunting of any kind of game, but these were not available to me.

The ritual is performed by the hunter, if he knows how, or he can ask a maestro or curer to do it for him. The period of continence and fast, however, has to be kept by the hunter himself.

The hunter makes nine candles, and on each of the nine days of continence he burns one on the altar in his house. Besides keeping away from his wife he should also abstain from smoking and drinking, and he eats only once a day after noon. After nine days he goes to a spring to perform the ritual. He will also be continent for two days after the ritual, thus completing three more days after the preparatory nine.

The day of the ritual the hunter leaves early in the morning, taking with him a member of his family to help him carry the offerings.

Once he arrives at the intended place, he clears the ground, counts the offerings, and lays them in a square on the ground, at the same time naming the supernaturals to whom they are offered, as listed in the booklet. Two different squares of offerings are laid down as described in the two different listings in the booklet. One consists of pinewood sticks, the other of branches planted on the ground as in a square fence with candles in the middle.

When the two squares are ready, he first sets on fire the square pile of pine sticks and then lights the candles in the second offering. Then he sacrifices the turkey over the pine sticks, scattering the blood as described in other rituals. Finally, he censes with copal gum both squares as described in the sowing ritual.

He says the prayer while he sets the pinewood on fire. Later he will repeat the prayer at home any time he goes hunting but without having to light candles or perform any other ritual.

11. Sowing a Child's Life (Jilotepequillo)

para tofama lopitine
afou cata
machofcolla lo mejull
primero topono malipalla lemaa

29

(drawing of three turkeys, two
of them crossed out)

111111111111
999999999 - 999999999 999999999 -
999999999 999999999 X
999999999 - 999999999 999999999 -
999999999 - 999999999 X
999999999 - 999999999 - 999999999
999999999 999999999 X 999999999 -
999999999 999999999)

777777777 111111111

IIIIIIIII

lindisma fauna1

How to sow the life.

?

To keep the house safe [from evil]
first, one places an (offering of)
nine to the sky.

29

Three turkeys

(twelve sticks)

(eighteen piles, each including
nine bundles of nine sticks).

[The informant did not attach any
meaning to the X's; these are corrections
or separation marks.]

(Nine piles of seven sticks, pile of
nine sticks, nine branches.)
Powerful Spirit.

This ritual is performed when a child is born to make sure it will live. One can wait as long as fifteen days after the birth.

The father of the child prepares all the offerings and takes them to a spring far from the village. He also has to find a rock of a nice round shape, or else a piece of guayacán heartwood that he shapes into a round ball. This he takes together with the offerings.

The father lays down the offerings in a square and plants the branches all around, as usual. Then he takes the rock or the wooden ball and buries it in the bottom of the spring. After that he burns the offerings, kills the turkeys, and censes as in other rituals.

The rock or wooden ball is the life of the child. If a wooden ball is used the child will turn out to be

more intelligent; if a rock is used it will be more stupid but it will have a longer life. The sex of the child makes no difference. If this ritual is not performed, the child will die very soon from a sickness, and people will say this happened because the gods were not notified when the child was born, and their permission was not asked.

The ritual takes place at a spring because that is a live place; it is life itself. Mountains are good places for praying to the gods, for sorcery and for curing fright, but they are not good for sowing a life.

The ritual requires nine days of continence; it is performed on the ninth day. The rock or ball is looked for three days before the ritual.

12. Marriage Ritual (Tenango)

CASAMIENTO

para mamaneá

999999999999. 999)9999999999

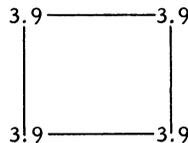
(999) 9999999999.

9999999999. 9999999999. 9999999999.

9999999999. 9999999999. 9999999999.

9999999999. (999) (999)

toponoma el cuadro



3.9 cada esquina

999.999.999.999.999.999.999.999.

999.999.

pa lix caichax 7777777. 7777777-

7777777 - 7777777 - 7777777 -

7777777 - 7777777.)

Nuebe dia de ynduljencia y

medio dia de alluna (sic)

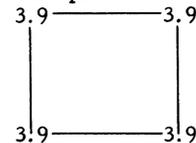
fin

MARRIAGE

For a marriage.

(Twelve piles of nine sticks, three piles of nine, nine piles of nine, three piles of nine, nine piles of nine, seven piles of nine, three piles of nine, three piles of nine.)

One places the square



3.9 in each corner.

(Nine piles of three bundles of nine sticks each.)

For the evil man [the witch]:

(seven piles of seven bundles of seven sticks each.)

Nine days of continence and half a day of fast.

End.

The ritual written in the booklet takes place some time before the marriage celebration. A Church wedding will have no private ritual of this kind.

The groom goes to a large spring in the mountain. He lays down the first set of offerings arranged in a square and then in each corner he adds a new pile of as described in the written formula. The offerings to the evil man are placed in a separate square. This is the first to be burned; the other square is then burned.

The purpose of this ritual is to ensure that the bride and groom do not die at the time of marriage.

We include here a description of the marriage procedures as given by the informant.

The young man takes a look at the girl. He does not talk to her but tells his father so he will ask for her. The father looks up an old man, someone who knows the customs and is respected in the village; there are few of them, only three or four. At about 8 o'clock in the evening the old man goes alone or with a friend to see the girl's father. He takes mescal (maguey brandy) and cigarettes. They first talk about work, about current happenings, and only near the end of the visit, when the woman of the house is already asleep and the men are alone, is the word given. The girl's father replies that he is not saying anything, his daughter has to give her consent. They set a date; these visits take place on Saturdays, so they decide that on the next Saturday a "yes" or "no" answer will be given.

The next visit the old man again takes mescal and cigarettes. If the answer is "yes," they decide on another meeting in one or two weeks when the go-between will go with the boy's father and the boy to take some presents. They take half a barrel of mescal, bread, clothes for the girl, money (12 pesos in the old days), one turkey and plenty of corn-husk flowers (flores de totomoztle, orchids kept within corn husks). The groom's relatives bring all the presents. When they arrive at the bride's house, her relatives are all seated. The groom's relatives take the flowers and distribute them among the relatives of the bride, one flower to each. They accept the flowers and take them to the household altar. The bride's mother lights there two big candles. Then the close relatives of bride and groom gather by the bride and groom who kneel down in front of the altar. Relatives on both sides ask them if they will really love each other for life and not merely for two or three days. The bride and groom say "yes," it is for life. There they agree to the marriage, and then all the presents that the groom brought are given. The money is placed in a plate adorned with flowers. It is laid on the ground in front of the altar, the same as all the other things they brought: chocolate, tobacco, etc.

Then the drinking starts. The bride's father starts serving, giving the first drink to the groom's father. After everybody has drunk, the groom's father does the serving. Three days and nights of drunkenness now follow.

El cavildo:
 999999999
 y 9 lupa coli †
 Cal chanx camas
 afane tangaica al caichi
 7777777. 7777777. 7777777.
 guel famama gitine
 apella pedazo
 111111111
 y el xineihua
 †††††††††
 (drawing of a turkey)
 Se pone esta mano
 onde ce acaba los pies
 el de aRiba
 y acaichi calchiqui coli

The chapter [of Church officials]:
 (nine piles of nine)
 and 9 pine branch tips.
 To man on earth:
 three times seven
 (three times seven piles of seven).
 To sow the life:
 nine pieces
 (nine sticks of pinewood);
 and branches
 (nine branches);
 one turkey.
 This hand is placed
 where the feet end
 the upper one
 and seven dogs [i.e., cones] of pine.

[Here was the drawing of a human figure with numbers denoting offerings written in the different parts of the body. The whole thing has been crossed out because, the informant said, it did not come out well.]

la sentura as (sic) los pies yeba
 37 y 7
 y la Barriga al Rededor
 21 catorce
 los 2 Brazos lleba 36
 pescueso lleba asta su centido
 13 de 7 y 2
 cero (sic) forma al mono
 colocando todo cada lado
 para las belas de la higlecia
 ce cuenta los hilos
 de esta manera
 12.12.12.12.12.12.12.12.12.12.12.12.)
 12.9.11.9.10.9.10.9.10.) 999.)
 9.9.9.9.) 999) 99) 99) 12)
 9 12) 999999999) 9) 999) 999)
 99) 9) 999) 99) 99) 777)
 99) - 99. 999, 100, 7
 cerresa 3 tres padre nuestro
 y 3 abe maria y 3 credo
 las animas un Responso
 y dios que nos dejaste

From the waist to the feet it takes
 (thirty seven piles of seven),
 and the belly around
 21 [piles of] fourteen.
 The two arms take thirty-six;
 [from the] neck to his "sense" it takes
 13 [piles of] 7 and 2.
 One shapes a figure
 by placing everything on each side.
 For the candles of the Church
 one counts the threads
 in this way:
 [the informant could not give
 a satisfactory explanation
 of these numbers].

One prays 3 Pater Noster
 and 3 Ave Maria and 3 Credo.
 (For) the souls, a response
 and God who left us.

[This Dios que nos dejaste is probably
 the collect for the Corpus Christi feast:
Deus qui nobis sub Sacramento mirabili
 passionis tuae memoriam reliquisti. ...P.C.]

This ritual is performed at a spring or a mountain top. It requires forty days of abstinence and continence plus three days without eating a thing. The period of continence starts in December and the ritual takes place in January. The sticks offered are of pinewood.

The man prepares, first, a square with all the offerings for the Earth and then another square with all the other offerings. This second group of offerings is laid down in such a way that the offerings to the different parts of the man's body form some kind of a human figure, whereas the other offerings form a square frame all around it. The branches are planted around this square frame and the candles are placed within around the figure.

When the two squares of offerings are laid down, the man sets the first one on fire, and once it is burning takes the dog, cuts its belly open and scatters the blood over the burning offering, invoking the spirits of the Earth, the water, mountains, winds, etc. Then he leaves it to burn and goes to the other square, which he sets on fire, and kills the turkeys in the usual way.

The human figure made of sticks represents the

teniente himself who is performing the ritual. The purpose is "to sow his life," i.e., to make sure that he or his family will not die and that no harm will come to him in his work. This is like making a request to the Earth that the good spirits will defend the man and the evil ones may not find a way to hurt him. When a sorcerer wants to harm someone he divines with maize kernels in order to find out whether his victim performed all the rituals (costumbres). If he did not, then the sorcerer can bewitch him. The whole human figure has to be shaped when placing the offerings. If anything is done incorrectly, sickness will enter through the part of the body represented in the wrong or missing offering.

All the town officials have to perform a ritual of this kind, especially the president, alcalde, and tenientes. The mayordomos also perform rituals like this one.

"Young people do not want to do these things any longer. What they do is take their guns and kill those who keep these costumbres saying that they are sorcerers. Five years ago they killed a man, his son and daughter who had some old books. The man was some kind of a curer and sorcerer. They killed him because

of that, and so he could not teach his children. His papers were burned. It happened in Las Animas, a rancheria of Tenango. Also in Zapotitlan, two years

ago [i.e., 1949], they killed a man and his wife, partly because of money they had, partly because of these things. They also were supposed to be witches."

14. How to Divine with Maize (Jilotepequillo)

Para lipite quella camas
tlano tejua
999.999.999.999.
catl mama catl alli tan cay ca

999.999.999.
quel capona cuxnu

111111111 - 111111111 - 111111111
tlano cuxnu

111111111 - 111111111 - 111111111
quel xutay
111111111 - 9 - 9
tla xutey
111111111 - 9 - 9
y tangayca
99999999

para malulli ylla
el cuana el trabajo
yma epay llommo
quimo paulla
pechi lo paá
quel pxans camas
111111111 - 111111111 - 111111111
para lopi queama
999999999
tlomunchama
999
lo mane
999
lo cuena comane
999
laja afane pella loli

y afane pella quelpoma

999999999 3 9

(drawing of three turkeys)
cada uno
En el nombre de dios padre
mo capille tejua

para malu y llano
quel cuana quel trabajo
pechi quelapa
pechi guiguanma
lite tlamas
tlumpu lamaz
tlu cuichamaz
o llaona chaizmina
quel chila canolle
quel chila caponala
o catl mama o catl alli
o quel pachi faunatl
o tlonchi quitine
o tla cuequi juala
o anuli quelchaz camaz
Bamos a ber
en el nombre De dios padre

To pray to the Earth.
To God of Corn:
(twelve piles of nine).
To the Mother and the Father, enter
[i.e., Moon and Sun]:
(nine piles of nine).
To the Lord of the Spirit
[or Lord Diviner, PC]:
(three piles of nine).
To the God of Spirit
[or God Diviner, PC]:
(three piles of nine).
To Kel šutay:
(three piles of nine).
To La šutey:
(three piles of nine),
and enter
(nine piles of nine)
[there are only eight nines but it
should be nine according to the
informant].

That it may tell me
the sickness, the travail,
I dream
to live,
where is it.
To man on earth:
(three piles of nine).
For his "sense"
(nine piles of nine);
his heart:
(three piles of nine);
his hand:
(three piles of nine);
his other hand:
(three piles of nine).
To the Water: three [piles of] nine
pinewood [sticks]
and three [piles of] nine [balls of]
copal gum
(nine piles of nine and three piles
of nine);
(three turkeys)
each one.

In the name of God the Father.
Egg-maize:
[The maize kernels are compared
with an egg because they are both alive]
that you may tell me
my sickness, my travail.
Where was it born?
where did it come from?
the middle of the earth,
the rim of the earth,
the dust of the earth,
or the Lord šaismina [evil spirit],
the great gods,
the great lords,
or the Mother, or the Father,
or Miracle Powerful,
or Master of Life,
or the old mountain,
or a man on earth [i.e., witch]?
Let us see.
In the name of God the Father

el fane maqui talejaa
 Capie tejua
 y 3 belas de sera
 de 3.9 de ylo
 iii
 por parte de dios
 iii
 las animas
 777

gana su cuarenta dias
 y 3 dias de alluna para empezar

This ritual is performed to prepare the maize kernels used in divination, asking the Earth to give them the power to answer the diviner's questions, or, as the informant once said, "to make the kernels wise."

The preparatory period consists of forty days of sexual continence during which the performer must abstain from smoking, eat only in the afternoon, and bathe every morning at dawn. Then follow three more days of total fasting. Only then is a person ready for the ritual. The ritual takes place on the last day of fasting and continence, at a spring or a mountain top.

On the day of the ritual, the man goes to the cornfield and looks for the largest ear of corn he can find. He picks it and from it takes twelve kernels, each from a different row. These are the kernels that he will keep in the future for divination. A diviner can have two different sets of kernels.

In the ritual the pinewood sticks are laid down and burned, the turkey is sacrificed, and the whole offering is then censed, all done as explained in other rituals.

Once the maize kernels have been "made wise" with this ritual they are ready to use without a full repetition of the ritual. All that is necessary from now on is that the diviner use his kernels with an empty stomach before breakfast. He has to be continent the night before and has to take baths the evening and early morning before divination.

All kinds of things can be divined with maize kernels: the cause of sickness, the person responsible for witchcraft, the name of a thief or a murderer. To do so, the diviner throws the kernels on the ground.

three times may it come out well,
 egg-maize.

And 3 wax candles
 of 3.9 of thread
 (three candles),
 on the part of God
 (three candles);
 the souls of the dead
 (three candles).

[The three candles for God have each a wick of three strands of nine threads. For the dead there are three tallow candles each with a wick of seven strands.]
 He gains forty days [of continence] and three days of fast to start.

When a kernel falls with the heart facing up they say it is alive, if it falls facing down it is dead. The diviner asks a question when throwing the kernels. If they fall six alive and six dead, the answer is yes. The kernels are thrown three times for each question and the answer should always be the same.

The prayer included in the written formula is what the diviner says when he is casting his maize kernels in order to find out the cause of sickness. He names all the possible senders of sickness until an affirmative answer is obtained from the maize. A sickness coming from the middle of the earth (or the center of the world as this can also be translated) is sent by God; a sickness coming from the rim of the earth is owing to witchcraft. A sickness coming from the dust of the earth will be transitory. Next in the prayer are named the supernaturals that could have sent sickness. Of these llapona chaizmina is an evil spirit and a witch will be responsible for the sickness he sends. When the cause is found to be witchcraft, the names of suspects are mentioned and the kernels are thrown again. In the same way the names of suspects of murder or of robbery are spoken and an answer obtained from the kernels.

If one asks about the well-being of a person and all the kernels fall dead and in two lines, the person has no life, that is, he is going to die soon.

A curer can also divine by dreaming. Some dreams mean that the patient is going to die, others that he is going to recover. The diviner has to sleep alone or in the fields; if he sleeps with his wife he will not dream.

15. How to Cure Fright (Suchiltepec)

espanto
 tlano camaz 12 9.
 tlipindesmala tlanocamaz 12 9.

tlano xpaiqui 12 9.
 el licencia 12 9. 12 9.
 quel huma quitine
 999999999

39. 39. 39.

tlixcaixans
 7777777777777.
 7777777777777.
 anuli ciento ciete caichi. 7
 quel su mema quitine el xpaiqui
 999999999. 0

Fright.

To God of the Earth: 12 [piles of] 9.
 To Tlipindesmala (spirits) of the
 God of the Earth: 12 [piles of] 9.
 To God of Fright: 12 [piles of] 9.
 To ask permission: (12 piles of 9 twice).
 To Hunger of Life [or Spirit of Life?]:
 (nine piles of nine).

(Vessel with three times thirty-nine
 pieces of copal gum put to burn with
 embers.)

To the evil man [i.e., witch]:
 (twice fourteen groups of seven),

one hundred [groups of] seven 7.
 To Hunger of Life [or Spirit of Life?],
 Fright:
 (nine piles of nine, one turkey egg

999999999999. 999999999999.
 999999999999. 999999999999.
 9999999999. 9999999999.
 99999999. 99999999.
 9999. 999. 999. 9999.
 999. 99. 9.
 7777777777
 7777777777

[When translating this formula the informant interpreted quel huma quitine and quel su mema quitine both as "Hunger of Life," which he described as a spirit he did not know. From the explanation of the cause of fright and of the performance of this ritual formula, it would seem that a better interpretation is "Spirit of Life," or the human soul of the person sick of fright.]

"Fright" occurs when someone has had a great scare and the Earth has captured his soul, or wahmá kitiné (literally spirit of the day or of life).

The curer who is going to treat a victim of fright is continent for nine days, and on the ninth day he does the curing. During these days he eats only once a day after noon. He cannot smoke, drink, or have sexual intercourse, and he has to bathe at dawn. This is to purify himself.

If the place where the sick person was frightened is near by, the curer goes there; otherwise he can go to a high mountain from which the place of frightening can be seen.

The sticks used in this ritual are copal wood. They are laid down at the time that the words written in the booklet are said. The offerings are placed in three different square piles, one with all the offerings to the spirits of the earth, another one with the offer-

three times nine piles of nine
 eleven piles of nine, ten piles of nine
 nine piles of nine, twice eight piles
 of nine, seven piles of nine, six
 piles of nine, five piles of nine,
 four piles of nine, twice three piles
 of nine, four piles of nine, three piles
 of nine, two piles of nine, one pile
 of nine,
 twenty piles of seven).

ings to the soul of the frightened man, and a third one laid down farther from the other two for the Devil. The offerings to the Earth are burned first, then those of the Devil, and finally those to the sick person's soul. The egg is placed in the center of the sticks and it burns with them. When the offerings to the sick man's soul are burning, the curer censes them with the burner full of copal gum; he calls the sick man by name and, taking water into his mouth, blows it onto the flames. He will have taken a shirt or some other used clothing of the sick person; he waves it like a flag while he keeps calling the sick man's name, and then takes it back to the patient who puts it on. The sick man's soul is this way restored to its owner.

The remnants of the burning are always removed so that it will not be noticed that a ritual has been performed.

16. Another Cure for Fright (Suchiltepec)

para al xpaiqui
 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12
 Toguafimallaf cuana
 los doce por doce
 topangogonama
 999.999.999
 para licencia tlamaz
 aparte al doce
 aparte al nueve
 aparte al 14 ciete
 toponoma alado
 777777777777
 3 dia de ayuna de medio dia
 tliguama quitine

9 9 9

For fright.
 (Twelve piles of twelve pinewood sticks.)
 Rub the sick one
 (with) the twelve by twelve.
 Start to count
 (three times three piles of nine)
 for permission from the Earth.
 Twelve apart,
 nine apart,
 14 (piles of) seven apart.
 Put aside
 (fourteen piles of seven).
 Fast of three days for half a day.
 Spirit of Life.

(Three groups of nine pieces of
 copal to burn in a vessel.)

One goes to a mountain top. The offerings are laid in two piles with the offerings to the Devil (the 14 piles of seven sticks) in a different pile, as the formula says; these are the first to be burned.

The informant's mother cured several people with this prescription.

The sticks used here are of pine; the curer holds them in bundles and, with them, rubs the patient all over his body in order to take out whatever sickness he has. The curer also uses a used shirt or other clothing of the patient and calls out his name while he censes, as in the other ritual.

17. How to Send Back Sickness (Jilotepequillo)

Para topayma el cuana
 [Here a few words had been crossed
 out with a pencil and then cut out
 with scissors.]
 litetla

To send back sickness.

This is what it eats:

11111111111111111111
 11111111111111111111
 11111111111111111111
 11111111111111111111
 11111111111111111111
 999 - 999 - 999 - 999 - 999 -
 999 - 999 - 999 - 999 - 999 -
 999999999
 0
 999 - 999 - 999 - 999 - 999 -
 999 - 999 - 999 - 999 - 999 -
 999 - 999 - 999
 111111111
 se cuenta uno asta nueve
 quince de nueve
 y despues otro 25 de tres nueve
 999
 una asta 25)
 0 0 0)
 y despues 300 ciete
 x otro al mismo
 200 ciete)
 y despues 41 nueve
 0 0 0
 un perro

(five piles of twenty sticks;

 ten times three piles of nine
 sticks;
 nine piles of nine sticks;
 one egg;
 thirteen times three piles of
 nine sticks;

 one pile of nine sticks).
 One counts from one to nine,
 fifteen of nine;
 and then another 25 of three nine
 (three piles of nine sticks)
 from one to 25;
 (three eggs);
 and then 300 seven
 another one at the same (?);
 200 seven
 and then 41 nine;
 (three eggs);
 one dog.

Sickness is a spirit that God sends in order to take away a person. At other times the Devil sends it because of the many prayers that the witches have addressed to him. The witches pray to the spirits informing them of the bad doings of a person, and the spirits send the sickness. The spirit of sickness is like air but sometimes it is seen in human shape; it depends on the luck of the person who sees it. It is then like a woman. People have seen her and the curers (onši) also know it is a woman.

The village of San Pablo Topiltepec, for instance, was destroyed by sickness. An old woman, who was resting by the road, saw the figure of a woman coming toward the village; she was wrapped in a sheet and was full of sores. The old woman spoke to the figure: "Where are you going?" The figure did not answer, but merely stared at the old woman and smiled. The old woman asked again: "Where are you going?" And the figure signaled toward the village. After a short time there was a great sickness in the village which almost finished it.

Some other people have seen similar things.

When a person is lying down with sickness, people ask the gods that he get well or else that he die at

once. People say that if the sick person has a short life and cannot get well it is better if he dies. When the curer performs this ritual he dreams whether his patient is going to live or die. He dreams of an old woman or an old man who tells him a word or gives him something. If the patient is to recover they give him a young maguey plant or a young corn stalk or a long lighted candle. If the patient is to die the curer dreams of receiving a tiny candle whose light is going out, or a white flower, a bag of corn, beans or sweet potatoes, or a pot of tamales ready to eat. This particular prescription from San Lorenzo is to deal with a sickness sent by God. The father of the family performs the ritual. It requires nine days of continence, and takes place in the mountain. When there is an epidemic every household performs this ritual.

Before sickness strikes the old people dream of it. They dream of a woman who asks for lodging like a traveler. If it is an ugly woman, this means sickness; if it is a young girl, it means an accident such as a wound from a fall or bullet. After such a dream this ritual can also be performed to ward off the disease. The purpose, then, is to pray that sickness may go back to where it came from.

18. How to Cast Out Sickness (Suchiltepec)

leipa ama cuana
 yndulgencia 40 dias
 99999 20 11111 9

 200
 99999
 0 0 99999
 200
 11111
 99999

To cast out sickness.
 Continenence: 40 days.
 (Five piles of nine, twenty piles of
 nine, five piles of nine;
 two hundred piles of nine;
 five piles of nine;
 two turkey eggs, five piles of nine;
 two hundred piles of nine;
 five candles, five piles of nine.)

This is another ritual to get rid of the spirit of sickness. It is performed on the same occasions as the previous one.

This prescription is of the type used by people who do not know how to read; that is why it consists

almost exclusively of numbers and does not list the names of the spirits. It requires forty days of continence, but to hurry up the ritual several people can get together; for instance, each of twenty men keep two days of abstinence, adding up to forty, and the ritual can be performed right away.

III. THE SUPERNATURALS

The ritual formulae described in the preceding section are prescriptions of the kinds and quantities of offerings required. As such, most of them also name the entities for whom the offerings are intended. Some of these names are not precisely those of supernaturals, however, but earthly beings on whose behalf the offering is presented in order to obtain for them protection from the supernaturals. For instance, offerings are presented on behalf of the farmer (or his "sense") in the rituals of clearing, sowing, and harvesting (2, 3, 7); or on behalf of the woman who is going to grind the first corn of the season (4). Protection may be asked for different parts of a man's body, as in the ritual for preparing maize kernels for divination, and for the man about to assume the office of teniente (13, 14). A similar interpretation is possible in the case of the land clearing and first corn rituals in which offerings are made to the ax, the machete, the stick, and the metate (2, 4). These offerings are made either because it is believed that the implements have supernatural power or, possibly, in order that humans may obtain supernatural protection in the use of the implements.

With these exceptions the rituals list supernatural beings to whom the offerings are addressed. We shall now discuss the nature of these beings and present additional information about the Chontal view of the supernatural world. First, let us examine the names of the supernaturals as they appear in the ritual formulae.

Names of the Supernaturals in the Ritual Formulae

Most supernaturals are related to elements of nature, and they often appear under the name of those elements without any title or qualifying name. For instance, there are offerings presented to Sky, Earth, Mountain, Water, Lightning, and the four directions. In most instances, however, the name of the natural element addressed is used together with a title that personifies it. Thus, instead of simply Earth or Mountain we find God of the Earth, Lord of the Mountain, etc. There are also names of supernaturals that have nothing to do with the name of any natural element. In all these examples we can see that a distinction can then be made between the natural element and its related supernatural.

According to the informant everything has two different spirits, one good and the other evil. Thus there are both kinds of spirits in springs, mountains, among thunderbolts, and so forth. In regard to the earth, for instance, the good spirit is a young woman and the evil one is an old woman. There is also a good and a bad spirit of the rainbow, a good and a bad guardian of the deer, etc.

Among the more common spirit titles is *łano* (tlano, llano), which the informant always translated as God. We find references to the God of the Earth or of the World (*łano kamats'*, various spellings, 1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 15), God of the Mountain (llano qui juala, 3), God of the Woods (llano qui mucot, 3), God of the Sky (*łano kemaa*, 1), God of Thunderbolt (*łano ketumi*, 7), God of the North (*łano kawa*, 1), God of Maize (tlano tejua, 14), God of Beans (łano calane, 8, 9), and God of Fright

(tlano xpaiqui, 15). (The last one is also appealed to once as simply Fright, 15.)

Another common title is *łapauhná* or *kapohná* (in various spellings) which the informant translated as dueño and we render as Lord. Belmar (1900, II, p. 84; 1905, p. 190) equates tlapohna with amo (lord or master). The only sixteenth-century report on the Chontal describes lapucna as the headman of a localized kindred and representative of their ruler, and equates the term to the Nautl tequitlato and the Zapotec golabe (Relación de Nexapa in Paso y Troncoso, 1905, pp. 33-34). Tlapocna is also the first element in the names of all the Chontal gods listed by Martínez Gracida (1910, pp. 57-59). He does not state, however, the source of his data and much of what he says looks quite unreliable.

Thus we meet in our formulae a Lord of the Mountain (3), a Lord of Lightning (3), and a Lord of the Clearing (2, 8). The same title is also part of the name of other supernaturals such as tlapouna coxi qui tñle, Lord Master of Life (10), capona cuxnu, Lord Diviner (14), and llapona chaizmina, described by the informant as an evil spirit of the fields, a sort of son, secretary, or errand boy of the Devil (14). Martínez Gracida gives a Tlapocna leimina as God of Hell (1910, p. 59) which is probably the same. In two rituals the plural form, caponala, the Lords, or chila caponala (14), the Great Lords, is also used.

Another title of some supernaturals is *onši*. This is the name of a curer or medicine man, that the informant called maestro in Spanish. We translate it as Master. Belmar (1900, II, p. 107) also translates *maestro* as tlomchi.

There are thus conxi camas, Master of the Earth (10) and tlonchi quitine, Master of Life (or of the Day, 14), or tlano conxi quitine, God Master of Life (10). The Master of Life was described by the informant as God the Creator.

In the hunting ritual (10) some natural elements are invoked under the name of *mun*, which the informant translated as spirit (espiritu). Thus the Spirit of the Mountain (mun qui juala), Spirit of the Ridge (mun cuntēnla), Spirit of Light (mun quepatl), Spirit of the North (mun cagua) and the Northern Spirit of Light (mun cagua quepatl).

One of the supernaturals more often addressed is *Pa:ši fawnal* (paxi faunatl, pachi faol, and other spellings, 3, 8, 9, 10, 14). Our informant translated *pa:ši* as "Miracle," or God, and *fawnal* as "powerful," "wise," or "great man." We have translated this name literally as Miracle Powerful.

In the Chontal linguistic material published by Belmar apashi is translated sacred (sagrado; Belmar, 1900, II, p. 118) and calpashi, miracle (milagro; Belmar, 1900, II, p. 108), while calfaunatl is given two meanings: "great lord" and the Sun (Belmar, 1900, I, p. 28). Our informant's meaning of the term is in agreement with these other data, but the identification with the Sun was not made by our informant, who was hesitant in describing this supernatural; he once said it was a God of the Earth. The main elements of this name appear also in the names given by Martínez Gracida of the God of Fire, Tlapocna Pashitlunga, and the God of the Sun, Tlapocna Cal Faunatl (1910, p. 58). The name *faunatl* appears also as part of the name of other supernaturals such as Hunter Power-

ful (caima founatl, 10; leima founal, 9), Tree Powerful (pate faunal, 9) lindisma faunatl, simply described as an evil spirit of the earth (11), Devil Powerful (lontaa faonal, 8, 9) and cuxnu faunatl, Spirit or Diviner Powerful (13).

The term cuxnu (kušnu), translated by the informant as "spirit," enters into the names capona cuxnu, Lord Spirit (14), tlano cuxnu, God Spirit (14), cuxnu faunatl, Spirit Powerful (13), cuxnugui culhuai, Spirits of the Creeks (13), and cuxnu camí (Spirit that Burns [?], 3). Belmar (1905, pp. 201, 205) translates koshnu (or kusnu) as diviner or medicine man (adivino, médico). We have included this translation as an alternative in the rituals where it seems to fit better than our informant's.

Other supernaturals, the meaning of whose names is not altogether clear, include llaona chaizmina (lāona šaismina, Lord of Hell [?]), an evil spirit of the fields (14), tlipindesmala, evil spirits of the Earth God or perhaps the local spirits that capture the souls of people suffering from fright (15), canolle (kanoye) simply translated as gods (10, 14), and len fanunla quetumi, Spirits of Thunderbolt in one ritual (3), simply as fanunla, or letuye fanunla in another (10). Other names not explained, perhaps names of supernaturals, are capitoqui (10) and Xutey, or Xutay (14).

In the following sections we discuss those supernaturals about which additional information was obtained from our informant. Reference is also made to the rituals in which offerings are given to them.

A number of supernaturals named in the rituals could not be clearly described by the informant, and no additional beliefs about them could be had. This suggests the existence of a certain amount of esoteric knowledge exclusive to curers who have a deeper religious knowledge than our informant.

Lightning and Water Beings

Supernaturals connected with lightning and thunderbolts have been mentioned in some of the rituals, notably the Tenango sowing ritual (3) and the hunting ritual (10) in which different names of lightning spirits are given.

Stories and beliefs referring to lightning seem to be quite developed. The two stories that follow are particularly interesting since they provide the world view that is behind the burning of offerings to the rain- and crop-bearing spirits. The first one is clearly reminiscent of the Aztec Tlalocan, or abode of the Rain God.

A trip to the country of lightning. The thunderbolts (rayos) live in the middle of the seas at the rim of the Sky. God has a place there something like a large house. There he has large trunks where the spirits of thunderbolts are kept. Other spirits are in charge of them and they do not release them except by order from God.

A Chontal man once went to the seashore. He liked to see the fish and he fished for a while. Suddenly an alligator came, a huge animal that swallowed him up and took him away. The alligator went far away; he was a huge animal and did not kill the man, he just threw him up somewhere else and left him. The man could not find anything to eat, he took to a mountain and came to some large very beautiful houses. Tortillas, ears of maize, and other kinds of food were lying all over the place. The man saw that and said: "There is plenty to eat here." And he tried to eat something. A man then spoke to him and told him not to eat it

because that was their dirt, the dirt of the thunderbolts. "Where am I?" asked the Chontal man. "This is where the thunderbolts rest," the other man said, and he took him to see several houses where the thunderbolts were. "If you want to see about this I now have an order to take out some thunderbolts so that they destroy such and such a village over there." The man followed him and saw how he opened a large box full of clouds. The clouds came out right away and the box was empty. The spirits of thunderbolt that came out caused a great loss in that village and killed many animals. Our man was shown several boxes. "Here is a box to end the world, no one can open it except with an order from God. This other one," his guide said, "has good weather rain. This other one is for just two or three showers. And now, you will take with you several kinds of seed." He gave our man pumpkin seeds, beans, gourd seed and chile seeds. [In answer to a question the informant said maize was not then given. For the origin of maize, see the story below.] He told our man to go to sleep so that they could take him back to earth. He fell asleep and when he woke up he was home in bed. In his belt he had the bag of seeds he was given: and this is the seed that he sowed on his land.

While the man was in the country of the thunderbolts, he saw their secret. When men burn offerings of pinewood and other things in their fields, the smoke upon reaching the country of the thunderbolts turns into tortillas and other foods that the thunderbolts eat.

The thunderbolt boy. A woman once went to the woods to look for medicinal herbs. She came upon a large pine tree and saw a boy stuck in it. The boy asked her to let him free. "I don't know my work well," the boy said, "this is the first time I've gone out and that is why this happened to me. I did not fall hard enough and I got stuck on this branch." The woman went back to the village to tell the men. Her husband came and got the boy out; he had to chop the tree in order to let him out. The thunderbolt boy was grateful and told the man that he would be able to sow any kind of land he wished to. He gave the man a thunderbolt knife—who knows what that's like—and said: "Wherever you want to work you should take this knife and stick it in the middle of the clearing or on one side, and because of this knife it will rain in your field even in bad weather." The man did just that, wherever he sowed he stuck the knife without telling anyone. It rained well on his land and he gathered a good harvest while other people lost their crops. People wondered why his crops never failed and became envious. Finally the man told the people, but as soon as he told them the knife disappeared.

As can be seen in the stories just given, thunderbolts (letumi; rayo in Spanish) have the shape of people. When seen on earth, they usually appear as a naked young boy, as in the story.

Human shape is also attributed to the rainbow (lupahé, in Chontal). The full rainbow is a man, whereas a half rainbow is a woman and very evil. If you show a red cloth to this female rainbow, as to a bull, she comes close to you. She causes fires, but our informant had not heard of the common Mexican belief that it is bad to point toward the rainbow because it will rot your finger, or that it causes tooth decay. The Milky Way is not a supernatural, it is the reflection of the river on the sky.

Other spirits connected with water are found in

springs. They appear as snakes and they can be either male or female. As was described before, the ritual of sowing a child's life has to take place at a spring. This ritual formula, however, is one that does not give a long list of supernaturals. A spirit of the creeks is addressed in the ritual for taking the office of teniente (13). Offerings are given to water in the latter ritual as well as in those for sowing (6), eating the first ears of corn (4) and preparing the maize kernels for divination (14).

The wind is another weather element that receives offerings in the Tenango sowing ritual (3), where it is given different names. No elaborate beliefs about the wind were obtained. The whirlwind is connected with the Devil. (See below.)

Another weather being is called Cometa in Spanish (comet), lowi in Chontal. This is a snake that flies. It comes out of a spring or a lake and falls again into another lake or into the sea. It is like a snake covered with burning oil or pitch that may drip and burn whatever it falls upon. Because of this it shines when flying; it is seen only in the night time. It causes thunder but is dry like fire, it brings no rain. When it strikes a place in a way similar to a thunderbolt it burns; the more water one throws on it the more it burns.

Toads and birds belong to Thunderbolt. The Chontal people do not kill birds except for eating and not then without asking for permission. One does not keep birds in cages and children are told not to kill birds because they belong to the thunderbolts. A story is told of a boy who used to kill birds and was struck by lightning.

A number of birds announce rain. Thus when the nu?u bird (bereguicha in Zapotec) sings, it will surely rain no matter what the weather looks like; it never takes more than three days for the rain to come. The ko? bird (pájaro vaquero in Spanish) when crying at the creeks in the morning announces rain in the afternoon. When it cries in the afternoon it announces wind. The lako? bird when crying in the morning also announces rain in the afternoon.

Bolts and comets can be the nagual, or companion spirit, of people. When a man has a comet as his nagual he is dull and quiet, he does not like to talk and is not friendly with anyone. Comets are rarely nagual. People realize that there is a comet nagual in a village, because when the comet crosses the skies it stops for an instant in front of the house of the man whose nagual it is.

Sorcerers can talk to an evil thunderbolt spirit, who will then kill the sorcerer's enemies. When a man is to be killed by thunderbolts, he dreams of strange ugly people who are his enemies. The importance of thunderbolts and comets as companion spirits is seen in the following story.

A fight between the Mareño and the Mountain Chontal. Mareños are the people of San Mateo del Mar, a Huave fishing village. They used to go to the villages in the mountains selling fish and shrimp. Once they came to the village of Santa Lucia. They sold their fish very well and the next time they came they raised their prices. The village authorities then complained and asked them to bring their prices down to what they had been before or else to stop selling and take their fish back home. An old Mareño who was among the traders got very angry. "You are against us as if you were he-men," he said. "If you are really men wait for us at the fall of the first rains in May!" The authorities just listened quietly to what the Mareño was saying.

So this was the reason for the fight. When the

rains came in May, the first time it rained there was a great storm, with loud thunder. Lightning struck the church bell which cracked, the church and some houses burned down, and it rained for so long that there was a landslide and part of the village, houses and all, slipped into the river.

But there was an old woman in the village, and it was she who defended the village; she was a nagual, this old woman, a Comet was her nagual. All the elders of the village got together in order to decide what to do to save the village that was about to be destroyed. "I will try and see whether I can talk to the naguales," said the old woman. She took cotton and a spindle and began to spin. As she was drawing cotton to spin, a great cloud began to form and rise and she was spinning and spinning and the cotton rose up and up and turned into a cloud. She had worked just an hour when the rain stopped and it started to thunder and flash. But it was only thunder and flashes of lightning, there was no rain. All night long there was this dry thunder. At dawn it was all calm and clear.

The people went then to see the village springs. There were three springs, one at each side of a mountain. At the first spring they found a big dead toad, at the second there was a dead snake, and at the third, a dead alligator. "These are their naguales, these are the Mareños," said the old woman. "We won; had we not won they would have finished our village." They took the toad, the snake, and the alligator and carried them to the village to show to all the people. All the villagers then gathered and the old woman said: "Let us take revenge on what they tried to do here." She went to the neighboring villages to see what strength she could gather to take against San Mateo. They sent a messenger to San Mateo to tell them to be ready for such and such a day when the mountain people (i.e.; Chontal) would come to test their strength on them. San Mateo did not want to, they asked for peace, for an agreement. They said what had happened was enough of a test. Three elders of San Mateo came to the mountains to sue for an agreement and to ask to be treated as better than brothers. And this is how, in order to achieve security, the Mareño became compadres with the Mountain people. To this day they call each other compadres.

The Sun and the Moon

Among the heavenly elements we find Heaven addressed in some of the rituals (see 1, 8, 11) and the four directions in one (1). A "Father" and "Mother" are given offerings in a number of rituals (8, 10, 13, 14). In one instance the informant explained this as being offerings on behalf of the farmers' father and mother (8), but in another ritual (14) he explained the expression as Mother and Father of the World, i.e., Moon and Sun, and in another instance (13) he said the term Mother referred to the Moon or the Earth and the term Father, to the Sun. The word faunati (or other spellings), which is part of the name of an important supernatural frequently mentioned in the rituals, is applied to the Sun, but, as said before, our informant always translated this as "Powerful Man" without identifying it with the Sun.

The following story, although apparently mixed with some kind of Hansel and Gretel tale, obviously belongs in the usual Mesoamerican Sun and Moon myth of which many modern versions have been recorded in Oaxaca.

There was a man who had a boy and a girl. His wife had died, and when he went out to work, the children stayed home alone. They led a sad life. When their father came home, the boy always burned something when making a fire and the girl and many people complained that he was too daring.

One day their father got tired of being alone and found himself a woman. This woman said that she would marry him only if he killed his children. The man agreed because he was annoyed with his children, but he did not want to kill them. What he did was to take them to a forest far away and very thick. He took tortillas as provision for himself and the children, and two gourds of water. When they arrived to the forest the man said: "I am going to look around. You wait for me here." The man went back home and left the children alone. When they saw their father was not coming back, they turned back and, following their tracks, succeeded in finding their house.

The man's new wife got very angry and said: "Well, didn't you say you had killed them?" The man asked her not to be angry, and said he would try to kill them again. He took the children once more to the forest and left them further off, but the children again found their way back home.

The woman then told the man: "If they come back next time, I will leave you." And since this man loved his wife, he took his children deep into the forest where it is most difficult to find the way out. He took his children near a big tree and asked them to wait there for him and not to worry, that he would come back soon. The children then said they knew that he wanted to lose them, but he said "No, I am going to cut down some trees. If I don't come back soon, the noise I will make chopping down the trees will lead you to me." The man took two water gourds and hung them from a branch. The wind moved the gourds, knocking one against the other. The children heard the noise and they felt happy thinking it was their father who was making that noise. Finally they tired of waiting and went to meet their father, to find instead that it was the gourds that were making the noise. They became sad; they remained there three days until all their food was finished. They walked all around looking for a way out of the forest, but they found none. Finally they tired of walking and the boy climbed a tree. He looked in all directions and saw smoke coming up from near a big creek. They were so glad that they had found some traces of people. They went after that smoke and came to a hut where an old woman lived. She asked where they came from and the children told her their story. "That's all right," she said, "you can stay here with me." She kept them in a room, gave them food to eat and took very good care of them and bathed them every day. The children got fat. One day the old woman took the girl out—she was the fattest—and when she went back to the house where they were kept she was wounded all over her body. The boy asked her what had happened and the girl told him how the old woman scratched her body to collect blood for her and her children to eat. Then it was the boy's turn. She took blood from his body and then shut him in again to care for them so they would get fat again. This lasted for some time until the boy realized they were going to eat his sister because they had fixed a big pot full of hot water. The old woman called the boy and told him, "I will have to go on an errand, you stay here adding wood to the fire until the water starts boiling."

The boy realized what it was, and when the old woman was stirring the fire, the boy hit the pot with a stick, the pot broke and the water spilled and burned the old woman whom he left there floundering. He ran to break into the house and take his sister out and they ran into the forest because it was time for the sons of the old woman to arrive and they only thought of hiding.

They spent several days in the mountains and finally they arrived at a town full of people. They had a fiesta and every year they had this fiesta to see who of all people would dare to swallow a burning ember. But no one dared. Year after year they tried. Finally the boy and his sister ate the embers. A woman told them about it when they came to the town. "Maybe you will dare. They say once you swallow that you will be gods, you will climb up the skies and we will have light." When the children heard that, they were so scared of the old woman's sons, that they would find them and take them back, that they decided better to swallow the embers and die. The boy was the first to swallow the embers, then the girl swallowed some more pieces and ashes. As soon as they had swallowed it they swelled up as a sun ray, they became bright and rose up into the Sky. First rose the sun and then the moon.

Other beliefs about the sun and the moon were obtained. Some, although recorded as isolated beliefs, appear to be connected with the story given above.

Thus the coyote is said to have been the moon's dog which she failed to take with her into the sky. That is why it is said the coyotes always cry in the nights when there is a full moon. They cry and look up at their former mistress and remember the moon when she was on the earth with them.

In a similar way the coral snake (coralillo) is said to have been a ribbon the moon was wearing when she left the earth. The Devil tried to pull her back when she was moving onto the sky, but he could only grab her ribbon, which, as he touched it, turned into a snake.

A spirit of the woods which causes men to follow her and get lost is also described as a former companion of the moon (see below).

On nights when there is no moon, it is said that the sun and the moon are together. The eclipse is caused by an animal in the sky, the sky-lion (kal šmu kemaʔa), who tries to eat up the sun or the moon. When the sun turns dark it is because he is fighting the monster. If the monster should succeed and eat the sun, the world would come to an end, but he has not succeeded yet. When during the eclipse the sun is darkened, many men get sick. In an eclipse of the moon, when the moon turns red, it is women who fall sick.

The Earth, her Animals and Plants

One of the most important supernaturals, addressed in practically every ritual formula, is the Earth. It appears under the name kamats which the informant translated as either Earth or World, or as iano kamats, God of the Earth. The informant used the word God (Dios), not Goddess (Diosa), although he said the Earth is thought to be a woman and the term Mother can be applied to her.

Many earthly supernaturals appear as specific localities or local spirits. Thus the Center of the Earth (13), the Mountain, or the Spirit, Master, or God of the Mountain (2, 3, 6, 10, 14), the Woods (2, 3), the Mountain Ridge (6), the Slope (10), the Plain (9), the Lair of the Animals (10), the Master of the Clearing (2), the House (4).

These local spirits can also be either good or bad. The earth being female, a good spirit will be a young woman, an evil one an old woman, but again the informant did not consistently refer to local spirits as females.

Among the evil earth spirits are those who can capture a human soul and thus cause fright; *špaiki*, Fright or *łano špaiki*, God of Fright (15, 16). In formula 15, the term *lipindesmala tlanocamaz* was explained as a certain evil spirit of the God of the Earth, who also causes fright. *Lindisma Faunatl* (11) was also described as an evil spirit of the earth, and *lļapona chaizmina* (14) as an evil spirit of the fields, somewhat like a son, errand boy, or secretary of the Devil.

In the mountains resides another spirit of the earth. It is a woman named in Chontal *nahio*, meaning girl or hen. Some people may see her and hear her shout. Men in love often see her and she entices them, calling them and making gestures to them. They follow her and when they realize who she is they have already walked deep into the mountains and are lost without having been able to overtake her. Then people say that the woman of the mountain deceived them. She is always described as a woman. She is heard shouting or laughing; usually she shouts three times in the evening. It is said she was the moon's companion who stayed on earth when the moon went up to the sky.

In the same way that certain animals are connected with lightning and water, others have close connection with the earth. All animals have an owner (*dueño*) who is a spirit of the earth and the mountain. It is a male spirit, a sort of shepherd of the animals. In the description of the hunting ritual we mentioned the two spirits, one good and the other evil, that watch over the deer. The following story gives the origin of the deer:

God had two little animals that were unable to walk; they stayed home all the time. He felt sorry for them. He cut some reeds and put them on as legs, and then cut a piece of cotton and put it on as a tail. Then He blessed them and sent them out and the deer jumped away very happy and went to the fields to eat. It was always this way with them when one day the Devil came and gave evil advice to the little animals. When God came to take them back home, instead of walking back to the house, they ran into the woods. For a second and a third time God tried to bring them back but he was not able to. Then He said, "Since you do not want to come alive, in the future you will come dead to the house of man," and to this day it turns out that deer are killed by men to take them home.

Other animals mentioned in the rituals are the crow, ants, and termites. The ants and termites are given offerings in the sowing ritual (3) to keep them from eating the corn. The crow and the ants also appear in the following story about the origin of maize:

People say at first there was no maize. One day people saw an ant (*arriera*) carrying a kernel of maize. They followed it and after a long time learned how the ant took kernels from a big cave where ears of corn were piled up. People then watched the cave to see who was the owner of the corn. He finally arrived; it was the crow. People kept watching to see where the crow was getting the corn because he kept bringing more. Every twenty days, every month, the crow brought a new ear of corn. But who knows where he was bringing it from. It was never found out. The crow, then, as the story goes, is liked by the people because it was he who discovered maize.

The origin of other cultivated plants is given in the story about the man who visited the country of Lightning. The God of Corn and God of Beans are also given offerings in some of the rituals (8, 9, 14).

Dreams may be sent by a number of spirits. Thus the earth, the wind, the sky, and the dead can cause dreams. But most important and common are the dreams sent by the earth and the mountains. People say that the earth and the wind hear.

There are different kinds of dreams. Some do not tell anything; they are no good for anything. Other dreams tell something that later turns out to be true. Most people tell their dreams when they wake up and if they don't know the meaning they ask someone who knows; some will ask a maestro (curer). The most common belief is that while one lies down asleep the earth will speak. Some old men write their dreams when they wake up; there are thus books explaining the meaning of different kinds of dreams. The same dream, however, can mean different things according to the person who had the dream.

Spiritual Attributes of Man: Soul, Sense, and Companion Spirit

Man's soul is named in Chontal *wahma kitine*, meaning spirit of life or day. It resides in the heart or breath and has a human shape. People believe this because when they dream of dead people, it is their souls that they see and they look just like people. During a dream the soul leaves the body and goes to meet other souls, and it even mixes with souls of the dead and that is why one dreams of them.

The sickness caused by fright is owing to the loss of the soul that is captured by an earth spirit. Because of this the soul is mentioned in the rituals for curing fright (15, 16). Death comes when sickness arrives with an order from God to take the soul away.

Another quality of man is called *sense* or judgment (*sentido*, *juicio*, in Spanish; *lipikehma*, in Chontal). This resides in the head. It can get out of the body and back again, as, for instance, when one looks far away and thinks of that place, the sense gets out but it always comes back. Several rituals prescribe offerings on behalf of man, the performer himself or a relative, such as a woman who is to grind corn, or on behalf of the man's sense (3, 4, 9).

In the divining ritual (14) offerings are made on behalf of man, his sense, heart (i.e., soul), and hands. In the ritual for taking office, various offerings are made on behalf of different parts of the official's body to make them safe from sickness (13).

In one of the rituals man is named Son of Maize (*ligua tegua*, 7). The expressions "the evil man" and "man on earth" refer to a sorcerer whose power to harm is warded off or who is being asked to allow a cure (9, 12, 13, 14, 15).

Every individual has a companion spirit or animal, called *łaišmak* in Chontal and *nagual* in Spanish. A person gets a nagual according to the day of his birth. Although every person has one, many people do not know which theirs is. It is some kind of animal, thunderbolt, or spirit. They say a person looks like his nagual—his features are similar. Of persons who speak little and move accordingly, people say they have a tiger as nagual. "These persons look very humble but it is a proven thing that the most humble are the most evil." Some very powerful men have a thunderbolt as a nagual.

When a person prays to his nagual he can get it to do what he wishes, but one has to know how to pray. There is no instance of a man turning into his nagual;

it is the nagual who acts by petition of his human companion. When a person dies the nagual also dies and vice versa. Some of the beliefs about nagual are illustrated in the story about the fight between Mareños and Chontal, given above. The practice of finding out what the nagual of a child is by spreading ashes around the house where the child has been born is not followed by the Chontal, according to our informant: "That is what they do in San Mateo del Mar (Huave), where they inspect the ashes around the house looking for the tracks of the nagual, whether snake, tiger, crocodile, or others. But this is not done by the Chontal."

Curers and Sorcerers

A man who has the knowledge and power to perform various rituals and to influence the supernaturals is named in Chontal onši, maestro in Spanish. In order to become a maestro, a man has to go through a period of training, including continence ("indulgencia") that will last three whole years. In this way he becomes very powerful and brave and he can act almost as if he were invisible.

The informant knows of a man who stood all three years of continence and praying. "And it so happened that people shot at him several times and he never was hit. People would take aim and pull the trigger but their guns would not shoot. This does not seem true but it has been tested. Only once was this man hit, but they say the man who hit him was himself a maestro. Anyway the man did not die, he is still alive."

A sorcerer is called utsu? or šiš kaišans ("Evil man"), in Chontal, and brujo, in Spanish. He is usually a man.

One becomes a sorcerer in the same way one becomes a curer, by praying, learning from the written booklets on the subject, and attaching oneself to another sorcerer whose secrets one buys. It takes a long period of continence, from one to three years. Then one receives permission from the supernaturals to start practicing.

A curer (maestro) and a sorcerer (brujo) are about the same, with the sole difference that the curer prays to the good spirits and the sorcerer to the evil ones. Any person can become a sorcerer by going through the required training, no special nagual (companion spirit) is required, although the person who has a strong nagual will not have to become a sorcerer in order to be powerful.

A sorcerer, like a curer, operates by praying to the spirits; he does not even have to touch the patient, and does not transform himself into an animal. Sorcery is simply like going to church to pray to a saint. The sorcerer that wants to bewitch a victim shapes a human form with pine and copal sticks in which all the piles of sticks are of seven sticks each. There are booklets for this but the informant has never had one.

There is an evil spirit that sucks or bites the victim. When a person realizes he is being sucked, he realizes it is this evil earth spirit who is doing it because of the sorcerer; it proves he is being bewitched.

The main Chontal concepts of disease have been discussed in connection with various rituals (see especially 14, 15, 16, 17, 18). Some other concepts of disease common in other parts of Mexico were denied by the informant. He has never heard among Chontal the working of magic on objects or belongings of the victim. He knew only of that type of sorcery as practiced in Tehuantepec with the victim's picture. The Chontal evil spirits suck the victim but do not draw

blood out; this, he heard in Tehuantepec, happens in Mexico. Neither does he know of Chontal sorcerers appearing as a ball of fire, although this happens in Tehuantepec. There seems to be no concept of disease by intrusion, whether caused by the earth (as among some Zapotec) or by sorcerers. Neither did the informant know of curing by sucking.

The fontanel (mollera in Spanish) is called pewa, meaning "soft," in Chontal. It is bad to hit a child there because it will sink, thus causing sickness. In order to cure the child one has to grab him by his feet and shake him down so that the fontanel goes back in place. The informant knows of the cure by pushing up the palate only because it is practiced in Tehuantepec.

Some of these beliefs, unheard of by the informant among the Chontal, are reported by Martinez Gracida (1910, pp. 87-88).

The Dead

According to our informant the souls of the dead have no close relation with the people on earth. Once they are dead they break with this world, and although a dead person will feel sorry for his living relatives, he has no power to do anything for them; as the informant puts it, the dead "do not have permission" to help (or harm) the living.

In the ritual formulae the dead are presented offerings only in the hunting ritual (10), and a Christian prayer is prescribed for them in the ritual for taking office (13). The offerings to the dead in the hunting ritual are in units of seven, a number that the informant associates with the dead, the witches and the Devil. Perhaps some of the unclearly defined evil spirits are connected with the dead and the underworld. Unless some of these supernaturals that are unclearly identified by our informant are related to the dead, it would seem that the dead are of slight importance in the Chontal view of the supernaturals and in ritual. This would offer an important contrast with other groups in Oaxaca, such as the Mixe, among whom the dead are of the greatest importance. The following story was recorded about the origin of death:

There is one kind of lizard named lin šawalé ka pimi, meaning "the lying lizard." This was once a human being.

In the beginning, God chose a man as a messenger and told him to go to the place where all the dead had been buried and tell them His order: "God says that you should be dead for only three days, after the three days you should get out of there." This is the order he was given.

The messenger left, but while on his way he got an idea: "No, I am going to tell them to stay down there for good." So he told them thus: "I come by the command of God that you shall remain there until your bones rot and only when your bones are thoroughly rotten at the end of the world shall you come out." For three times he repeated this message and then he turned back.

When he came back, God asked: "What did you say?" And the messenger explained: "I said thus. . . ." God simply cursed him. And he was so ashamed to come before God and to be cursed by God that he shrank into a small animal; he got lost and turned into a lizard because of God's curse. He is the most wretched of all the little animals.

When a person is near death he has a presage in the form of dreams. The dream may have to do with the earth. The man sees policemen or armed men taking him away, and a woman (the Earth) bids him

goodbye. One may also dream of a light. Every person has his light in the skies and when he dies his light is put out. This is why when one dreams of a light going out it means that someone is about to die, and dreaming of a long candle means a long life.

If a person has friends far away he has to notify them before his death. It is the person's soul or "spirit of the day" that does this. The person himself does not realize what happens. He simply feels tired or sad while his spirit goes to see his friends. The spirit cannot talk, so he throws pebbles or makes some other noise or shouts outside the friends' houses to attract their attention. But when people come out they find nothing.

The dead all go to Heaven. There they are under God's command and they have no permission to leave. Grown-ups go to the Sun while the children go to the Moon. When children of nursing age die, the Moon feeds them so that they keep growing. The Moon has a tree that drips milk and thus children are fed. But after they grow up they still remain there; they belong to the Moon.

Asked whether the Devil also took some dead, the informant said he did not know.

The dead have to pass some obstacles before reaching the other life. The dead person arrives at a place where there is a large lake and he has to drink it all up before being able to proceed. This water represents everything that the person has done on this world, whether good or bad. People who have never eaten gopher remain there for years drinking water and never able to finish. But if a person has eaten gopher while on earth, a gopher comes up to help. It digs underground, makes a hole, and the lake drains out in two or three hours.

The dead also have to cross a river, and this they do with the help of a dog. It has to be a black dog, however, a white dog cannot cross the river. Of a black dog it is also said that it does not like the Devil, it never lets him into a house, but the Devil will count the hairs of a white or spotted dog and the dog will play with him.

Some curers (onši) while in a dream have visited the town where the dead live. They say it is a large city. There are many people and they all look the same; it is not possible to tell one from the other. But if one knows how, one can find a dead relative. A man visiting the abode of the dead should take thistle seeds to throw at people. If he does not hit anyone he picks them up and tries again. When he hits someone, it is because that one is a relative, and then he talks to him. All this—the informant says—is only a dream.

Dreaming of the dead is considered a bad omen. It means that whatever the dreamer was thinking of doing will come to naught.

According to our informant there are no rituals of the type described in this paper for the burial of the dead. A body should be buried wrapped in a mat. A coffin is not used because the earth will not receive the dead until the coffin has rotted, and in the meantime the soul of the dead suffers. The body is buried with all the objects the living has used. If there are children surviving, they take the valuables; otherwise the belongings are buried, even if valuable. After a death it is not considered good for the soul of the dead if its relatives weep. The soul is ready to go but if it sees its relatives weep it wishes it did not have to go. That's why the survivors drink and sing. It is like a fiesta when people are invited to eat. It takes place before and after the burial.

The spirits of the dead occasionally come back to

earth taking an animal shape so that they can be seen. They always come to warn of some happening such as a future death. They take the shape of an unidentified animal called *tsuñah*, which they say is an animal from the "other life," or else they take the shape of a snake called *łakałpo?*, meaning "our tail." This name comes from the belief that when a man behaves badly while on earth, he will wear that snake as a tail when he reaches the other life; it represents the sin or crime committed on earth. This snake announces rain when seen on a treetop or other high place.

The dead also come back on the Day of the Dead (All Saints' Day). At that time one can hear noises that are the conversation of the dead visiting on earth. That is why offerings are presented on this day to the dead.

The Devil

The Devil—*łonda ʔa*, in Chontal—lives in the air, the same as God. He appears in many different forms but always as a human being. The evil spirits are his helpers.

The Devil is responsible for whirlwinds; he gets in and out of one at will. When a person is in bad luck he runs into a whirlwind which hits him or causes fright.

One experience of meeting the Devil is that of the informant's mother's grandmother. She lived at the time in a mountain village. It was a moonlit night and at about 12 midnight the Devil passed by near where they lived. He was on horseback laden with gold, silver, and all kinds of money. The steps of the horse sounded like hitting a chain because of the great load of money. The horse was black, the horseman was talking in one language after another. The woman understood Zapotec, and she heard the Devil speaking now in Zapotec, now in Chontal, now in another language. He was a heavy man dressed in black. The woman at that time lived alone with two boys; they saw the Devil cross the village.

The whirlwind is given offerings in the Tenango sowing ritual (3), The Devil (*łontaa fauonal*, Devil Powerful), in the bean-sowing ritual from Chontecomatlan (8). In neither case, however, do the prescribed offerings include the figure seven that the informant associates with the evil supernaturals.

Story of the Flood

At the time of the great flood the mountain of San Lorenzo Jilotepequillo saved the people. Everything was covered by water except the top of that mountain; the water reached to 10 meters below the top. You can still see the line the water reached; that mountain has a sort of a neck.

God had his own people with Him, and after the flood He sent a man to the earth to see what he could find. Many fish had died and the man saw many animals about to die, but God had not blessed them yet; there was as yet no permission to eat. The man however did not waste any time. He made a fire and started to roast fish to eat right away.

God waited for awhile and when He realized his man was not coming back He sent a second one. But when this one met the first man, he invited him to eat, and seeing him eat, he took something to eat and there he stayed.

God saw that His second man was not coming, so He sent a third one. But again He realized that this

man was not coming back either because he also stayed behind in order to eat. God then sent a new man and ordered him to punish the others. To the first man who made the fire he ordered his head cut off and placed on his buttocks and his buttocks on his head; this is the dog. And the other men who also ate suffered the same punishment and were turned into buzzards (*zopilotes*). The dog was then given permission to eat everything he wants and the same with the buzzards who are the dogs' helpers.

Story of the Chontal King

The Chontal and the Zapotec were at war. The Chontal were surrounded by the Zapotec who had defeated them and wanted to finish them up. The Chontal had taken refuge on the mountain tops. It was then that a woman fled from their town, from Pueblo Viejo (Old Town), a town now deserted between Quiegolani and Santo Domingo Chontecomatlan. The woman fled, trying to hide, and reaching the mountain she found a cave that still exists near Pueblo Viejo near the boundary of Quiegolani. There she found a large egg. She took it to her house to see what would come out of it. One day the egg cried, burst open, and a child came out. The woman took care of it so that he would not die, and he grew up very fast. Soon he began to talk and said his name was Fane Kantsini ("Three Hummingbird"). He told the people not to worry, that he

had come to defend his people. He was bright and brave. The first day he went to fight he went to a large maguey, cut it up, took the fiber from its roots and used it for his bow. The Zapotec had stolen a weapon from the Chontal, who knows what it was. Three Hummingbird made this other weapon that always killed; he put poison in his arrows. He asked his people not to fight with him, to leave him alone. He fought for three days and three nights. After three days the people went to the trenches to see what had happened and not a single Zapotec was left. Three Hummingbird had killed them all.

He then made some ovens, and there he put all the people he had killed. Half he took for his people to eat, the rest was burned. There are three ovens still there to one side of Pueblo Viejo near the boundary with San Bartolo Yautepec.

Finally, the war came to an end. Three Hummingbird distributed his people; he placed them in groups as detachments in every mountain in order to be ready to defend them. Even today the villages are on the mountain tops. They then made a feast to celebrate their victory over the Zapotec, and then their king disappeared. It is not known where he went. Some people say he went to the same cave he had come out from.

[An elaborate account of this Chontal King is given by Martinez Gracida, although he does not explain the source of his data (1910, pp. 255 ff.). The neighboring Mixe also tell a similar story (Miller, 1956, pp. 105-109).]

IV. CONCLUSION

This collection of ritual formulae covers a majority of the occasions on which rituals of the pagan type are performed. When more than one formula is available for the same ritual, it is clear that within the same general pattern great differences in detail may exist.

The informant knew of some other occasions that also call for a ritual. One is a ritual performed when the maguery is buried in the pit oven for making mescal. Offerings of pine sticks are then presented to various supernaturals according to the usual pattern. There is also a new-house ritual, in which offerings of pine sticks and eggs are buried at the four corners, at the door, and in the center of the house. Written formulae for these rituals exist but the informant had not been able to obtain them. Written booklets are also extant on the interpretation of dreams, on the medicinal qualities of herbs—some herbs have prayers addressed to them before they are cut—on how to become a curer, and on how to work sorcery; but again none of these written documents were available. There are also several kinds of prescriptions for the rituals required of various civil and religious officials (*mayordomos*) before assuming their office. Of these only the *teniente* ritual was obtained.

The informant did not know of rituals performed in connection with the steam bath, weaving, or pottery making. One reason he gave was that those are women's tasks and only men participate in the rituals. He also denied knowledge of rituals upon starting a trip, although some omens are observed before departing, based on observation of animals and on dreams.

In spite of many differences of detail, a general ritual pattern is clearly discernible from this collection of ceremonies.

Rituals are private affairs related to the initiation of technological activities or to events in the life cycle of an individual. The participant is a man, the head of the family concerned, who may have the help of a son or other male relative. If the services of a professional practitioner, such as a curer, are required, he of course is then in charge of the ritual.

Most rituals take place in lonely spots far from the village, partly because the rites center about activities, like farming and hunting, which are carried on outside the village (only a new-house ritual will take place in the village), and partly because of the need to be close to the supernaturals involved which are those of mountains, springs, and other "hidden places" (*lugares ocultos*), as the informant put it. The informant also emphasized that prayers should be said in these hidden places. Another factor is probably the fact that, at least in recent times, these rituals are considered superstitions by some people, and a person performing them may be persecuted by "progressive" village authorities.

The individual performing a ritual has to observe what is called in their Spanish *indulgencia* (literally, indulgence), meaning sexual continence for a determined number of days. A stipulated period of fasting and baths may also be required. Separate offerings are presented to different supernaturals and are also presented on behalf of different individuals and even on behalf of various parts of the performer's body (cf. 13, 14). The offerings are laid on the ground as

the supernatural concerned is addressed. This laying of offerings is called *postura* ("placing") and the term is used in the title of the booklet containing the hunting ritual (see 10).

The main offerings are sticks of pine or copal wood about a *jeme* long (thumb-index span), about the size of an ordinary pencil and thick as the thumb. They are arranged in a stipulated number of piles or bundles, each of which will also consist of a required number of sticks. Other offerings are copal (incense), pine branches, candles, eggs, and bloody sacrifices of dogs or turkeys. Offerings are burned at the end of the ceremony.

A very important element is the use of ritual numbers, since different numbers of sticks or other offerings are required; even the number of strands in a candle wick will have ritual significance. The need to know the exact number of offerings required for each supernatural is probably the main reason for the recording in writing of the ritual formulae. The simplest ones are simply number recipes (see 18, for instance). We leave to the numerologist an attempt to work out the ritual meaning of the various numbers used. The obvious pattern, and one the informant was aware of, is the prevalence of 7 and 14 in offerings to evil spirits, witches or the dead, and of 3 or multiples of 3, especially 9 and 12 in other instances. Four, which was so important in Aztec ritual, is not common here.

The informant denied knowledge of a ritual calendar of the usual Mesoamerican type, but since rituals similar to those here described are regulated among neighboring Mixe and southern Zapotec by the ritual day count, it would be worthwhile to investigate further the possible existence of a ritual calendar.

The system of rituals described in this paper offers numerous similarities with those in other parts of Mesoamerica in which pagan rituals have survived. The private character of these rites, their connection with technological activities and events in the life cycle, the stress on fasting, continence, and ritual numbers, and most of the kinds of offerings presented, have a wide distribution throughout Mesoamerica. Perhaps the most distinctive type of offering among the Chontal are the sticks of pine or copal wood placed in piles or bundles and in stipulated quantities. Some Mixe towns, however, also have this type of offering (Miller, 1956, pp. 224-225, 255, 256), and a similar use of bundle offerings has been reported for the Mixtec and Tlappanec of Guerrero, although here the offerings are not of sticks but of leaves or of sections of reed stalks (Schultze Jena, 1938, pp. 65, 144 ff.).

The use of written documents recording pagan rituals characteristic of the Chontal has not been reported in modern times in any other area, and it is clearly the outstanding feature in the ritual pattern here described. One should keep in mind, however, the use of written documents in connection with religious aboriginal survivals in Colonial times. We have thus the Chilam Balam books in Yucatan and the calendrical books of Highland Guatemala. In Oaxaca the Zapotec of Sola de Vega also had calendrical books in the seventeenth century (Berlin, 1957, pp. 17-19), and booklets with the ritual day count are used even today by the Mixe. It thus seems that even the most distinctive traits of Chontal ritual today may

simply be the result of differential survival and an elaboration of features from an old, widespread Mesoamerican pattern.

The supernaturals, as nature spirits, are also of the usual type in modern Mesoamerica and offer many similarities in detail with those of other areas. It would also seem that among the Chontal, as among the neighboring Mixe, there is, relatively speaking, a much stronger development of ritual, as exemplified by the formulae here described, than of mythology. The beliefs and stories obtained from our informant are not much more developed than what is found among other Mexican Indians—the Mitla Zapotec, for instance—that have no system of pagan rituals like the one here described.

Another interesting aspect is the small number of Christian elements in these Chontal rituals. Throughout the whole of modern Mesoamerica many different

configurations of ritual and of ritual organization are found. These configurations vary according to the interconnections and relative importance of public rituals conducted by officials of the town's politico-religious hierarchy and private rituals conducted by the individuals concerned or by private practitioners. They vary also according to the relative importance of pagan and Christian elements in each of the two ritual systems. Among the Chontal there seems to be a system of private pagan rituals which show very little Christian influence and are without connection with the public Church rituals. Since all Mesoamerican ritual configurations are the result of different types of acculturation, a comparative study of them could yield important results. It is hoped that this report may contribute material to such a study, and also arouse interest in the hitherto unknown Chontal.

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APPENDIX: THE DOCUMENTS

1. A booklet of fourteen pages, 13.7 cm. by 11 cm., containing the formulae and other data on the hunting ritual of Tenango; it is fully described in number 10.

2. A letter-size piece of paper on which Juan Rodriguez had typed four rituals, all of which are from Santo Domingo Chontecomatlan. The document has the heading "TEHUANTEPEC!. oax. junio de 1941 balor 9 pesos." Then follows under the title "PARA-CEMBRAR" the sowing ritual described in number 6; under "PARA PISCAR!!" is the harvest ritual described in number 7; under "PARA CEMBRAR FRIJOL" is the ritual for sowing beans (8); and, without separate heading, the ritual to be performed when beans blossom (9).

3. A second typed sheet (ruled white paper 20.5 cm. by 24.5 cm.) that contains four rituals from Tenango. It has a number of corrections written in with a ball-point pen in blue ink. These are mostly added commas and corrections of typed double l's into what looks like written double l's but probably represents tl sounds and have been so transcribed. The rituals presented are: "1a. PARA SEMBRAR," the sowing ritual described in number 3 (the end of this transcript is marked by the line "2a. FIN"); the ritual to be performed before eating the first green corn (no heading; see number 4); "3a. PARA PISCAR LA MAZORCA," the harvest ritual described in number 5; and, under a typed "4a" and a handwritten "para comenzar a rosar," the land clearing ritual described in number 2.

4. A booklet of seven leaves of ruled paper, 22.2 cm. long by 15.7 cm. wide, torn from a copy book. I have numbered the pages 1-14 in pencil. Most of the material is written in blue ink, but some parts are in pencil. Some pages are blank and others contain ma-

terial irrelevant to this discussion and hence not transcribed.

The first page includes the address of Mr. McDougall and a few personal names. Pages 2 and 3 in a dark-blue ink of a shade different from the rest of the book refer to a trip by the informant with Mr. McDougall which started February 14, 1940. It simply gives the altitude in feet of a number of places in the Chontal country.

Immediately following this on page 3, but written in pencil, is a prayer to the loadstone (oracion piedra iman) of the type to be found in the popular magic books sold in Mexico. Pages 4 and 5 contain the Tenango ritual performed by a man assuming the office of teniente. We transcribe it in number 13. Page 6 has the marriage ritual, also from Tenango, described in number 12. Page 7 has only a few scribbles. Page 8 and part of page 9 have the ritual for divining with corn, discussed in number 14. The rest of page 9 again has a prayer to the loadstone, written in pencil. Page 10 gives the ritual for sowing a child's life from San Lorenzo Jilotepequillo, described in number 11, followed without any heading or spacing by the ritual from the same town to ward off disease, explained in number 17.

A formula for curing fright from San Miguel Suchiltepec is found on page 11; this is written partly in ink and partly in pencil; we describe it in number 15.

Page 12 is blank except for a couple of irrelevant words. On page 13 is the pencil-written formula to throw out disease described in number 18, and the cure for fright transcribed in number 16. They are both from San Miguel Suchiltepec. It also has the date April 26, 1941. Page 14 is blank.

All these documents are at the Museo Nacional of Mexico. A photographic copy is also available at the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.