

# SIERRA POPOLUCA FOLKLORE AND BELIEFS

BY  
GEORGE M. FOSTER

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PUBLICATIONS IN AMERICAN  
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## PREFACE

THE PRESENT collection of stories was obtained in Soteapan and Buena Vista in the state of Veracruz, Mexico, during the spring of 1940 and the spring of 1941, as material incidental to the main project, an economic analysis of Popoluca culture. No Popoluca, of course, speaks English, and Spanish was used as the contact language. A number of the stories were recorded in text, and it was hoped that they might be published in this form. Additional field work, for which there are no immediate prospects, will be necessary before this will be possible. Since a considerable number of stories were already available it seemed advisable, for the sake of completeness, to include all stories, regardless of method of transcription, in the same volume.

Five informants were utilized in varying degrees :

1. Leandro Pérez, of Soteapan, about thirty-five years old. An "average citizen" in most respects, Pérez had learned a great many stories from his mother as a child, and proved to be generally the most satisfactory storyteller, particularly when accounts were taken in text.

2. José Rodríguez, of Soteapan, about eighty years old. The majority of the explanatory tales were furnished by Rodríguez. One of the oldest men in the village, his stories probably are as purely indigenous as any that were obtained.

3. Juan Arizmendes, of Soteapan, about sixty-five years old. Arizmendes was a former municipal president of the community, and is one of the most intelligent Popoluca.

4. Anastasio García, of Buena Vista, seventy-five or eighty years old. In spite of his age, García seemed most familiar with stories of Old World origin.

5. Angel Cervantes, of Buena Vista, about eighty-five years old. Cervantes contributed only one story. Although he was reputed to know much of the old lore, the stay in Buena Vista was not of sufficient length to establish an adequate rapport with this very reticent Popoluca.

The Popoluca are almost entirely lacking in a time sense. Their ages are approximations which are based on the appearance of the individual correlated with his stage in life at various fixed dates in the past which he remembers. I believe that they are accurate within five years.

Ing. Robert Weitlaner and Dr. Wigberto Jiménez Moreno of the Museo Nacional de México first pointed out to the author the desirability of doing field work in the Popoluca area and gave many helpful suggestions which made possible the successful carrying out of the work. Thanks are due to Lic. Alfonso Caso, Director del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia de México, and the Honorable Lic. Jorge Cerdán, governor of the state of Veracruz, for their kindness in giving letters of introduction which facilitated travel in rural Mexico. Dr. Harry Hoiijer and Dr. Franklin Fearing, both of the University of California, have read the manuscript, and I am indebted to them for the constructive comments which they have made. Without the assistance of my wife, Mary, both in the collection of the stories in the field and in the preparation of the manuscript, the work would have been immeasurably more difficult, and I take this opportunity to express my appreciation for her help.

GEORGE M. FOSTER

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
Los Angeles, California  
May 15, 1943

# SIERRA POPOLUCA FOLKLORE AND BELIEFS

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## I. INTRODUCTION

IN THE MOUNTAIN fastness of the southern part of the state of Veracruz, Mexico, live about 10,000 Indians who speak Sierra Popoluca, one branch of the Veracruz Popoluca which also includes the three languages of Texistepec, Sayula, and Oluta, and which are related to Mixe and Zoque.<sup>1</sup> For more than four hundred years, the Sierra Popoluca have had contact with European techniques, beliefs, and ideas, but the force of this contact has been relatively weak. Instead of the sharp impact of Western civilization on an aboriginal culture, followed by the rapid crumbling and disintegration of the latter, as in the United States and other parts of the world, contact has been of such a nature that the aboriginal way of life was subjected to a gradual leaching process. Within the old cultural framework traditional elements slowly disappeared as new ones were introduced without greatly altering the original psychic and material orientation. Metal tools partly supplanted wood and stone, but the early forms of gaining a livelihood remained. New crops were introduced, but the staples remained maize and beans. Spanish was learned by some men, but Popoluca continued to be the language of the home. Christian concepts were implanted by the Catholic fathers, but under this veneer remained much of the old magico-religious strength. The steam locomotive came to not-too-distant towns, and the airplane flew overhead daily, but the Popoluca continued to move most of his produce on his back, aided by the horse, the introduction of which was so long ago that he soon lost all idea of a time when the horse did not exist.

At one point only was the slow process of acculturation speeded up: the years of the Mexican Revolution, the second decade of the twentieth century. At this time the old life suffered the rudest dislocations of any time, and greater knowledge of the outside world was acquired more forcibly and rapidly in a few years than in the preceding century.<sup>2</sup> Yet even this event did not really alter the nature of the culture contact; it merely increased the tempo of the processes which had been at work since the sixteenth century. New elements were accepted with little question—although imposed forcibly at times—and many ancient ones that had withstood four hundred years of contact vanished. But the pace at no time was too great to prevent the Popoluca from maintaining his cultural equilibrium. Old times were different, perhaps better, but he still felt that he was leading his own life, and except when bands of brigands or federal troopers forced him to flee from his village, he was his own master. He was conscious, perhaps for the first time, of the meaning of change, but the possibility of his elimination from the scene simply did not occur to him.

Change has gone on more rapidly, too, since the Revolution, and new ideas, feelings, and items of material culture, are constantly making themselves felt. Eventually the Popoluca may conceive of himself and his fellow villagers as a part of a

<sup>1</sup> For more detailed information about the geographical, cultural, and linguistic position of the Veracruz Popoluca, see G. M. Foster, *A Primitive Mexican Economy*, New York, 1942, pp. 4-7, and "The Geographical, Linguistic, and Cultural Position of the Popoluca of Veracruz," *American Anthropologist*, 45:531-546, 1943.

<sup>2</sup> See *A Primitive Mexican Economy*, pp. 14-15 for a more detailed account of the effect of the Revolution on the lives of the Popoluca.

great national unit, and reflect with pride on his allegiance to a great Mexican nation. But such a picture is far distant. The Popoluca still thinks of himself, as his father and grandfather did before him, first, as a member of a village, and secondly, as bound by ties of kinship and language to individuals who live in adjacent villages. In more distant places people speak Mexicano (Aztec) and Spanish, and from itinerant traders he knows of the Zapotecs and Mixe of Oaxaca. Contact with the former, at least, is often necessary, but almost invariably they are looked upon with distrust and suspicion; they constitute the out-group, which at best is strange and foreign. When a stranger comes to town the Popoluca's wife shuts herself in her house, to remain until the visitor has passed by, or his identity established. Hospitality to any stranger is grudgingly given, if at all; the Popoluca shows no overt hostility to the traveler, but he clearly shows by passive resistance to all suggestions of aid that the stranger's presence is not desired.

The Popoluca is not given to introspection and reflection. He is only mildly interested in his past, and in the strains which have blended to form his way of life. He has no concept of indigenous and foreign elements. He uses many Spanish words in his speech, and a few Spanish grammatical forms. He counts up to six, *tum*, *wustén*, *tukutén*, *maktastén*, *mostén*, *tuxtutén* in Popoluca, and continues without a pause *siete*, *ocho*, *nueve*, *diez*, unaware that he has changed idioms. Practically speaking, he has not. The Spanish forms were introduced into his tongue at an early date and he has never known any others. *Ocho*, *nueve*, *diez* are just as much his language as are *tum*, *wustén*, and *tukutén*. The fact that Spanish-speaking peoples count eight, nine, and ten in this fashion is proof that *they* are using Popoluca words, not he Spanish. *Las palabras salen igual*, "the words come out the same," is his answer when his attention is called to the matter. The names of his most important towns—Soteapan, Ocozotepec, Sogotegoyo, and others—are Aztec, as are his words for colors and many other things, both material and nonmaterial. Here again the situation is the same: *Las palabras salen igual*, "the words come out the same." Popoluca, Spanish, Mexicano, are all languages of equal validity. For some reason which has never bothered him, numerous words are common to two or all three languages. He has no concept of Spanish as a recent intruder, brought from far over seas; it has existed as long as Mexicano or Popoluca itself. "Here we speak Popoluca, in Mecayapan Mexicano is spoken, and in Acayucán *Castellano*;" in Oaxaca, *quien sabe*—'who knows'—they speak many different tongues."

In his milpa the Popoluca plants maize, beans, onions, sugar cane, mangoes and many other things. The cane, onions, and mangoes are just as much his as are the maize and beans; to him there never was a time when they were not planted. With coffee it is different, for he well remembers the time, just prior to the Revolution, when an attempt was made to start a large *finca*<sup>4</sup> near Buena Vista. Following the years of lawlessness he started to transplant the surviving trees, start new ones and so develop his individual *finca*, averaging perhaps three hundred trees. But even here the introduction was not too strange, for years earlier in the Coatzacoalcos basin coffee trees had grown, often wild and untended.<sup>5</sup> The Popoluca had merely learned to value a tree whose potentialities he had not formerly seen.

Flashlights, maize hand mills, sewing machines, machetes, needles, beer, brandy, and a host of other things come to him by trade. But has trade not always been the rule? Was there ever a time when his ancestors did not exchange beans for pots with the Popoluca of Sayula and the Mexicans of Oteopan? When *comales*<sup>6</sup> did not

<sup>3</sup> The invariable term for Spanish. <sup>4</sup> Plantation.

<sup>5</sup> Coffee was introduced into the Coatzacoalcos basin about 1800. See Foster, *A Primitive Mexican Economy*, appendix II.

<sup>6</sup> Clay griddles for cooking tortillas.

come from Mecayapan, and lime and salt from Jaltipan, and dyestuffs from Oaxaca? Perhaps more things are imported now, but the pattern is the same. The Popoluca does not distinguish between the products of the machine age and those of other folk economies like his own.

Probably no culture, however isolated, is completely static. The processes of acculturation have been at work in the Popoluca area for countless centuries. Linguistic evidence suggests that they at one time lived farther west, in contact with the Mixe and the Zoque. Many cultural forms likewise testify to an interchange of ideas and beliefs with the dominant Zapotecs. Later, the acculturating influence of the Aztecs must have been tremendously important. They swarmed down from the northern and western plateau in ever greater numbers, armed and equipped for fighting, and presumably drove the Sierra Popoluca to less desirable land in the sierra. No real records of this invasion remain, and few traditions among the Popoluca are to be found, beyond confused ideas about Moctezuma, but its extent is today still visible in linguistic and cultural forms. Except for writing and the use of metals, the Spaniards were little more civilized than the Aztecs, and perhaps at first their influence was no greater. Little by little their pressure became stronger, but at no time were the processes of culture change so rapid as to make the Popoluca feel that he was being forced to give up his old way of life and adopt a new one.

Present-day Popoluca culture is made up of three basic elements: the aboriginal framework<sup>7</sup> within which much of the fabric has been replaced by European elements, plus many Aztec traits which were incorporated in both pre- and post-Spanish times. But the Popoluca is unaware of these transformations. His culture to him is just as real, just as valid as was the Popoluca culture of five hundred years ago to his ancestors. It is in terms of this multiple origin that the myths, folk tales, beliefs, and superstitions which help to make up the *weltanschauung* of the modern Popoluca can best be understood.

The Popoluca is essentially a practical and unsentimental man. He lives in a village in a sturdy house with thatch roof and stick or wattle-and-daub walls. His wife cooks tortillas in traditional fashion on a clay griddle, and boils beans, fries eggs, and makes coffee. She rears his children, takes care of his pigs, chickens, and turkeys, helps him in his milpa and in the evening toils home with a heavy load of firewood or produce wrapped in a carrying net suspended across her forehead. If she fails in any way she is beaten, and if he suspects her of infidelity—often not without cause—he may even kill her, although infidelity on his part is merely an expression of the male prerogative. If she dies in childbirth, or from hard work, she is buried in the little cemetery, and a proper mourning feast is held in her honor. The Popoluca will shed a few tears, and in some cases he feels real grief. More often he will soon set about the task of finding another wife, for without a woman in the house life is impossible. Sometimes he will take two wives, either for variety, or because a brother or other close relative has died leaving a widow.

Six days in the week he goes to his milpa, where he has cleared and burned the brush or forest, set out mango trees as insignia of possession, and planted maize, pineapples, bananas, sweet manioc, chayotes, and other crops. During the rainy summer months he spends all of his time in a perpetual battle against weeds; in the fall he plants beans; in the winter, more maize. In January and February he picks and dries the gleaming red coffee berries which mean money above all else, and which will make possible the purchase of the things he does not directly produce himself. In the drier spring<sup>8</sup> months he harvests maize, prepares new milpa land,

<sup>7</sup> Comparative studies will probably show much in common with both the Mixe and the Zoque.

<sup>8</sup> Rain can and does fall in all months of the year, and totals well over 100 inches annually.



journeys to market towns along the trans-Tehuantepec railway, attends fiestas in neighboring towns, and with the first June rains begins the cycle anew.

On Saturday nights he may join with his fellows and sing for hours at a time from Latin hymn books in the corrugated iron church, his mournful songs interrupted periodically by drumming. On Sundays he may work at odd jobs around the house, or aid in the carrying of a saint from house to house, in order to collect small offerings to be used to defray expenses of some future fiesta. From time to time a close friend or relative dies, and this entails many tasks: digging of the grave, all-night wakes, the killing of hogs and the preparation of food for the final feast in honor of the departed. Occasionally, if he tires of these rounds, he will take his dog and gun and go after venison or other game, or take a bow or net and set out after small fish which are to be found in near-by streams.

The Popoluca is a solemn man. He is not given to joking and horseplay. He does not gamble, and he knows no form of group play or competition. Except for church music he does not sing, and the only dance in which he ever takes part is the typical Veracruz *huapango*,<sup>9</sup> which is badly and listlessly executed.<sup>10</sup> The Popoluca drinks but rarely, for it interferes with his productive efficiency, and he looks with disdain on the frequently drunken neighboring Mexicanos. His pleasure comes from hard work, from the knowledge that his milpa is good, that his family will have plenty to eat, and that enough will be left over to buy a few luxury items. In his rare idle moments he hardly knows what to do with himself. The milpa comes first in all things; it is the center of life, and around it all of his activities revolve. Without hard work the things which he desires will not be possible.

But hard work alone is not enough. The fields, the streams, the mountains, the sky, his own village—all are the homes of a host of spiritual beings who can help or hinder him in his work. Without due respect to them, without due caution, his efforts will be in vain. Certain spirits must be pacified with offerings, precautions must be taken against malevolent witches and other unseen evils, and a rigorous set of taboos governs each and every productive task. Maize, the staff of life, is the gift of Homshuk, the god of maize, and if proper offerings are not made to him the crop will fail. The favor of Homshuk is sought through the rite of burning copal in a small earthen pot. The seed is passed through the smoke, before sowing, and the farmer on three subsequent occasions carries the smoking copal pot through his fields: after the sowing, when the maize is knee high, and when the tassels appear.<sup>11</sup> Homshuk is pictured as a being three feet tall with hair of corn silk, who passes from childhood through maturity to old age each year during the cycle in which the maize sprouts, grows tall, ripens, and then withers. He is normally invisible to man, but on occasion can be seen.<sup>12</sup> He is thought vaguely to live in the hills near Ocotal Grande or Mecayapan, but if human beings come close he is spirited away by the *rayo* of San Miguel, who is entrusted with his care.<sup>13</sup>

Sometimes while working in the milpa the Popoluca becomes hot and tired, and he stops in the shade of a tree to rest. Then he is likely to see a *makti*, who are people who live in trees. The females are of exquisite beauty, go about unclothed, and are

<sup>9</sup> See J. B. Johnson, "The Huapango: A Mexican Song Contest," *California Folklore Quarterly*, 1:223-244, 1942.

<sup>10</sup> At fiestas today one sometimes finds a phenomena which passes locally for "jazz" music, which is supplied by musicians imported from Chinameca who play Western instruments and tunes for ballroom style dancing in the town hall. Relatively few Popoluca take part in such activities; those who do are mostly visitors at the fiesta who have come from Mexicano and Spanish-speaking towns.

<sup>11</sup> A more detailed account of maize ritual is found in Foster, *A Primitive Mexican Economy*, p. 42.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88 for an account of a meeting with Homshuk.

<sup>13</sup> *Rayos* are discussed in the comments to stories 2 and 3, and see the index.

almost irresistible to mortal men. But woe to the Popoluca if he succumbs to such charms and accepts her invitation to live with her in the tree tops, for never again can he return to his home. Even should his body return his soul would remain, and death would soon follow. More rarely, a male *makti* takes a woman to live with him.

Hunting and fishing must be accompanied by proper and precise ritual. In all mountains live the *chanekos*, dwarfs three feet high, normally all white or all black, and customarily unclothed. The Popoluca has been told that they make a noise like a burro, and he may have even thought that he has heard them while in the mountains. Chanekos are both beneficial and dangerous. They are the "masters" of all fish and game, particularly deer, and as such have it in their power to grant luck to hunters and fishers, or to withhold it. They shut all deer up in their underground homes at night, and let them out the next morning; the deer are their cattle. They become angry at men, sometimes for no apparent cause, but more often if one is greedy and kills too many deer, or is careless in hunting and wounds deer. In such cases they punish the man by kidnaping his soul and keeping it in their *encantos*<sup>14</sup> under the mountains; unless they relent and return the man's soul he will eventually die. The favor of the chanekos is secured by lighting a special cotton wick in the trail before setting out, and placing copal on it so that smoke arises. The gun, bow, or fish net is passed through this smoke and simultaneously a prayer is made to the chanekos for luck. When a deer is killed his jawbone is removed and smoked in copal. The soul returns to the encanto of the chaneko, and the smoking of the jaw makes this journey possible without incident, thus pleasing the masters. The jaws are saved and a good hunter will have a number hanging from his house rafters.

The practical Popoluca is not content to invoke the aid of the chanekos alone—he also uses a *gamito*, a deer caller made of the shank of a deer in which a membrane is placed. This gamito can be made only on January 1, or March 1, and its manufacture must be preceded by twenty-one nights of continence. The gamito sounds like a fawn calling, and any doe within hearing distance is believed to come. Some deer possess small bezoar stones in their stomachs,<sup>15</sup> and a hunter fortunate enough to obtain such a stone keeps it in his house, always smoking it with copal before setting out on another hunt. Deer at best are difficult to kill, and all preparations must be made exactly according to custom. Thus, the Popoluca knows that small worms are found in the hoofs and nose of deer; when a hunter sights a deer the bite of the worm is supposed to warn the deer of impending danger.

If the Popoluca is young and the animal, fish, or bird is the first of its species that the hunter has killed, he will not eat any of it, for fear he will never again have luck. Or if he is breaking in a new hunting dog and the animal kills game, although he can eat the game he must not put salt on it; otherwise the dog would never again kill that kind of game.

Many dangers, both natural and supernatural, await the person who goes into the mountains. To avoid snake bites a leaf of dried tobacco is chewed and the spittle smeared on the walker's feet. The odor stupifies the snake, thus protecting the traveler.

<sup>14</sup> Enchanted places.

<sup>15</sup> R. M. Gomez-Maillefert, "Folklore de Oaxaca," *Journal of American Folklore*, 36:199-200, 1923, p. 200, records a similar example. This belief is widespread in Mexico and Guatemala; it may or may not be an Old World trait introduced by the Spaniards. The medicinal properties believed by the Spaniards to be inherent in bezoar stones made them a valued object of search, and some New World stones were believed to be superior to those of the Old World. Because of such intense interest, and resulting monetary exchange value of the stones to the Indian finders, this superstition might more readily become incorporated in native belief than other more academic concepts. Vázquez de Espinosa dutifully lists the virtues of the bezoar stones of no less than eleven Central and South American localities.

Sometimes a hunter becomes hopelessly lost in the mountains. At such times he is likely to stumble across a broad road, which leads him to a village where the *tsapupushin* live. The *tsapupushin* are good people who simply have wandered off from Popoluca, Aztec, and Spanish-speaking towns and who have taken up life in the remote parts of the sierra. They live in settlements which are duplicates of real villages, except that they disappear from time to time and have no permanent location. Thus, a lost hunter who returns from a *tsapupushin* village can never find his way back to it. Sometimes *tsapupushin* are seen walking through Popoluca villages on their way to the Spanish-speaking pueblos along the trans-Tehuantepec railway, where they go to shop and trade. They are *Cristianos*, "Christians," human beings like the Popoluca, and they feed the lost hunter who finds his way to their village, allow him to pass the night if necessary and send him on his way refreshed in the morning.

Less pleasant to encounter are the *grand salvajes*, immense giants who, except for the fact that the women have one breast only, are human in form. If one can pray in Latin, the *grand salvajes* are harmless; otherwise they will seize the unfortunate individual and eat him.

Although werewolves are no longer a menace, the Popoluca knows that they formerly existed; they lived in encantos, dressed like humans, and had cannibalistic tendencies. He tells stories of the times when men were deceived by flashily dressed individuals, only to discover their mistake too late to save themselves.

*Los Franceses*, "the French," were likewise at one time a great source of danger because of their anthropophagous tendencies. *Los Franceses* now live in a great rock several miles from Soteapan, one of the most important Popoluca villages, and although the potential danger remains, no one has been eaten within the lifetime of the oldest living persons.<sup>30</sup>

The Popoluca knows that in the forests and mountain depths dwell *hunchuts*, creatures four feet tall, flat-headed and without brains, with feet attached backward, and with stiff necks, so that in order to look around the entire torso must be turned. *Hunchuts* most commonly live in caves behind waterfalls, and are masters of all armadillos (some say fish as well), who serve them as chairs. In his own home the Popoluca has one or more small stools made of half a hollow log, often with handles rudely carved to represent head and tail, and called "armadillos." *Hunchut* women are of great personal beauty, in spite of their physiological oddity, and formerly lured men away from home, often eating their brains in an attempt to remedy their own lack. *Hunchut* men are great hunters, and Popoluca women sometimes voluntarily surrendered themselves in exchange for meat, and in rare cases actually went to live with *hunchuts* in their homes. Years ago priests blessed all of the waterfalls where *hunchuts* were known to live, so they no longer are dangerous, although they continue to live on in fact and story.

<sup>30</sup> About the year 1830 an unsuccessful attempt was made to found a French colony near the site of Minatitlán on the Coatzacoalcos River. Many people died, and after several years most of the survivors were only too glad to return to France. This was probably when the Popoluca had contact with the French, but it does not explain their unshakable belief in their cannibalistic propensities, since none of the accounts indicate that the French resorted to this practice. Possibly it arose out of the deep-seated fear of the Popoluca for all strangers—the more different the strangers the greater the fear of them, and the greater the certainty that they *comen Cristianos*, "eat Christians." *Los Franceses* are today as completely legendary as the *chanekos*, the *makti*, or any of the other supernatural beings before mentioned. This gives some idea of the speed with which real characters can become legendary, and indicates the untrustworthiness of Popoluca legends as historical sources. If by chance the Popoluca were told that the French ate humans at the time of Maximilian's ill-fated venture in the 1860's, the speed of transformation is all the more remarkable. Regardless of origin, *Los Franceses* are perhaps the most genuinely feared of all supernatural beings. Possibly their recent advent is indicated by the fact that no true legends deal with them. This fear and belief comes out only in conversation.

Formerly, there existed the *nu-utsu*, "water monkeys," who lived in streams and who pulled unwary women under the surface to live with them as their wives.

Much more dangerous than the above-mentioned beings, and an ever-present menace, is the *nagual*. The *nagual* is a witch, and has certain characteristics in common, including the name itself, with witches in all parts of southern and central Mexico. The Popoluca knows that certain persons are *naguals*, and he suspects others. He knows how the *nagual* works, but he does not understand how he controls his powers. He knows that since the power of the *nagual* is empirical and not divinely revealed that he too, had he sufficient money or a close relative willing to instruct him, could become one. More than likely he prefers to have nothing to do with the arts of black magic; the *nagual* is a powerful person in the community, and precisely for this reason he is in constant danger of sorcery at the hands of other *naguals*, or of ordinary people who know the mystic devices necessary to injure him. At Ocotal Grande the Popoluca has seen the three rudely inscribed stones where he knows that novices formerly were tutored by older practicing *naguals*.<sup>17</sup> The largest, more than ten feet high, is the male, and the two smaller ones are females, wives of the male. Students under the guidance of older *naguals* recited the esoteric inscriptions, jumped over the rocks seven times, and were transformed into animals. Four years of study at each rock, making twelve in all, were necessary to graduate with highest honors. This was at the time when *naguals* were really powerful. But they no longer study at Ocotal Grande; years ago a priest blessed the rocks, causing them to be enveloped in flames, and since that time they have been harmless, although still the objects of awe.

Today the novice quietly studies away from the village, or he may contract with a Mexicano to instruct him, going once a year to Mono Blanco, a treeless artificial hill on the outskirts of Catemaco, in territory formerly Mexicano-speaking. Here, under the guidance of the Mexicano master, the novices are brought into contact with *wak-ku'u, el diablo*, "the devil," who imparts the black arts necessary to make a powerful *nagual*.<sup>18</sup> The devil is said by some to be a Negro, but he has several different faces that he can put on at will so that mankind can easily be deceived. He is said by some to ride a jet black mule, and to be visible only at night. Persons, not necessarily *naguals*, are believed to be in league with the devil when they have much money but no visible source of income. In return for money a human agrees to deliver to the devil a close relative—father and mother excepted—within a short space of time.

The *nagual*, once sure of his powers, is ready to work mischief, and also to cure. Customarily he will transform himself into a tiger, a snake, a black cat, or any other animal form that suits his fancy, and go about doing evil. Sometimes he travels head down in a whirlwind, and sometimes he can be seen at night as a ball of fire. The *nagual* can transform himself in several ways: he may lie on his back and roll seven times like a dog; he may adjourn to the mountains, remove his intestines, and hang them on a bush; or, in ancient times, at least, simply jumping over the Ocotal Grande rocks seven times sufficed. Sometimes a *nagual* transforms himself by removing one leg at the knee and leaving it in his home. In this condition he goes hopping through the night, mischief bent, his bones rattling like those of a skeleton. When the Popoluca hears the "trak-trak-trak-trak" sound he closes his door even tighter, for he knows that a *trinilokuts* *nagual* is passing by.

<sup>17</sup> See G. M. Foster, *Notes on the Popoluca of Veracruz*, México, D.F., 1940, pp. 22-26 for more details on *naguals*, and plates 13 and 14 for photographs of the inscribed rocks. *Naguals* are also discussed in the comments to story 13.

<sup>18</sup> One of the mechanisms whereby common ideas have diffused over wide areas is indicated by this willingness to learn from members of different ethnic groups.

A nagual exhumes dead bodies, particularly those of children, and eats them. Vampirelike he sucks the blood from the throats of sleeping persons, although this action leaves the victim with nothing more than a tired feeling, an aching head, and two red marks on his throat. If angry, or more often for a commission, he will attempt to kill an individual by inserting a small animal—a snake, a toad, a spider, or a worm—in the body. When the intruded animal begins to eat the victim feels a gnawing, itching sensation which soon changes to pain, and if the animal is not killed by more powerful counter-magic the individual dies, his vital organs eaten away.

The Popoluca is not entirely defenseless against naguals, and he knows certain techniques which can be used to kill them. Ordinary bullets or knife wounds are useless: magic must be countered with magic. If the intestines of a nagual found hanging on bushes are sprinkled with salt, they cannot be replaced and the witch soon starves to death. A green tobacco leaf left in the damp air for seven nights can be ground and mixed with wax from a church taper. When placed on the point of an arrow it will penetrate and kill. Or, seven balls of wax from a taper can be placed in a gun with a powder charge, the gun smoked in copal, and fired at the victim. An aggrieved layman can make a powder of tobacco, toasting and grinding it, smoke himself with copal at night, and then throw the dust on the nagual when he passes by. Death should follow immediately. Chile mixed with pulverized green tobacco leaves placed on the detached leg of the trinilokuts will prevent replacement of the limb, thus revealing the identity of the witch.<sup>19</sup>

Sometimes a nagual will disguise himself as a *tsauka* (rayo) and in the form of a destructive tempest wreak havoc in the milpas of his own and neighboring villages.<sup>20</sup> A *nagual tsauka* also, if he wishes, can bring gentle growing rains, or cause prolonged droughts. The Popoluca knows that there are also natural rayos which have never been men, and which are merely local manifestations, sometimes anthropomorphized, of Mahuiwin, one aspect of the Hurricane, god of the storm. Learned old men have told him that these real rayos, when they appear in human form, are almost as tall as grand salvajes, and that they dress in silk-like garments of incredibly fine texture, colored red, white, green, and yellow, which are "dangerous" colors. The most powerful of all rayos is Mahuiwin, who was instrumental in bringing rain, but who today is more a legendary figure than an active force. Perhaps his contemporary manifestation is Senteña, who is referred to as "chief of the rayos" and who is kept chained most of the time on Santa Marta, the enchanted mountain of the Popoluca. Occasionally Senteña breaks loose and behaves like a demented being, and in the form of a hurricane destroys everything in his path, sometimes killing men and animals with lightning. The hurricane itself is deified by the Popoluca as Masawa, and along with Mahuiwin helped to bring maize to mankind.<sup>21</sup>

Normal, life-giving rain is also the work of rayos, less powerful than Mahuiwin or Senteña, more benign than the nagual tsaukas. When thunder is heard it is said they are talking to each other. From time to time small pieces of obsidian are found,

<sup>19</sup> These are Popoluca manifestations of the widespread Mexican beliefs surrounding *piciete*. The Popoluca word is *noki*.

<sup>20</sup> The Spanish *rayo* means "lightning," particularly the thunderbolt. Because of its wide use in Mexican and Guatemalan literature I use this term in preference to the Popoluca *tsauka*.

<sup>21</sup> Mahuiwin is derived from the verb *anhuiipa'*, variously translated as "to make noise," "to sound," and by extension, "to thunder." *Ma-* is a prefixal particle indicating large size, hence mahuiwin is most accurately transcribed as "big thunder." In Spanish translations given by informants he is most often called *el rayo viejo*, "old thunderbolt," and *el rayo grande*, "big thunderbolt." *Relampago*, "lightning," is also sometimes used. Masawa is derived from *sawa*, "wind," and the same prefixal particle, *ma-*, hence "big wind." In Spanish masawa is usually referred to as *el rey del huracán*, "king of the hurricane," and sometimes *ventarrón*, "stiff wind," or "stiff gust." Mahuiwin, Masawa, and rayos are more fully discussed in the comments to story 3.

and these are thought to be small bits of lightning, broken off and fallen to earth when rayos are about. Formerly they were believed to have been dangerous, but now they are handled without fear.

Everything considered, the tsaukas, naguals, and rayos are mysterious and dangerous, and the less one has to do with them the better. More desirable are the *curanderos* who, it must be admitted, are sometimes naguals as well. Through herb treatment, in the form of external poultices or infusions to be taken internally, a powerful curandero can counteract the black magic of a nagual and kill the intruded animal so that it passes out harmlessly in the feces. Occasionally a Popoluca will be badly frightened, and his soul will leave his body, taken prisoner by the chanekos or other spirits. In such cases the curandero attempts to induce the spirit to return, either by pleading with the spirits believed to have it, by sucking the body of the patient, or more often by a combination of the two methods.

Superimposed upon, or rather integrated with these aboriginal beliefs, are many Christian concepts. The Popoluca recognizes *Dios* as supreme, the creator of the world and all of the peoples in it. More real is the power of Jesus, because his image is in the church and can be seen by all, and often he substitutes for Dios in stories. Of great importance are the Virgin Mary, also represented by an image, and a variety of Catholic saints. None of the individuals, with the possible exception of God, are thought of in the abstract. Jesus is the image which is seen in the church, and the Virgin of Soteapan is she who is in the church in the village of Soteapan. She is a distinct entity with characteristics and qualities distinct from those of the Virgin of near-by Mecayapan. San Pedro of Soteapan is an entirely different person from San Pedro of Mecayapan, different in appearance, different in qualities, and just as different from him as from San Isidro. It is just coincidence that they both have the same name. This particularization of saints is by no means limited to the Popoluca. It is a phenomenon found in all parts of Mexico, and an understanding of this fact goes far in aiding the observer to comprehend the bewildering-maze of European and Mexican beliefs that make up modern Mexican folk religion. Various saints are patrons not only of days, but of crops and kinds of activities. San Isidro is the patron of all field workers and work. Santiago and Santa Ana are the patrons of *jacamas*, which for best results must be sown only on the days of these saints. Beans, tomatoes, chayotes—all have their patron saints, on whose days they must be sown. The saints who are represented by images in the church are honored on their day by *velorios*,<sup>22</sup> all-night wakes at which men sing and pray before an outdoor bower in which the saint is placed, and pigs are killed and tamales made. Occasionally, to curry special favor, an image is taken to a near-by town to participate in a joint *velorio* with a saint of that town. The saints are normally kindly disposed toward man, but a witch who knows the proper techniques can by means of magic enlist their services for nefarious purposes. The witch lights a candle in a pot in honor of a specified saint, and mutters the request that the saint aid him in bringing death to a specified victim. Though it may be against his wishes, the magical spell is so potent that the saint is not able to help himself.

In addition to these major concepts the Popoluca has a great variety of superstitions and beliefs. Many of the most important center around death. Death, he knows, may come from natural causes, or it may be the result of sorcery. Sometimes it comes suddenly, unexpectedly; sometimes it is announced beforehand by various portents. A hooting owl, a croaking *tapacamino*, a clucking hen, or a howling dog near a house at night presage death. The first two have been sent by naguals, who have mystic powers over them and thus seek to terrorize their victims. Owls are

<sup>22</sup> See Foster, *A Primitive Mexican Economy*, pp. 66-67, for a description of a *velorio*.

never killed near a dwelling; if so, several others would come the next night to torment the killer and his family. In the home of a child who cries constantly someone will die shortly, and if corn, after it has been briefly boiled in lime water begins to sprout, death or disgrace will come to some member of the family.

Death is a dangerous time for the soul of the departed, and every attempt must be made to ensure its safe arrival in the afterworld. The corpse is wrapped in a shroud, head uncovered, and placed on boards raised a few inches above the floor of the house. Candles are lighted around it, and a whip woven of seven strands of cotton is placed in the hand, to be used to drive unspecified dangerous animals from the traveler's path. Next morning one or more chickens are killed and food is prepared for all visitors who arrive before the body is taken to the cemetery, to be buried without a coffin, in an extended position. Small amounts of food, water, and clothing are buried, as well as a silver coin to be used in payment for entrance to the hereafter. The soul of an individual does not go immediately to *la gloria*<sup>23</sup> but lingers around its former haunts for from two to three weeks. On several nights during this period *rosarios*, short periods of singing and praying, are held, and finally the major funeral feast is prepared. Pigs are killed, cracklings rendered, tamales made and boiled all night, and just before dawn the family of the deceased undergoes a ritual cleansing following which the guests eat. Chile is not put in this food, for it would "cause the soul to get off the path."<sup>24</sup> Any fat on the hearts of the hogs is not eaten; when sick or when on spiritually dangerous ground the Popoluca always avoid fat—for some reason it is dangerous. Chopped onions and a bit of aromatic *apazote* leaf are added to the brains, which are then wrapped in *berijao* leaves and cooked in clay dishes along with the cracklings. The pig jaws and snouts are carefully cleaned and saved. About two in the morning chocolate is served to all visitors, the only time at which this beverage is consumed by the Popoluca. Beside the entrance to the afterworld stands a cacao tree, and the soul can pass only if the survivors have drunk a toast made from the fruit of this tree.<sup>25</sup> Preceding the soul of the dead is that of the chicken, which went on ahead to show the way. The pig jawbone and snout also help the soul to find the way; the same concept is present as in the case of the smoking with copal of deer jaws to enable the souls to get back to the encantos of the chanekos.<sup>26</sup> The souls of good persons go to *la gloria*, and the souls of bad persons to the underworld. Apparently the final place is not definitely determined by the individual's actions on earth, for when he finds himself on the brink of the perilous passage, with life left behind him, he is confronted by two roads. The one to the right is narrow, bad, littered with rubbish and ascends a steep grade to heaven. The one on the left is broad, smooth, clean, and by an easy grade descends to hell.

About four in the morning a relative of the deceased smokes a tamale pot with copal which burns on a piece of broken griddle, removes seven tamales, and places them in a basket with tortillas, the brains, and the snouts. In another basket the clothing of the departed is placed. The three objects, food, clothing, and burning

<sup>23</sup> "The Glory," heaven.

<sup>24</sup> No hardship to the diners. The Popoluca use chile sparingly.

<sup>25</sup> Cacao trees do not grow in most of the Popoluca territory. This ritual use may reflect a former lowland habitat and greater use of the beverage, which was abandoned when the essential ingredient could no longer be easily obtained.

<sup>26</sup> This is apparently an ancient and deep-seated belief. In addition to the deer ritual, copal smoking is practiced before hunting certain other animals, notably the agouti, wild boar, rabbit, and armadillo, and the jawbones of all of these are saved and smoked. This custom appears to have a twofold purpose: (1) it enables the souls of the animals to return to the encantos of the chanekos; (2) these animals normally are hunted with dogs; when the dog dies the jawbones of the animals he has killed are thrown away with the carcass, thus making it possible for *his* soul to find its way to the hereafter.

copal, are placed before a crude box altar surmounted by burning candles, pictures of the Virgin, and all of the tools and possessions of the deceased which the family wishes to use again. One by one these are passed over the three objects and replaced on the altar. Then all relatives adjourn to the edge of a near-by arroyo, carrying food, clothing, and copal, which are placed on the ground. All persons step over the burning copal seven times, thus completing the first part of the ritual purification made necessary by contact with the corpse. The clothing and food are thrown in the bushes, but the copal is returned to the house. All visitors, most of whom have helped with the preparations of the feast, are now invited to eat, and by early morning all traces of food have disappeared. The relatives sweep the house for the first time since the death, throw the rubbish in the arroyo, and bathe—likewise for the first time—thus completing the official period of mourning. By the termination of these procedures it is assumed that the soul has safely reached its destination, and the responsibilities of the living are over.

There is an ill-defined belief that souls are reborn, always in the same sex, but into other families, without memory of preceding incarnations. The time before rebirth depends on the nature of the deceased. Atonement first must be made for all sins. Children are normally reborn more quickly than older persons, since they have lived a shorter life and have had less time to sin.

In addition to death there are many other things which the Popoluca observes that he is unable to explain in natural terms. For all of these he has a ready explanation, though his explanation may sometimes differ from that of his neighbor. He believes that the rainbow is the path of a giant snake en route to see another snake, while his neighbor has learned that it is merely the breath of a giant serpent, and that it presages rain. If rain is not desired a person can make seven cutting motions with his hand and the rainbow should disappear. But his arm will ache for the rest of the day. The Popoluca knows better than to point at a falling star, for he knows that incurable eruptions will break out on his arm if this is done. And he evinces great alarm when the ethnologist, in his ignorance, does so.

On very rare occasions, at midday, the sun begins to disappear, and a strange darkness settles on the land. Chickens roost, horses stand at rest, and an unearthly quiet pervades the countryside. The devil has found nothing to eat on earth, has gone to the sky to eat the sun and moon, and a great fight ensues. But the Popoluca does nothing to frighten the devil away; he has learned that the sun and moon are capable of taking care of themselves, and soon the sun will reappear, the devil vanquished by the powers of light.

When the earth shakes, parents seize their children, place their hands over cheeks and ears, and attempt to lift them off the ground. If this precaution is not taken, the children will cease growing and remain stunted. The earth has moved, believes the Popoluca, because the Virgin Mary who holds it in her hand has become tired and transferred it to the other hand. Or, if it is not the Virgin who holds the earth—for who can be absolutely certain about such things—then it must be San Salvador, for does he not hold a ball in his hand in the church?

Some persons, knowingly or unknowingly, can cause children to fall ill simply by looking at them. It is fortunate that there are few such persons, for there is no very satisfactory way to prevent such mischief. Knowing the general prophylactic powers of pulverized green tobacco some parents attempt to ward off this evil by placing small packets of the substance around the necks or wrists of babies.

Catching humming birds or touching their nests will make a person insane. Naguals alone can handle them, and from their bones, they make a powder which, if given to girls, makes them sexually aggressive, willing, and anxious to sleep with



any man. When a fire whistles, a piece of copal is offered to it. If a small flame shoots out, friends or relatives will come from the direction toward which the flame pointed. But if it points straight down, some member of the family will die. If one sneezes, or one's ears ring, it is because a distant friend or relative is thinking of one. If an adolescent boy's voice cracks, it indicates that he has had intercourse with an older woman. If while shelling maize a cob thrown aside stands on end or leans upright against something, a friend will come and stand on that exact spot. A corn-cob is also used to restore a chick knocked senseless by a blow. The chick is placed beneath a *jícara* cup which is then tapped with the cob until a reassuring cheep from beneath indicates that the little patient has revived.

Like all men, the Popoluca is curious about the sex of his wife's unborn child. Some say that if the woman's nipples become black, a boy will be born, but if they remain red, the baby will be a girl. There are some women who claim to be able to tell, simply by looking at the navel of a woman, how many children of each sex she will bear, but the Popoluca is not sure whether this is true or not. He knows that a woman should not worry about anything while pregnant; if she does she will have a difficult delivery. If the baby is slow in coming, the midwife asks her if she has been "thinking," and if the mother confesses that she has, the baby is born without further difficulty. What she has been thinking about is not important—the damage is caused merely by the mental strain of using one's brain.

The Popoluca knows that his Mexicano neighbors believe in the *tonal*, an insect or animal which is observed by the father near the house at the time of birth, whose spirit is so intimately connected with that of the child that should either die the other would soon follow. The *tonal* is a guardian spirit who looks after the individual, and does all in his power to protect him. The Popoluca himself has no *tonal*, but a weak manifestation of the idea may be represented by a vague idea of *suerte*, "luck." A curandero searches for his *suerte*, going to the mountains on Thursdays and Fridays—days on which the layman is most likely to have bad luck. The layman may likewise find his *suerte* in the form of any unusual event which happens to him, or in an encounter with some animal in the forest, but unless he recognizes it as his *suerte*, he will not be able to take advantage of it. One Popoluca tells of an encounter in the mountains with a baby tiger which he killed. By his subsequent sickness and inability to earn money he realized too late that he had found and killed his *suerte*.<sup>27</sup>

This, in brief, is the ideological setting in which the life of the Popoluca is oriented, and it is within such a frame that the tales he tells can best be understood. But to be fully appreciated, these stories must be thought of not only in terms of their function within the community, but also as local manifestations of a wider phenomenon, that of Mexican folklore. Thirty years ago Boas expressed the belief that Spanish American folklore was largely Old World in origin.<sup>28</sup> In the light of subsequent research we now know that such a concept is only partly correct. Many stories are of this provenience: the Tar Baby motif, stories about kings, princesses, serpents, and boy heroes. But many more stories, even though occasionally tinged with Old World elements, are clearly indigenous, and represent the creative literary efforts of the Mexican Indians. Perhaps it would be more exact to say that in a purely analytical sense the folklore of the indigenous peoples of Mexico today consists of a great number of "episodes" or "incidents." Some of these are clearly of New World origin, either restricted to parts of Mexico or found over a wider area in North and South America. Other elements are obviously of Old World origin,

<sup>27</sup> See Foster, *Notes on the Popoluca of Veracruz*, p. 28.

<sup>28</sup> F. Boas, "Notes on Mexican Folklore," *Journal of American Folklore*, 25:247 et seq., 1912.

and appear to have two principal sources; one, Bible accounts, with the elements often torn from their original context and always much altered and redefined in terms of the Mexicans' world; two, familiar incidents from Old World folk tales.

The Mexican Indian rarely if ever is aware of the multiple origin of the stories he tells. As indicated in the paragraph on language, the historical past is a flat projection without depth or perspective. Adán, the first man, is just as real and personal a possession of the group as is a rayo or a chaneko, and all three can be blended together to form a stylistically well-balanced and well-integrated account which is just as valid an expression of the art of the storyteller as is a coyote story from the Great Basin. Many of the Mexican incidents mentioned are widespread in much of the country, and some are well nigh ubiquitous. And yet, the stories of each group have a flavor peculiarly their own, which represents the touch of the local raconteurs in bending the implications and meanings to be extracted from the stories in the direction of the dominant values and interests of their own people. Thus, the right of each group to claim a body of folklore as its own lies not in its creative efforts to produce new stories, but rather in its particular way of combining the countless episodes and elements which are the common property of many peoples. Obviously, this does not mean that at one time each tribe had a potpourri of literary episodes from which the local storytellers withdrew the separate pieces and wove them into the characteristic forms found today. Folklore, like all aspects of culture, continually undergoes change. Old elements are dropped off, new ones are added, sometimes having as origin some event in the lives of the people, but more often passed on from some outside source, the result of diffusion. It is in this process of sloughing off the old and integrating the new that the uniqueness of each body of folklore develops. Several villages of different linguistic affiliation may hear a new story from the same source, and in relatively unchanged form it may become the common property of all of them. Thus, there are several accounts of the Tar Baby story in addition to the two reproduced here, all of which are substantially the same. This common version is unlike any Old World Tar Baby story, yet the arbitrary association of numerous episodes suggests a common source for all, followed by assimilation of the story into each tribe's body of stories with relatively little change. Other Mexican accounts, beyond the "stick-fast" motif itself, are entirely different, suggesting another origin in time and place.

Within the group the same processes observed on a larger scale between tribes are also at work, making for a slow but steady evolution of the folk literature. No two storytellers will know quite the same stories, nor make use of quite the same elements in the same order. Lacking the authority of a written source, each teller accepts the authority he considers best, that is, the person from whom he first heard the story. He may allow himself, as an artist, to take liberties with the original form, but always within certain well-defined limits. Thus, probably few persons would remove the wasp nest episode from the Tar Baby story and include it in some other context. Such a thing might happen *accidentally*, if the teller were uncertain of his story, or if his memory were failing, and if no one else present were able to correct him. But it seems unlikely that purely literary experimentation would extend so far as to allow the individual arbitrarily to attempt such a thing. Usually other persons also acquainted with the story would hear of the heresy, and the force of tradition would work against the acceptance of the new form, while at the same time, the experimenter might lose prestige in the very field in which he wished to be respected. Were it not for this stabilizing effect of tradition—the feeling that stories should be told as they have always been told—the field of comparative folklore would be beset with impossible obstacles.

As it is, in Mexico we can trace certain episodes up and down the length and breadth of the land. Often they are found in combinations well known to us, but always they may crop up in totally new and delightful forms. Thus, though any new collection of tales can offer relatively little that is unique, each will have a freshness and charm which spring naturally from any vigorously functioning culture.

Quite apart from the artistic implications of folklore, and aside from the question of origins and diffusion, collections of stories are invaluable to the person who wishes to know better the hidden interests and values of a people. Such interests may appear but rarely in the normal round of daily life; sooner or later a clue will be found in a story.

The ethnographers who have not had the experience of finding a perplexing point made clear by a key first grasped in a casual tale are few in number. Particularly in Mexico, where in spite of a great body of documentary material there are few really penetrating studies, is folklore of value in making the many indigenous and folk cultures more intelligible.

In spite of the fair number of stories represented here I am under the impression that the Popoluca do not tell stories to the extent that many of the Indians of North America north of Mexico do. I know of no Popoluca, male or female, who has a reputation as a storyteller, around whom many individuals of all ages gather to listen. Only in the course of linguistic research were informants found who knew many stories, and the unsuspected talent was often as much a surprise to other informants as to the ethnologist. Stories are apparently told informally by parents, perhaps most often mothers, to their children, and I know of no Popoluca who volunteered stories learned as an adult.<sup>29</sup> Many younger Popoluca appear to be incapable of telling any complete story, though they may offer single elements clearly drawn from the context of the complete story.

In the stories that follow, an attempt has been made to group together those stories that are believed to be indigenous to the New World, or to have a majority of indigenous elements (nos. 1-31). They are followed by stories of Old World origin, or which contain a majority of Old World elements (nos. 32-45). This division is not absolute. It is yet too soon to classify with finality all Mexican episodes and beliefs on the basis of origin. And, from the standpoint of function and artistry, origins are of very little importance. In an attempt to relate this body of folklore more closely to the reality of the culture from which it has been extracted, my comments follow many of the stories. Though this study does not pretend to be comparative in scope, attention is sometimes called to similar stories and elements in other areas of Mexico.

<sup>29</sup> I suspect that one informant, discovering the gold in stories, went back for refresher courses to older non-Spanish-speaking relatives. This is, obviously, a different situation.

## II. STORIES

### 1. THE ORIGIN OF MAIZE

(Told by Leandro Pérez)

ONCE UPON a time there was an old couple who had never had any children. Daily the woman went to the stream to carry water. One day when she went to the stream, she saw in the water an egg. When she returned to her husband she said, "I encountered good fortune." Her husband replied, "What is it?" "An egg," said the old woman. "Come with me to take it out." They went and they arrived. The egg was shown to the old man, and he was astonished. He saw it swimming down there. "How are we going to get it out?" he asked. "I am going to take it out with a fish net," said the old woman. She began to try, but was not able to reach it. She did not realize that the egg was on a large rock over the pool in the stream and that what she saw was its reflection. Then the old man looked around, and he saw then that the egg was up above on the rock. "You have been deceived," he said to his wife. "I encountered good fortune," she said. Then the man climbed up and got the egg. Together they returned with it. "I am going to take care of it," said the woman, and she put it in with her clothing.

After seven days they heard a child cry, and looking in the clothing they found a tiny child with hair golden and soft like the silk of maize. "What did I tell you," said the old woman. "I encountered good fortune." "We will raise him as our son," replied the old man. Then the boy grew, and after seven days he was already large, and could talk and walk. Then the old woman said, "Ai, my son, go and fetch water." When he arrived at the stream, he was made fun of. Little minnows said, "You are only a little egg taken out of the water with a fish net." "Don't make fun of me," said the boy. He returned home and told his little old grandmother and said, "They made a great deal of fun of me, the minnows." "Don't think anything of it," replied the old woman. "But it makes me very angry that they say I am an egg taken out of the water with a fish net," said the boy.

The next day, his little old grandmother said to him, "Go and fetch water." "I am not going," said the boy, "because the minnows make fun of me." But he was sent. "You go," said the old woman. When he arrived at the water, they commenced to make fun of him. They said, "You are a little egg taken out of the water with a fish net." When he returned home he said to the old woman, "Make me a fishhook. I am going to teach them a lesson for making fun of me." The next time he went to the water he took his fishhook. He arrived where the minnows were and he said to them, "Now I am going to teach you a lesson for making fun of me." He commenced to take them out and put them in a sombrero. Then he returned with them to his house. "Didn't I tell you," he said to the old woman, "that I was going to take them out of the water?" The old woman said, "Ai, you, son. Why do you jest? You will have to put them back." Again he returned with them to the water, but before putting them back he warned them against making fun of him, and told them that from that time they would be sought by the rest of mankind to be eaten.

Then he returned to where the old woman was. One day he went to the milpa with his foster-parents, and upon arriving there, the thrushes began to shout, "You are a little egg. You are a little egg." "The thrushes are mocking me," he said to the old woman. "Don't let it worry you," she replied. "I don't like to be mocked," said the boy, "Grandfather, make me a bow and arrow." His grandfather did not know that he wanted to shoot thrushes. The boy did not know that the thrush was indeed the chicken of his little old grandmother. Then he killed a great many thrushes and the old woman appeared at the place where he had killed them. She commenced to scold

him, saying, "Now, you will have to revive these thrushes." The boy replied, "I killed them because they mocked me." Then he commenced to revive them, and said to them, "Never mock me," and he threw them up into a tree.

The boy did many other things he was not supposed to do. The old woman said, "You do many bad things. You do not listen. Many times you are told not to do something which you immediately do again." Later she said to her husband, "We will have to eat our son. We will eat him. Now we will tell him to climb to the *tapanco*.<sup>1</sup> Then when night comes we will drink his blood." The boy went up to sleep, but he knew that they were going to kill him. Up above he talked with a bat. "When my little old grandfather climbs up, cut his throat." Then he went up to the ridge of the roof. When the hour arrived, the old woman said, "Our son sleeps." "He sleeps," said the old man. Then he went up to where he thought the boy was, but the boy was outside on the ridge of the roof. The bat came down and cut the throat of the old man. The old woman heard many drops of blood falling, tasted it, and said, "The blood of our son does not taste good." Then she said to the old man, "Why don't you talk? You have the best part (the flesh) and I am down here drinking something that is no good. Don't be stingy. Bring him down so that we can eat him together. The two of us raised him together, and it's not right that you should eat him alone." Then she saw that the old man didn't speak. She went to look and found him dead. It was his blood that she was drinking. And the old woman was very much annoyed because her husband had been killed. "Ai, you, son, why did you kill your little old grandfather? Now I am going to eat you." The boy went far away, but she followed him. He looked behind and saw his grandmother who called out, "Stop, let's talk things over."

"Let alone," said the boy, "for I am very strong and able to destroy you. I am the one who is going to give food to all mankind." But since the old woman continued to follow him he climbed a tree in the middle of a savanna beside the shore, and from there he saw that the ground all around him was burning. "Don't eat me, for if you try to do it you will be burned up. Come here and climb the tree and see how everything is burning all around. If you try to eat me, you will be burned." The old woman did not know she was going to be burned. While she looked, the boy escaped through the flames which were drawing near. Then she looked and saw that the boy was not there, and she commenced to cry in a loud voice, "Ai, son, why are you going to burn me?" The boy went away, and the old woman remained there in the encanto, for such it was, where she was burned to death.

Free of all danger the boy went on his way. On arriving at the shore of the ocean he began to beat on his drum. Hurricane heard him and said, "Who knows who is drumming there?" He sent a man to find out, saying, "Go and ask the name of the one who is drumming there." When the man came to the boy, he said, "I have come to see you. Tell me your name." The boy replied, "I am he who sprouts at the knees. I am he who flowers. This is what you shall say." The man returned to Hurricane and said, "He did not tell me his name." "Return to him," said Hurricane. "Tell him that he must tell you his name." The man returned and said to the boy, "I came to ask you your name. You must tell me because Hurricane wishes to know." Then the boy replied, "Very well. My name is Homshuk. Tell him that I am the one who is shelled, and the one who is eaten." The man returned to Hurricane and reported, "He told me that he is named Homshuk, that it is he who sprouts at the knees and gives fruit." Hurricane answered, "He didn't tell you his real name. He is a nagual."

Then the boy spoke to a tarantula, "Build me a house," he said, "because it is

<sup>1</sup> Attic-like room above the main room of a Popoluca house.

<sup>2</sup> Another account says: "Now I am going to eat you because you killed your grandfather."

going to rain very hard. Hurricane is going to send a heavy rainstorm and I will need protection." The tarantula did as requested. That night the rain poured down in torrents, but in the morning when Hurricane's men came, the boy was still on the shore, drumming. He had not been harmed. Hurricane said, "He is a nagual."

Then a tortoise came to Homshuk and asked, "What are you doing, uncle?" Homshuk said, "Well, here I am, uncle, drumming. I want to cross the ocean, and if you are a good fellow you will take me." Said the tortoise, "I will take you." "You are not going to deceive me?" asked Homshuk. "I am not going to deceive you," replied the tortoise. "Run along and try and see if you are able to swim well," said Homshuk, and the tortoise showed that he was a good swimmer. "I am going to climb up on your back," said Homshuk. After he had swum only a short distance the tortoise shouted, "Ai, uncle. My chest is being broken." Said Homshuk, "Didn't I tell you that you were not big enough to bear my weight?" And then he came back to the shore. This type of tortoise has since been known as *pecho quebrado*. Presently another much larger tortoise arrived and it asked, "What are you doing, uncle?" Homshuk replied, "Well, here I am drumming. If you are a good fellow you will carry me to the other side of the ocean. If you do this I will give you colors such as none other of your species has." "Well, if you will do that," said the tortoise, "I will carry you." Immediately the boy painted the tortoise, then climbed on his shell, and was carried across the ocean to where Hurricane was. Ever since, this type of tortoise has been brightly colored.

"What are you looking for?" asked Hurricane. "I'm just passing by," replied Homshuk. "You are a nagual," said Hurricane, and ordered him taken prisoner. In the land of Hurricane, there were different kinds of jails: one in which there were hungry tigers, another in which there were many famished serpents, and still another in which there were arrows in constant flight. Then Homshuk was ordered placed in the jail where there were serpents. "You are a nagual," Hurricane said. "Here you are going to be eaten." But in the morning when they appeared, he was seated on a serpent. He had not been eaten. And the other serpents had disappeared, for Homshuk had said to them when he was locked up, "You shouldn't harm me, for I am a strong man, and it is essential that I live in order to give food to mankind. Moreover, you are supposed to live in the forests and mountains."

The next night he was placed in the jail with the tigers, and he told them the same thing that he had told the serpents, keeping only the largest to serve as his chair. When Hurricane saw what had happened, he said, "This time we are going to put you where there are arrows," and he was put there so that he would die. Homshuk said to the arrows, "Don't harm me. You are to aid in the defense of man, and to help him in hunting." Then they all fell to the ground and he gathered them in a bundle, on which he sat. On the following day, Hurricane saw that the boy was not dead, and he said, "That is a nagual." Then he pondered, and finally said, "We won't be able to kill him this way, but since he is a nagual, he can't continue to live amongst us." "I am not a nagual," replied Homshuk. "I am a good fellow and will be the source of food for all mankind. You should not try to kill me."

"Well, we will have a competition, and if you win, you can live here. If you lose, you must die." "And what is this competition?" asked the boy. "Well, it's a question of who can throw a stone from here to the other side of the ocean," explained Hurricane. "Well, I don't know how to throw," said the boy. "But before trying I would like to get my own stones." So the boy went into the woods and called out for Woodpecker and said to him, "I am in danger. If you don't aid me Hurricane will kill me." "What do you want of me?" asked Woodpecker. "Well, I want you to go to the other

\* The term means "broken chest."

side of the ocean, and when I throw a stone you must begin to peck on a tree so that Hurricane will believe it is sound of my stones against the tree." The boy returned. "You were very slow," said Hurricane. "Moreover, it appears that you didn't bring any stones." The boy threw the first stone, and after a little time they heard from far off, "tra-tra-tra" (which was only the sound produced by the bird). "Do you hear?" asked the boy. "My stone arrived on the other side, and with so much force that it goes bouncing from one tree to another. Now it's your turn." Hurricane threw his rock with all his strength, but when after several hours they heard no noise, he was declared vanquished.

But Hurricane was not able to get the idea of killing the boy out of his head, and after talking it over with his people he ordered a gigantic hammock placed between two large trees on the shore of the ocean. This done he said to the boy, "Are you staying here, or are you crossing the ocean? For my family and I are going to the other side. If you care to come, it is very easy to cross with this hammock." The boy knew the intentions of Hurricane, but he knew he was safe, so he said. "Very well, I'll go with you." "Then climb into the hammock," said Hurricane, and he commenced to swing it until it was going as fast as possible and swung far out over the ocean. Believing that Homshuk had fallen into the ocean, Hurricane stopped the hammock, and out jumped the boy.

"Yes," he said. "It's really a very good way to cross the ocean, for I arrived half way over. I didn't go to the other side because I didn't know where you were planning to go. Therefore, it will be better if you go first and then I will follow." "Very well, all of us will go first," said the people of Hurricane, and they climbed into the hammock after him. Meanwhile Homshuk called to Tuza<sup>4</sup> and said, "Señor Tuza, I want you to cut the roots of these trees very rapidly," and Tuza went off to do his task. "Ready?" asked Homshuk. "Yes," they all replied, and he began to swing the hammock. When it reached its greatest swing, Tuza cut the last root, and the hammock and trees fell in the ocean. All of the people were killed, but Hurricane alone miraculously managed to escape, though with a fractured leg, since he had fallen from a great height. Upon arriving at the shore, he begged, "Give me pardon. Now I know who you are." "Well, what are you going to offer me?" asked the boy. "When you are dry," replied Hurricane, "I can water your head." And since during the months of June and July there was not enough water for Homshuk to grow, he agreed to this. And since that time, Hurricane has watered the milpas during these months so that man can have maize to eat.

[1] Although this story is unlike any other Mexican account known to me, either of the origin of maize or legendary beginnings, certain of its characteristics are suggestive of Maya mythology as revealed in the *Popol Vuh* and in more recent collections of stories. This similarity is found both in specific episodes common to the two areas, and in the general types of incidents. Redfield and Villa record one version of a widespread Maya legend, "The Dwarf of Uxmal," in which a boy with supernatural powers is hatched from an egg guarded by an old woman.<sup>5</sup> A parallel to the drumming of Homshuk is offered by the playing of a guitar by the Maya child to attract the attention of a wicked king of Chichen who periodically levied tribute in the form of children to be fed to a serpent. The child then goes on to best the king in a series of competitions, failure in any one of which would have meant his death, and the story ends with the killing of the king. None of the contests is the same as those in the Popoluca story, but the idea of the competition with the life of the boy at stake is, of course, very similar.

<sup>4</sup> Gopher.

<sup>5</sup> R. Redfield and A. Villa, *Chan Kom, a Maya Village*, Washington, 1934, pp. 335-337.

Homshuk's physical characteristics, particularly his hair in the form of corn silk, is suggestive of the Maya maize god who sometimes is portrayed as having a head resembling a leafed ear of maize. Homshuk's stature recalls the local guardians of Mayan milpas, the *balams*, who are thought of as little men.

Certain events related in the Popol Vuh suggest that the elements which compose Popoluca folklore were in part drawn from Maya sources, or from sources common to the two areas. In this story, as will be shown, two of the episodes are the same as events narrated in the famous chronicle. For the rest, there is rather the similarly conceptualized background as illustrated, for example, by the motif of individuals with supernatural powers competing against each other. Thus, the ridicule of Homshuk by minnows and thrushes finds a parallel of this generalized type in the experiences of the ball-playing brothers, Hunhun-Apu and Vukub-Hunapu. The boys make so much noise in their game that the lords of Xibalbá (Hades) ask, "What's going on up there? What makes the earth shake? Who is making such a hubbub?" These words, both in content and manner of asking, are very reminiscent of the questions of Hurricane about the drumming of Homshuk. Messengers are sent to ask the brothers to compete in a ball game, to which they agree. Previously the lords of Hades have determined that they will make fun of the brothers when they come. This is accomplished by placing lifelike wooden images of the lords in the place to which the brothers come, and, believing them to be real, they courteously salute them, thereby losing face, to the noisy laughter of the lords. The lords next ask the brothers to sit down, but the bench turns out to be a burning stone, and again the pair is humiliated.

The same sequence, and the subsequent one, strongly suggest Homshuk's adventures in the land of Hurricane. The brothers are placed in a dark room, given burning pine torches and tobacco, and told to return both objects unconsumed in the morning. For failure to achieve this impossible task they are executed. The head of one of the brothers is hung from a tree, which immediately produces calabashes which conceal the identity of the head, and people are warned to avoid the tree. But the daughter of one of the lords of Hades goes to look at the tree, the head spits in her hand, she conceives, and goes to the home of the mother of her calabash-husband, where she gives birth to supernatural twins, Hun-Apu and Xbalanqué, who repeat the cycle of their father and uncle, accepting the challenge to play ball, but tricking the lords of Hades. The humiliation of saluting statues and of the hot seat are avoided, as is the firebrand and tobacco episode. Most pertinent to the discussion are their experiences when put into the "Cave of the Arrowpoints" in which arrows are in constant flight. The arrows are tamed by being told that "you are intended for the flesh of animals," and by implication, "not for our flesh." After successfully surviving several other trials the twins are placed in the "Cave of the Tigers" where it is expected they will be devoured, but they persuade the ferocious creatures not to eat them. Dumbfounded, the lords then ask, "What kind of people are you? From where have you come?" The quizzing recalls Hurricane's desire to establish the identity of Homshuk.

A deity, Jurakán figures prominently in the Popol Vuh, although his position and characteristics are generally somewhat different from those of the Hurricane of the Popoluca story. Jurakán is identified as the spirit or heart of the sky who manifests himself as a thunderbolt, as thunder, and as the lightning flash, and he clearly has life-giving powers. Only in the final sentence does the Hurricane of the Popoluca take on these beneficent qualities, although, as the discussion following story 3 indicates, Jurakán and Hurricane probably can be equated.

Analytically it may be pointed out that the birth-from-the-egg episode is classi-



fied as a part of the "Strong John" story, type 650, of Aarne-Thompson (T 541 of Thompson). The rock-throwing contest has a general resemblance to Thompson's K 18 type in which a bird substitutes for the rock itself, instead of merely pecking on trees as in this account. The explanatory elements (why fish are eaten, how the tortoise got his coloring, why arrows are used in hunting, the origin of rain, and the like) are very characteristic of Popoluca folklore, as will become increasingly apparent in the following stories.

## 2. THE ORIGIN OF MAIZE

(Second version told by José Rodríguez)

Before maize was known in this region there already lived Hurricane and Old Thunderbolt, who were the first beings to travel over the earth. After some time they decided to bring maize to this region and plant it, but as their other occupations did not leave sufficient time to transport the seed, it was necessary to find helpers. Hurricane succeeded in getting more helpers than Old Thunderbolt, because he sought the Picho, the Pepe, and the Zacua. Old Thunderbolt had as his only helper the dove, and as a result of this Hurricane was able to gather together more maize for planting. But before beginning to plant the two held a meeting to discuss the best methods to use in this undertaking. After much discussion, Old Thunderbolt said that the best method was to plant half of the grains cooked and the other half uncooked. Hurricane agreed, and set off to plant his milpa, following the counsel of his malicious friend, who proceeded to plant all of his maize uncooked. Thus it was that after a few days the milpa of Old Thunderbolt was much the better. Enraged by the poor showing of his planting, Hurricane decided to destroy the milpa of his friend, and immediately ordered North Wind to loose his fury on it. In a few minutes the maize was completely uprooted. When he saw this, Old Thunderbolt complained, requesting Hurricane to restore his milpa to its former good condition. After a few minutes Hurricane ordered the rain to restore the milpa, and after a few days it was green as formerly. After a few months the roasting ears were ready to be eaten. Old Thunderbolt invited his friend to try the new food, and he arrived accompanied by his faithful friend, Raccoon, who also was to try the new food. Old Thunderbolt prepared the ears with honey of the *abeja real* (the indigenous stingless bee) but in spite of the enticing aroma given off he hesitated to try it. Likewise, Hurricane hesitated. Therefore it was necessary to insist that Raccoon be the first to try it, which he did with great appetite. Since that time this animal has the habit of eating roasting ears before their owners.

## 3. TWO MEN MEET A RAYO

(Told by Leandro Pérez)

Several years ago a man went to look for maize with his brother. A sudden shower overtook them, and as they were starting back they saw a rayo seated beneath a tree. The man said to his brother, "I see a thunderbolt." Then the brother also looked. As they started to go they heard a thunderclap. The two men fell down, knocked senseless. Their spirits went and looked where they had seen the rayo seated. The tree was no longer there. It had fallen to pieces. The man said to his brother, "This is the thunderbolt; his shirt is green and another piece is red." They saw that the rayo was a tall man, and said to themselves, "What kind of a thing is a thunderbolt?" They went to see and found that not a piece remained of the tree beneath which the rayo had been seated.

[3] The first three stories, considered together and in the light of comparative material from other Mexican groups, go far toward clarifying our understanding of Popoluca ideas about the most powerful of the pre-Conquest deities. Clearly the Popoluca shared in the common substratum of belief held by the Maya, Zapotec, and Aztecs—and undoubtedly other groups—which concerns the nature of deities of rain, storms, and accompanying phenomena. Parsons has amply documented the importance of lightning (i.e., rayos) in Zapotec folk belief, and comes to the conclusion that lightning in ancient times was the Zapotec rain god associated with fertility and abundant crops. She assumes, with justification I believe, that he is the god called Cocijó by Caso and other Mexican archaeologists, and identified by them with the Aztec rain deity, Tlaloc.<sup>6</sup> Like the Popoluca rayos, Zapotec Lightning lives in the mountains, his cry is the thunder, and he may, if displeased, destroy the crops with wind and hail.

It is difficult to say what is the best name to use for the Popoluca deity of rain and fertility. It is evident that they, like surrounding groups, recognized the life-giving qualities of clouds, rain, and wind, and at the same time were awed and terrified by the destructive forms which these natural phenomena can take. Perhaps Hurricane (masawa, "the big wind") can be thought of as the God of the Storm in its entirety, both destructive and creative. Lightning (in the abstract mahuiwin, "old thunderbolt"; in the particular tsauka, or rayo) is a principal manifestation of Hurricane, as is Thunder, also interpreted as the voice of Lightning, and Wind (sawa). Minor rayos, or secondary thunderbolts, are a part of the total concept, and can be thought of as the individual manifestation at a particular time of Mahuiwin. Viewed in this light, Popoluca mythology becomes internally consistent. In the first story the potentially destructive God of the Storm, Hurricane, is tricked or forced by the maize deity into promising to bring rain each year at the time necessary for crops. In the second story we have another struggle with the same end in view: the agreement among the supernatural forces to water the earth so that man can eat. It is easy to understand how untutored persons might feel the force of struggle apparent in lightning, thunder, and wind, and while recognizing at the same time the oneness of the phenomenon, apply different names to the three aspects. The third story is an illustration of the minor rayos, powerful enough in their own right, whom a human being may encounter.

In addition to probable identity with the Zapotec deity Lightning, Hurricane can be equated with the Quiché Jurakán, who manifests himself as the thunderbolt, thunder, and lightning flash, and to the Yucatecan rain god, Chac. Hurricane also shares certain characteristics with two Aztec gods. The first, Tezcatlipoca, is said to have been a spirit of air, wind, and the tempest, who in addition to being a life-giver was also a destroyer, who roared through the night looking for victims. Interestingly, if one of his would-be victims could overcome him in struggle, he could ask and expect of Tezcatlipoca anything he wished, just as Homshuk exacted from Hurricane the promise henceforth to water the milpas. The second Aztec god is, of course, Tlaloc, who, like Jurakán, manifests himself as the thunderbolt, thunder, and lightning flash, and whose primary function is to bring rain. It is possible that this formalization of Jurakán and Tlaloc into a trinity is a post-Conquest development built upon less precise indigenous concepts. Popoluca nonconformance on this point might be interpreted as evidence of an earlier stage of development.

The widespread Mexican and Yucatecan idea of color symbolism appears in attenuated form among the Popoluca. In the third story the rayo was found to have

<sup>6</sup> E. C. Parsons, *Mitla, Town of Souls*, Chicago, 1936. Chap. 5, and particularly pp. 210-214, 328-339.

been wearing a shirt with vivid red and green colors, and in conversations with informants rayos were described as dressing in shirts of silk-like material colored red, white, green, and yellow. Tlaloc is said to have carried a shield of yellow, green, red, and blue feathers. No ideas of the association of colors with the cardinal directions were forthcoming in response to questions on this point, though of course it is always possible that another informant might have had beliefs or knowledge of this type.

It is unsafe to say that one group "borrowed" or had forced upon it ideas of deities of rain and wind from other groups. It is more probable, I believe, that certain basic ideas about meteorological phenomena were common to peoples over a wide area in Mexico, and at an early time. In the course of centuries these concepts developed along local lines, deviated from early forms, acquired specialized names, were influenced from time to time by each other, and later by the Spaniards, until the present-day forms emerged. At first glance this essential identity is not always apparent, but careful scrutiny of the mythology of the peoples in question must inevitably leave one with a feeling of common origin for Aztec, Zapotec, Popoloca, and Maya ideas and concepts of rain, wind, thunder, and lightning.

Speaking specifically of story 3, it seems probable that the identification of naguals with rayos, also apparent in story 15, is a later development, and gives some idea of the powers with which certain witches are believed to be endowed. The act of Old Thunderbolt in story 2 in preparing the first ears of maize with honey of the abeja real gives validity to this custom, observed to the present time by some families.<sup>7</sup> Note again the explanatory element in this story of why the raccoon is such a lover of maize.

#### 4. STORY OF THE ARMADILLO

(Told by José Rodríguez)

Before the animals that now inhabit the sierra began to live there, their masters, the chanekos, told them that it was necessary that each one invent a means of defense in order to make life less dangerous for themselves. These means of defense were to be approved or rejected in a solemn gathering which all the animals would attend, with the masters, the chanekos, acting as judges. The day of the gathering arrived, and all the inhabitants of the forest gathered at the appointed place, from the imposing *león* to the most insignificant animal. The demonstrations began, and one by one the defensive methods were shown; some were accepted, others were modified, and some were rejected by the judges, who regarded with admiration the fact that all of the animals without exception had in their defense the idea of exterminating man, who already existed in those remote times. Then came the turn of the armadillo.

"My esteemed judges and masters," he began by saying, "I have acquired these large and sharp nails to use as knives in the neck of man." "But how is this possible?" asked the judges. "Man is much more powerful than you and would vanquish you." "I have foreseen all this," rejoined the armadillo. "Before using my nails I will make a dense cloud in front of me and take advantage of it to kill men."

The judges asked that the curious little animal demonstrate that which he had described. The armadillo began to make a rapid movement with his tail until there was formed in front of him a dark curtain of smoke, but there was no smoke screen behind him. Thus his means of defense served only as a protection against danger in front. Moreover, the smoke in front was so dense that the armadillo himself was unable to see his enemy. A chaneko went behind him and sympathetically pricked

<sup>7</sup> G. M. Foster, "Indigenous Apiculture Among the Popoloca of Veracruz," *American Anthropologist*, 44:538-542, 1942.

him with the tips of some palm leaves, at the same time, saying, "Your defense is very poor and will not be accepted. Moreover, since you are condemned to be eaten by man you will not be able to attack him and ought always to flee and hide from him. Your claws are very good and very strong, it is indeed true, but you must use them to dig in the earth and make your house, and thus, escape from man."

#### 5. WHY THE ALLIGATOR HAS NO TONGUE

(Told by José Rodríguez)

At the end of the gathering the chanekos ordered the animals to spread out over all the land, and from that time they began to inhabit the forests, the rivers, the arroyos, and the lakes, depending upon their species. Since the animals did not yet know how to use their means of defense with the same facility as today, they encountered many difficulties, because already man lived among them. One bright day, while passing the margin of a river, a hunter with his bow and arrows met an enormous alligator, who was the only one of his species at that time.

This creature said to the man, "If I had seen you sooner I would have killed you." "But how is this possible?" asked the man. "Very simple," replied the alligator. "Like this," and he commenced making rapid movements with his body and opened his mouth very wide.

"Reptile," said the hunter, "this is very interesting and very worthy of admiration." The alligator, flattered by the man, continued his action, and in a moment of carelessness, the hunter threw a stone in his enormous mouth. Then he proceeded to cut off the tongue of the huge animal. Since that time all alligators lack tongues.

#### 6. HOW THE TURKEY LOST HIS MEANS OF DEFENSE

(Told by José Rodríguez)

The turkey lost his means of defense in a way similar to that of the alligator. One morning while walking through a thick wood this beautiful bird encountered a hunter. The turkey, who noticed the hunter only when he was very close, said to him, "If I had seen you sooner I would have killed you."

"I don't believe it."

"Well, I can do it," insisted the bird. "By extending my wings and puffing up my body I am able to produce a sound stronger than the thunder of a tempest; a sound which has the peculiarity of making an individual lose his mind."

Unimpressed with such a claim, the hunter put plugs in his ears and requested that the bird make his thunderous sound. The turkey began to make his loud noise, but without causing the least damage to the hunter, who instead of being bothered insisted that the bird should not stop making its graceful motions. Taking advantage of a careless moment on the part of the turkey, the hunter took a rock and threw it over the wings of the bird, injuring it to such an extent that it was no longer able to make its thunderous sound. Since that day, the turkey has been able to make only a soft whirring sound such as we know.

#### 7. ORIGIN OF THE PARTRIDGE

(Told by Leandro Pérez)

Once upon a time a woman went to work, leaving at home her little brother and son. She told the brother that he should cut up calabashes and cook them for himself and her little son. But the little brother understood that he was supposed to cut up the calabashes and cook them *with* the little son, which he did. When the woman re-

turned with her husband there was no little son; he had been killed. This made the child's father very angry. The next day he said to his little brother-in-law, "Let us go to the mountains looking for *tepejilotes*."<sup>8</sup> Intentionally he deceived the boy, for in the mountains he deserted him and then went home and told his wife that the boy was lost. Next day he "remembered" about the boy and went to look for him, and in the mountains he heard him calling, "*umuwei*" (cuñado—"brother-in-law"). Then he went to where the boy was calling, but saw to his astonishment that it was not his brother-in-law; his brother-in-law was now a bird. Then he returned home and told his wife that her brother had turned into a bird. They began to cry. The boy remained in the mountains as the partridge which today calls "*umuwei, umuwei*."

[4, 5, 6] Stories 4, 5, and 6 are separate episodes integrated in a larger cycle which undoubtedly contains many stories not recorded. Stories of this type when told to young children must constitute a powerful factor in maintaining the reality of the supernatural world of belief. The hunter, unable to remember a time when he did not associate game animals with chanekos, is very loath to forego any of the traditionally sanctioned marks of respect to these "masters" of game. Thus, each time the story is told custom and traditional correctness are reemphasized. Story 7 belongs in the cycle on the basis of explanation, but appears to have no connection with the activities of the chanekos. It merely explains, and also entertains. A similar account is known to the Zapotec of Juchitán, Oaxaca, and a summary follows. A father marries a cruel woman after the mother of his two children dies. She dislikes the children, orders the man to lose them in the forest, which he twice attempts, but each time they return. The third time he takes them deep into the forest and leaves them. One child, a girl, calls *tat-oi, tat-oi*, trying to make her father hear, and the other, a boy, whistles *fíuu, fíuu*. Soon an old man appears, who, because of the wild animals, fears for the safety of the children, and turns them into a pair of partridges which chant *tat-oi, fíuu*. And if the feathers are removed, one finds the thigh joint of a child.<sup>9</sup> This chant, in contrast to the Popoluca *umuwei*, is an interesting commentary on the importance of the cultural factor in the onomatopoeic explanation of the origin of some words.

## 8. WHY COPAL IS BURNED FOR THE CHANEKOS

(Told by Juan Arizmedes)

Once upon a time there was a hunter who was very successful in killing deer, which he always gave to his wife. But she secretly had a lover and was accustomed to give all the venison to him. Thus the supply of meat did not last long in the hunter's home, and he had to kill a great many animals. As is often true, some of the deer were only wounded and escaped into the mountains. One day, far from home, the hunter met a chaneko, and at this moment it became dark, as in the evening. "Close your eyes and do not open them until I say so," said the chaneko. The hunter did as told, and after a moment was told to open his eyes. He found himself in a large fine house under the mountain—the home of the chanekos. All of the deer wounded by the hunter were also there. "You must cure all of these deer," said the chaneko. "But I don't know how," replied the hunter. "If you want to return home you must cure all of them," said the chaneko again. After much supplication, the chaneko finally said, "Well, it really isn't so much your fault that there are so many

<sup>8</sup> *Chamaedorea tepejilote*, a wild, mountain plant considered to be a great delicacy by the Popoluca.

<sup>9</sup> G. López Chiñas, *Vinni Culasá: Cuentos de Juchitán*, México, 1940, pp. 31-33.

wounded deer as it is your wife's. She gives all of the meat to her lover so that you must spend all of your time hunting. If you get copal and candles and bring them, I will free you. We chanekos are very fond of these two things." The hunter did as told, and brought the copal and candles to the chaneko. As a parting gift he was given a fine large deer to take home. In this manner arose the custom of burning copal and candles as an offering to the chanekos before going hunting.

#### 9. AN ENCOUNTER WITH CHANEKOS

(Told by Juan Arizmendes)

Many years ago I went to join the Revolution. I carried nothing but my musket and a machete. At night I slept in trees, tied with a rope so that I wouldn't fall out, for there were many coyotes. After three days without food I arrived at a place in the mountains called Agua Fria and stopped at the home of a friend who killed cattle to sell. He gave me food, but by this time I had little appetite. I stayed a number of days, and since there had been few hunters in that place, the mountains were full of deer. Every day I went hunting, and killed many deer which we sold. One night with a friend I went out with a lantern. Climbing a large rock we saw many *jabalí*<sup>10</sup> very close to us. These we tried to shoot, but even though it was very close range and we could see the balls pass right through the jabalí, we could not kill them. We were frightened and we ran all the way home. We knew the chanekos were angry with us for having killed so many deer. That's why they wouldn't let us kill jabalí.

[8, 9] Stories 8 and 9 further emphasize the reality of the chanekos to the Popoluca. The recognition that over-hunting will reduce the supply of game animals is also apparent. By the means of legend a young hunter is taught that he must never kill more than he needs. Game is a gift of the chanekos to be used for the benefit of man. It must be used wisely and sparingly, and proper recognition must be given to the granter of success in the chase. Through myth the perpetual question of childhood and youth, "Why?" is answered.

#### 10. THE CHANEKO, THE MAN, HIS MISTRESS, AND HIS WIFE

(Told by Leandro Pérez)

Once upon a time a man went fishing, accompanied by a friend. He set his traps and caught a great many fish, which upon returning he gave to his mistress, leaving nothing for his wife. This made her very angry, and since she had received no fish she fought with her husband, accusing him of having a mistress. On the following day the man again went fishing, this time accompanied by his mistress. After some time a chaneko came and took them. Since her husband did not return, the woman went in search of him, and after some time she found the skirt of his mistress on top of a rock. "My husband must be here," she said. Then she began to cry, and called out, "Oh, my husband, if you are with the chanekos, come out. Don't remain with your mistress. Think of our little son. How am I going to take care of him if you don't help me?"

Since nothing happened she returned home, and was advised to burn candles and copal. She returned to the rock where her husband was imprisoned, did as instructed, and said, "Oh, my husband, pay no attention to my words [the quarrel]. Come out free." The husband heard his wife crying. Then the chaneko said, "She is looking for you. And since she brought an offering of copal and candles to me, you

<sup>10</sup> Peccary.

may go free." And the man went out, but his soul remained with the chaneko. And because of this he died after a short time.

[10] This story documents a frequent situation in which marital strain results because of favors shown by a man to his mistress, to the detriment of the wife. Likewise it illustrates the belief in kidnaping by chanekos, as well as the mystic power of copal and candles in dealing with supernatural beings. Finally, it shows the belief that even if a kidnaped person returns home his soul will remain with its captors, and death is inevitable. This belief in soul loss as one of the causes of illness and death is more fully documented in another place.<sup>11</sup>

### 11. STORY OF THE MAKTI

(Told by Leandro Pérez)

Once upon a time a man went to work in his milpa, and there he saw the footprint of a woman. He said to his wife, "I would like to know who has passed by in our milpa." But the woman said to her husband, "You are deceiving me." "No, I am not deceiving you," replied the husband. "It looks like the footprint of a woman." "Your mistress has passed by," said the woman. "No, it's not my mistress," replied the man. Then he went to the milpa again, saying to himself, "If I encounter the woman I am going to marry her." Then he saw her walking in his milpa, and again he said to himself, "Yes, if I find her I will marry her." Noon arrived and he began to eat his dinner. Then the woman came and said, "What are you doing here?" "Here I am," he replied. "You are the one who said that if you encountered the woman you would marry her, are you not? Well, here I am." "I am going to marry you," replied the man. Then the woman said, "Now I am going to wash you," and she began to wash him. "I am going to wash your skin because you eat salt." She washed him some more. The woman could tell how salty he was by licking his skin. "Now, certainly, you are all right," she said, and she lifted him up into a tree where she had stretched her hammock. "Here we are going to live," she said to the man.

For three days the man's wife waited, but he did not return. The next day she went to look for him in the milpa. She arrived and began to walk back and forth, saying, "Ai, old man. Present yourself to me." The makti said to the man, "Now you are being searched for." "My wife has come," replied the man, "to look for me." "But now you can't go to see her," answered the makti. Then he heard her begin to cry. "She is crying a great deal," said the makti, "but you can't speak to her. If you speak to her, you will die." The next day the man went to work, and at noon his wife came. "Where have you been spending your time?" she asked. "Just here," he replied. Then the woman embraced him and said, "Now we will go to our house." Three days after the man returned he died, because his spirit had remained with the makti.

[11] This theme of the female siren who lures men to their death has a Maya parallel recorded by Brinton. "She is called X tabai, the (female) deceiver. Her home is under shady bowers in the forests, and there the ardent hunter suddenly spies her, clothed, and combing her long and beautiful hair. As he approaches she turns and flees, but not with discouraging haste, rather, in such manner and with such backward glances as to invite pursuit. He soon overtakes her, but just as he clasps her beauteous form in his strong embrace, her body changes into a thorny

<sup>11</sup> G. M. Foster, "Soul Loss Among the Veracruz Popoluca," *El México Antiguo* (in press); Notes on the Popoluca of Veracruz, pp. 22-27; *A Primitive Mexican Economy*, pp. 73-74.

bush, and her feet become claws like those of a wild fowl. Torn and bleeding he turns sadly homeward, and soon succumbs to an attack of fever with delirium."<sup>12</sup>

Very characteristic of the Popoluca is the readiness upon the slightest provocation to suspect one's mate of infidelity. Such suspicion often has better grounds than that of the wife in this account.

An episode in a Mixtec story from Oaxaca throws light on why the makti objected to the salt on the man's skin, and his practice of eating salt. Titna Nihi, the goddess of the *temascal*, or vapor bath, has never submitted to the Catholic rite of baptism, which includes the placing of a pinch of salt in the mouth of the infant. Therefore she herself never eats salt, and at the fiesta in her honor salt is left out of all dishes prepared; only those who have received the symbolic salt at the time of their baptism have the right to eat it regularly with their food. From this, one may judge that salt has a certain sacred Christian character, and as such is odious to pagan gods and spirits. The power of salt used to combat evil spirits is further illustrated in the comments following story 14.<sup>13</sup>

## 12. THE DEATH OF A WITCH

(Told by José Rodríguez)

Many years ago in the town of Buena Vista there lived a man about fifty years of age, who had dedicated the greater part of his life to fishing. He had a brother, a wife, and children, to whom he always brought the products of his calling. The principal fish that he looked for was the crayfish, which he always succeeded in gathering in considerable quantities—one or two sacks full. Then he came here to Soteapan to sell them, or to exchange them for beans, maize, or some other thing that his family lacked. A number of individuals here, seeing that crayfish gathering was a good business, set about this occupation, but none was able to get as many as our principal fisherman. This was due to the fact that, as a result of many years of practice, he had discovered a new method of catching crayfish. This consisted of an apparatus of vines, a trap, to which is given the name *naza*, and with it it was possible to fish rather easily. The new fishermen, envious and bad-hearted, commenced to plot means of injuring the honest fisherman, but they were never able to find where he placed his traps, because when they set out in the morning they met him already returning home with his catch. Thus they were never able to hit upon the means of discovering the place where this man hid his fishing apparatus. Since they were unable to interfere with the fisherman's occupation, they decided to go to a well-known nagual of these parts, who agreed to accept the perverse commission of these wicked and envious men.

On the following day when our fisherman went to take the crayfish out of his traps he found them destroyed. He did not imagine that it was the work of his companion fishermen, but thought that some animal had entered his traps in order to eat the crayfish. He rebuilt his traps and arranged them in their places. On the following day he came as usual to Soteapan with his load of fish, which made the other fishermen go again to the nagual who promised that on the following day he would not return with crayfish.

The next day our good fisherman went to carry out his accustomed task, but he found that although the traps were full the first contained a dead toad and the second a dead chicken. He took only the crayfish from the trap that contained the

<sup>12</sup> D. G. Brinton, *Essays of an Americanist*, Philadelphia, 1890, p. 178.

<sup>13</sup> Alfredo Ibarra, Jr., *Cuentos y Leyendas de México*, México, D.F., 1941, pp. 82-90. "Titna Nihi, La Abuela Encantada."



chicken, cleaned the other, and set them again. Upon arriving here in this town he told his friends what had happened, saying that this sign of witchcraft upset him a great deal, for he had never injured anyone.

Then he returned home with the produce which resulted from the sale of his catch, and told his family what had happened. They immediately suspected the nagual of this place, but they did not know how to prevent his harmful activities. On the following day the fisherman returned, as was his custom, to gather the fish. This time he found one trap occupied by a large dead snake, but empty of fish; the other contained, in addition to many fish, two live toads. He removed the toads, took out the crayfish, washed the trap that contained the snake, and reset both. He returned to Soteapan to make his sales, and did not cease to comment to his friends about the new events which had occurred in his traps.

Since, in spite of all of their activities, the fisherman continued bringing his catch to sell, his bad-intentioned enemies went still again to visit the nagual saying that his methods did not prevent the victim from catching fish. The nagual demanded a certain amount of money to kill the fisherman, which the men paid immediately.

The following day when the fisherman returned to gather his fish, upon entering into the rocky arroyo he was attacked by an enormous rattlesnake which bit him a number of times. With his last remaining strength the fisherman succeeded in giving a great blow to the snake, which was the nagual, causing him to remain stretched out on the ground without motion for some time.

The night before these events the fisherman had dreamed that a firebrand was burning his body, and he experienced the great agony of death. When he awoke he told his dream to his youngest son, who did not understand its fatal significance. When the boy's uncle returned home the boy told him his father's dream, and he immediately set out in search of his brother, because he knew the meaning of the dream. Upon arriving at the place where the good fisherman had his traps the man found his brother dead, and beside him the half-revived snake, who upon seeing him tried to attack him. The uncle killed it immediately, and great was his surprise to see that as the reptile died it gradually assumed human form, until he was able to recognize the inert body of the well-known nagual of Soteapan.

### 13. STORY OF THE FOX AND THE ARMADILLO

(Told by Leandro Pérez)

Once upon a time a nagual from Oaxaca burned the earth near Catemaco with the aid of an armadillo and a fox. The former dug with his paws and the latter burned the earth with his tail. The witches of Catemaco wanted to kill them, but they couldn't because they hadn't studied enough. Then they began to think, "But the naguals of Soteapan are witches that would be able to do it." So they came here and began to talk with the naguals of this pueblo. They had seen that the armadillo dug up the earth with his paws and the fox burned it with his tail. They came to Soteapan and said, "We are not able to kill those that burn the earth." "We can kill them," said the witches of Soteapan. "Let's go and see what it is that is burning the earth." They arrived in Soteapan and saw that it was an armadillo and a fox that were burning the earth. "Now you witches of Catemaco must go and try to kill them," said a nagual from Soteapan. But they were not able to get to where the animals were in order to kill them. "Well, I will go," said a nagual of Soteapan, and speaking to one of the Catemaco witches who had come for him, "I am going to give them a terrible blow, and you are to cut off their heads." They found the animals and killed them. It was a nagual named Mishi who had made use of the armadillo and the fox.

[13] No Popoluca has any doubt about the reality of witches. Witches of various types are believed to exist, but no well-systematized body of belief or interpretation is to be found. The idea of the nagual is fundamental. The peculiar trait which distinguishes a nagual is his or her ability to assume at will various forms, usually that of an animal but often other guises, and in this way go about working mischief. Story 14 deals with a nagual who assumed a form known as trinilokuts, and story 14 deals with one who assumed the form of a *rayo*. As pointed out on page 197 it seems that the idea of naguals and rayos stems from two distinct sources, and in some past time the concepts have partly fused. A rayo is a powerful manifestation of the god Hurricane, and hence can be thought of as a powerful spirit; a nagual can assume any form he wishes, and therefore he sometimes assumes rayo form. Among the present-day Popoluca the idea of the nagual as the animal spirit intimately and inextricably bound to the human is poorly if at all developed, although there is evidence that at an earlier date, under the name *tonal*, this belief flourished.

The concept of the nagual is widespread in Mexico and Central America, and because of the fact that in some places it refers to the transforming witch and in other places to the intimately linked spirit, or tonal, considerable confusion has resulted. Mention of both concepts of nagualism is widespread in the seventeenth-century chronicles. The Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg dwells at some length on the phenomenon, and his ideas appear to have been seized and elaborated upon by Brinton in his well-known paper, "Nagualism: A Study in Native American Folklore and History."<sup>14</sup> Brinton's conclusions were partly correct in that he pointed out that nagualism was not simply the belief in the tutelary spirit. However, Brinton along with Brasseur de Bourbourg, was wrong in assuming that it was a powerful secret organization extending over a wide area, including members of different languages and varying cultures, bound together by mystic rites and occult doctrines, and having as its chief purpose the destruction of the whites. Data subsequent to the time of Brinton indicate that in some localities the guardian or related spirit motif is paramount; in other places the transforming witch motif; and elsewhere the two blend together in a confusing mixture.<sup>15</sup>

In story 12 several items of culture are emphasized: the presence of a local intra-tribal system of barter, which continues to the present; the custom of hiring a nagual to injure or kill an enemy; and the prophetic significance of dreams, also illustrated in story 19. Story 13 illustrates clearly the fact that the nagual is not a shaman in the commonly accepted sense of the word, for his powers are solely the result of training and study, and not of supernatural revelation.

#### 14. THE TRINILOKUTS

(Told by Leandro Pérez)

Formerly in this pueblo there were many witches who were in the habit of feeding on human flesh, going out every night to neighboring places to look for victims. Usually they ate persons that they found sleeping. These witches were called trinilokuts. They went through the streets every night after people had stopped walking, and although nobody ever saw them it was known when they were passing, because they made a special noise when they walked, which sounded like "trak, trak, trak, trak." It was the noise of the bones of their bodies. It was the custom of these witches

<sup>14</sup> L'Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg, *Voyage sur l'Isthme de Tehuantepec*, Paris, 1861, pp. 167-191; D. G. Brinton, "Nagualism: A Study in Native American Folklore and History," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 33:11-73, 1894.

<sup>15</sup> For further discussion of nagualism, see G. M. Foster, "Nagualism in Mexico and Guatemala," *Acta Americana*, 2:85-103, 1944.

to walk with only one foot, taking off one leg at the knee and leaving it at home. One time a woman married one of these witches without knowing what he was. But it wasn't long before she knew it, because he went out every night after people had stopped going through the streets and when most of them were sleeping. Upon leaving, as was his custom, he took off one leg, loosening it at the knee and leaving it in the house near the door. He always returned at dawn before the people began to get up, in order not to be discovered. But the woman did not sympathize with the life of the witch that she had for a husband. She went to visit a neighbor of hers, and since the latter was older and also hated witches, she had learned the means of harming them. She said to the wife, "Well, it's very simple. If your husband is a witch he has to leave a piece of his leg in the house, and what you must do is grind a little chile and mix it with pulverized green tobacco, and when this is ready you anoint the upper part of the leg. When he returns he will no longer be able to use it. The wife said goodby and prepared everything as she had been directed. About three o'clock in the morning the witch arrived home and tried to put on his leg. But in spite of all of his efforts he was not able to do so. Already tired, and not wishing to be surprised by the light of day with only one foot, he called to his wife, begging that she remove the mixture from his leg, promising never again to be a witch. But the woman said, "Already you have killed and eaten too many people, and it is right that you pay. As soon as the authorities know they will give you what you deserve." The witch cried and did not know how to convince his wife of the change in his way of living so that she would remove the chile and tobacco from his leg. But instead of doing so, she went to tell the authorities, and soon they arrived together with most of the pueblo. The authorities ordered a great pile of wood and they arranged it around the witch and then set fire to it. Thus were ended the villainies of that being, and since that lesson there has been no witch in this town.

[14] The idea that salt or other materials can be used to prevent the witch from assuming human form following a transformation is widespread. Both Hartman<sup>16</sup> and Schultze Jena<sup>17</sup> record stories from the Aztecs of Salvador. Hartman records a story wherein the witch steals away from his sleeping wife, and falls on his head on the floor, causing the head to become detached from the body, which remains in the house. The wife places ashes on the neck of the body, which prevents head and torso from again uniting. In Schultze Jena's story the witch wife steals out at night, leaving behind the trunk of her body. A mixture of salt and ashes prevents the reassembling of the woman. Brinton records a Maya tale in which a man unwittingly marries a witch wife.<sup>18</sup> One night he secretly followed her to a moonlight glade where she stripped off her clothes and then removed her skin, standing as a skeleton. Then she rose to the sky. When she returned she discovered her husband, asked if he would care to accompany her, but is prevented from repeating the ascent as the result of having salt thrown on her. Parsons has recorded a Zapotec story, "The Salted Skin," in which the witch wife took off her skin in order to transform herself into a cow. Upon the advice of the priest the husband filled her skin with salt, which prevented her from again putting it on.<sup>19</sup> This is suggestive of the Yuki (California) belief that the witch transforms himself into a grizzly bear by hanging his intestines on a bush. If the intestines can be found and salt is sprinkled on them, the witch is unable to replace them, and shortly after starves to death.

<sup>16</sup> C. V. Hartman, "Mythology of the Aztecs of Salvador," *Journal of American Folklore*, 20: 143-150, 1907, p. 144.

<sup>17</sup> L. Schultze Jena, *Indiana: Mythen in der Muttersprache der Pipil von Izalco in El Salvador*, Jena, 1935, p. 23.

<sup>18</sup> D. G. Brinton, *Essays of an Americanist*, pp. 171-172. <sup>19</sup> E. C. Parsons, *Mitla*, p. 364.

## 15. THE WIFE WHO WAS A RAYO

(Told by Leandro Pérez)

Many years ago there lived in this pueblo a señorita, who, although she was old enough to marry, and was continually urged to do so by her father, refused all offers from the young men. Nobody knew the cause of her lack of interest in men, and, according to the custom of this pueblo, her admirers continued asking her hand of her father, but without success. This was because the woman had learned to be a rayo. Every night she went out of her house and directed her steps toward a near-by hill on the far side of the Río Guasuntlán, about four kilometers from Soteapan. There she came to a great rock embedded in the hill which rose directly from the left bank of the river. This hill is called Tyukang, and is believed to be a great house where the rayos live. Night after night she went to this place to join her companions.

But the father was very anxious that his daughter get married, and as the years went by he became afraid that she would always remain single. When a man asked for her hand, he would say, "Now I beg of you, do you like this man?" And she always answered, "I don't like him." Finally despairing of finding a suitor that she would like he decided to marry her by force, and thus it was. In spite of the girl's protest he made her marry the first man that came along after making his decision.

After the wedding the girl refused to sleep with her husband and left him to sleep alone. Each night after he was asleep she left the house and made her way to the top of the enchanted hill of the rayos.

One night the husband heard her moving about and asked, "Where are you going?" His wife answered, "You do not need to know." But the husband said, "Tell me. What strange kind of a person are you and what do you do?" "I am not going to tell you," she replied.

Now the husband was very curious because of her strange behavior. He became very suspicious and began to spy on her. He said, "I shall follow her until I find out what she does. Perhaps she is meeting another man." That night he lay awake and saw her leave the house. Then he quickly arose and followed close behind. He followed her past the arroyo of Temolapan, which runs along the edge of the pueblo, along the path until she reached the Río Guasuntlán, which she crossed without looking behind. She went up a hill and he saw that she climbed to a large rock. All of the other rayos were already gathered there. When she reached the top the woman looked behind her and saw her husband. "Why do you come after me?" she asked. He then realized that his wife was a rayo. Just at this moment the rock opened and other rayos came out. "It's my husband," she explained. "I want to learn to be a rayo, too," he said. "Well, tell him to come in," said the other rayos. So she told her husband to follow her. They entered the hill through the rock and inside there was a great room brightly illuminated, and in the center was a great rectangular rock which served as a table for all the rayos that ate in this place.

"You must learn to be a rayo, too," said an old rayo, "but first we are going to jump, and when we come back we will teach you. You can wait here; we won't be long." And they went to two great rocks, about four meters long and three meters high. There they took off their clothes, which were brilliant like silk and colored red, yellow, and white, and began to jump over the rocks, each one several times. Meanwhile a great noise as of thunder echoed in the place.

But some of the rayos were not pleased with the unexpected visitor's presence and they decided to kill him. They picked him up to carry him to the ocean to drown him. "I believe my husband is being carried away," said the woman, and when she

saw that it was so she put on her dress and went after him. She followed to the middle of the ocean where he had been dropped, rescued him, and brought him back to the hill.

(From this point there are two separate endings to the story.)

#### Ending 1:

"Now you are going to learn to be a rayo," she said, and they all began to teach him. "You are not going to return home," she said. "We are going to remain here." Said the man, "I am going to learn to be a big rayo." After this time they remained in the hill. Then the mother of the man said, "I believe my son must have died because he hasn't come back." The son saw his mother and heard her cry, but he wasn't able to talk to her because he was enchanted; he was united with a chaneko-rayo. Then he said, "You won't be able to talk with me unless a rayo brings you here also." But the old woman was frightened, and she didn't cry anymore for her son. Here the story ends.

#### Ending 2:

"Many times I have told you that I am not the person who can bring you happiness," she said. "Go home and find another wife, for I must remain here living the life that I have lived for so many years with my companions." "No, that is impossible," said the man. "I must stay here with you," but in spite of his pleas she refused him. One of the rayos said to the woman, "We could bring in a set of bells to celebrate our fiestas, and he could take care of them. In this way he could stay by your side." But she said, "No, he wouldn't be expert enough for such a task, and he would lose a great deal of time in learning. Moreover, he will be of more use to his old mother who has no one else to take care of her."

The rejected husband, deeply wounded, returned to his house, but dominated by love for that curious woman he went every night to visit her at the hill. And to this day in the months of June and July<sup>20</sup> when the rayos come out to play, he receives visits from multitudes of rayos that come near to his house in the midst of rain and thunder.

[15] The episode of the jumping over the rocks, part of the process necessary for transformation into a nagual, validates the Popoluca belief concerning the three stones at Ocotal Grande which are thought to be the witch doctors' school.<sup>21</sup> Further emphasized is the basic idea that training is the one and only means by which one becomes a nagual. A connection between the chanekos and naguals and rayos is also hinted.

### 16. THE HUNCHUT WHO MARRIED A WOMAN

(Told by Leandro Pérez)

Many years ago in San Fernando Chimpa there was a woman who lived alone after her husband died. One day a hunchut came, bringing much game. The hunchuts are hunters who always have good luck. The hunchut lived with the woman and they always had much meat—more than anyone else in the pueblo. But word came to the *presidente municipal* in Soteapan that a woman was living with a hunchut from an encanto. So he sent soldiers who went and surrounded the house. The hunchut answered their demands that he come out without argument. The soldiers tried to

<sup>20</sup> These are the months of the heaviest rains and thunder storms.

<sup>21</sup> G. M. Foster, *Notes on the Popoluca of Veracruz*, p. 22.

bind him, but without success, for he simply stood there and broke his bonds. Angered, a soldier struck him with a machete, but instead of killing him, sparks flew. He was hard, just like a stone, and sparks flew, just as when one strikes a rock.

The soldiers returned to Soteapan and later went again to the hunchut's house, armed with a candle of beeswax from the church and a particular vine which grows in the mountains. The hunchut again came out, and immediately they stuck the candle, which had been lighted, on his head and whipped him with the vine. He ran screaming and shouting to the forest, where he disappeared, unable to shake off the candle.

By this time, however, the woman was pregnant, and shortly thereafter, she gave birth to a baby hunchut, smaller than our own children. When he was seven days old he could walk, and went with his mother to get water. "Mamma," he said. "My father is in that great rock over there." "Nonsense," replied his mother. "Your father died when the soldiers came. Come, let us go home." A few days later the boy was much bigger, and he went again with his mother to get water. Again he said, "Mamma, my father is in that great rock, and I am going to see him." And in spite of her pleas he walked over and disappeared in the rock. Neither he nor his father were ever seen again.

#### 17. STORY OF A HUNCHUT

(Told by Angel Cervantes)

One day a woman went into the mountains to look for *nanches*.<sup>22</sup> While she was collecting nanches, a hunchut appeared to her and began to speak. At first she was frightened, but after a time she allowed the hunchut to carry her to his house, which was under some rocks. There she saw that there was much meat: deer, jabalí, *tejon*, and many other forms of game. The hunchut told the woman that if she would live with him she would always have much meat to eat. The woman went home, but each day she came to visit the hunchut, and in return for her favors was given meat. But after a time she got tired of so much walking, and told the hunchut that he must come to visit her in her house. After several nights the woman's daughter-in-law saw the hunchut enter, and she told her husband, the woman's son. The son then hid outside the house of his mother and saw the hunchut come, just as his wife had said. Very much angered, he entered the house, accused his mother, and told her the hunchut must leave, since it ate children. The mother then went away with the hunchut to live with him in his cave.

#### 18. AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE GRAND SALVAJES

(Told by Leandro Pérez)

The grand salvajes live in the mountains. They are between thirty and forty meters tall. The women have only one breast, in the middle of their chests. Their feet are a meter long. They roar through the forest making terrifying sounds. They are so tall that they have to sit up to sleep; there is not enough space to lie down. About four years ago, a man and a woman were eaten in a crevice near Bastonal. They were on the way to Catemaco for the fiesta of the Virgin Carmen. All that was found of them was their clothing and the hair of the woman. It was known to have been a grand salvaje because in the mud was found a footprint a meter long.

I haven't ever seen a grand salvaje, but my father-in-law once heard one. He was going to Catemaco to the fiesta of the Virgin Carmen of Catemaco. At night he was camped all alone near Bastonal. Suddenly he began to hear grand salvajes roaring

<sup>22</sup> *Byrsonima crass, folia*, a species of small fruit.

in the mountains. So he built a huge fire. He knew a secret: he knew how to pray in Latin. So he prayed and prayed to God, and the grand salvajes roamed all around, but so great was the power of prayer that they didn't come within sight. My father-in-law was not harmed.

[16, 17, 18] Stories 16 and 17 clearly illustrate the way in which indigenous and Spanish elements can be combined in stories without regard to origin. In the first the hunchut theme is dominant, but without the traditional Mexican political organization, centered in the *presidente municipal*, and without the episode of the church taper, the account would be pointless. It seems probable that the aboriginal belief in the ritual significance of burning copal was a factor which made for the easy introduction of and subsequent great faith in the ritual power of church candles. From the standpoint of acculturation, this item is of considerable interest. In story 18 the traveller was able to save himself because of his possession of the right magical form—the ability to pray in Latin.

Certain Maya beings roughly parallel the grand salvajes and hunchuts. Brinton mentions the *che vinic*, or Man of the Woods, a huge fellow who prowls through the forest looking for human beings to eat.<sup>28</sup> Like the grand salvajes he sleeps sitting up, but for a different reason: lacking bones and joints, once lying down he has great difficulty in arising. The defense against the *che vinic* is, not a prayer in Latin, but the practice of dancing with a green branch, which throws the demon into convulsions of laughter, he falls to the ground, and is unable to get up in time to catch his victim. Brinton quotes Berendt to the effect that this belief is widespread in Yucatan and Tabasco. Similar to the hunchut is the *culcalkin*, a hobgoblin with head cut off even with his shoulders, who wanders around villages at night.

#### 19. THE SIGN OF DEATH: SIGNIFICANCE OF DREAMS

(Told by José Rodríguez)

The Popoluca believe that when an individual dreams of two lizards and a serpent, regardless of what form they take in the dream, it is a sign of death. The person will die the following day, or several days later. Several years ago this ancient belief was again confirmed. A man who lived in this town of Soteapan had this fatal dream the day before being stricken by death. The morning after the dream, the morning of the day he died, he told it to his children and wife, who were very much upset, believing that the end of the life of their good father and husband was nearing. But, as is always true, there was not lacking a neighbor who assured them that there was no reason to be sad, that this belief was nothing more than a meaningless superstition from ancient times. With these words in his ear, the man went out without any fear whatsoever, and told his dream to his friends. But upon returning to his home around noon he felt a bad pain in his heart, and shortly after he died. Because of this event this belief is still regarded with respect.

#### 20. STORY OF THE TSAPUPUSHIN

(Told by Leandro Pérez)

Once upon a time a man was about to go hunting. He said to his son, "I am going to look for deer because we don't have anything to eat." Then he went into the mountains and wounded a deer, but did not kill it.

He began to follow it, and was walking along when presently he came to a broad

<sup>28</sup> D. G. Brinton, *Essays of an Americanist*, pp. 176-177.

road. "I wonder where this road goes," he thought to himself, and after he had walked along it for a way, he heard a rooster crowing. "There must be a little settlement here," he said, and when he arrived where houses and people were, he asked "What are you doing?" And the people replied, "Well, here we are." Then they began to talk. The man said, "I shot a deer, but I couldn't catch him. I lost him. I would like to know where he went." Said one of the men of the village, "He has lain down here. He is my animal, and you have wounded him badly. It means a lot of work for me to cure him. Go and see if it isn't the animal that you have been following." The hunter looked. "Yes, this is the one that I shot."

Then he was told, "Well, this time, you can carry away the animal you have wounded, because we have seen that you don't have any maize. You can eat the animal. And if you need maize, we will give you some. We have enough." Then the man said, "I am going to come back again to get maize. You will see me here tomorrow." When he had returned home, he said to his son, "I know where there is maize. His *compadre* said to him, 'I'm going also to bring maize.'" Next day the hunter and his *compadre* went to the mountain, but the hunter could not find the road and they returned home. On the following day, they went out again, but were not able to find the village to which the hunter had come in following the deer.

Then the *compadre* said that those people must not have been ordinary people because they had hidden their road and their village. The hunter realized then that the people he saw were enchanted.

## 21. THE DOG WIFE (Told by Leandro Pérez)

Once upon a time there lived in this place a couple who had a bitch which was very affectionate and faithful to her owners. After some time the woman died, and this made the bitch very sad, because the man stood before his wife's body crying and saying, "Now, who is going to make us tortillas? Who is going to prepare food for us?" The dog wagged her tail and looked at her grief-stricken master. The man asked the same questions each day, and on the third day before noon, the dog disappeared. When the man saw that his faithful dog was gone he was indeed sad. "First my wife dies, and then my best friend, my dog, deserts me," he wailed. But upon returning home his astonishment was great to see that fresh tortillas had been made and that there were also other kinds of food. "Who can this kind person be," he said to his dog, whom he found at home, "who has prepared food for us?" but the dog merely answered by wagging her tail. This experience was repeated each day. One day the man returned home early, and great was his surprise to find a beautiful woman baking tortillas in his house. Looking more closely, he saw near the table the skin of his faithful dog who had changed herself into a woman to cook for her master. From that day the man took as wife his faithful dog, in spite of her rather unusual origin.

[21] Huichol and Tepecano counterparts to this story are recorded by Lumholtz<sup>24</sup> and Mason.<sup>25</sup> Both are deluge stories, and involve the futile activities of a man in felling trees. Each morning the trees are again standing. The man finally spies at night, and finds that a supernatural being, in one version a man and the other a woman, has raised the trees. He is instructed to build an ark and take seeds or ani-

<sup>24</sup> C. Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico*, New York, 1902, Vol. II, pp. 191-193.

<sup>25</sup> J. A. Mason, "Folk Tales of the Tepecanos," *Journal of American Folklore*, 27:148-210, 1914. The Tepecanos are reported as living at Azqueltan, Jalisco, and are the last remnants of the Pima population which formerly inhabited this region.



mals or both with him in order to survive the coming flood. After the waters recede, the man farms, returning at night to find tortillas mysteriously prepared. Spying one day he finds that his dog takes off her skin and is a beautiful woman. Stealthily approaching, he casts her skin into the fire, lives with her and raises a large family, in this way peopling the earth.

The Popoluca account may represent merely a fragment of the larger tale, although, since there is a complete Popoluca flood legend (story 43) which begins with the tree episode, I am inclined to believe that this motif has never here formed a part of the Biblical story. The belief that many humans are able at will to assume animal form, and many supernatural and animal beings to assume human form and live with humans is so basic in Mexico that the story of "The Dog Wife" seems to me to integrate perfectly with the autochthonous folk belief. This story shows the typical attitude of the Popoluca toward the marriage institution. The man is upset, not primarily because his wife has died, but because there will be no one to cook for him. Economics, and not love, appear to be basic in the Popoluca familial organization. This same feeling is further emphasized in "The Story of the First Man" in which Adán requests that Christ furnish him with a cook, and is quite annoyed when he is supplied with a woman instead.

## 22. STORY OF THE HERON WOMAN

(Told by Leandro Pérez)

Once upon a time a man went to a lake to fish. When he arrived there, he saw a woman bathing, and he said to himself, "Where has this woman come from? There's no town around here." Then he hid himself and watched the woman bathing. "I am going to wait until she has finished bathing and then I will go," he said. Later, when he had returned to his house, he said to his brother, "I saw a woman who was bathing, but she wasn't a woman, because I saw that she was a heron." His brother said, "That is your suerte." Then the man said, "Well, I'm going to wait for her again," and the next day he returned to the place where the heron had bathed and again hid himself. Presently the heron came, and he saw that while she was preening herself, a feather fell to the ground. The man saw where it fell. Then the woman took off her shirt (feathers) and stepped into the water. "How am I going to be able to leave without her seeing me?" said the man to himself. "I'll have to try," and he came out of his hiding place and went to get the feather. When he came to where the heron woman was, he said to her, "If you like, I am going to marry you." "But my house is very distant," replied the woman. "Well, I'll follow you," said the man. "Then give me my clothes," replied the heron woman, "for you have picked them up." "I'm not going to give them to you now," spoke the man. "If I marry you then I will give them to you." "Well," replied the heron woman, "since you have my clothing I guess I'll have to marry you. But my sisters are in my village." "Let's go and see them," said the man. "Let's go walking."

"If you aren't going to deceive me," said the heron woman, "then nobody will scold me." "You won't be scolded," replied the man, "for I do not have a wife. I am single." "Well, if you are not going to deceive me," continued the woman, "then it will be all right, because my mother doesn't like anyone who deceives me." "I am not deceiving you," said the man. "I can marry you."

Then he returned to his house and told his brother the story. "What did I tell you," said the brother. "Didn't I tell you that you had met your suerte? Now you have a wife. You have found a pretty woman."

"I believed what you said," replied the man. "Now you see that I have a woman."

The heron woman loved him very much because she was a suerte encountered on the edge of the lake where the man had gone fishing. But after this the man caught no more fish because he had spoken with the heron woman. Then they were married.

### 23. THE WOLF

(Told by Leandro Pérez)

Once upon a time six men went to look for honey. They said, "Let us go to look for wax because we have need of it." Since there were many bee trees in a forest that surrounded a lake, they went to that place in boats. They arrived at the edge of the lake and began to prepare a place to spend the night. In the morning they said, "We are going to look for bee trees." They began to fell bee trees. At noon they stopped to eat, and to their astonishment, they heard a door open. They said, "Who knows what makes that sound?" Then they listened. They saw coming a man dressed in knee boots and wearing woolen clothing of a very brilliant color. When he arrived opposite them, he said, "Good day, compadres. What are you doing here?" Three of the men replied, but the rest did not, for they saw that his skin shone brightly. Three of the men shook hands with him, and three did not. They understood that he was not a good man. He said, "Well, compadres, why don't you come to my house?" and they said, "We don't know. Where is your house?" Then he went away saying, "Presently I am going to come back to get you. You are going to sleep in my house." The three who had spoken then went to sleep. About four o'clock, the others heard the man coming, but the three who were asleep did not awaken, because the stranger had carried off their spirits. Those who had not replied were not asleep. Very late they heard the noise of the door opening. They saw the stranger coming. Then they said to each other, "Carry the others, our brothers." They were going to put them in the canoes. But they had not succeeded in doing this when the animal arrived (the wolf had now taken his true form). They began to get in their canoes, with only two of the sleeping men, leaving the third behind. Then the animal shouted out, "Stop, compadres. Let's talk a while." The men said, "Let us row fast." They looked behind and saw that their brother was being eaten. Then they saw that it was an animal that eats Christians.

They went to their town to make known to the authorities what had happened. One said, "My brother was eaten by the animal." "You are lying," said the authorities. "You killed your brother." "It's not a lie," he said. Then the man was bound and placed in the jail. "Tomorrow," said the authorities, "we are going to see if you have not lied." He was still tied up when they set out. At twelve o'clock, after arriving at the lake, they heard the sound of the door of the house opening. A soldier said, "The animal is coming." It arrived at the edge of the lake and began to call out, "You have come, compadres. Come, let us talk." They saw it, but they did not reply. Then they returned and went to advise the authorities that it was no lie, that in truth the animal that eats Christians came out. Then the authorities told them, "Tomorrow you are going to take many soldiers in order to kill the animal."

Then they looked for a pig, a bull, and an old woman. Two Negroes brought a new machete, which the priest blessed. They went to the bank of the lake again and made a platform in the trees. They said, "It won't be long until the animal comes out." When the platform was ready the two Negroes went up into it. Two men were told to tie up the pig and the bull. The old woman was tied up behind the bull, and then she cried very much.

They heard the animal come. It went to the pig and began to eat it. Then the soldiers fired, but although the bullets passed through the body of the animal they

did not harm it. After eating the pig, the wolf went to the bull and began to eat it. Those who were shooting saw that their bullets went through the wolf and came out the other side. But the wolf did not die. Just as he was finishing the bull the first Negro jumped from the platform in order to prevent the death of the old woman, and approached the wolf. When the wolf opened his mouth and stuck out his tongue, the Negro grasped it and cut it off with his new machete. The wolf did not die. Then the second Negro jumped, and instead of sticking the wolf in the body he stuck his paws. From his paws there came out a white dove, a butterfly, and a hummingbird. The wolf fell down dead. This Negro had guessed that the wolf had his spirit in his paws.<sup>26</sup>

Then the priest said, "We will have a look at his house, because his wife has remained there. When they arrived, the door was open. The priest said, "Don't enter until I bless it." But one of the soldiers looked inside and he disappeared inside and the door closed. The priest then said to the others, "You were told not to look inside." Then they went back to the place where the wolf was and cut off his head. They wanted to show it to the authorities. Thus they were saved, and here ends the story.

#### 24. THE WOLVES

(Told by Leandro Pérez)

Many years ago wolves used to be able to dress up as Christians.<sup>27</sup> Once a group of men were cutting a bee tree near Lake Catemaco.<sup>28</sup> Several men came up to them and said, "Good morning, compadres." They all shook hands and talked—all except one who stood silent and said nothing. They wore boots and shiny, hairy pants. They didn't have noses like wolves, but they had much hair on the face. Their hands also were covered with hair. Then the men heard a sound like a door—a huge door closing in the rocks. It was the door of an encanto. Two men ran down to the lake and jumped into their canoe. One wolf followed them, shouting, "Stop, stop, stay and talk." But they stayed out in the lake. The other men were eaten by the wolves.

[23, 24] The second story appears to be a summary of the first. I am not sure whether the idea of the werewolf is indigenous or European. Either a native motif has been greatly modified as the result of Old World elements, or an Old World theme has been firmly integrated into a Popoluca setting. The idea of supernatural beings who assume human and animal form is certainly just as much Mexican as Spanish, and the invulnerable body of the wolf finds a counterpart in Arizmendes' account of the jabalí that could not be killed. (Story 9.) Priests, Negroes, bulls, and pigs could not, of course, enter into a purely autochthonous account. The act of the priest blessing the house of the wolves, thereby making it no longer dangerous, apparently represents one of the early activities of the priests in their attempts to stamp out pagan beliefs. Similarly, all waterfalls formerly inhabited by hunchuts have been blessed, thereby rendering their inhabitants harmless, and the rocks at Ocotal Grande, reputed to be the nagual's school, were similarly treated.

<sup>26</sup> Another version suggests that the three things that came out were the souls of the three bee tree cutters who had spoken to the wolf and who had remained sleeping.

<sup>27</sup> Human beings are always referred to as *crístianos*. In asking about the habits of unknown and strange beings the question is phrased, «¿Comen crístianos?»—"Do they eat humans?"

<sup>28</sup> Since Lake Catemaco is far outside the range of Popoluca villages it is hard to understand why a bee tree, heavy to move, would be cut here. I have no other record of exploitation of a bee tree too far removed to be transported to the village of the finder.

25. STORY OF A SHÚNUTI

(Told by Leandro Pérez)

Once upon a time a man went to search for food. When he arrived where he was going, he began to search for shrimps. At midday, he started to return home and there, in the path, he saw a cat coming toward him. He didn't know that it was an animal that ate people. He said to himself, "I wonder what this cat is looking for." He set forth again, and the cat followed behind him along the path. Then he saw that the animal was growing larger. He said, "This is not a cat. This is another kind of animal. I believe it is the one that I have heard called *shúnuti*." The man began to run with the animal after him. He climbed up in a tree and the animal remained at the foot. Noon came and he found himself very thirsty. After awhile he was forced to spit because of his thirst and the spittle was licked up by the cat. As he did so, the flesh began to fall from the man's bones. He could hold on no longer and fell from the tree. Then the animal began to eat him. Only the bones remained. And thus it was seen that with our saliva, the *shúnuti* makes our flesh fall from our bodies.

26. STORY OF A SHÚNUTI

(A second version told by Leandro Pérez)

Once a man was sent to Acayucán with the mail. The next day as he was returning on horseback, he met a *shúnuti*. When he saw it, he made the horse run. The *shúnuti* came after him. The man saw him and said, "This animal is going to eat me." His horse was tired of running. He rode the horse into an arroyo. Suddenly, monkeys began to chatter and frightened away the animal. The man climbed a little hill and there he fell down with his horse, for the latter was very tired from carrying the man at a run. Thus was the man saved.

27. MOCTEZUMA

(Told by Juan Arizmendes)

Moctezuma at one time lived in Soteapan. I don't know whether he was born here or not. Before his time people went naked; he showed them how to dress in clothes. There was a great fight one time and people used slings and large rocks and also bows and arrows. Later he went to Piedra Labrada and started to build a bridge of stone to Spain. The rocks at Piedra Labrada are the foundations of this bridge. Then someone stole his wife, and very much disgusted he went off to Mexico where he was poisoned.

[27] This fragmentary account is the only tradition recorded which deals with Aztec influence in southern Veracruz. Moctezuma is generally thought to have been a Popoluca, and in conversation other informants stated that he had gone to Mexico for a time, and then returned to Texistepec, a town which he founded, and which today is inhabited by people speaking one of the four Popoluca languages. A culture-hero motif, generally lacking in Popoluca mythology, is hinted at here, as well as the common explanatory theme. The rocks mentioned are near Piedra Labrada, the easternmost Popoluca settlement, and the only one near the Atlantic shore. These stone works, which consist of a stele with unidentified inscriptions and several crudely carved stones, have been briefly described by Blom and La Farge.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> F. Blom and O. La Farge, *Tribes and Temples*, New Orleans, 1926. Vol. I, pp. 40-42.

## 28. THE UNLUCKY MAN AND THE HORNED WATER SERPENT

(Told by Leandro Pérez)

Once upon a time there was a man who didn't know how to work, as a result of which he lived by the efforts of his family. Finally they grew tired of supporting him and told him he was good for nothing and must leave. During the rainy season the man left home. He was so unhappy because he was good for nothing that he wanted to die. As he was crossing a swollen river on a hammock bridge<sup>80</sup> he saw a large serpent swimming in the water below. This creature had horns on its head, one yellow and one white. "What are you doing up there?" asked the serpent. The man told his story and said that he wanted to die. "If you want to eat me, I am at your disposal."

"No," said the serpent, "I don't wish to eat you. I will take you to the home of my parents. So saying he took the man on his back, who, holding with both hands to the serpent's horns, was carried over the mountains to the ocean and out to an island where the serpent lived. The serpent's parents were human beings. "When you meet my mother," said the serpent, "tell her that you cared for me in your home, and that in return you want her to give you the ring she always wears." The serpent told his father that he had been cared for in the man's home, and when he took him to his mother he told her the same thing. The man asked for the ring, which she reluctantly took off her finger and gave to him. "This will always bring you happiness," said the serpent. "Keep it in a little wooden box and you will always have what you want." The man returned home and thereafter lived a happy life.

[28] Although particularly characteristic of the eastern United States, where it appears both in archaeology and folklore, the idea of the horned water serpent is also fairly common in Mexico. Lumholz reports that among the Tarahumare "large serpents which only the shamans can see are thought to live in the rivers. They have horns and very big eyes."<sup>81</sup> Parsons records a Zapotec story involving a horned water serpent and lightning, and quotes R. L. Beals to the effect that the Mixe believe that floods are caused by the horned water serpent that lives in a spring and falls out of the sky.<sup>82</sup> A possible connection with the Quetzalcoatl motif is suggested by the fact that in one version the culture hero sailed out to sea on a raft of snakes, while the man in this story voyaged on the back of a single serpent. The first part of this account obviously is indigenous; the second part, dealing with the magic ring which brings good luck, is clearly Old World. The impossibility of always classing a story exclusively Old World or New World is shown by this blending of one of the most ancient American ideas with common European elements.

## 29. THE COCK'S ADVICE

(Told by Leandro Pérez)

Once upon a time a man was punished by his wife who was angry with him. To punish him she would give him no tortillas. When he came home from work he was very hungry but there were no tortillas ready for him. He got into his hammock and as he was lying there he heard his chickens talking to one another. A cock said, "Our master is being punished. But I have many wives and I can tell them what to do. Our master can't even make his one wife obey him. He shall see now. I am going to beat my wives." He began to beat them on the head with his beak. The hens

<sup>80</sup> A suspension bridge woven of vines. <sup>82</sup> Parsons, *Mitla*, pp. 332-334.

<sup>81</sup> Lumholtz, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 310.

cackled and shrieked and later when the man asked his wife for tortillas she grew very angry and said, "Don't come asking me for tortillas!" Her husband answered, "I saw how the cock makes his wives obey him, even though I could not make you obey me." And he began to beat her until she fell on her knees. He beat her until she respected him as a father. Then he asked her for tortillas and they were given him immediately. The wife was lazy no longer. She had been very lazy before, but because of the cock's advice she was lazy no longer.

[29] Both as a reflection of attitudes and in general flavor this story is typically Popoluca. It shows clearly the great economic import of the marriage relationship; the most abusive thing the wife can do, and the surest way to disrupt normal family life, is to refuse to make tortillas for the husband. Likewise the story shows the Popoluca attitude of the relations between the sexes. A wife cannot be reasoned with; to ensure the smooth functioning of the home it is necessary for the husband to beat her so that she will respect her lord and master. The phrase, "until she respected him as a father," also illustrates the attitude of the relationship between father (or mother) and children. Children, also, must be severely beaten to ensure good behavior as well as the proper attitude of respect and devotion to the parent. That the parent's own childhood may seem, in retrospect, a time of terrible fear and suffering (as a number of informants attested) does nothing to change the pattern of Popoluca child rearing.

Hammocks, incidentally, are almost never used by the Popoluca. At most, an individual may have one for daytime lounging. Nights are too cold for comfortable use of hammocks. They are, however, used by many of the Popoluca of Texistepec, Oluta and Sayula, where the climate is much warmer and a cool bed is desirable. The Sierra Popoluca do, however, have a word for it in their language and casual mention of a hammock in this story may be another shred of evidence in support of the theory that the Sierra Popoluca were at one time lowland dwellers. Mention has already been made of the evidence of cacao, which, although it does not grow in Sierra Popoluca territory, is an indispensable item in funeral ritual. The presence of chickens of course represents Spanish influence. Either an Old World story has been thoroughly integrated into the Popoluca setting, or the chicken has been substituted for a native domestic fowl.

### 30. THE SUN AND THE MOON

(Told by José Rodríguez)

Once upon a time there was a couple who gave birth to a son. They named the child "Sun" (*hama*). A few years later they had a daughter, very white and beautiful, and they named her "Moon" (*poya*). Several years later the parents died leaving their young children orphans. The children suffered greatly for several weeks and at last God took pity on them and carried them into the sky. He gave them the task of lighting the earth, one by day and the other by night.

### 31. THE ECLIPSE

(Told by José Rodríguez)

It is said that the sun is a man and the moon a beautiful woman. The sun has for a long time been in love with the moon and has many times proposed marriage, but the moon is disinterested and will not accept. This situation has resulted in much quarreling between them, and while they are fighting there is no light for the earth.

[30, 31] These two brief accounts indicate none of the elaborate development of belief with regard to the heavens and celestial bodies characteristic of the higher Mexican cultures. No hints of the identity of the couple (*matrimonio*) who gave birth to Sun and Moon are given, nor do the sun and moon figure in any other mythological accounts. The explanation of the eclipse differs from that in the introduction where, it will be recalled, the devil is said to be trying to eat the sun and moon. Both explanations are common and widespread both in the Americas and in the Old World.

### 32. TAR BABY

(Told by Anastasio García)

Once upon a time there was a very poor woman. One day while sweeping she found six centavos. "What shall I buy?" she asked herself. "If I buy sugar it will soon be exhausted, and if I buy salt, the same will happen. Whatever I buy will soon be used up." Finally she decided to buy some lettuce seed, which she sowed in a small seed plot. After a time she harvested her lettuce, and with the money thus obtained she was able to get more seed, with which she sowed a large garden.

But then a mischievous rabbit began to do much damage in the garden. One day the poor woman arrived home from her work, and a neighbor asked, "How goes it, neighbor? How is your garden?" "Well, a rabbit is doing a great deal of damage to it." "Then look, neighbor, there is a very easy way to trap the rabbit. For this you will have to make a doll of beeswax and put it in the path where the rabbit goes." But the woman did not hear all the words, and instead of making a beeswax doll she made one of rags, which she put in the garden. Later, her neighbor asked, "How goes it, what has happened to the rabbit?" "Well, nothing, neighbor. Your advice was in vain. The rabbit destroyed the doll."

"But what did you use to make the doll?" "Rags." "No-o-o, neighbor, I told you *wax*."

On the following day the poor woman followed the advice of her neighbor, made the doll of beeswax, and placed it in the rabbit's path. When the rabbit arrived at the garden he found the doll at the entrance, and said to it, "Good evening, good friend. Aren't you going to give me permission to come in to eat my tender little lettuce leaves?" When the doll did not reply, the rabbit slapped it, and his hand stuck fast. "Let me go," he cried. "If you don't I'll hit you again." And since there was no reply, he slapped the doll again, and then both hands were fast. Then the rabbit became very angry. "If you don't free my hands I am going to kick you," he threatened, which he did, and his feet were then stuck in the wax of the doll. Then he tried to bite the doll, and his head likewise became stuck.

The next morning the owner went to her garden, and she was very satisfied to find the rabbit a prisoner. She made a cage and put the rabbit inside, and after gathering vegetables picked up the cage and carried the rabbit to her home. Again the neighbor asked, "How goes it, my neighbor?" "Well, very well. The rabbit is now caught. I have him here."

On the following day, a raccoon passed by the house when the owner was not at home, and he asked the rabbit, "What are you doing here, good friend?" "Listen, raccoon. If you will free me I will invite you to my wedding." The raccoon, interested in attending the wedding of the rabbit, took him from the cage, and off the two went together. Presently the rabbit pointed out a beehive. "Remain here and take care of these children, raccoon, for I am their teacher. At noon you will strike it three times so that the children (who in reality were bees) will come out of this school." Then he went away.

Following the orders of his perverse friend, at noon the raccoon struck the hive three times, vexing the inhabitants who stung the good-humored raccoon many times. "When I find the rabbit I'll eat him," he said. And after several days he found the rabbit at a spring, and he said, "I am going to eat you." "No, don't eat me." "Yes, I'm going to eat you because you deceived me about your wedding." "No, don't eat me," begged the rabbit, "Because I am about to go for my bride and the music. Meantime you guard this spring, and if at noon you are hungry you can eat this cheese." The cheese in reality was the reflection of the sun in the water. Then the rabbit went away.

At noon the raccoon tried to take the cheese out of the spring, and fell head first into the water. Enraged beyond bounds, he promised himself never again to pardon the life of the deceitful rabbit. A few hours later he found the rabbit by a bonfire, and said, "This time you won't escape." "Don't eat me," pleaded the rabbit. "Come here, get close to the fire and get dry." This the raccoon did, and presently he went to sleep. Then the rabbit pushed him into the fire, burning him severely.

The rabbit fled until he arrived at a prickly pear cactus and was very well occupied when the raccoon arrived and again said, "This time I am going to eat you." "No, look, I am taking care of these *tunas* (fruit of the prickly pear). If you wish I will give you one." "Very well, give it to me." "How do you wish it?" asked the rabbit. "Peeled or unpeeled?" "Just as it is," replied the raccoon, and the rabbit threw him an unpeeled tuna. Of course, the spines of the tuna stuck in the hands of the raccoon, and while he set about the difficult task of removing them, the rabbit fled.

Finishing his painful work, the raccoon again took up the pursuit, and found the rabbit hiding under an old bridge which he was pretending to hold up. "Now I am going to eat you," said the raccoon. "No, don't eat me," replied the rabbit. "Tomorrow in truth my marriage is to be celebrated. Moreover, I've got to hold up this bridge, for if I don't the world will come to an end. If you will oblige me and hold up the bridge I will go to make all arrangements for the wedding." The sympathetic raccoon agreed to help prevent the end of the earth, and held up the bridge while the rabbit fled. But gradually tiring, he crept slowly out from under the bridge, and saw to his astonishment that it did not fall. "He has deceived me again, but this time he will never escape," thought the raccoon.

Continuing his pursuit he found the rabbit next day in the center of a thicket. "Now I am going to eat you," he said. "No," begged the rabbit. "I am just on the point of leaving to get the music for my wedding, and I am going to be married on this very spot. When you hear the thicket thunder, it will be the drumming of the music, and it is the signal to begin dancing." Then the rabbit left the raccoon, and once outside the thicket commenced to set fire to it. After a few moments the raccoon heard the thundering of the flames, but he did not see them, saying to himself that this time the rabbit was not deceiving him, for were the drummers not coming, just as he had said? And so he began to dance as instructed. But after a few moments he found himself surrounded by flames, and only with great difficulty succeeded in getting out, badly scorched.

"This time it is impossible that the rabbit will escape me," he said to himself. "I will eat him the minute I find him, for he has deceived me so many times." After a while he found the rabbit at the foot of a tree where there were many vultures eating the remains of a dead animal. "This time I will eat you," he said. "Don't be like that, Señor raccoon. Don't you see that I am caring for my turkeys for my wedding? How would you like to watch them while I go for my bride? If I haven't returned by noon, you may eat one of them."



The raccoon agreed, and when noon came and no rabbit, he tried to catch a vulture, believing it to be a turkey. But the vulture, seeing what was happening, flew off and was followed by the rest. "He deceived me again, that rabbit, but for absolutely no reason will I ever pardon him again." And he set off in search of him once more. This time he found him in the top of a tree which held a *mata de cordon*.<sup>28</sup>

"Prepare to die, deceitful rabbit, for this time I will surely eat you." "But at this moment it will be impossible, for it is going to hail. Cover yourself with this basket so you will not be injured," said the rabbit, pointing out an old basket at the foot of the tree, and at the same time upsetting the *mata de cordon*, causing the water to fall on the raccoon. The raccoon, believing that it was about to hail, covered himself with the basket, and then the rabbit descended the tree and began to hurl rocks at the raccoon until it was dead, in this manner freeing himself of his enemy.

### 33. TAR BABY

(Second version told by Leandro Pérez)

Once upon a time a man planted some watermelons. Every night they were eaten by a rabbit. Although the owner kept watch he never could apprehend the thief. The rabbit came only at night to eat the watermelons. The owner said, "What thing is this that eats my watermelons?" So he built a trap and when the rabbit came to eat, his teeth were caught by the trap. When the owner returned, he found that he had caught the rabbit. He said to him, "You are the one who has been eating my watermelons. Now you have fallen in my trap and you are in my power." He put the rabbit in a basket and sewed the top together so he could not escape.

While the man was out of the house a tiger came. "What are you doing here?" he asked. "I am a prisoner," the rabbit replied. "What did you do that they put you here?" said the tiger. "They want to marry me to a girl but I am very small, and therefore she does not fit me very well. You are big. She would fit you fine. Why don't you get in the basket in my stead?" The tiger agreed, and when the owner returned he said, "Now I am going to burn you with a branding iron." He proceeded to burn him, but the rabbit was no longer in the basket. The tiger was there and the tiger received the punishment intended for the rabbit.

Meanwhile, the rabbit had fled from the house and some distance away he met an alligator. The latter said, "Now I am going to eat you." The rabbit said, "Don't eat me. I am going to be married, but I am very small and the girl doesn't fit me very well. She would fit you because you are big." The alligator believed him. Then the rabbit said, "The girl is over there. They showed me where she was." He pointed to a rock. "You must open this door with your teeth." The alligator tried to move the rock with his teeth but it was so heavy that his teeth fell out and the rabbit picked them up. As the rabbit fled, he met the tiger, who had been trying to catch up with him. "Now, at last," said the tiger, "I am going to eat you." "Don't eat me," said the rabbit, "I have just come from the home of your mother and father. I saw that they were both dead. I was sent to notify you of their death." The tiger began to weep, and when the rabbit saw this he caught the tiger's tears as they fell. Then the rabbit ran away, and in a little while he met a man. The man told him that he could make him grow. The rabbit was very small and had always wanted to be tall. The man said, "Now I am really going to make you grow. Go and stand on that hill over there. He seized the rabbit by the ears and said, "I will make you the size that you wish to be." The man pointed to his own shadow on the ground in front of them, and as he pulled on the rabbit's ears he asked, "Is this the size that you would

<sup>28</sup> A type of parasitic plant that contains water.

like to be?" Seeing the large shadow in front of them, the rabbit believed that he himself was now very large. "Now I am big," he said, "Now I am a man." So the man said, "Then this is the size you shall remain.

The rabbit was very happy as he ran away once more. At last he came to the place of the deer. He said to a deer, "Give me your horns." The deer answered, "I won't give them to you. You are very small, too small to wear horns." The rabbit said, "I was told that I am now very big." "Well," said the deer, "You have been deceived. You couldn't wear my horns, but they fit me very well." And he began to run about crying proudly, "See how well my horns fit me? I am certainly a deer." After this the rabbit felt very sad because he had not grown tall. He was very angry to realize that he was still one of the smallest animals in the forest.

[32, 33] These stories, together with numerous other Mexican accounts, illustrate particularly well the tendency pointed out on page 189 for the Indian storyteller to combine various episodes to form his own complete story. More Tar Baby versions probably have been recorded in Mexico than versions of any other story. Sometimes these versions are limited to the stick-fast motif alone (Type 175 in the Aarne-Thompson classification),<sup>34</sup> and end with the death of the rabbit. More often the rabbit explains to the coyote,<sup>35</sup> as in the second version, that he is going to be forced to marry the daughter of his captor, a distasteful idea because the girl is so much bigger than he. Then the coyote releases the rabbit and takes his place in the basket, following which he is beaten by the woman before finally escaping, vowing to eat the rabbit for deceiving him. Most frequently in Mexican versions the story continues with a new series of episodes in which the coyote continually is deceived by the rabbit, and finally is killed by him. Thus, the stick-fast motif, with the addition of the false marriage story, and the series of episodes seems to constitute the basic Mexican pattern. The local versions revolve around this central core and are sometimes spun out to great length and combined with totally irrelevant happenings, and sometimes reduced to the original theme. Often single elements from the concluding series will form the basis for a separate story; at other times they will find their way into other longer stories. The chart illustrates the basic points of similarity shown by twelve Mexican, one Guatemalan, and one version from New Mexico. Episodes are reduced to the simplest form possible, and do not take into consideration minor variations. Thus, in some accounts, *zapotes*<sup>36</sup> or *pitahayas*<sup>37</sup> take the place of the prickly pear cactus, and sometimes the participants, as in the Popoluca account, differ from the type-story. Sometimes the rabbit is released so that the coyote can substitute to marry the girl, and sometimes the rabbit is released so that he can make preparations for his own marriage with an unspecified individual. The numbers in the table (p. 222) indicate the order in which the separate episodes occur.

In the first eight stories the stick-fast motif and subsequent release follow the same general outline. From this point each branches off into its own unique line of development. The prickly pear cactus episode is the most common, occurring in all eight, and is followed by the cheese sun, the burning thicket, and the falling stone episodes, each with six occurrences. Versions eleven and twelve consist of two episodes out of this context, and without further elaboration. Version ten is an elaboration of eleven and twelve with one more episode, and ends with the rabbit being caught (but not with a Tar Baby) and then released by a coyote. Versions thirteen and fourteen are limited to the stick-fast motif and end with the death of the rabbit.

<sup>34</sup> Aarne-Thompson, *The Types of the Folk Tale*, Helsinki, 1928, p. 37.

<sup>35</sup> The more common names of the principal characters are used here.

<sup>36</sup> *Zapote* = *Mammea americana*. <sup>37</sup> *Pitahaya* = *Acanthocercus pentagonus*.

THE TAR BABY STORIES  
ORDER OF OCCURRENCE OF SIMILAR EPISODES

Episodes	Popo- luca <sup>a</sup>	Pochu- lata <sup>b</sup>	Chatino <sup>c</sup>	Mitla <sup>d</sup>	Aztecs, Veracruz <sup>e</sup>	Tuxtepec, Ist <sup>f</sup>	Tuxtepec, Zac <sup>g</sup>	Guste- mala <sup>h</sup>	Mexico <sup>i</sup>	Tepe- canos <sup>j</sup>	Laguna and Zuni <sup>k</sup>	Tepez- tlan <sup>l</sup>	Mazatec <sup>m</sup>	Chinan- tec <sup>n</sup>
Stick-fast theme . . . . .	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	—	—	—	1	1
Rabbit released . . . . .	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	6	4	—	—	2	2
Wasp nest . . . . .	3	4	5	6	—	—	—	—	1	2	—	—	—	—
Cheese as sun . . . . .	4	5	6	—	3	—	5	5	4	1	2	2	—	—
Coyote burned . . . . .	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Prickly cactus . . . . .	6	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	2	—	—	—	—	—
Falling stone . . . . .	7	6	4	4	—	5	—	4	3	3	1	1	—	—
Burning thicket . . . . .	8	7	7	—	5	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Vultures as turkeys	9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hail basket . . . . .	10	—	—	5	—	—	—	—	7	—	—	—	—	—

<sup>a</sup> First version.  
<sup>b</sup> F. Boas, "Notes on Mexican Folklore," *Journal of American Folklore*, 25:214-280, 1912.  
<sup>c</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 235-239.  
<sup>d</sup> E. C. Parsons, "Zapotec and Spanish Tales of Mitla, Oaxaca," *JAF*, 45: 277-317, 1932, pp. 296-299.  
<sup>e</sup> W. H. Mechling, "Stories and Songs from the Southern Atlantic Coastal Region of Mexico," *JAF*, 29: 547-648, 1916, pp. 549-551.  
<sup>f</sup> *Ibid.*, "Stories from Tuxtepec, Oaxaca," *JAF*, 25: 199-203, 1912, pp. 200-201.  
<sup>g</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 201-202.  
<sup>h</sup> A. Recinos, "Cuentos Populares de Gustamals," *JAF*, 31: 472-487, 1918, pp. 472-473.  
<sup>i</sup> J. T. Reid, "Seven Folk-Tales from Mexico," *JAF*, 48: 109-124, 1935, pp. 121-124.  
<sup>j</sup> Mason, *op. cit.*, pp. 150-153.  
<sup>k</sup> E. C. Parsons and F. Boas, "Spanish Tales from Laguna and Zuni, New Mexico," *JAF*, 33: 47-72, 1920, p. 49.  
<sup>l</sup> F. Boas, *op. cit.*, pp. 246-247.  
<sup>m</sup> J. B. Johnson, "Three Mexican Tar Baby Stories," *JAF*, 53: 215-217, 1940.  
<sup>n</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215.

Story nine is aberrant in that it begins with the familiar *un bien con un mal se paga* theme,<sup>88</sup> then branches off into the cycle of episodes, and finally the rabbit is caught, put in a basket, lures the coyote into the basket and kills him with stones, a modified hailstone ending. This version is also interesting because it shows a reversal of Boas' Pochulata story which ends with the *un bien* theme in substantially the same form.

Especially typical of the Popoluca is the thrifty note sounded in the opening paragraph of the first version in which the woman asks herself what she shall do with her newly found money, rejects several alternatives because of the transitory nature of the resulting satisfaction, and finally decides on something that will bring her a profit. The profit motive and the desire for wealth are dominant characteristics of Popoluca culture.

The second story is so aberrant that it is not considered in the comparative analysis. Clearly the original inspiration is the Tar Baby theme, although actually this means of taking the rabbit is merely hinted at by the fact that it is his teeth that stick to the trap. The episode of the rabbit telling the larger and more powerful animal that he is to be forced to marry a girl much too large for him is the point of closest agreement with the typical Mexican version, but from this point on about the only point of resemblance is that the rabbit is fleeing from and deceiving the more powerful animal in order to avoid being eaten. Altogether this version is much less well integrated than the first, and probably represents a not-too-successful attempt on the part of the storyteller to draw out from the recesses of his mind a story heard early in childhood and but imperfectly remembered.

### 34. THE RABBIT TRICKS THE GIANT

(Told by Anastasio García)

A hunter once went into the mountains with his wife, and under an overhanging rock they encountered a giant who took the woman away from her husband. The hunter was on his way home, crying, and very much upset, when he chanced to meet a *tigre*<sup>89</sup> in his path. "What has happened to you, Man?" asked the tigre. "The giant stole my wife." "Don't cry, I'll bring your wife back," replied the tigre.

Upon arriving at the giant's house, the tigre demanded that the man's wife be turned over to him, but the giant did not accede to this request, and both were soon locked in mortal combat. After a few moments, the tigre was dead. The man, who had followed the tigre, after contemplating the fierce struggle again set out for home, weeping. This time, he encountered the *tigre real*, the most powerful of all wild beasts, who asked what was the cause of his flood of tears. To this the man responded that the giant had stolen his wife. Very much enraged, the tigre real promised to restore the woman to her husband, and set off in search of the giant, followed by the husband. Like the tigre, the tigre real demanded that the giant deliver his prisoner to him, at the same time springing on the giant, without injuring him in the slightest, and presently he died, in the same way as his predecessor. Again the man set out for home, still more grief-stricken because his hopes had been raised and then dashed.

Presently he encountered an arrogant bull, who asked, "What's happened to you?" And the man replied, "The giant has stolen my wife." "If you wish it," said the bull, "I will get your wife immediately." "But the fact is," replied the man, "he

<sup>88</sup> "A good turn is repaid with an injury." This theme appears in reduced form among the Popoluca in an entirely different context, developed in the comments to story 28.

<sup>89</sup> The *tigre* is apparently the ocelot (*Felis pardalis*), and the *tigre real* the jaguar (*Felis hernandesi*).

has already killed two tiges." "Don't trouble yourself," rejoined the bull. "I am very strong, and with my horns I will easily put an end to this monster." "We will try," said the man. After a lengthy walk, they arrived at the cave of the giant, and the bull commenced to shout, "Giant, Giant." "What do you want," replied a loud voice. "I want you to hand over the wife of the man to me," said the bull. "Well, I won't give her to you," replied the giant, and coming out of his abode, he faced the intruder. The bull commenced to gore the giant with his horns, but the giant was so strong that the horns were not capable of injuring him. By this time, very much annoyed, the giant gave the bull a tremendous blow, causing his immediate death.

Once again the man set out for home, crying and lamenting the loss of his wife. This time he encountered a rabbit, who asked, "Why do you go along crying, Man?" to which the man gave the same reply he had given the others. "If you wish, I will save her for you," said the rabbit. "This is impossible," replied the man. "The tigre, the tigre real, and the bull promised me the same thing, and the three were killed. Obviously, you who are so small cannot hope to succeed where the most powerful have failed." "Well, we will do whatever is possible to save your wife," said the rabbit, disappearing into a thicket. The rabbit selected for the struggle three *tecomalitos*.<sup>40</sup> In one he put clear water, in another, water dyed red, and in the third, maize dough. Once outside the giant's abode, the rabbit hid behind a tree and called out to the giant, "I have come for you to hand over to me the wife of the man." "I won't give her to you," replied the giant, emerging from his rocks. "Well, if you don't give her to me, I will hit you so hard that with the first blow you will break out with perspiration; with the second your blood will come out, and with the third, your brains." "Don't try to intimidate me," replied the giant. "Under no circumstances will I give her to you."

Upon hearing these words the rabbit hurled the first *tecomalito* at the giant, who not seeing his opponent, believed that the water which ran down his face was his own perspiration. "Still I will not give her to you," he shouted. The rabbit threw the second *tecomalito* which contained the dyed water, and the giant believed his blood was running down his face. Still he replied, "You are fighting in vain, for I will not give you the wife of the man." "Then I will knock out your brains," replied the rabbit, who was still hidden, and he threw the third *tecomalito* at the giant. The giant, feeling the blow, passed his hand across his forehead and felt the dough which the third *tecomalito* had contained, and believing that it was his brains roared in rage, "Go away, woman."

The woman ran to the side of her husband, and with the rabbit they started for home. "What do you ask in return for your favor?" asked the man. "Only that you sow a milpa of beans so that my family and I can eat," replied the rabbit. The man, fulfilling his obligation, sowed the milpa for his friend, the rabbit. But after some time the rabbit finished his milpa and began to eat that of the man. One morning the man met the rabbit and said, "Friend, some rabbits are eating my milpa. I've got to do something to prevent this damage. Give me your advice." "Set out a trap," said the rabbit. "I don't know how to make it," rejoined the man. "Oh, don't worry yourself. I'll show you," replied the rabbit. "After you make it, put fruit in it and set it out at dark." "Very well, I will do it in this way," said the man, and he did. And on the following day he found his old friend in his trap. "It doesn't matter, I've got to kill you," he said. Replied the rabbit, "*Un bien con un mal se paga.*"

[34] A familiar Old World plot which needs no explanation is apparent in this account. Properly the story should end with the giant deceived into thinking his

<sup>40</sup> Diminutive of *tecomate*, a gourd container.

brains were oozing out of his head. The final episode appears to be compounded from a modified Tar Baby element in which the stick-fast motif is lacking, plus the *un bien con un mal se paga* theme alluded to in the preceding comment. This last theme is classified by Aarne-Thompson as Style 155, "The Ungrateful Serpent Returned to Captivity."<sup>41</sup> Some animal or human rescues a more powerful creature from death in a mud hole, snowbank or other situation. As a reward, the rescued animal states his intention of eating his savior, because it is well known that a good turn is always repaid by a bad one. The rescuer requests permission to first ask three individuals if this axiom is true, a favor which is granted. The first two agree that it is true, but the third, before passing judgment, wishes to see the rescue reenacted. When the powerful animal is again helpless, the third judge suggests that he be left as he is, advice which is followed. Apparently the Popoluca raconteur was acquainted with the saying but did not know the more common context, therefore he created his own situation in which the axiom could be used, consciously or unconsciously drawing upon his knowledge of the Tar Baby story, and tacked it on another story where it did not seem too much out of place. Other Mexican accounts of this theme are found below.<sup>42</sup>

### 35. THE CAT, MASTER OF THE TIGER

(Told by José Rodriguez)

In the first days of the world when the animals began to live, it became known that the cat was one of the most astute of all beings, because of which the tiger wished to take lessons from him. He went to visit the cat, and his attention was called to the fact that the cat had food in great abundance. "Do you always have as much food as today?" asked the tiger. "Yes," replied the cat, smiling, "Why do you wonder?" "Because I pass entire days without eating; I am not able to trap rabbits, nor deer, nor the other animals that are supposed to be my food, because they are more agile than I. I am going to have to complain to our friends, the chanekos, so that they will remedy my situation. But before doing this, I would like you to show me your methods of hunting."

"Very well," said the cat. "I will teach you what I can, because it appears that we are of the same family." "And when do we begin?" asked the tiger. "Right now, if you wish," replied the cat, and he commenced to teach his new pupil. "Look, now. In order to hunt well, it is essential to conceal carefully your claws and use your tail to distract the attention of your prey. Then with a good jump, sink your claws in, and he is yours. You see how easy it is." The tiger laughed, very well satisfied, and went away.

After several weeks the tiger had learned to hunt, and to climb into trees in order to make the jump easier. But the cat taught him only to climb in strong trees, and not far above the ground. Now the tiger believed he was superior to his teacher, and when the latter came to give the last lesson, he brusquely said to him, "Today I will pay for your teaching, dear teacher, using you as my lunch." Saying this he sprang on the cat but did not catch him. The cat sought refuge in the top of a slender tree and the tiger was not able to follow. The cat, laughing until it seemed his sides would split, said to him, "Always the teacher keeps for himself a means of humiliating his disciple," and with this, he was off. Since that time the two have been enemies. In this manner, the tiger learned to hunt.

<sup>41</sup> Aarne-Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

<sup>42</sup> J. T. Reid, *op. cit.*, pp. 121-124; M. L. Wagner, "Algunas Apuntaciones Sobre el Folklore Mexicano," *Journal of American Folklore*, 40:105-143, 1927, pp. 139-148; P. S. Pauer, "Folk Tales from Mexico," *ibid.*, 31:552-553, 1918, p. 552; F. Boas, *op. cit.*, pp. 209-210.

## 36. THE RABBIT TRICKS THE TIGRESS

(Told by Leandro Pérez)

Once upon a time when the animals could speak there lived a tigress at the foot of a hill, across which a rabbit frequently passed. The tigress had a small cub, and for this reason she passed the better part of the day away from home looking for food for her son. Every day when the rabbit passed he greeted the little tiger and then gave him several lashes, telling him that he would do the same to his mother when she returned home. Since the rabbit continued this action day after day, the mother tiger decided to remain at home and surprise him. Around noon the rabbit arrived and as usual lashed the tiger cub, but then the mother, being very much irritated, decided to take vengeance on the knavish rabbit and sprang at him. The rabbit started running, with the tigress close behind. Presently he saw a hollow log scarcely big enough for him and into it he went. The tigress, with her eager desire for vengeance, followed him, but because she was too large, she stuck in the log. The rabbit, very well satisfied, went out the other end, cut a rod, and gave a terrible beating to the tigress who remained wedged in the log with only her hind-quarters protruding.

[35, 36] The moralizing element in story 35 is rare in Popoluca accounts and clearly shows Old World origin. In story 36, the rabbit appears in the well-known role of trickster.

## 37. OLIVA AND OLIVAR

(Told by Leandro Pérez)

Once upon a time there lived two children, a brother and a sister. One day their stepfather said, "Let us go, the three of us, to look for tepejilotes, and so they went into the mountains. When they were in the center of the forest, the father said, "You stay here while I look for tepejilotes," and there they remained. After a while it began to grow dark, and they saw that night was approaching, but their stepfather did not return. They began to cry, and then they climbed a tree to sleep. Presently a tigre arrived who, instead of trying to eat them, stood guard at the bottom of the tree to protect them. Then they saw a tigre real coming to eat them, but the tigre chased him away. He took care of them and didn't eat them. But they did not know the way home, so they wandered through the forest. After five days when they had become very, very hungry, they smelled bananas frying. "Well, I wonder where the smell of frying bananas comes from," said the boy, and he went to look for them. He discovered a house where food was being prepared. He saw a woman frying the bananas. He saw that she was blind. Then he went back to his sister and said to her, "Each morning I am going to steal bananas." The blind old woman heard him, and went striking around with her stick saying, "Away with you, cat." Then he ran back to his sister. He did not laugh. Then the girl said, "I am also going," and he said, "Don't go. You laugh too much." The sister said, "I am not going to laugh," and she followed her brother. Again he said, "Don't come," but she followed after him. Then she saw that her brother was going to steal the food. When the old woman heard the noise again she said, "Away with you, cat," and the words made the girl laugh. Realizing that children, and not cats, were stealing her food, the old woman said, "Come, children. Why don't you come to see me? Don't run away." Again she said to them, "Come, don't run away," and she began to feed them. They stayed with her, and she began to fatten them up. Then she put them in a pigpen and gave them much to eat. She said, "Eat, children, fatten yourselves

up." For she had the habit of fattening children up to eat them. Each day when she came to feed them she asked to feel their fingers, for in this way she could tell if they were becoming fat. When the boy realized what was happening, he killed a rat and cut off its tail. When the old woman came, instead of giving her their fingers, they let her feel the rat's tail. They didn't give her their hands. "You are not getting fat," she would say. "Ai, children, eat and fatten yourselves."

But after awhile the girl took the rat's tail and lost it. "Now, indeed, we are lost," said the boy to himself. "Tomorrow the old woman comes and she will know that we are now fat." Then the old woman came and she said, "Give me your hands. Yes, you are now fat. Now you will come out because you are fat. I now want you to fetch water, because we are going to kill a pig." The children were deceived, for they were going to be eaten. Then they went to fetch water. At the well, a person appeared who looked very much like San José.<sup>48</sup> "Why do you want water," he asked. And the children told him they were going to kill a pig. But he said, "You have been deceived; you are the ones who are going to be killed and eaten." And then he gave them advice. He said, "When you see that the water is boiling in the kettle, say to her, 'Old woman, I don't know what it is like when water boils' and when she climbs up to show you how to look in, push her in and boil her. When she has boiled for some time, turn the kettle over on her. Seven days after you have turned it over, two dogs are going to come out, named Oliva and Olivar."

Then the children went back and put the water on to boil. After some time, the old woman said, "Is the water boiling yet, children?" "We don't know anything about this, grandmother," they said. "We have never seen water boil. Show us." When the old woman got close to the kettle to show them how to tell when water was boiling, they pushed her in and then followed the instructions of San José. After seven days the two dogs came out of the kettle. When they saw this the boy said, "Now we will go."

They entered a village, and there they saw a woman tied. "Ai, children, don't come here, because here lives a serpent that eats many people." "Well, I say, for this I have come," said the boy. "I have come to kill it." Said the woman, "Go, because I am the one that is going to be eaten. Nobody can kill the serpent. But my father has said that he who does will be my husband. I am the daughter of a king who lives near-by. Thus it is that I am a princess." "I am going to save you," said the boy. "How is this possible?" asked the girl. "I have two dogs here," replied the boy. "They are going to kill the serpent." About noon a great noise was heard. It was the snake coming. The woman spoke to the dogs. She said to them, "Oliva and Olivar, free me, because he is going to eat me." The dogs went running. They seized the snake, and there they killed it. The boy then took out its tongues. It had seven tongues. But he left the head.

Presently a Negro came by and saw the head, and knowing the reward offered by the king he picked it up and ran through the town saying, "I killed the serpent." He went to the palace of the king, saying that he had killed the serpent. "Yes, you killed the serpent," said the king. "You are going to get married." The Negro was very happy because he was going to marry the king's daughter. But the woman said, "No, he is not the one who freed me." She knew who had saved her because he had two dogs. Then there was much commotion in the palace, for the girl was going to marry the Negro. "I don't want him. He did not free me," said the girl, but the father said, "Well, you are going to get married because I say so." And then there was much commotion, and food was already placed on the table to be eaten. The boy came close to the palace to see what was going on. He said to Oliva, "Go steal the

<sup>48</sup> Patron saint of Soteapan.



plate of the princess." The dog went and grasped the plate of the woman and fled. In spite of the search of the guards they were not able to find out who was the owner of the dog. But the princess said, "This is one of the dogs that saved me from the serpent."

When he had finished the food that Oliva had brought him, the boy said to Olivar, "Go get the next dish of the princess, as Oliva did." When he arrived, the girl said, "See, this is the other dog that helped save me, but this Negro, he is not the owner." The king said to the guards, "Go, find the man wherever he is. Find out if it is true that he has freed my daughter." They found the boy and said to him, "You're going to go walking with us, because the king wants to see you." The man<sup>44</sup> went. He was asked if it were true that he was the one who had killed the serpent. "I am the one who killed the serpent," he said. "It is impossible," said the Negro, "Because to prove that I killed it, I have brought the head." "Well," said the king to the man, "you will have to prove that you killed it." "All right. Look in the mouth of the serpent. It has no tongues because here I carry the seven tongues which I cut out after I killed the serpent."

And then the Negro who had deceived them was tied up. Two mules were saddled and there he was tied, one leg to each mule. They commenced to beat the mules, which set out running in opposite directions and thus the Negro was split in two because he had deceived.

Then the man took possession of the princess, and they were married. The sister saw that her brother had taken a wife, and this angered her. She fixed the pillow of her brother where he was accustomed to sleep and said to him, "You are tired." He lay down, but already she had placed a piece of bone with many points in the pillow. This pierced his brain, and he died. At dawn they went to bury him. The dogs were tied up and were not able to go to free their master. When the funeral party returned from the cemetery the dogs jumped up barking loudly and broke the ropes with which they were tied. They knew that their master was dead and they ran to see where he was buried. They began to jump over the grave; they jumped seven times and then their master came out. He examined the back of his neck and there he found the bone that had killed him. Then he said to his dogs, "Thanks to you, I revive myself." They all returned together to his house. Said he to his sister, "Very pretty, that which you did to me, that you killed me. If it had not been for my dogs I would not have recovered." And then her brother said, "From here we go together no more." And then he sent away his sister and remained forever after with his wife.

[37] Several well-known Old World tales and episodes are integrated to form the Popoluca story. The beginning is the familiar "Hänsel and Gretel" form of the "Children and the Ogre" type.<sup>45</sup> Using this as a jumping-off point, the Popoluca storyteller embarks upon a series of events very similar to "The Tale of the Seven Heads,"<sup>46</sup> differing primarily in the fact that the dragon has but one head which contains, however, the requisite number of tongues. The temporary death of the hero resulting from the bone in his head is an episode which finds a counterpart in a story from Yucatan recorded by Margaret Park Redfield.<sup>47</sup> Here, the injured individual is a princess.

<sup>44</sup> At this point in the story the boy becomes a man.

<sup>45</sup> Aarne-Thompson, *op. cit.*, Type 327, Form A, p. 56. This story has a wide New World distribution which has been traced by Stith Thompson in *European Tales Among the North American Indians*, Colorado College Publ. Language Series, Vol. II, No. 34:319-471, 1919. Pp. 323-334.

<sup>46</sup> Aarne-Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 44. Type 300, "The Dragon Slayer," is outlined in a form very similar to the Popoluca account.

<sup>47</sup> Redfield and Villa, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

## 38. THE OLD SOLDIER, PEDRO DE MAL

(Told by Leandro Pérez)

Once upon a time an old soldier, Pedro de Mal, fled with three other soldiers to the mountains. They arrived at the foot of a great mountain where it appeared that nobody lived. "Here we will build a house," said Pedro, "and here we will make a great milpa. It is virgin land and it will give us great crops. Tomorrow when we go into the mountains one of you will stay here to get lunch ready. The rest of us will come back at noon."

In the morning Pedro and two soldiers went out. About eleven o'clock the soldier left in the house began to prepare dinner, but before the others returned a great Negro appeared. "What are you doing here?" he asked. "Here I am," replied the soldier. "I have been left to prepare dinner." "Well, I don't like you to live here," said the Negro. "Don't you know that this is my dominion?" "But señor," replied the soldier, "I am only obeying the orders of my chief. I am preparing something to eat for him." "I don't want to have anything to do with your chief," said the Negro. "I don't want to see you here any more, and I will return tomorrow to see." Then he defecated in the dinner and began to beat the soldier until he was sick.

When Pedro returned home and found no dinner he said, "What's going on here?" "I have a fever," replied the soldier. "No, it's just that you're lazy," said Pedro. "Tomorrow you will come to work and another will stay." The next day another man remained, and at noon the Negro again came and asked, "What are you doing here?" "I have been left here to prepare dinner," replied the soldier. Then the Negro beat him and again defecated in the food. When Pedro returned he asked, "What's happened to you?" "I have a fever," said the soldier. Then Pedro began to scold him, saying, "It's just that you don't want to work." The next day the third soldier was left to prepare dinner, and at noon the Negro again came. He beat the soldier and said again, "Don't come here any more because you don't belong here." Again he defecated in the food. Pedro returned the third time, saying, "I am hungry." Then he saw that the cook was unable to get up. He said, "What's happened to you?" "I have a fever," said the man. "It's just that you are deceiving me," replied Pedro. "Tomorrow I will stay and you will go to work with the others." Next day they went to work, and when they came back at noon Pedro asked, "Well, why don't you ask me, 'What's happened to you?' I know that the Negro came to beat you, but he wasn't able to hurt me. Tomorrow we will go and look for him."

The next day they went to look for the Negro, for Pedro had cut off his ear. "You are going to look in that cave because I followed the Negro here. Now I am going to lower you with a rope. You are going to see what is in the cave. When you want to come up, jerk on the rope. I will pull you out." When the man had been lowered he said, "I see a bull, but I can't reach it." Then the man came out and said, "Well, we can't get down very deep because the rope is too short." "Well, I am going to go down," said Pedro. "When I pull the rope you are going to draw me out." Then Pedro arrived at the bottom of the cave. He saw the bull and said to it, "I am looking for you." Then he killed it and began to walk in the cave. He arrived in a room and saw that there was the Negro. He said to him, "I'm looking for you." Then they began to fight and he killed the Negro. Then Pedro saw that there was a woman there. The Negro had kidnaped three women. She said to Pedro, "If you will take me out of this cave I will marry you." Replied Pedro, "I have come just for this." Then the woman said, "In another room are my sisters. Aren't you going to take all three of us out?" "I am going to take out all three," replied Pedro. Then he returned with them, and they arrived where he had killed the bull. "I think I will take out a

quarter of the bull, too," he said. His friends were outside. He had said to them that when he jerked the rope they were to lift him out. The first woman was tied up and pulled out, but before she went she gave Pedro a ring. Then the rope returned again until all three women had been lifted out. "Now, what am I going to do," said Pedro. He tied the quarter of the bull, and the men, believing that Pedro was on the end of the rope began to lift. But when it was half-way up they let it fall. "What if I had been tied there," said Pedro. After this the men fled. Then Pedro became very hungry. He couldn't find anything to eat. "But I have the Negro's ear. I am going to eat this." Then the ear said, "Don't eat me. Ask me for whatever you wish and I will give it to you." "I want something to eat," said Pedro, "and I want it right away." Immediately much food appeared on a table, and Pedro began to eat. Then he said, "I am going to ask this ear to take me out of this cave." He bit the ear and said to it, "Now I would like you to take me out of this cave." Immediately he was taken out. Once out he said to the ear, "I am going to bite you again." Said the ear, "Ask for what you wish." "I want you to tell me where the men went with the women." "Right now they are getting married," replied the ear. "They carried the women to their father; they were daughters of a king." Pedro said to the ear, "Now I want a good horse." His wish was granted, and he went without stopping until he reached the place of the weddings. The woman said to her father, "There is the man who took us out of the cave." "He's not the one who took you out," replied the king. "And now you are going to marry this man" (indicating one of the three soldiers). But Pedro had kept the ring the woman had given him in the cave, and he said to the king, "This man has deceived you in saying that he took your daughters from the cave. If you don't believe me I have the ring." The woman said when she saw the ring, "This is the man that took me out of the cave." "Well," said the king, "Now I am going to kill these men because they have deceived me." Then Pedro married the woman, and here ends the story.

[38] This narrative consists of the final episode of the well-known "John the Bear" story, its wide distribution in America was pointed out long ago by Boas.<sup>48</sup> This in turn is but one form of a widespread Old World tale which is classified by Aarne-Thompson as Type 301, "The Three Stolen Princesses."<sup>49</sup> In the Popoluca account, the place of John, born of a supernatural father (a bear, a tiger, etc.) is taken by the old soldier, named Pedro. The theme of desertion into the depths of the mountains may reflect revolutionary days, when flight away from the traditional villages was the escape of many who otherwise would have been pressed into military service. Here again appears the Popoluca love of good productive earth which, if well worked, will yield bountiful harvests.

### 39. JUAN CENIZAS

(Told by Leandro Pérez)

There once was a man named Juan Cenizas (John Cinders). He was very lazy and would not work. He always slept in the cinders. He would go walking and then would enter a house and go to sleep. One day a vender of brown sugar passed by. Juan had worked just enough to earn three cents and with it he bought some sugar to eat, some of which he put in his pocket to eat later. Another man went by and Juan overheard him say to a woman, "I will come to you later, at about nine o'clock. I will pull the bell chain." She said, "I will be waiting for you." Juan was listening and heard the conversation. The man went on his way and Juan overtook him. He

<sup>48</sup> F. Boas, *op. cit.*, p. 254. <sup>49</sup> Aarne-Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

said, "Stop! I have something to tell you. The woman said that you should not come, for she is to be guarded." "Thank God you told me," replied the man.

At nine o'clock Juan Cenizas went to the house where the woman slept and pulled on the bell chain. The woman said, "The man has come." And she began to pull him up by a chain to her window. Since it was nighttime she could not see that this was not the man she expected. Then she said, "Let us light the lamp." Juan Cenizas said, "Don't light it—now, let us sleep."

After they had lain down, a cat came and smelled the brown sugar in the pocket of the shirt which Juan had taken off. The shirt was of leather and it rustled noisily when the cat searched for the sugar. The woman asked, "What was that noise? Shall we light the lamp?" But Juan persuaded her that they should remain in the dark. When they awoke it was already dawn. Because the king, who was the woman's father, had said, "Whoever sees my daughter must marry her," the woman said to herself, "Now that I have given myself to this man, I must marry him." At dawn they were discovered together and the king said, "Now you must marry this man, since he has found you." The woman said, "Since he has found me I will marry him." But Juan Cenizas said, "I am not going to be married, for I have no money." The king replied, "Since I have said that you are to marry her, you must do so." So they were married.

Later, Juan Cenizas said, "I do not like it here." The king said, "If it is money you want I will give you a great deal." But still Juan was not content. He told them that he would like to work. The king answered, "Don't work. We have enough money. What more do you need? If you would like to see your mother, I will give you money for the trip." Juan decided to go to visit his parents and was given two mules loaded with money. He started out and on the way passed a group of men gambling with cards. Juan watched for a time and they said to him, "Unload your pack and join the game." After he had played for awhile Juan saw that his money was all gone. He said to himself, "Never mind that it is gone," and continued to play. He took off his shoes and sold them. Then he sold his trousers, for he was losing. Finally he took off his shirt and sold that. Then he said, "Now there is nothing left." But suddenly he remembered that he still had his hat and sold that. Then he had nothing left to gamble and went on his way to his father's house. Before he arrived he said to the servant who had accompanied him. "Return, because I am going to see my mother and you will not be needed."

When he reached home his mother said, "Ai, my son. Where have you been?" He answered, "I have left my wife in the place where I have been living." Said his mother, "Don't deceive me. No woman would want to marry you. You are too lazy." Juan replied, "I have a princess." Then he lay down in the cinders to sleep, saying, "My wife will come to seek me here." But his mother repeated, "Who would marry you? You are too lazy." Juan said, "If you don't believe me, tomorrow my wife will come."

The next day they heard a noise and saw two carriages coming. As they reached the edge of the village the king descended and asked a villager, "Where is Juan Tonto?" He was told, "I don't know him, but I know Juan Cenizas. There is his house." As he approached the house Juan's mother cried, "Ai, Juan, they have come to arrest you!" Juan said, "Don't be afraid. My wife is coming." When they reached the house they were told that Juan was there. They called to him and he replied, "I am here." As his wife approached, Juan appeared from the cinders and said to her, "Here I am, sleeping." And he began to brush the ashes from his clothing. He was given clean clothes and told, "Put on your shirt, because we are going home." They left money for the mother and Juan went with them.

When they reached the palace, Juan said, "I don't like it here. I am going to work." He was told, "But we have much money. Don't go to work." He replied, "I am going." Then he asked his wife for tortillas to take with him and went to work at a large hacienda. At noon the workers said, "Let us eat." As Juan took out a tortilla the owner of the hacienda said, "Why are you going to eat that tortilla? It isn't edible." Juan replied, "It is a tortilla made by my wife, and I am going to eat it." The owner said, "You are lying. You are trying to make us believe that you are married to the princess." Juan answered, "How much will you bet that I am not married to the princess?" The owner said, "Let us make a bet. If it is true that you have married her, I will give you my entire hacienda." The king was then asked if it were true, and he answered, "Juan is my son-in-law." So the owner lost the bet and gave Juan his hacienda. Juan told his wife, "I won much money." He took her to live in his house and thus ends the story of Juan Cenizas.

[39] This story, along with others such as "Oliva and Olivar," "Pedro de Mal," and "The Wager on the Wife's Chastity," show how a background totally foreign to the Popoluca scene can be used to serve as the setting for Popoluca characters, without any seeming inconsistency so far as the storyteller is concerned. Mysterious, supernatural beings that are seen by no one are a part of the Popoluca world; the villages of the Tsapupushin are known; it is no strain upon the imagination to believe oneself in a world of fantasy of cities, palaces, carriages, kings, and princesses. The Popoluca feels perfectly capable of taking such strange things in his stride, and projecting his own life and customs into them. The episode of the tortilla which Juan commanded his wife to prepare, is an amusing example of this adaption. There is apparently no question but that the wife, even though a wealthy princess, will obediently prepare with her own hands the food which her husband requests. In Popoluca society the man gives orders and the woman obeys. That the tortilla which she has prepared is seen at once to be of an inferior quality shows, of course, that a king's daughter is not expected to be properly instructed in the home arts. The Popoluca can apparently imagine that there *are* places in which the women are not all cooks. In Popoluca society there is no class structure, and the ability of all women to cook is taken for granted.

The story of Juan Cenizas sheds considerable light on Popoluca attitudes toward work. Hard and continuous work is the socially accepted norm, and the way to succeed in life; contempt is heaped upon the man who loafes. And yet, here is a man who sleeps in the ashes, who does no work at all, who is the hero of the story, and to whom all good things come—wealth, a princess for a wife, and a fine estate. And Juan has the complete sympathy of the teller. No Popoluca would overtly admit that a loafer should achieve such success. Yet it is evident from the story and the manner of telling that the raconteur—incidentally one of the most industrious of all Popoluca—is intrigued by the idea of everything for nothing. Work, though desirable, is monotonous. Is it not possible that there is some other society, some other place where it is not all-important? The story of Juan Cenizas is the story of that world. Tales of amorous adventures with supernatural enchantresses appeal to the Popoluca as something to remove them from the drudgery of everyday life, even though they know that such experiences are socially undesirable, as emphasized by the death penalty for him who succumbs. Similarly the tale of the rise of a hopelessly lazy man through sheer chicanery and luck is perversely pleasing as an illustration of what might have been the rule, instead of merely a dangerous and tempting idea—an idea which must not be dwelt upon too much for fear the dreamer will not pay proper attention to the tried and true way of life.

## 40. THE BURRO AND THE TIGER

(Told by Leandro Pérez)

Once upon a time a man worked as a muleteer. He went from place to place with many burros. One day one of the burros grew tired and lay down in the middle of the path. The man took the saddle off and said, "You shall stay here, and here the vultures will come and eat you." Then the man continued on his way. When he was gone the burro stood up and began to eat grass. After three days he was very thirsty but could find no water, so he went to look for a spring. He found one in a place that was very pretty. The tiger and all the other animals were accustomed to come to drink at this spring. While the burro was drinking a tiger appeared at the spring. The tiger said to the burro, "I am going to eat you." "Don't eat me," begged the burro, "because I am very thin." The tiger said, "I am going to eat you." "Don't threaten me," said the burro. "If you do I will shoot you." The tiger said, "I am going to eat you." "Before you eat me let us make a bet," said the burro. "I'll wager that I can catch a bird that flies overhead and that you cannot. If you lose you must let me go free." "I am going to eat you," repeated the stubborn tiger. "If you are brave," said the burro "you will catch a bird that flies overhead." To prove his courage the tiger finally agreed. After he had departed the burro lay down in a savanna and soon there came a vulture who, thinking the burro dead, was going to pick his bones. But as the vulture flew down the burro jumped up and caught him.

Finally the tiger returned. He had not been able to catch a bird but had caught a monkey. The burro said to him, "Now you can't eat me, but if you try I will shoot you." The tiger said, "Don't shoot me." The burro said, "I am going to shoot you." And he began to kick the tiger with his hooves. The tiger couldn't eat him because the burro was the braver of the two. Then the burro said, "You are going to pass me over to the other side of this river." The tiger was unable to follow him to the other side because he was shot by the burro's rifle (his hooves).

## 41. THE WAGER ON THE WIFE'S CHASTITY

(Told by Leandro Pérez)

Once upon a time two men made a bet in a shop. Several men were joking and boasting together and one of them said, "I have all the women." A married man said, "But you don't have my wife." The former answered, "Didn't I just say that I have all the women?" So the married man said, "We will see if you have my wife. I will give you eight days, after which period you will tell me what my wife looks like."

The man engaged an old woman to help him and asked her to see the woman. The old woman went to her house and said, "I have come to sleep with you." The woman said, "I am glad that you have come." That night she said, "Now we shall go to sleep," and she began to undress. The old woman observed a birthmark on her body. In the morning she went to tell the man, and said to him, "I saw that she had a birthmark high up on her waist." The man was pleased, and after the eight days had passed he met the woman's husband in the shop. The latter said, "Now you will tell me what kind of a wife I have if you have seen her." The man answered, "Well, she has a birthmark." The husband replied, "Then our house belongs to you." He went home and said to his wife, "Gather everything together as we are going to go away." His wife asked, "But where are we going?" He replied, "I know where we are going." His wife put a stamp of the Virgin of Guadalupe on her breast and went with her husband. As they were going along a path the husband said to her, "Go and kneel on the top of that rock." She obeyed and her husband shot her. He

saw that she fell down as if dead and then returned to the town to see the authorities. He said, "I killed my wife," whereupon he was seized and made a prisoner.

The woman meanwhile had been saved from death because of the protection of the stamp of the Virgin. As she was returning to town she met a charcoal vender. "Have you any work for me?" she asked. The man hired her and she went to work. Soon after this she met a storekeeper who, thinking she was a man because she wore men's clothes, said, "If you are willing you shall come and work in my house." "What will you pay me?" asked the woman. "I will pay you four pesos a day." Whereupon she went to work for him. At midday she began to play and sing. Her husband who was in the jail near-by heard her and said, "It sounds like my wife singing," and he began to weep. A few days later the storekeeper thought to himself, "Can it be that this man is really a woman?" He had two daughters who both said, "I am going to marry that man." Their father answered, "But this is not a man, it is a woman." The daughters refused to believe this, and the father said, "If you don't believe it go for a walk with her and you will see what things she likes." The daughters obeyed and as they walked in the plaza the girls said, "What pretty dresses those are!" The woman answered, "I like trousers and shirts, and I also like my hat." When they returned home the girls said to their father, "He doesn't like women's clothes, he only likes trousers and shirts." So the father said, "Then I will ask the man if he will marry you." He went to the woman and said, "My daughters want to marry you." The woman replied, "I can't get married because I am a woman." The man told his daughters this and said, "What did I tell you. This isn't a man; it is a woman."

The daughters were convinced, and the next day the woman again began to sing, and her husband heard her and said, "Thus sang my wife," and began to weep. Then the woman, dressed in trousers and shirts and with a pistol in her belt, came to where her husband was and said to him, "Come out here, let us talk." Her husband came out and she asked, "For what were you imprisoned?" The man said, "I killed my wife." "Why did you kill her?" asked the woman. "Because of a bet," he answered. The wife said, "Let us go to see the authorities." They went there without the husband recognizing his wife. He was talking with her and the authorities began to question him about how he killed his wife. Then the man who had deceived him was called, as well as the old woman who had aided him, and they also were questioned by the authorities as to whether it was true that the man had had the woman. The man said, "I didn't have her. It was only in jest." Then the authorities said, "Then you deceived this man and therefore we shall kill you and the old woman too for assisting you." Then the man lived again with his wife.

[41] This is a version of "The Wager on the Wife's Chastity," classified as type 882 by Aarne-Thompson.<sup>50</sup> Though clearly of Old World origin both the theme and the separate elements are particularly characteristic of Popoluca attitudes. Always there is the underlying fear that one's wife is unfaithful—a fear reflected in the taboo against any married woman being seen in the company of another man unless her husband is also present. Likewise, the boasting of conquests and pride in one's successes is typical of Popoluca custom, although one might think twice before boasting in the presence of the husband. The killing of the unfaithful wife, or of a wife merely suspected of infidelity, is a common solution to such types of domestic discord.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

## 42. STORY OF A POOR MAN

(Told by Leandro Pérez)

Once there was a man who ran away because he had not paid his debts. The authorities said that they were going to seize this man. He heard that he was going to be caught, and went into an oak grove. It was on the 24th of June. Night fell and he said, "What thing will eat me here? I shall sleep in the top of a tree." At midnight he heard a great deal of noise. He was afraid and said, "They will eat me now. Here, I am done for." Then he saw that a fire had been lighted on top of a plateau. He saw that many men came out and began to dance. He saw that a man tied up with hay came running to where they were dancing. Then those who had been dancing disappeared. He did not see where. There only remained an old man seated with a walking stick beside him. The man asked, "What do you want?" The old man said, "I want nothing. I came to dance because I like to. "But you, you want something." The man replied, "I want nothing." Then he was given an earthenware jug full of money. The old man said, "Take this to your house. Then come back and leave candles, copal, and some altar cloths for me. Put them on top of this stone."

Then the man returned to his house. The authorities saw him and called him saying, "Where have you been?" The man said, "I went to earn money." They said, "Now you must pay the debts because of which you fled. They fined him five hundred pesos. He brought his money and the authorities said, "You went to steal." The man said, "I didn't steal." Then he returned to his house and said to his wife, "Now we are going to build our house." Then everyone saw that he had money and they said, "Who knows where this man got his money?" And there the story ends.

## 43. STORY OF THE FIRST MAN

(Told by Leandro Pérez)

Once upon a time a man went to work in his milpa. He began to clear a field, and he worked the entire day, and then very tired returned to his house. On the following day when he went to work he saw that the trees which he had cut were again standing, green as before. Very much astonished, he said, "My God, My God, what is this?" and went about his work again. The following day when he returned he saw that it was a large rabbit that was restoring the field. This was Jesus Christ, who upon seeing the man asked, "Where were you, son?" "I went to clear my field," replied the man. "Don't work any more," said Jesus Christ, "because the world is going to be destroyed." Then the man began to weep, saying, "Why are we going to lose everything?" Said Jesus Christ, "Because the world is very old. Because of this it is going to be destroyed. Now I am going to give you these cedar tree seeds. Plant them, and after seven days they will make big trees. Then look for two carpenters, fell the trees, and make an ark. When it is ready I am going to come and see you. When the ark is ready you are to gather firewood and two chickens and two dogs and two pigs and two of each kind of animal."

When all was ready the animals came and entered the ark. Then it began to rain, and when the level of the water had reached two hundred meters the men said, "Yes, the world is coming to an end." Many people swam in the water, or clung to house tops or trees, but in the end they all died. For forty days it rained. The only birds that flew about the ark were parrots, which formerly had very well-formed feet and were able to walk. One of them alighted on the edge of the ark, but as the ark continued to rise on the waters it finally reached the sky, which it hit with a great shock, breaking the feet of the parrot and making them as they are now.



Then the water began to go down. "Is it still very deep?" asked the man of the parrot. The parrot stepped out and the water only came up to its knee. Then the man said, "Now we are saved," and in a moment the ark touched ground. The quantity of fish lying about was great, but before the rain Jesus Christ had said to the man that he should not eat until he, Jesus Christ, should say so. But feeling very hungry the man ordered his wife to light a fire and they began to fry fish for themselves and their family. Jesus Christ said, "Where is fire being lighted?" and he said to the vulture, "Go and see where the fire is that I smell."

Upon seeing the vulture arrive, those of the ark said, "Wouldn't you like to eat?" and the vulture, who had a big enough appetite, accepted. When Jesus Christ saw that the vulture did not return, he said to the hawk, "Go and see what the vulture is doing." The hawk arrived and saw that the vulture was eating with the people, and he returned to tell Jesus Christ, who was very angry, and said to the hummingbird, "Go and see if it is really true that the vulture is eating." The hummingbird arrived and saw that the vulture was eating. Said he to Jesus Christ, "This is the reason that he has not come back. He's eating fish." Jesus Christ said, "Well, I'm going to see," and he arrived where they were. "What are you doing?" he asked. "Eating," they replied. "Didn't I tell you that you weren't to eat until I came? I was going to leave you here to be the first men, but now I am going to punish you. You are lost. I am going to turn you into monkeys." Then Jesus Christ reversed the man so that his head was where his buttocks had been, and his buttocks where his head had been. "You are going to live in the mountains. There you will eat nothing but tender leaves." Then the woman was grabbed and reversed, and she became a female monkey. Then the children were turned into little monkeys. To the vulture he said, "You will henceforth eat only of dead animals." He returned to the sky and thought, "Now the world is very sad. Not so much as a bird is singing." He began to think and decided he must make birds and animals and men. He began by making a bird which he threw up into a tree, where it began to sing. Said he, "Already there is happiness."

Then he began to think again. "Now, how am I going to make a man?" He thought. "I am going to make a man." He began to gather earth and then from this there came a Cristiano<sup>a</sup> who, however, remained inert on the ground. "Now, how is he going to speak?" Jesus Christ began to speak to him. Seven times he said, "Get up, tell me what your name is." The man did not speak. Seven times he was spoken to, and finally the man said, "*Ai, Dios mio*. Who are you?" "I am Jesus Christ. Now you must stand up," and Jesus Christ began to walk seven times forward and seven times backward, saying, "Get up! Get up!" and on the seventh time the man got up. "Now that you can stand up, can you walk?" asked Jesus Christ. "No, Señor." "Then go and take steps," but the man was unable to do so. Then Jesus Christ began to walk. He walked seven times and said, "Now you can walk," and then the man was able to walk. Said Jesus Christ, "You are the first man. Since I am very busy you are going to take care of my garden which I have sown." "Very well," said the man. "That is what I am going to do."

But after a few days he said to Jesus Christ, "Well, I am not able to cook my food because I spend all my time working. If you would listen to me I would like a cook to prepare food for me." "It can be done," said Jesus Christ. "Next Friday at noon knock on your rib seven times and in this manner a cook will appear." The man returned and did as he was told, but no cook appeared. The man was very sad. Then Jesus Christ appeared and said, "Knock again." The man began to knock on his ribs. Said Jesus Christ, "Now you see a woman is coming out. She is going to be

<sup>a</sup> Christian. As pointed out on page 214, note 27, human beings often are referred to as Christians to distinguish them from other beings.

your wife." "But I only wanted a cook," replied the man. Then Jesus Christ said, "Now you have your name. You are Adán and the woman is Eva," and he said to the woman that she was to do her husband's bidding. And he went off. The man worked in the garden and the woman stayed at home. But one day a serpent that stayed in the orchard appeared to the woman in the form of her husband and offered her an apple. "I don't want it," said the woman, "because it's not good to take it." "Take it," said the serpent. "It's all right. I eat apples." Then Eva took it, and with it she conceived a child. When the First Man returned he asked, "Where did you get the apple?" "Why, you gave it to me when you were here a little while ago," she replied. "But I haven't been here," said the man. "It must have been the serpent in the orchard, and for it you have conceived. We will see. In six months the child will show." Then came Jesus Christ, "What have you done with Adán," he asked. "Nothing, Señor," replied Eva. "It was the serpent that gave me the apple." Then Jesus Christ began to orate. He said, "Now you have conceived. After nine months you will have a child. Thus it is. Then you are going to have many children."

Then she began to conceive many children by Adán, and they grew up. "As soon as you are grown up," she said, "get married." Thus it was that while she was still raising children her oldest son already had a wife and children. They all formed a pueblo. Then they all began to speak different languages; they did not respect each other; they all got drunk; they did not show proper respect to their old father; they killed each other; that is why we have death.

Then Jesus Christ came and said, "If you don't obey and correct your ways, I will end the world as before." The people, frightened, said that this would not be good and that they desired to live. After this they began to form other pueblos, and now Adán, who was very old and about to die, called for one of his sons and gave him the Testament that Jesus Christ had left with him, recommending that it be passed down from generation to generation. And in this way it has been possible to know the true history of those far-off times.

[43] The "Story of the First Man" is one of the best illustrations of the phenomenon of the blending of indigenous and Spanish elements in Mexico to form new, stylistically sound stories. The account of Noah apparently made a great impression on the native population, possibly owing to the presence of a similar deluge myth in their own mythology. Out of Biblical sequence, but in logical order in terms of the story, is the episode of God's creation of Adam from earth, and his assignment to the Garden of Eden. The version of Eve's creation is particularly significant for the insight it offers of the common Popoluca attitude toward marriage, namely, the importance of the economic aspect as contrasted to the purely romantic. In this story, Adam is not a little annoyed because Christ presents him with a woman, and not with a cook, as he had originally requested. The explanatory motif which tells here how the parrot's feet were formed, the origin of monkeys, and why we have death, probably reflects an indigenous substratum of folkloristic patterning. The following abbreviated version of the same story also explains why the vulture eats carrion. The opening paragraph is of considerable comparative interest.

Mention has already been made of the accounts of Mason and Lumholtz in which trees are magically restored after being cut down. The same motif is basic in Polynesia, where Rata felled a tree without asking permission, and upon returning next morning found the tree again erect and undamaged.<sup>62</sup>

The episode of human beings changed into monkeys in origin accounts may very

<sup>62</sup> P. Buck, *Vikings of the Sunrise*, New York, 1938, p. 30.

well be an ancient New World belief. Lehmann gives origin accounts from Sayula and Oluta, both of which include this event, and which in general follow the plot of the Soteapan account. In that from Sayula, God, who is called *el viejito*, "the old man," asks where fire is burning, and upon finding that the first man against his orders has built a fire to cook fish, transforms him into a monkey by reversing his face and buttocks. In the Oluta account the man is puzzled because his milpa is restored each night after cutting it down. One night he watches, sees God tell the brush to stand up again, and is himself told that he should not bother to make a milpa, since the earth is about to be destroyed. The man is instructed to make a canoe for himself and his family, by which means he survives the flood. After the water subsides the man gathers the bodies of drowned animals and begins to cook them. San Pedro smells the smoke, wonders what is happening, finds the man cooking carrion, and turns him into a vulture and his children into monkeys.<sup>58</sup>

Brinton quotes a translation of the Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg from the Codex Chimalpopoca, a work in Nahuatl, written about half a century after the Conquest. In this account the gods Citlallinicue and Citlallatonac instruct the first man to build a boat. When the boat comes to rest on dry ground the first man and his wife gather and roast fish. The gods are angered, ask what the fire is doing, and then send Titlacahuan-Tezcatlipoca, who scolds, asking, "What is this fire doing here?" Then he seizes the fish, and "moulded their hinder parts and changed their heads, and they were at once transformed into dogs."<sup>59</sup> In this account the final form after the transformation differs—quite possibly because monkeys are unknown in the area described in the codex—but the basic idea of the story is the same.

Two instances of humans turned into monkeys occur in the Popol Vuh. The first, although in a slightly different form, is similar to the Popoluca story in that the first race of men, unsuccessfully made of wood, perished in a great flood, and their descendants survive in the form of the little monkeys which inhabit the Central American forests. In the second, the trickster twins, Hun-Apu and Xbalanqué, whose position in Quiché mythology has already been outlined in the comments following the first story, turn their half brothers into monkeys. These individuals, Hunbatz and Hunchouen, as punishment for their constant nagging and persecution of their young trickster half-brothers, are tricked into a tree which grows so high they are unable to descend. Following the advice of the wily twins they fasten their loin cloths in such fashion that a point of cloth hangs down behind them, which immediately turns into a tail, and they into monkeys.<sup>60</sup>

Among the Mbocobis of Paraguay a man and his wife are changed into monkeys by the sun which falls from its place in the sky and destroys the earth.<sup>61</sup> The Guaymis of Costa Rica tell a legend in which, after the flood, a kindly god sows the seed of man, and from the best of this seed comes mankind, and from the worst, monkeys.<sup>62</sup>

All these accounts are by no means the same, but it is evident that a non-Biblical idea is common to all of them, and this idea presumably is of New World origin.

<sup>58</sup> W. Lehmann, "Ergebnisse einer mit Unterstützung der Notgemeinschaft der Deutschen Wissenschaft in den Jahren 1925/1926 ausgeführten Forschungsreise nach Mexiko und Guatemala," *Anthropos*, 23:747-791, 1928.

<sup>59</sup> D. G. Brinton, *The Myths of the New World*, Philadelphia, 1896, pp. 241-242, quoting the Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg.

<sup>60</sup> *Manuscrito de Chichicastenango*, Guatemala, 1927, pp. 183, 239.

<sup>61</sup> D. G. Brinton, *The Myths of the New World*, p. 246. Quoting Guevara, *Historia del Paraguay*, chapt. 15.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246. Quoting Pedro Melendez, *Tesoros Verdaderos de las Yndias*, I, p. 4.

## 44. STORY OF THE FLOOD

(Told by Leandro Pérez)

Long ago Christ ordered a man to make an ark, saying that he was going to flood the world. All the earth was flooded and the people on the ark alone were saved. They had with them a pair of pigs, chickens, dogs, horses, and a few other pairs of useful animals. When the water disappeared the ground was covered with large fish, which formerly had been the people who had inhabited the earth. The survivors began to build fires and cook and eat the fish. Christ sent the vulture to see what was happening. The vulture saw that they were having a great feast, and remained to get his share. When he did not return Christ sent the hawk. He watched what was happening and returned to report that they were eating the former inhabitants of the earth. Christ sent the hummingbird to see if this were really true. He flew quickly and returned to report that it was. Then Christ went down himself. "What are you doing?" he asked. "Nothing, here we are eating fish," they replied. Christ was very annoyed and took the people who had been eating and turned them upside down and threw them into the trees, saying, "Now you are monkeys and must live in the trees. When there is nothing for you to eat you must just sit and look." Then he told the vulture that his future task was to eat all dead animals. Then he populated the earth by turning the fish back into men.

## 45. STORY OF SOLOMON

(Told by Juan Arizmendes)

Once there was a wise man named Solomon who wanted to be able to talk directly with God and to know the size of the sun. So he started to build a tall tower. When he was high up he devised a system to make the work easier. With the rope he lifted sand and water to where he was working. When he jerked on the rope twice he wanted sand, and when he jerked three times he wanted water. But the people below were knavish, and when he jerked three times they sent sand and when he jerked two times they sent water. After a time Solomon got tired of this and quit. Already the tower was so high it took him three days to come down. The following day the tower fell down.

Very much disgusted, he went off with one servant to the edge of the ocean to get away from everyone. By magical means, because he was a sage, he had constructed a huge palace, and read inside it every day. One day he saw a boy digging a hole in the beach, and then taking water from the sea to put in the hole. Filled with curiosity, Solomon went to see him. "What are you doing?" he asked. "Working," replied the boy. "But doing what?" countered Solomon. "I am going to put all the water in the sea in his hole." But the sea is too large; it isn't possible," replied Solomon. "But sire," replied the boy, "it's just as good an idea as you had, wanting to talk with God, my father." Thinking profoundly on this remark, Solomon returned home.

Later Solomon went to see a woman about thirty years of age who had never had children. "Will you be my mother?" he asked. "How is this possible?" she replied. "Merely wishing to do it is enough," he said, and then returned to his palace, where he spoke to his servant. "I am going to be reborn. You must kill me and cut up my flesh and bones in small pieces. Then put them in a large pot, but don't tell a soul." The servant obeyed and put a cover over the pot. At the end of six months the woman was clearly pregnant. At the end of nine months the authorities came to consult Solomon, and not finding him they questioned the servant so much that he

finally told the story and showed the pot. The authorities uncovered the pot and found the baby Solomon ready to be reborn. But at the contact of air he died. That is the story of Solomon.

[45] In this account the building of the Tower of Babel is integrated with the activities of Solomon. Beyond the fact that Solomon was a wise man little of the Biblical version remains, unless Solomon's decision to have himself cut up in order to be reborn is interpreted as taken from the episode of the division of the child in the Bible. This episode also may have indigenous roots. It is suggestive of the antics of the trickster twins, Hun-Apu and Xbalanqué in the *Popol Vuh*, who in the course of vanquishing the lords of Hades demonstrated their powers by having themselves burned to death in an oven, their bones ground and the ashes scattered in a stream, after which they revived themselves. The pointing of a moral (which might be expressed as "Don't attempt the impossible") by the Christ-child's reply to Solomon is something generally lacking in Popoluca folklore, as well as in the daily round of life, where beating rather than moralizing is the primary educational technique. There is a Zapotec account of Solomon which is very similar to the Popoluca tale.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>68</sup> E. C. Parsons, *Mitla*, pp. 348-349.

### III. CONCLUDING REMARKS

THE MEXICAN ethnologist, perhaps puzzled by the summaries of Mexican folklore by Boas<sup>1</sup> and Espinosa<sup>2</sup> which largely deny the importance of native traditions, may be pleased to find that the larger part of Popoluca tales are of New World origin. The conclusions of Boas and Espinosa were of value in that they pointed out the tremendous importance of European sources in Spanish-American folklore, including that of most of the native peoples. Unfortunately, because of the forceful presentation of these conclusions plus the fact that a large part of subsequent work was done in relatively civilized places where the increment of Spanish tales is admittedly high, there has been a regrettable tendency to assume that *all* Mexican folklore is Old World, and that *almost none* can be considered as surviving from pre-Columbian times. The result has been that many folklorists have failed to find indigenous tales because they did not expect to find them, or because they were insufficiently acquainted with the cultural matrix of which the stories were a part. The importance of "Tar Baby" and "John the Bear" was known; when encountered they were immediately recorded, while equally important autochthonous legends were passed over. A few collections of Mexican stories, particularly Radin and Espinosa's *El Folklore de Oaxaca*,<sup>3</sup> and Parsons' account from Mitla,<sup>4</sup> make it apparent that native Mexican forms are far more important than was formerly thought. Unfortunately, such collections are few in number.<sup>5</sup>

It is not my purpose to convey the impression that the Mexican folklore of today is largely indigenous. Obviously, such a conclusion would be untenable. I *do* contend that a *significant part*—a more significant part than commonly thought—of the tales told by many groups have their roots deep in the traditions of the American continent. One cannot escape the fact that storytelling in Mexico must always have played a less important part than among the simpler peoples to the north. Probably there were never so many stories in the foreign region, and because of a long period of contact with the Spanish, the Mexican cultures have taken on a form not duplicated in the other areas of North America. The same process of acculturation which has produced the modern folk cultures of Mexico has also worked to transform the traditional literature into the folk literature of today—not strictly indigenous, and certainly not European, but with its roots firmly embedded in both sources. Although there may be exceptions, it seems reasonable to assume that the folklore will change at about the same rate as the rest of the culture. In urban centers one may expect to find almost purely Spanish literary forms; progressively, as the degree of acculturation decreases, fewer European forms should be apparent. In another place.<sup>6</sup> I have pointed out that the Popoluca appear to have been less affected by Spanish contact than most of the other Mexican groups. Presumably this fact explains the high proportion of indigenous folktales told by this group. I believe that the first thirty-one stories are of New World origin, or contain a majority of New World elements; the final fourteen stories appear to be predominantly Old World in origin. The percentage is not, of course, precisely thirty-one to fourteen

<sup>1</sup> Boas, *op. cit.*, pp. 204–260.

<sup>2</sup> A. M. Espinosa, "Comparative Notes on New Mexican and Mexican-Spanish Folktales," *Journal of American Folklore*, 27:211–231, 1914.

<sup>3</sup> P. Radin and A. M. Espinosa, *El Folklore de Oaxaca*, New York, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> E. C. Parsons, *Mitla*.

<sup>5</sup> This paper was written previous to the publication of Paul Radin's article "The Nature and Problems of Mexican Indian Folklore," *Journal of American Folklore*, 57:26–36, 1944, in which similar conclusions are reached about Boas and Espinosa. It is gratifying to the author to find himself in accord with Dr. Radin on this very important theoretical point.

<sup>6</sup> G. M. Foster, *A Primitive Mexican Economy*.

in favor of the indigenous tales. Usually the European accounts are longer, and some of those classed as New World have very little plot or form, and are perhaps better classed as simple lore or experiences. Nevertheless, it is clear that either in terms of total number of stories or of a breakdown of separate episodes, the larger part of Popoluca folklore springs from American and not from European sources.

Aside from the question of origins it is apparent that the Popoluca tales, although by no means perfectly mirroring the culture of which they are a part, shed light on many of its characteristics. Particularly revealing points have already been discussed, and there is here need for no more than a brief summary. Even to the casual reader it must be apparent that the Popoluca are completely prosaic and unromantic in their way of life. In general drabness each day is like all other days, with no real expectation of something unusual or out-of-the-ordinary to break the monotonous tempo. The Popoluca themselves do not know how to supply diversions; they have no sports, games, or competitions, and generally seem lacking in these aspects of culture so well developed among many of the North American Indians. Yet the subconscious longing for such a break or change is amply illustrated in stories in which there is the hope of a chance encounter with a *suerte*, or better yet, the finding of a beautiful supernatural woman who will spirit away the grimy toiler to a cool haven in the trees or elsewhere. And yet, even here the edge is taken off of this anticipation by the knowledge that such an experience can end only in death.

The normal relationship of the sexes is completely unromantic and matter of fact. Strong emotions of attachment between individuals are not often noted, and even in encounters with beautiful supernatural beings no truly romantic situations can be said to exist. The devotion on the part of the man who married a *rayo* is the rare exception which has its counterpart in real life, and which by its rarity only serves to emphasize the common situation. A large part of the desire for a woman can be understood in terms of physical well-being—a cook, a housekeeper, a servant, and not a wife and companion. A man's dog turns into a woman to take the place of his wife who has left with another man. He is pleased—because he will not have to come home from the field and find no supper. Adán, the first man, is positively irritated when Christ sends him, not a cook, but a woman, as yet untested and untried in home arts.

The gratification of the sexual urge is a strong force in Popoluca life. Sometimes it is expressed indirectly, as in the story just discussed when the man's wife leaves with another; and sometimes it is made clear, as in the story of the wager on the wife's chastity. The few fragments of dreams told by informants likewise indicate the same interest in sex. Philandering on the part of the man, and his fear, sometimes justified but probably more often not, that his wife is also unfaithful, are potent sources of discord in Popoluca society.

The very marked preoccupation with work, profit, and wealth, which are among the most apparent characteristics of Popoluca attitudes, are indicated in some of the accounts, notably the thrifty introduction to the Tar Baby story. A fact not so easily discernible in direct observation of daily life is the danger of being too successful and thereby arousing the ire of other less industrious or capable persons. The point is made clear in the account of the death of a witch, hired to cause the death of the successful fisherman. The clever Popoluca attempts to strike a happy medium in his degree of success: sufficient wealth to mark him as capable, hard-working, and a man to be reckoned with in the community, but not too great a display of wealth as to suggest that he is using questionable means, or that he is obtaining more than his share of material possessions, or to risk the anger of others who have not done so well.

The constant danger of witchcraft which the successful individual may be exposed to is merely one manifestation of a great preoccupation on the part of all individuals with the hazards of the supernatural or outside world. This preoccupation is most often expressed in the fear of being eaten, a fear which goes beyond all of the feelings associated with death, which is regrettable, but understandable and not greatly feared. The fear of being eaten, on the other hand, causes a haunting horror in the minds of many individuals, and even though they know that no one within their immediate experience has been so treated, there is always the possibility that outsiders will come who will have cannibalistic intentions. Hitler and Stalin are names but vaguely known, yet one wonders, "Do they eat human beings?" All unknown beings and individuals presumably are dangerous because of anthropophagous tendencies. Perhaps this attitude reflects the desire for a small social enclave to resist all possible contact with other groups, a desire that continues to the present day and is marked by the forcible ejection or murder of teachers sent to educate the Popoluca in reading, writing, history, and social theory. This anthropophagous motif appears to be the most frequently occurring theme in Popoluca literature.

The techniques, or rather the lack of techniques, employed in storytelling also shed light on Popoluca attitudes and mentality. The Popoluca have no sense of the dramatic; stories are merely collections of episodes, or accounts of happenings. At no point is the attention of the listener built up to a pitch, to be released by some startling and exciting event. Nor is appreciation for a dramatic situation ever found, either in terms of plot or characters. In other words, the lack of artistry on the part of the storyteller is but a reflection of the general lack of imagination manifest by almost all Popoluca. Things and happenings within their immediate experience can be apprehended; abstract situations or events which they have not experienced, are entirely outside of their understanding. Conversation of characters in stories is steady and even, an exact replica of that of everyday life. Particularly noteworthy is the evasive answer as a part of speech. If asked what he is doing, no Popoluca will give a direct answer and say, "I am threshing beans," or "I am about to leave for my milpa," or any one of a thousand different tasks which he may be about. Instead, he invariably answers, "*Pues, nada. Aqui estoy*," "Well, nothing, Here I am," with the emphasis on the "nothing," as if he is surprised at your stupidity in assuming that he is doing anything, or would admit it. Such evasiveness is probably a defense mechanism with which the Popoluca, comparatively few in numbers and culturally inferior to their neighbors, have managed so well to maintain their relative independence from other peoples.

These points, drawn from the stories, illustrate the manner in which a body of folklore can be utilized to make more complete our knowledge of a strange culture. Folklore alone is of course insufficient and may lead to erroneous ideas. Used judiciously with other data the student of primitive cultures will find that his understanding of his problem is more complete, and the picture which he obtains correspondingly closer to the reality of the people who tell the stories.



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