

LEGEND OF THE TEPOZTECO: MESOAMERICAN AND CATHOLIC MYTHOLOGY

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Tepoztlan, a town located south of Mexico City, under a ridge of mountains known as the Ridge of Tepoztlan, has become a favorite subject of anthropological research. The reason for this is that its history has exemplified the continuity of certain pre-Hispanic traditions and the transformation that the conquest produced in rural communities, as well as the change and resistance that the process of modernization has brought about in modern Mexico (Corona Caraveo, 1999: 15-16). Doubtless, the most renowned studies are Robert Redfield's *Tepoztlan, a Mexican Village* (1930), Oscar Lewis' *Life in a Mexican Village: Tepoztlan Restudied* (1951) and *Tepoztlan, Village in Mexico* (1960), and Claudio Lomnitz-Adler's *Evolución de una sociedad rural* (1982). These studies are excellent anthropological records of life in Tepoztlan (Tostado Gutiérrez, 1998: 9). However, more than analyzing the myths, they deal with the changes Tepoztlan underwent as modernization and industrialization took place in the country. Philip K. Bock's "Tepoztlan Reconsidered" (1980) complements these analyses because it explains why the traditional systems have survived in the town.

The legends of Tepozteco and the ritual in which he is commemorated are keynotes in the preservation and revitalization of collective memory. The word *Tepozteco* designates several entities. It refers to *Tepoztecatl*, the *pulque* god whose temple is on top of one of the mountains that make up the ridge, but it also denotes the mountain per se, and sometimes it refers to the wind. Furthermore, it stands for the mythic character that appears in several of the legends that circulate in this town. In these stories, Tepozteco is the local hero who liberates the people of Tepoztlan from the domination of the neighbor city Xochicalco.

The celebration of Tepozteco every September 8th is probably the event that generates the strongest social cohesion in this community. On this date, Tepoztecos commemorate the two main patrons of the village: the Virgin of the Nativity and Tepozteco. According to popular belief the renowned Tepoztecan ruler received baptism on September 8. To celebrate this conversion, every year the Tepoztecos stage a dramatic performance that represents this event.

The purpose of this article is to identify the possible origins of the legend of the Tepozteco. The first part of this analysis is a description of the evolution of the story. It is followed by an account of the elements that most versions have in common. Finally these components are compared to the *Popol Vuh*, as well as to Nahua and to Catholic mythology.

THE TEPOZTECO LEGEND

Evolution

The principal object of this study is a collection of several versions of the legend of the Tepozteco. These come from different sources found in the Latin American Library at Tulane University and from cultural institutions in Tepoztlan. They cover an extensive period of time. The earliest is from 1928, and the last one is from 2002. In chronological order, the first three accounts are the ones Pablo González Casanova published in 1928 (versions A, B, and C).ⁱ In 1937 Apolonio H. Escalada published another version of the legend. Like González Casanova, he incorporated the Nahuatl original and a Spanish translation. A fifth account of the Tepozteco story is Robert Barlow's interview with Genaro Verazaluz in 1942. The following relation is *El Tepozteco según Olivia*, a Spanish account that a Tepoztecan maid told Gail Giachini in 1959.ⁱⁱ Angel Zúñiga Navarrete, a native from Tepoztlan, included the legend in his book *Breve historia y narraciones tepoztecas*, which was first published in 1995. Urbano Bello Díaz's "La historia del Tepozteco" participated in a story contest organized in 1995 by the Historical Center of Documentation of Tepoztlan. The purpose of the project was to "collect and broadcast the historical memory that the Tepoztecas had kept until that moment, so that this would not be lost forever" (Tostado Gutiérrez, 1998: 10; *the translation is mine*). In 1998, the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) published the stories that participated in this contest. The next story comes from an electronic source. It can be found at the website *Red Escolar*, a project that the Mexican government designed "to provide current and relevant information to elementary school students and teachers" (<http://redescolar.ilce.edu.mx>. *The translation is mine*). The last version of the legend is an interview that I conducted on August 3rd, 2002 in Tepoztlan. The narrator of this story is an elementary school teacher named Mario Flores Oropeza.

After collecting the different versions of the legend, I identified the main units of action of each one in order to find out whether these units coincided or not.ⁱⁱⁱ The stories prior to 1959 differed a great deal; therefore, it is possible to say that until 1959, there were five separate legends. In one of these stories, Tepozteco killed Xochicalcatl, the monster-king of Xochicalco, who subjugated the people of Morelos. After this victory, Tepozteco stole the *teponaxtli*, the symbol of power held by the people of Cuernavaca, and took it to Tepoztlan. In another legend, the ugly Tepozton raised the bells to the belfries of Mexico City's cathedral.^{iv} A third legend narrates that Tepozteco was a young foreign warrior who became the chief of Tepoztlan. One day he saw the daughter of the king of Xochicalco, and he requested her in marriage. Since the king refused, Tepozteco and his people destroyed Xochicalco (Muller, 1949: 47). Florencia Muller also documented a fourth legend. In it the king of the Chichimecs fell in love with Chimalma, the daughter of the lord of Tepoztlan. He threw some arrows at her, but she ignored him. Consequently, he turned her into a deer and rode her. They had a son:

Tepozteco (1949: 46-47). Finally, in the last legend known as *El reto del Tepozteco*, the lords of other communities of the region defied the ruler of Tepoztlan because he had received baptism and thus betrayed their ancient gods. At the end of the story, Tepozteco convinced them to convert. This is the episode that the Tepoztecans represent every September 8. By the end of the twentieth century the most important legends were incorporated into one long cycle; consequently, they shared the main units of action.

Narrative sequence

Throughout the twentieth century, the episodes that constitute the basic legend have remained the same:

I. Tepozteco was conceived in an immaculate manner.

Nine out of the ten versions studied start with this episode (1928A, 1928C, 1937, 1942, 1959, 1995, 1998, 2001, and 2002). However, the identity of Tepozteco's mother varies. In some versions, she was an old woman (1928A); in others, she was a young woman (1928C, 2001), a nun (1937), a priestess (1942), or the wife of a polygamous king (1959). In respect to fatherhood, six of nine episodes recognize that the wind, either in a pure manifestation (1928A, 1998, 2001) or in a birdlike one (1928C, 1995, 2002), was the father. Therefore, the idea that Tepozteco was the son of the wind has persisted. Another element that has been carried on is that Tepozteco was conceived in a spring at the bottom of the Ehecatpetl Mountain (1928A, 1995, 2001, and 2002).

II. Someone attempted to kill the baby.

In eight out of the ten stories, after Tepozteco was born, either his mother or his grandparents tried to get rid of him (1928A, 1937, 1942, 1959, 1995, 1998, 2001, and 2002). In four of these cases (1928A, 1959, 1995, 1998), they followed the same course of action. First they placed him on top of an anthill, but instead of biting him, the ants fed the baby with crumbs. Then, they put him inside the leaves of a maguey plant; however, the leaves bent towards the baby and fed him with their sap. Finally, they put him inside a box and either left him in the river or in the ravine so that when it rained, it would go away.

III. The baby was adopted.

In most of the accounts, an old couple found and adopted the baby (1928A, 1937, 1995, 1998, 2001, and 2002). In the 1942 version, the adoptive parents were the ruler of Tepoztlan and his daughter.

IV. Tepozteco became a marvelous hunter.

As the son of the wind, in his childhood Tepozteco revealed magical hunting powers (1928A, 1942, 1995, 1998, and 2002). He shot directly into the sky, and then game fell. In this manner, he supported his senior adoptive parents.

V. Tepozteco decided to confront Xochicalcatl.

In all of the accounts Xochicalcatl lived in Xochicalco and required victims to sacrifice or to eat. In the earliest accounts, he was characterized as a giant (1928A, 1928B), as a king (1937, 1942, 1959), or as a non-specified monster (1942). In the most recent accounts, he was a serpent (1998, 2001) or a dragon (2002). This might reflect

influence from western fairy tales and Hollywood impact. Xochicalcatl requested one or both of Tepozteco's adoptive parents as tribute, and Tepozteco took the place of the victim. In most of the accounts (1928A, 1937, 1942, 1959, 1998), he told his parents that they would see a column of white smoke if he was successful, of black smoke, if he was unsuccessful.

VI. During his peregrination, he transformed and named the landscape (1928A, 1942, and 1995).

In the 1928A and 1942 stories, he turned some of his captors into hills or into rocks, whereas in the 1995 version, he left the mark of his knees and hands on one rock. In two accounts (1928A and 1995), he drew figures on mountain rocks.

VII. He picked up flints (1928A, 1937, 1942, 1959, 1995, 1998, 2001, and 2002).

VIII. Once he arrived to Xochicalco, he began transforming himself into different animals. In one version (1928A), he turned into a rooster, a snake, a fish, a deer, a hawk, a rabbit, a coyote, a wolf and a tiger, while in another (1995), he became a rooster and a tiger. By continually transforming himself, Tepozteco evaded the assistants of Xochicalcatl (1928A, 1937, 1995).

IX. Tepozteco defeated Xochicalcatl (1928A, 1928B, 1937, 1942, 1959, 1995, 1998, 2001, and 2002).

Xochicalcatl swallowed Tepozteco, but Tepozteco cut the monster's stomach with the flints picked up on the road, and thus, Tepozteco killed Xochicalcatl. As a sign of victory, he sent a column of white smoke.

X. He went to Cuernavaca and stole the *teponaxtli* (1928A, 1928B, 1937, 1942, 1959, 1995, 1998, 2001, and 2002).

In five of these stories (1928A, 1937, 1995, 1998, and 2002) another episode precedes the theft. Tepozteco was dismissed from the celebration in Cuernavaca because he was wearing rags. When he changed clothes, they let him in, but as a protest he poured the food onto his clothes. After this event, he stole the *teponaxtli* by producing a wind storm that blinded everybody.

XI. Tepozteco fled to Tepoztlan.

Some of the accounts specify the route he followed when the people of Cuernavaca persecuted him (1928A, 1928B, 1995, and 1998). Another element that most versions share is that during the flight, Tepozteco created Cuernavaca's ravine with water, either his urine or water from his gourd (1928A, 1937, 1942, 1959, 1995, 1998, 2001, and 2002).

XII. He arrived to the Ehecatpetl Mountain and defeated the people from Cuernavaca.

In some versions his persecutors tried to cut the mountain and left when they realized they could not (1928A, 1959, 1995, 2001, and 2002). In others, the wind blew away his enemies (1937) or turned them into the stone steps of the mountain (1998). In another story, Tepozteco transformed them into coyotes (1942).

XIII. Tepozteco became the ruler or king of Tepoztlan (1995, 2001).

As king of Tepoztlan, he went to a celebration in Cuernavaca.

XIV. He raised the bells of Mexico City's cathedral (1928C, 1937, 1995, 1998, and 2002).

Although the accounts that González Casanova published in 1928 reveal that this episode was very likely a separate legend in the early part of the century, in four later versions (1937, 1995, 1998, and 2002) it is incorporated into the main story. Basically this legend follows the same structure in the five versions. Tepozteco produced a windstorm to raise the bells. As a reward, he obtained a box with doves that would bring prosperity to Tepoztlan; however, the people of the town opened the box, and the doves flew to other cities. In this manner, Tepoztlan was doomed to poverty.

In general, the continuity of the story is remarkable. Basic elements were repeated over and over through a time span of seventy-four years. Perhaps this phenomenon is the result of the increased interest in Mexican folklore that followed the demise of the Mexican Revolution. In the 1920s, a reevaluation of Mexico's indigenous roots took place (Kartunnen, 1998: 440). It was then that researchers such as Frans Boas began to collect animal fables, moral tales, and other accounts in Nahuatl (*zazanilli*) (1998: 440). The foundation of the Colonia Tepozteco in Mexico City is another example. The Tepoztecos who left their village because of the Revolution established this society with the purpose of preserving their cultural heritage, for instance, the Nahuatl language of Tepoztlan (Lewis, 1960: 22). Perhaps the publication of Tepozteco's legend was part of this process. Moreover, in 1932, Enrique Villamil Tapia and Leandro García, former members of the Colonia Tepozteco who had returned to their village, reinitiated the staging of the *Reto* during the September 8th festivity. This celebration and the staging of the play had been suspended during the Mexican Revolution and the period of unrest that followed it (Tostado Gutiérrez, 1998: 216). It is likely that the reestablishment of this commemoration helped to uphold the oral traditions of the town.

Another reason for the interest of the community in the Tepozteco legend, and thus of its permanence, is that this story has played an important role in the peoples' resistance to economic projects that have threatened the ecological, cultural, and social identity of their town. One example is the 1994 movement against the establishment of a golf club in Tepoztlan (Corona Caraveo, 1999: 58).

THE LEGEND OF THE TEPOZTECO AND THE *POPOL VUH*

There is a striking similarity between the structure and the content of the legend of the Tepozteco and that of the Hero twins' cycle in the *Popol Vuh*. First of all, like Tepozteco, Hunahpu and Xbalanque were born from a virgin maiden. Blood Moon conceived the twins when the skull of One Hunahpu spitted in her hand (Tedlock, 1996: 99). For both the mother of Tepozteco and the mother of the twins getting pregnant implied a transgression; therefore, in both cases, their fathers became very angry with them. In the legend from Morelos, the father of the pregnant maid, or the maid herself, attempted to kill the baby to hide the offense; in the *Popol Vuh*, the father of the twins' mother decided to kill her.

The second episode is analogous in the two legends. Tepozteco's grandfather, his emissaries, or his mother tried to get rid of the baby by taking him to an anthill and

afterwards to a maguey plant. Hunahpu's and Xbalanque's grandmother and their half-brothers, One Monkey and One Artisan, decided to kill the twins too. First, they took the babies to an anthill, but Hunahpu and Xbalanque did not die (Tedlock, 1996: 104). Then, they placed the babies over some brambles (1996: 104). Both Tepozteco and the twins survived and flourished.

In the third episode, Tepozteco and the *Popol Vuh* heroes became great hunters. However, the former used a bow and arrows as weapons, while the latter used blowguns (1996: 38). In the two stories, the legendary heroes supported their families with the animals they hunted (1996: 105).

Afterwards, Tepozteco confronted and defeated the giant-king-monster-snake-dragon Xochicalcatl, while Hunahpu and Xbalanque confronted two giant monsters. The first was a crocodilian monster named Zipacná who had formerly killed "the gods of alcoholic drinks, the Four Hundred Boys" (1996: 35). He killed them after they got drunk with the "sweet drink" (*pulque*) they had made (1996: 83). Then, they became the Pleiades: "Such was the death of those Four Hundred Boys. And it used to be said that they entered a constellation, named Hundrath after them, though perhaps this is just a play on words" (Tedlock, 1996: 84). The association among the twins, Zipacná and the four hundred *pulque* gods is probably the most important connection between the legend of the Tepozteco and the *Popol Vuh*. There is however one difference: Zipacná killed the four-hundred *pulque* gods in the *Popol Vuh*, whereas one of these four-hundred deities [Tepozteco] killed Xochicalcatl.

Tepozteco, known in pre-Hispanic times as *Tepoztecatl* was one of the four-hundred Aztec gods of *pulque*. In the *Popol Vuh*, Zipacná killed the Four Hundred Boys after they had made *pulque*. It is very likely that this story is related to the Aztec legend of the creation of this alcoholic drink, which, according to Sahagún, was a climactic point in the migration of the Mexica. The woman who discovered "the boring of the maguey was Mayahuel" and the man "who discovered the stick, the root, with which wine was made was Patecatl" (Sahagún, 1961: 193). Then other gods intervened in the creation of *pulque*: Tepuztecatl, Quatlapanqui, Tlilhoa, Papaiztac, Tzocaca. In the mountain Chichinauhia, they prepared a wine that excelled and that foamed up, because of this they called the mountain Popoçonaltepetl (1961: 193). The name Chichinauhia probably refers to the Chichinautzin ridge, which is the first mountain that makes up the escarpment where the Tepozteco ridge is located.

According to Tedlock, in the *Popol Vuh*, the death of the Four Hundred Boys "corresponds to early-evening settings of these stars. At the earthly level, among contemporary Quichés, the Pleiades symbolize a handful of seeds, and their disappearance in the west marks the proper time for the sowing of crops" (Tedlock, 1996: 35). Having long ago measured the orientation of the temple located in the Tepozteco Ridge (Aveni and Gibbs, 1976), Anthony Aveni believes that the temple was aligned to the celestial events that marked the beginning and the end of the agricultural cycle during the contact period (ca. 1550) (personal communication with Prof. Aveni, March 2002). According to him, five hundred years ago in the last half of March and nowadays in the first half of April, from the entrance to the temple but looking outwards along its perpendicular axis to the west north (25° NW), one could observe that in the evening, the Pleiades set exactly on the axis of the pyramid and just to the west of the sunset point

(personal communication with Prof. Aveni, March 2002). This event coincided with the beginning of the agriculture cycle. Therefore, it is very likely that for the Tepoztecs, as for the Quichés, the movement of the Pleiades marked this event.^v

Going back to the content of both legends, it is interesting that in the two stories, the heroes defeated their monster enemies through food. Tepozteco killed Xochicalcatl after it swallowed him. Hunahpu and Xbalanque enticed Zipacná into a crevice of a mountain with the promise of treats. Then they made the mountain fall on him (Tedlock, 1996: 85). They killed Earthquake, Zipacná's brother, in a similar manner. They made him eat a bird that had a spell and was coated with earth. When Earthquake ate it, he died (1996: 35, 87). In the two stories, eating is associated with self-magnification. The Hero twins killed Zipacná and Earthquake with food as a punishment for their arrogance. In the celebration at Cuernavaca, Tepozteco poured the contents of his plate onto his clothes to protest that the people of this town only allowed him in when he wore pretentious clothing.

In the next episode, Tepozteco, Hunahpu, and Xbalanque accepted their death and literally plunged into it; furthermore, the three deaths are in one way or another related to food. After transforming into different animals in order not to be cooked, Tepozteco jumped into Xochicalcatl's mouth. Even though Hunahpu and Xbalanque had passed the tests set to them and defeated the lords of Xibalba in the ball game, they knew that their passing away was inevitable (1996: 130). Their captors teased them because they would be killed inside an oven: "They must come. We'll go with the boys, to see the treat we've cooked up for them" (1996: 131). When the time came they jumped into the oven: "They grabbed each other by the hands and went head first into the oven" (1996: 131). However, the twins revived (1996: 132), and so did the Tepozteco.

After Hunahpu and Xbalanque resurrected, they reappeared "as two vagabonds" (1996: 132). Then they tricked the lords of Xibalba into asking the twins to sacrifice them, and by doing so they defeated these lords (Tedlock, 1996: 138). Tepozteco arrived dressed in rags to Cuernavaca. However, unlike the twins, because of this he was not accepted. So he changed clothes, and then he tricked the people of Cuernavaca by blinding them with wind and stealing their *teponaxtli*.

Finally, both stories justify hegemony; the *Popol Vuh*, that of the Quichés; the legend of the Tepozteco that of Tepoztlan. Nevertheless, as early as 1937, the people of Tepoztlan inserted the story of the bells of Mexico City's cathedral into the Tepozteco legend. It is possible that this tale existed until 1928 (version C) as a separate story. Perhaps the Tepoztecs incorporated it into the main account to explain the manner in which Tepoztlan's destiny switched from one of supremacy to one of poverty. During the precontact era, in the Classic period (Muller, 1951: 454) as well as in the post Classic one (Haskett, 1991: 9), Tepoztlan was an important settlement. However, during the colonial period and after Mexico's independence from Spain, many Tepoztecs lost their land to the *haciendas*, and they were forced to work there (Lewis, 1960: 20). The Mexican revolution worsened the situation (Tostado Gutiérrez, 1998: 185). For several decades, the people of this town endured hardship. It is likely that the episode in which the Tepoztecs let the prosperity's dove fly away explains the fate of the town.

So far, the resemblance between the *Popol Vuh* and the Tepozteco legend is extraordinary; both fit in content and structure. However, there is one separate event in the *Popol Vuh* that resembles another one in the legend of the Tepozteco, even if it doesn't match the structure of this story. When the Quiché lords went to Tollan to acquire rulership, they found the Lord Plumed Serpent (possibly Quetzalcoatl), and they were amazed because he turned himself into different animals:

On one occasion he would climb up to the sky; on another he would go down the road to Xibalba.

On another occasion he would be serpentine, becoming an actual serpent.

On yet another occasion he would make himself aquiline, and on another feline; he would become like an actual eagle or a jaguar in his appearance.

On another occasion it would be a pool of blood; he would become nothing but a pool of blood.

Truly his being was that of a lord of genius. All the other lords were fearful before him. (1996: 186).

These transformations recall those the Tepozteco underwent as the people of Xochicalco tried to cook him:

Entonces cargaron con él los topiles y fueron a ponerlo en una gran cazuela para que se cociese; pero se cuenta que no se cocía, sino que se convertía sucesivamente en gallo, en culebra, en pescado, mientras que el Xochicalcatl desfallecía de hambre [...] Se lo llevaron y lo arrojaron al horno, pero apenas cayó dentro empezó a transformarse sucesivamente en diversos animales: venado, gavilán, conejo, coyote, lobo, tigre (González Casanova, 1928: 45).

[Then, the topiles carried Tepozteco and put him in a big pot to cook. But the story says that he did not cook, instead he transformed into a rooster, a snake, a fish, while Xochicalcatl was starving [...] They [the topiles] took him to the oven, but as soon as he was inside he began to transform into different animals: deer, hawk, rabbit, coyote, wolf, tiger] (*The translation is mine*).

One hypothesis to explain the similarity between the *Popol Vuh* and the Tepozteco legend is Maya influence in central Mexico during the Late Classic period (A.D. 600-900). According to Tedlock, one example is "Mayan presence at Xochicalco and Cacaxtla" after the fall of Teotihuacan (Tedlock, 1996: 22). However, it is likely that the legend of the creation of *pulque* by the Four Hundred Boys in the *Popol Vuh* originated in central Mexico, for it is related to the mountains of this region. This fact suggests that the cultural influence was on the other direction, from central Mexico to Guatemala's highlands. Munro S. Edmonson explained that there were "five waves of major Mexican contact with Guatemala, to judge from archaeological remains: (1)

Olmec, (2) Teotihuacano, (3) Toltec, (4) Nahuatl, and (5) Aztec” (Edmonson, 1985: 107). He believed that during the early postclassic period, Nahuatl speakers introduced into the “western Guatemalan area” “motifs to Quiche mythology” (1985: 111). One of these was the Hero twins’ destruction of Seven Parrot and his sons, Zipacná and Earthquake.^{vi} Being an “extra creation,” this episode alters the original cycles of creation (1985: 111). As it has been said before, this episode is very similar to Tepozteco’s victory over Xochicalcatl. Consequently, the sources for the Tepozteco might not be Maya but Nahuatl.

THE “LEGEND OF TEPOZTECO” AND NAHUATL MYTHOLOGY

Myth of Mixcoatl-Camaxtli

The Tepoztecan story resembles this myth because most of the versions emphasize that as a child Tepozteco was a hunter who did marvelous deeds with his bow and arrows. This might be an example of the Nahuatl people’s commemoration of their Chichimec past. According to Torquemada, the Chichimecs were wild people who wore skin clothes; their weapons were bow and arrows, their principal activity was hunting, and they lived in caves (Torquemada, 1975: 58).^{vii} Henry B. Nicholson identified Mixcoatl-Camaxtli as the chief of the gods of his category “the Mixcoatl-Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli Complex.” These deities represented the way of life of the Chichimec ancestors: hunting and gathering (Nicholson, 1971: 426).^{viii} Thus, Mixcoatl-Camaxtli was the god of the hunters:

Del Idolo Camaxtli, de quien se ha hecho aqui mencion, eran mui devotos los Caçadores, porque les ajudasse a caçar, teniendolo por favorable, y propicio para el efecto de la caça; y asi, quando querian ir à caçar, ò pescar, primero se sacrificaban, y le ofrecian su sangre, ò otras cosas (Torquemada, 1723: 80).

Like Huitzilopochtli and Quetzalcoatl, in the ancient histories, Mixcoatl-Camaxtli is also described as one of the Chichimec leaders who took his people from the north to central Mexico: “Estos teochichimecas tenían por dios a Camaxtli (que es el mismo que los mexicanos llamaron Huitzilopochtli), el cual hablaba con ellos y les decía y revelaba todo lo que habían de hacer y en que partes y lugares habían de poblar y permanecer” (Torquemada, 1975: 356).

Another element in common between the myths of Mixcoatl-Camaxtli and Huitzilopochtli can be found in the *Códice Chimalpopoca*. Four hundred *mixcoas* led the Chichimecs during their peregrination, but Itzpapalotl ate them. The only one who escaped was Iztacmixcoatl, also known as Mixcoaxocoyotl or Mixcoatl junior (*Códice Chimalpopoca*, 1975: 3). Iztacmixcoatl killed Itzpapalotl by invoking the four hundred dead *mixcoas*. This story resembles considerably the myth of Huitzilopochtli’s birth, as well as the destruction of the Four Hundred Boys or the gods of *pulque* in the *Popol Vuh*. The legend of Iztacmixcoatl is also associated with that of Quetzalcoatl.

Myth of Quetzalcoatl

The first point of contact between the “Legend of Tepozteco” and Quetzalcoatl’s myth is their conception. As discussed in Chapter III, Chimalma conceived Quetzalcoatl after swallowing a precious green stone, a *chalchihuitl* (*Códice Chimalpopoca*, 1975: 7).

The Immaculate Conception of Quetzalcoatl evokes that of Tepozteco, especially in the 1937 version, in which a priestess became pregnant after swallowing a bead.

There is a striking resemblance between the wind's role in the conception of Tepozteco and that of Quetzalcoatl as a wind god in the creation of *pulque*. As soon as the gods had created man, they decided to make something that could provide him with joy. Ehecatl Quetzalcoatl, the wind god, went to the second heaven, to look for the virgin goddess Mayahuel. He kidnapped her from the monstrous Tzitzimime spirit that guarded her and took her to earth. There, Ehecatl and Mayahuel transformed each into a branch and joined one another in one tree. But the Tzitzimime spirit, sometimes identified as Mayahuel's grandmother, went after her. Mayahuel tried to flee, but in the attempt, "her grandmother" captured her, broke her apart, and gave the pieces to other Tzitzimime spirits. They devoured them, but left some crumbs behind. When they had left, Quetzalcoatl picked up these pieces; as soon as he touched them, they became bones. He buried them and cried over them. Some time later, a plant with a very peculiar shape grew from that spot. The tears of the wind god had given new life to Mayahuel. Moreover, the tears became the juice in the heart of the plant, which would later be turned into *pulque*. This heart was surrounded by bone-like leaves with lateral thorns that looked like bloody teats, in order to recall Mayahuel's suffering (Mateos Higuera, 1994: 11-21). Quetzalcoatl (representing wind) and his tears (representing water) gave life to the maguey and to *pulque*. The same elements that brought *pulque* into existence were implicated in the conception of Tepozteco (a *pulque* god), for it was the wind or its manifestation (a bird's feather) that impregnated a woman who was bathing in a spring. Consequently, Tepozteco was the son of the wind just as *pulque* was Quetzalcoatl's creation.

In the sixteenth or early seventeenth century, Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl wrote an account similar to the birth of Tepozteco and the mythical creation of *pulque*. Nicholson included this story among the "Late Probably Distorted, Versions of the Basic Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl of Tollan Tale" (Nicholson, 2001: 100). In it, one manifestation of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl was born as the son of "the next-to-last Toltec ruler, Tecpancaltzin or Iztaccaltzin" in the year Ce Acatl (Nicholson, 2001: 124). This boy was named Meconetzin 'niño del maguey' (2001: 117), and his birth recalls that of Tepozteco. A beautiful girl named Xochitl and her parents visited the ruler of Tollan, Tecpancaltzin, to offer him what they had discovered: "la miel prieta de maguey" (2001: 117). Without her parents' knowledge, Tecpancaltzin made her his concubine, and she gave birth to Meconetzin. Her parents were very distressed when they found out the truth, but the Toltec ruler appeased them when he promised that this boy would be his successor (2001: 117).

In the *Histoire du Mechique*, the resemblance between the "Legend of Tepozteco" and the myth of Quetzalcoatl goes further than their birth. In it, Quetzalcoatl is the son of two gods: Camaxtli and Chimalma. Since his mother died at childbirth, his grandparents raised him. Then he was taken to his father. Out of jealousy, his brothers made several attempts to kill him but failed (note the similarity with the *Popol Vuh*). At the same time, Quetzalcoatl stood out as a great hunter. Since his father had discovered Quetzalcoatl's brothers' plan to kill him, they tried to eliminate him, but Quetzalcoatl saved him and killed his brothers (Nicholson, 2001: 13).

Another similarity between the “Legend of Tepozteco” and that of Quetzalcoatl is that a peregrination followed a conflict with a major enemy. After defeating Xochicalcatl and stealing Cuernavaca’s *teponaztli*, Tepozteco travelled from Xochicalco to Cuernavaca and then back to Tepoztlan. Several versions of the legend list how he transformed and named the landscape as he crossed it (see below). According to Nicholson, in the codices *Telleriano-Remensis* and *Vaticanus A*, Quetzalcoatl led the Toltecs away from a monster that the people had brought upon them due to their transgressions (2001: 71). Nicholson adds that in the *Histoyre du Mechique* and in fray Gerónimo de Mendieta’s *Historia eclesiástica indiana*, Tezcatlipoca personified this monster. In the former, he terrified Quetzalcoatl because he “transformed himself into several different animals and monsters” (Nicholson, 2001: 14). In the latter account while Tezcatlipoca played ball with Quetzalcoatl (note the similarity with the *Popol Vuh*), he turned into a jaguar. Quetzalcoatl was horrified, and he left with his people (2001: 59). Tezcatlipoca’s transformations recall those of Tepozteco (see below). A great difference between Tepozteco and Quetzalcoatl is that the former defeated his enemy, whereas the latter was defeated and thus had to flee. However, both undertook a peregrination. Like Tepozteco, Quetzalcoatl stopped in specific places, modified each place into its final form by his actions, for example, by leaving the mark of his hands on stones: “y puso muy muchas señales en las tierras y caminos según que dicen” (Sahagún, 1997: 203), and named places (1997: 202), “y dio todos los nombres a las sierras y montes y lugares” (1997: 204). The fate of Tepozteco’s enemies, the people from Cuernavaca, is analogous to that of some of Quetzalcoatl’s followers. In some versions, with his urine or with water from his gourd, Tepozteco created a ravine that separated him from his enemies. In others, he turned his enemies into hills or into rocks. According to Nicholson, in the codices *Telleriano-Remensis* and *Vaticanus A*, several of Topiltzin’s followers fell into a ravine that sealed on top of them; others carved a tunnel to pass through a mountain, but the mountain fell on them, and they turned into stone (note the similarity with Zipacná’s death) (Nicholson, 2001: 71). In Mendieta’s *Historia eclesiástica indiana*, the people who observed the game in which Tezcatlipoca transformed himself into a jaguar were so frightened “that they stampeded into a barranca, through which a river flowed close by, and drowned” (2001: 59).

In many accounts, for instance in the *Histoyre du Mechique* and in Mendieta’s account, when Quetzalcoatl arrives at the end of his peregrination, he dies, is cremated, and ascends into the heavens transformed into a star, Venus (Nicholson, 2001: 16, 59). The *Histoyre de Mechique* emphasizes that the smoke that came from his body turned into Venus (2001: 16). Perhaps the column of smoke that indicated the victory of Tepozteco evokes this event. As a matter of fact, version G ends when the Virgin of Nativity transformed Tepozteco into the morning star. In many of the stories (I, G, J), like Quetzalcoatl, Tepozteco went to an unknown place. However, almost the same versions (H, I, J) mention that it is very likely that he went to *La Casa del Tepozteco*.

Quetzalcoatl’s legend blends with that of Mixcoatl-Camaxtli and of Huitzilopochtli. In Diego Muñoz Camargo’s *Historia de Tlaxcala*, when the Teochichimeca arrived at the province of Teohuitznahua, their leader, Mixcoatl-Camaxtli, married one of the principal noble women of the region: Coatlicue. She gave birth to Quetzalcoatl (Nicholson, 2001: 82). In a letter from Viceroy don Antonio de Mendoza to his brother don Diego de Mendoza, later paraphrased by Gonzalo Fernández

de Oviedo, Moctezuma's legend intermingles with that of the three deities. It starts with the coming from the north of four hundred warriors led by Captain *Orchilobos* (Huitzilopochtli). After several battles, they settled in the middle of the lake. *Orchilobos* conquered several towns and then left, promising that he would return (2001: 89). Some years later, a priestess of the temple of this deified captain picked up a feather that had fallen from the idol. She became pregnant and gave birth to Guateçuma (Moctezuma). No one believed that this had been an immaculate conception; hence, she was banished from Tenochtitlan. However, Guateçuma grew up to become a great warrior. He entered the Tenochca army and died fighting against *Tascalala* (Tlaxcala) (2001: 89).

Myth of Huitzilopochtli

The mythical birth of Huitzilopochtli parallels the Immaculate Conception of the Hero twins, Quetzalcoatl, and Tepozteco, as well as the killing of the Four Hundred Boys in the *Popol Vuh*. The birth of the "historical" leader of the Mexicas also resembles the birth of Tepozteco. On the other hand, the story of the Aztec migration to the Basin of Mexico calls to mind the peregrination that Quetzalcoatl and Tepozteco underwent. It seems as though the myth of Huitzilopochtli summoned up all the other stories. Thus, the account reflects how the Aztecs incorporated existing mythology into a legend or myth that would justify their hegemony.

In Aztec tradition, a woman named Coatlicue lived on a mountain named Coatepec. One day she was sweeping as penitence and she saw a ball of feathers; she took it and put it inside her skirt. Then she became pregnant. Her other children--Coyolxauhqui and the four hundred gods (Centzonhuitznahua)--became very angry with her, for she had dishonored the family. So, they decided to kill her. Gradually, they approached the mountain where Coatlicue was. When they got there, Coatlicue gave birth to Huitzilopochtli, who was born as a full man dressed with his accoutrements. He decapitated Coyolxauhqui and threw her body down the hill. When it reached the ground, it broke in pieces. Then, he fought against the four hundred gods. He killed many of them on Coatepec Mountain, and he chased those who had fled to the valley and killed them. Then, he was honored as the god of war (Sahagún, 1997: 191-192). The points of contact between this story and that of Tepozteco are the following: Huitzilopochtli was conceived on a mountain from feathers; his siblings tried to kill him and his mother, and he was able to save both. The story also evokes Zipacná's killing of the Four Hundred Boys, and therefore, the four hundred gods of *pulque* who became the Pleiades. Eduard Seler interpreted this legend as "the dawning sun fighting off the gods of darkness. With his Xiuhcoatl fire serpent, Huitzilopochtli is the newly born sun shooting out burning rays, and, clearly enough, the Centzon Huitznahua are the stars who at every dawn are vanquished by the rising sun..." (Taube, 1993: 47).

Sahagún (1997: 610), Motolinía (1995: 146), and Durán (1967: 28) affirm that the mythical figure who led the Mexica through their peregrinations was Mecitli or Mexitli; because of this, the name of the people who founded Mexico-Tenochtitlan was Mexica. Motolinía indicates that this was the name of the Mexicas' main god: "su principal dios o ídolo el cual tenía dos nombres, conviene a saber, *Vitzilipuchtli* y el otro *Mexitli*" (Motolinía, 1995: 46), whereas, Sahagún (1961, Book 10: 189) and Durán (1967: 28) explain that Mecitli was the name of the priest who guided the Mexica. According to Sahagún, this word meant 'maguey-rabbit' because *me* stood for *metl* 'maguey' and *citli*

stood for ‘rabbit’ (Sahagún, 1997: 610),^{ix} and its origin as a name was the following story:

It is said that when he was born they named him Citli. And they placed him in a maguey leaf, where he grew strong; wherefore was he named Mecitli. And this one, when he matured, became a priest, a keeper of the god (Sahagún, 1961, Book 10: 189).

Mecitli’s origin resembles that of Tepoztecatl, for the latter was taken into the wilderness to die, but a *maguey* leaf protected him and fed him with its juice. In both instances, the plant of *maguey* is identified as a “mother-earth” that gives and preserves life.

During their peregrination, the Mexicas modified the landscape. According to Durán, the Mexicas cultivated the land where they stopped. When they continued their pilgrimage, the old and the sick remained in this place. Therefore they had an important role in the process of inhabiting the land (Durán, 1967: 29). On the other hand, the *Crónica mexicáyotl* details the places they went through one by one, as though someone was marking the itinerary on a map (Alvarado Tezozomoc, 1975: 35). This part of Huitzilopochtli’s story recalls the journey that Quetzalcoatl and Tepozteco carried out; especially because the Mexicas also named the geographic locations they traversed (1975: 26).^x

In the stories of Quetzalcoatl and Tepozteco, a conflict had preceded their migration, while in Huitzilopochtli’s it took place during the trip. Sahagún described the confrontation between Huitzilopochtli and Coyolxauhqui in a mythical manner, whereas Durán and Alvarado Tezozomoc explain the historical event behind it. In Coatepec a group of people, under the leadership of Coyolxauh, rebelled against Huitzilopochtli, for they wanted to stay in this place. Therefore, exactly at midnight Huitzilopochtli killed them and cut out their hearts (Durán, 1967: 33). He did so to set an example against rebellion and to demonstrate his authority (1967: 34). Alvarado Tezozomoc adds that Huitzilopochtli ate them at night (Alvarado Tezozómoc, 1975: 35). The “eating motif” that characterized the relationship between Xochicalcatl and the people of Morelos appears again in the *Crónica mexicáyotl*. Copil, the son of the offended sister of Huitzilopochtli, wanted to kill and to eat Huitzilopochtli in order to avenge his mother: “Está bien, oh madre mía; puesto que ya lo sé iré a buscarle adonde se fué a acomodar, a asentarse, e iré a destruirle y *comérmele*” (1975: 40; italics mine). Furthermore, Huitzilopochtli used one of Tepozteco’s most powerful weapons: water. When the Mexicas had first arrived at Coatepec, Huitzilopochtli ordered his priests to change the course of a river so that it would irrigate the valley (Durán, 1967: 32). After the rebellion at Coatepec, he ordered them to let the river continue in its former course. In that way, the region became sterile (1967: 34). They left and continued their peregrination.

Finally, Copil’s rebellion recalls the fight of the people from Cuernavaca against Tepozteco, for Copil summoned other people from the region to join him against Huitzilopochtli (1967: 38), just as other towns joined Cuernavaca against Tepozteco (1937, 1942, 1959, and 1994 versions).

THE LEGEND OF THE TEPOZTECO AND CATHOLIC MYTHOLOGY

The legend of the Tepozteco is a perfect example of the syncretism that characterizes Mexican folklore. Catholic influence is as obvious as pre-Hispanic impact. The immaculate conception of the Tepozteco recalls the marvelous birth of the Hero twins, but also that of Jesus in the New Testament. In seven versions of Tepozteco's story (1928A, 1937, 1942, 1959, 1994, 1995, and 2002) the baby was put inside a box that was later taken to a stream or a ravine. This recalls the story of Moses in the book of Exodus. After Moses was born, his mother put the baby inside a box that she left in the river. The pharaoh's daughter found and adopted him. The 1942 version of the Tepoztecan legend is an equivalent of this account. In it, the daughter of Tepoztlan's ruler found Tepozteco and adopted him. In other versions, an old couple finds and keeps the baby. This episode evokes the birth of Isaac in the Bible, especially because in three accounts (1928A, 1937, and 1994), the old woman pretended to have given birth to Tepozteco, and thus amazed the people of the town. In the book of Genesis, Sara, Abraham's wife, conceived and gave birth to Isaac in her old age; thus, the people marveled and considered this birth as God's miracle. The Tepoztecan legend then retakes Moses' story. Tepozteco fought against Xochicalcatl in order to free the people of Morelos just as Moses struggled against Egypt's pharaoh to obtain the Jews' liberty. To signal his victory, Tepozteco sent forth a column of white smoke. Prior to his ordeal, he had told his adoptive parents that they would see a column of white smoke if he was victorious, of black smoke if he was defeated. These signals correspond to a perfectly Catholic tradition: white smoke indicates that a new pope is elected, whereas black smoke indicates that the cardinals are still debating who should become pope.

After Tepozteco and Moses defeated their antagonists, they started a peregrination. However, the people of Cuernavaca in the former case, Egyptians in the latter, persecuted the heroes. Then, Tepozteco opened the earth with his urine or water from his gourd, and in this manner, created a ravine that separated him from his persecutors. On the other hand, Moses divided the waters of the sea with his divine staff. When the Jews had crossed, he brought down the water of the sea onto the Egyptians, drowning them.

Furthermore, two of the versions end with episodes in which Tepozteco seems to have taken the place of Jesus. The 1994 story ends when the Virgin of Nativity transformed Tepozteco into the morning star. This event evokes the ascension of Jesus into heavens after his resurrection. On the other hand, the 1995 account ends with the statement that Tepozteco will come back at the end of the world, just as Jesus is supposed to come after the final resurrection.

Since colonial chronicles, such as those of Sahagún, Motolinía, Durán, and Torquemada, studied indigenous cultures through a European Christian perspective, it is very difficult to distinguish the authentic precontact sources of the "Legend of Tepozteco." It is very likely that Catholic mythology also influenced the myths of Mixcoatl-Camaxtli, Quetzalcoatl, and Huitzilopochtli.

CONCLUSIONS

The legend of the Tepozteco reveals the complex processes that have brought and kept into being Mexican folklore. First of all, the continuity of the story in an almost unchanged manner through a time span of seventy-four years is probably the result of two

factors. The first is the increasing interest of scholars in recording oral legends. The other is the significance that ancient tradition has always had for the people of Tepoztlan. It is likely that the two dynamics have cooperated in the preservation of the Tepoztecan legend.

Probably, the recording of the story into written accounts served to alter its evolution. For instance, up to 1959, there are several distinct legends about the same character: the Tepozteco. After this time, these stories tend to converge into one longer cycle. Perhaps, this change is also a product of how the Tepoztecan conceived the situation of their town. They might have added the story of Tepozteco and the bells of Mexico City's cathedral to explain why Tepoztlan lost its destiny to be hegemonic, and was instead doomed into poverty. The last version (2002) stresses not the poverty, but the resistant character of Tepoztlan's inhabitants.

The legend also discloses the process by which two mythologies have come together into Mexican folklore: Mesoamerican and Catholic mythologies. The stories of Tepozteco, the *Popol Vuh* Hero twins, Mixcoatl-Camaxtli, Quetzalcoatl, Huitzilopochtli, and even those of Jesus and Moses have several things in common: a miraculous conception, a confrontation, and a peregrination. It is very likely that these elements are universal. However, there are several "authentic" Mesoamerican characteristics in the legend of the Tepozteco. First of all, Tepozteco was a trickster. He was a trickster-hunter like Hunahpu, Xbalanque, and Mixcoatl-Camaxtli. He is reminiscent of Quetzalcoatl, because like him, Tepozteco embodies the forces of wind and water. His final association with Mesoamerican cosmology is that he is one of the four-hundred *pulque* gods that are related to the mountains of the region, to the agricultural cycle, and to the astronomical phenomena of ancient Mexico.

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ⁱ Pablo González Casanova collected three legends: he transcribed them from the original Nahuatl version, and he included a Spanish translation. The first is the transcription of a manuscript that the Tepoztecan Bernardino Verazaluce bequeathed to his son Genaro Verazaluce (Version 1928A). Bernardino was born in Tepoztlan in a humble family, but later in his life he migrated to Mexico City. At the National Museum, he was an assistant of a prominent scholar: Cecilio A. Robelo (González Casanova, 1928: 26-27). Another Indian from Tepoztlan, Maximino Navarrete, recounted another version of the legend to González Casanova (1928: 26) (Version 1928B). Finally, an Indian from Milpa Alta, Enedina González, is responsible for the third story (1928: 26) (Version 1928C).

ⁱⁱ She was a student of the course Mexican Folkways taught by Fernando Horcasitas in the Mexico City College (Tulane University. Horcasitas Articles. Box 15. Folder 14).

ⁱⁱⁱ The foundation of this methodology is based on Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*.

^{iv} Pablo González Casanova published the two legends in 1928 in the *Revista mexicana de estudios históricos*

^v For the importance of the Pleiades in the agricultural cycle of the Quiché Maya see B. Tedlock 1982: 181, 183, 185.

^{vi} "Seven Parrot is a distinctly Nahuatl character. Though he is named in Quiche, he appears to have had a Nahuatl day name, probably Seven Cozcacauhtli, and his two sons also had calendric names: Cipactonal (Mayanized to Cipacna) and Ome Icxit (Maya Cak r Aqan). Their mother was Chimalmat (the mother of Quetzalcoatl as well)." (Edmonson, 1985: 111).

^{vii} "Tomaron nombre de chichimecas estas gentes (que así se nombraron) del efecto, significa su nombre; porque chichimecatl tanto quiere decir como chupador o mamador; porque chichiliztli es el acto de mamar o la mamadura; y chichinaliztli es el acto de chupar o la chupadura y así se llama el pecho y teta de la mujer y la de cualquiera otro animal chichihualli; y porque estas gentes en sus principios se comían las carnes de los animales que mataban crudas y les chupaban la sangre a manera del que mama, por eso se llamaron chichimecas, que quiere decir chupadores o mamadores" (Torquemada, 1975: 58).

^{viii} However, their nature was fundamentally stellar. Therefore, in pictorial manuscripts, Mixcoatl-Camaxtli wears Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli's attire. Seler affirmed that as a warrior and hunter, his stellar role associated him with "the soul of the dead warrior transformed into the star, which ties in with the man-star role of the prisoner destined for sacrifice" (Nicholson, 1971: 426).

^{ix} Schroeder points out that *citli* refers to ‘grandmother,’ whereas *tochtli* refers to ‘rabbit’ (personal communication, May 2003).

^x “Y pues bastante por todas partes anduvieron los mexicanos por la tierra de los chichimecas, en algún buen lugar permanecían, por veinte años se asentaban, cuando se sienten a gusto en algún lugar se asientan por quince años, como por diez, como por cinco años se asientan, como por cuatro años, como por tres años se asientan [...] y pues por todas partes venían hacia acá nombrando la tierra” (Alvarado Tezozomoc, 1975: 26).