



## Anales de Tepoztlán

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# The Legend of the Tepozteco as the Cosmology of Tepoztlán

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### **The Legend of the Tepozteco and its relation to the Cosmology of Tepoztlán**

The purpose of this paper is to present the cosmology of a town in the state of Morelos (Mexico) called Tepoztlán. This town existed since pre-Hispanic times, and up to this moment its inhabitants have preserved one legend, that of the Tepozteco, which explains the mythological origin of the local god, of many of the topographical traits of the region, and of its political importance. However, this legend has undergone many changes as Tepoztlán passed through different historic moments, such as the conquest and the colonization. This paper deals with the information about the Tepozteco registered in colonial documents that describe pre-Hispanic beliefs. There is not a lot of information, and it is neither cohesive nor orderly, but the aim of this study is to join the different threads of the story. The first part of the paper includes a brief discussion on the role that myths, rites and geography played in the cosmology of Mesoamerican peoples, as well as general information about Tepoztlán, such as geographic location, weather, agriculture, and political information. Then follows an account of the pre-Hispanic Tepoztécatl, myths related to the origin of pulque, a discussion of the significance of pulque in Mesoamerican thought, and finally an explanation of the importance of the four hundred gods or the Pleiades.

**Myths, rites and geography: cosmovision.**

Johanna Broda defines cosmovision as the way the Mesoamerican people structured their ideas about the environment that surrounded them and the cosmos where they situated man's life. In this manner, nature was a cultural perception and construction through which man explained the world and his place in universe (Broda, 2001: 166). Myths and rites are the ultimate expressions of cosmovision.

Agricultural rites constituted the core of Mesoamerican religion. They integrated man with nature (landscape, seasons, agriculture), and originated social cohesion and thus a sense of community (: 228). They also structured and legitimized social institutions such as kingship, war and trade (Townsend, 1992: 183). "Great public religious spectacles" brought people together because they transmitted "a powerful emotional and imaginative appeal" through "common experiences and beliefs and a shared grammar of visual symbols" (: 172). During the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the Aztec's policy was to incorporate the religion of the towns they conquered. These cults and their deities acquired a new meaning and helped to create and preserve the Aztec "specialized, stratified, and heterogeneous society" (: 172). Therefore, art, architecture, festivals and rites had the aim of achieving social cohesion among a "diversified population" (: 172).

The basic cycles of Aztec ritual were related to rain and maize. The purpose of these rites was to demand sufficient rain to keep the agricultural cycle going. The different stages of maize growth were celebrated in specific rituals (Broda, 2001: 215). Sacrifice was the most important part of these rites because its role was renewal; it perpetuated the cyclic processes. "Blood was believed to be a primary ritual nourishing agent, assuring the arrival of water at the change of the dry to the rainy season and the regeneration of the earth for the annual planting" (Townsend, 1992: 179). Sacrifice was performed in trouble or critical months of the year, for it symbolized and at the same time brought about "the transformation of death into life" (: 178). The most important rites were those that marked the beginning of the agricultural cycle as well as the passing from the dry to the rainy season and the ones that indicated the end of this cycle, and thus the time of harvest. Mesoamerican people oriented their temples to the special events that took place in the sky during the dates that marked the beginning of those specific periods (Broda, 2001: 225).

The authority of Aztec kings and lords came from the fulfillment of their obligation "to assure the coming of the rains and the regeneration of nature" (Townsend, 1992: 185). Consequently, performing rites served to legitimate kingship. Rites, especially those to Tlaloc, followed the structure of myths. When the world was still incomplete and the land was dry and unproductive, a hero emerged. He undertook an odyssey in search of a life-giving gift. As soon as he found it, he made an offering and then took the present home (: 183). During rituals, rulers reenacted the saga of the hero.

Conquest and colonization did not alter the geographic, climatic and agricultural conditions and cycles of Mesoamerica. Since these factors determined the Mesoamerican cosmology and the calendar, they persisted (Broda, 2001: 168). However, the conquest did bring about a major change. In pre-Hispanic times, the agricultural cult and calendar were part of the state and its ideology. When the Spanish government replaced the Indian one, agricultural rites became local cults of peasants (: 169). As Christianity expanded, the setting of these rites moved from the

cities to the landscape (hills, caves, maize fields) (: 169). The "syncretic" religion that was formed during the colony incorporated parts of pre-Hispanic cult and religion, especially the cult that revolved around agriculture. For instance, the Indians used the festivities of the Santa Cruz (May 3rd), Día de Todos Santos and Día de Muertos (November 1st and 2nd) to mark the beginning and the end of the rainy season and of the agricultural cycle of maize (: 204). The Indians retained their rites as well as the pre-Hispanic sacred landscape formed by sanctuaries on hills and caves. In this manner, communities preserved their cultural identity and succeeded in their resistance to acculturation. Tepoztlán is a great example of this process.

### **General information.**

Tepoztlán is located northeast of Cuernavaca, the capital of Morelos. A group of mountains separates the Valley of Mexico from the state of Morelos. Tepoztlán is found below the Ridge of Tepoztlán, which rises from the southern slope of these mountains. Rare formations and capricious shapes caused by corrosion of rains and wind characterize the ridge. Each of the peaks that make up the ridge has a different name:

The Tlahuiltepetl, the flaming mountain, the Ehecatl, the windy mountain, the Papalotzin, Cihuapapalotzin, or Zuapapalotzin, the butterfly mountain, the Tlamintepetl, the wounding mountain or the trench from which people are hurt; the Chalchiuhtepetl, the emerald or treasure mountain, the Ocelotepetl, the tiger mountain, and a kind of needle or obelisk many metres in height, which is called Topiltzin, that is staff or little son (Salinas, 1936: 8).

The people of Tepoztlán erected a temple for their local god, known in pre-Hispanic times as Tepoztécatl and nowadays as Tepozteco, in the Cerro del Viento or Ehecatepetlicpac (Mateos Higuera, 1994: 43). Today this peak is known as the Tepozteco. This cerro lies to the north of Tepoztlán. At its base there is a spot called Axitla. "This means where the water rises, and in truth, a small spring gushes out there" (Salinas, 1936: 30). On the peak, there is a platform divided into two parts; one to the west; the other, to the east. The western part forms the porch of the temple. On the pyramid one can see the ruins of the shrine "erected in honour of Tepoztécatl, the god of pulque" (: 34). Although the access to the temple was and still is very difficult, Tepoztécatl's cult figure was greatly venerated with offerings of copan, rubber, flowers, food and pulque. It is said that pilgrims came from remote regions, such as Chiapas and Guatemala, to honor him (Mateos Higuera, 1994: 44).

In the region of Morelos, the year is made up of two seasons, the dry season, which takes place during January, February, March, April, November, and December; and the rainy season, which takes place during June, July, August, and September. There is little rain during May and October (Grisby, 1992: 111). The passing of these two seasons has shaped the life of the inhabitants of Tepoztlán since pre-Hispanic times, for they, like the rest of the population of Morelos, were an agricultural community. The crops grown in Morelos were the standard ones for Mesoamerica: maize, beans, squash, tomatoes, and chiles (Haskett, 1991: 9).

Like the rest of Mesoamerica, Morelos was organized in "units made up of a dominant altepetl (a compound made up of atl, water, and tepetl, hill or mountain) to which other altepetl, each retaining its own rulers owed economic and political services. There were six dominant altepetls:

Cuauhnáhuac "probably the most significant power" (: 9), Oaxtepec, Yautepec, Yecapixtla, Totolapan, and Ocuituco. Tepoztlán was a "largely independent altepetl" which constituted "a seventh significant power in the region" (: 9). During the colony this organization continued to be so:

...the centers which retained the greatest amount of political power after the arrival of the Spanish were the same altepetl that had been able to make the most of the earlier Mexica conquest of the region: Cuauhnáhuac, Yautepec, Oaxtepec, Yecapixtla, and Tepoztlán... (: 12).

### **The pre-Hispanic Tepoztécatl**

The inhabitants of Tepoztlán claim to have kept the traditional legend since pre-Hispanic times through oral tradition. Unfortunately, there are no records of the legend either in codices or in colonial accounts about the Nahuatl culture. However, the god Tepoztécatl is mentioned in two codices: the Codex Magliabechiano and the Florentine Codex. In these codices, he is associated with pulque and with the four hundred gods of pulque. Many other elements derive from these associations.

In the Codex Magliabechiano, Tepoztécatl is one of the four hundred gods related to pulque. The text that accompanies its image, though it describes another of the pulque gods, is the following:

*Esta fiesta es de un demonio q esta aqui q se llama papaztac q era unos de quatrocientos dioses. borrachos. q los yndios tenian de diversos nonbres. pero en comun. se llamavan todos totochti quiere dezir conejos. y quando los yndios tenian segado y coxidos sus mahizes se enborrachaban y bailavan invocando a este demonio. Y a otros destes quatrocientos ansi de las figures q van adelante hazian lo mismo (Codex Magliabechiano, 48 verso).*

The text that should go with the illustration of Tepoztécatl is the following:

*Esta es una figura de una gran vellaqueria q un pueblo q se dize tepuztlan. tenia por rrito y era q quando algun yndio moria borracho. los otros deste pueblo hazian gran fiesta con hachas de cobre. con que cortan la leña en las manos. este pueblo es par de Yautepeque. Vasallos del señor marques del Valle (Codex Magliabechiano, 49 verso).*

According to Elizabeth Boone, the inscription "vasallos del señor marques del Valle" indicates that "the year 1529 may be considered the earliest date for a portion of the text" (Boone, 1983: 151) because in 1529 Cortés received the lands mentioned in this text. Later on, Boone adds "the last year in which the prototype could have been painted and written was 1553" (: 152). This indicates that the first written records of the Tepoztécatl were very early.

In the Magliabechiano, he appears as a green warrior, with gold, jade, feather and plant ornaments. He wears a nose ring identified by Mateos Higuera as a yacametztlī, nose ring with a moon shape. His shield is that of the pulque gods: its border is blue; inside it, two black bands surround a red one. On the red band, there is a yacametztlī and it is surrounded by four petal-like figures (Mateos Higuera, 1994: 45). In front of him there is a copper ax, which is related to his name. Tepoztécatl means "native of Tepoztlán", and Tepoztlán means place of copper, for tepuztlī is copper (: 44. See Fig. 1).

Elizabeth Boone indicates that Francisco Cervantes de Salazar might have used the Codex Magliabechiano as a source for the Crónica de la Nueva España written between 1558 and 1566 (Boone, 1983: 93). This is especially obvious in his descriptions of the pulque gods Papaztac and Tepoztécatl, for they are very similar to the texts in the Codex. Nevertheless, an interesting fact is that Cervantes de Salazar included this information among the "calendrical and festive material" (: 94). Consequently, the celebrations of the pulque gods, as well as that of Tepoztécatl, might have been part of the cyclic festivities.

### **The creation of pulque**

Even though the Codex Magliabechiano does not give further information about the four-hundred pulque gods or about Tepoztécatl, there are certain elements that it presents that are related to other Mesoamerican myths about pulque and creation: Tepoztécatl was one of the four-hundred pulque gods. These were identified with the rabbit (tochtli), and they were related to agriculture, for they were honored after harvest with ritual mass drinking. About Tepoztlán, we know that drunkenness and copper axes had a special meaning, for the Indians celebrated with copper axes when one of them died of drunkenness.

The figure of the rabbit, eighth of the twenty-day signs, was the symbol of the pulque gods. According to one legend, a rabbit discovered pulque when by accident it scratched the heart of the maguey and tasted its juice. The rabbit came back the next day because it enjoyed the sweetness of the liquid, but by then the juice had already fermented, and the rabbit got drunk (Mateos Higuera, 1994: 25). The rabbit might symbolize fertility, for, as it is common knowledge, rabbits reproduce themselves in great numbers. Moreover, in the Nahuatl culture the rabbit was intrinsically linked to the moon. When the fifth sun was created, two suns rose from the fire at Teotihuacan. The gods threw a rabbit to dim the light of the second sun. Since then, there is a rabbit inside the circumference of the moon, visible at plain sight. According to Patricia Anawalt, rabbits were related to maguey because they lived among them, and both were related to the moon and to fertility:

*...the Aztecs saw a rabbit in there. Like the prolific rabbit, the lunar gods were connected with fertility, probably because the menses suggested a lunar cycle. In addition, the white, viscous pulque evoked milk and seminal fluid. Linked to the moon and the maguey plant, rabbits thus embodied a wide range of fertility symbolism... (Cordova, 2001: 7-8).*

Mesoamerican people linked the moon to fertility and to creation because the gestation period is the same as the moon phase cycle. Mateos Higuera indicates that the yacametzli (nose ring) that the Centzontochtli (the four hundred rabbit gods of pulque) wore had a moon shape to denote the influence of this celestial body in the quantity of juice produced by the maguey (Mateos Higuera, 1994: 28). James Cordova indicates that these iconographic features also referred to the day-sign rabbit (Cordova, 2001: 7). Furthermore, the calendrical date "One Rabbit was the day-sign of the earth; here the earth rebels against humanity by withholding her fruits" (Burkhart, 1989: 77).

The association between pulque, fertility and agriculture is more evident in the pulque goddess

Mayahuel: "an earth-mother form with four hundred breasts and whose headdress in the Mixtecan Borgia Codex seems to link her with Tlaloc" (Taylor, 1979: 31). The connection between Mayahuel, the rabbit and pulque is evident on Diaz and Rodgers' Plate 12 of the Codex Borgia (Cordova, 2001: 7). Mayahuel is depicted pointing at the day-sign Rabbit, whereas a vessel with pulque is pictured over her. In this manner, she "is represented as the patron deity of the day-sign Rabbit" (: 7. See Fig. 2). The legend of Mayahuel's birth is characterized by the idea of death and rebirth, which relates to the cycle of life and death, of dry and rainy season, of planting and harvesting, of "dawning and sowing". The legend also brings together the plant of the maguey with the natural forces that bring it into being: wind and water.

As soon as the gods had created man, they decided to make something that could provide him with joy. Ehécatl 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, Ehécatl and Mayahuel transformed each into one branch and joined one another in one tree. (This event in the story might have been an attempt of the Nahuatl people to explain sex). 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). The tears of the god gave way to pulque, just as the tears of the children sacrificed during the rite of Atlcahualo attracted rain (Broda, 2001: 187). Perhaps this analogy indicates that for the Aztecs, pulque represented and evoked rain.

In the Florentine Codex, Sahagún explained that there was an intimate relationship between Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl (the wind god) and Tlaloc (the rain god), for the former prepared the way for the latter (: 180). Richard Townsend makes the same association: "In the metaphoric language of Aztec poetry Quetzalcoatl ('quetzal/feathered serpent') was a term that described the great wind storms that brought rain" (Townsend, 1992: 182). Thus, wind originated and preceded rain, and both brought about agriculture, just like Quetzalcoatl (representing wind) and his tears (representing water) gave life to the maguey and to pulque.

The section of the Florentine Codex that is about the Mexica people (Book ten, chapter twenty nine) includes another myth of the origin of pulque; furthermore, it presents many elements in common with other myths, including that of the Tepozteco. Fray Bernardino de Sahagún explained the origin of the word Mexicatli or Mexica from the combination of two words: me, maguey, and citli, rabbit (Sahagún, 1961: 189). The priest that led the Mexica was called Mecitli:

*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 (: 189).*

Mecitli's origin resembles that of Tepoztécatl, 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. Sahagún's text continues with the migration of the Mexica. One climactic point is the creation of pulque. 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" (: 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 (Sahagún, 1961: 193). Since pulque is related to fertility, and Tepoztécatl is one of the gods that created and perfected it, then Tepoztécatl might also be related to fertility.

After creating pulque, the gods summoned "all the rulers, the leaders, the old men, the experienced men. They went there to Mt. Chichinauhia" (: 193). There they drunk in honor of the gods, but they only received four cups of wine, for they would get drunk if they drank the fifth (Sahagún, 1997: 612). These numbers are symbolic. Aztecs' history was divided into five eras. The first four made up an "evolutionary, cumulative process" that culminated with the fifth sun: "when this age ended there was to be no other" (Burkhart, 1989: 74). The figures four and five also represented the structure of Nahuatl space: "The number four symbolized wholeness: the four quadrants that composed the earth. The number five, adding the center to the four directions, was also a symbol of wholeness, but here wholeness passes into completion, fullness, and excess" (: 74).

### **The importance of pulque**

It is essential to analyze the importance of pulque, in order to understand the significance of Tepoztecatl as a pulque god. Along with maize, the maguey was fundamental in the life and religion of the Aztecs. The liqueur produced from it was used as an intoxicant, as a dietary supplement, for it was rich in vitamins, as a medicine against diarrhea and other stomach diseases (Taylor, 1979: 30), and it was "essential to replace water during the dry season, and useful in the fields where it was drunk by workers to revive themselves from the heat of the day" (Haskett, 1991: 182). Above all, pulque had a ritual significance: "Ritual –the formal, symbolic expression of values, attitudes, and expectations- permeated the use of alcohol just as it, along with a view of the insignificance of humanity in the face of Nature, personified, permeated pre-Hispanic life in general" (Taylor, 1979: 34). In the *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España*, Fray Diego Durán explained that pulque was one of most prized offerings to the gods. Furthermore, he stated that the Nahuatlans revered maguey as divine and celestial, and that they considered its fermented juice, i.e. pulque, as a god known as Ome tochtli (two rabbits). According to him, drinking pulque was restricted to those who understood its significance. Young people could not drink, just as Catholic children could not take communion, because they had not been initiated in the special rites (Durán, 1967: 272).

Therefore, the occasion and the person who was allowed to drink, restricted alcohol consumption: "On ritual occasions when drinking was permitted, adult male participants could apparently drink themselves into a stupor without shame" (Taylor, 1979: 30). In general, drinking was ritual, periodic and restricted to the nobility, to the old, and to the sick. Commoners as well as alcoholic nobles were punished with "death, whipping or public humiliation" if they

drank (: 32). Nevertheless, drinking restrictions varied regionally. There was more control in the central valley under the jurisdiction of the Triple Alliance than in the peripheries (: 34).

Mass drinking was practiced on certain occasions, such as "harvest and rain ceremonies, births, weddings, funerals, and the warrior's rite of passage, as well as during feasts dedicated to particular gods" (: 33). Consequently, drinking pulque was associated with the rites that commemorated the cyclic passage of time, in the form of seasons (drought followed by rain) and actions (planting followed by harvesting). It was also associated with the two elements that made agriculture possible: wind and water. Moreover, pulque was a gift from the gods, as life itself, and so, men had to thank the gods for it, and what a better way than drinking the divine liquid? In this manner, the following phrase from the Codex Magliabechiano is quite clear: "y quando los yndios tenian segado y coxidos sus mahizes se enborrachaban y bailavan invocando a este demonio. Y a otros destos quatrocientos" (Codex Magliabechiano, 48 verso).

The pulque god Tepoztécatl was probably, as pulque itself, a manifestation of the agricultural cycle, yet why was it venerated at Tepoztlán? The codices do not answer this question. Moreover, Tepoztlán was not an important center of pulque production. William Taylor states that Cuauhtitlan, Apan, and Tula (now in the modern states of Mexico and Hidalgo) were the districts that produced pulque in the largest scale (Taylor, 1979: 32). Therefore, the area of presentday Morelos was not an important pulque producer. According to Robert Haskett, in that region pulque was produced in a small scale. In other words, individuals manufactured and sold it in their homes (Haskett, 1991: 19). By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the towns in Morelos with large numbers of producers were Achichipico, Atlacholoaya, Xochitepec, Xochitlan, and Yecapixtla (: 101). Consequently, not even in colonial times was Tepoztlán important in the production of pulque.

According to Mateos Higuera, the celebration of the centzontotochtin, the four hundred pulque gods including Tepoztecátl, took place in the veintena called Tepeilhuitl (Mateos Higuera, 1994: 45). Durán indicates that Tepeilhuitl meant "fiesta de los cerros" (celebration of the mountains). During that festivity all the mountains were venerated, along with Tlaloc, god of rain, lightning and thunder, and Chalchiuhtlicuye, goddess of water, rivers, and fountains (Durán, 1967: 165, 279).

According to Durán, there was one mountain named Tlaloc, like the rain god, because it was so tall that clouds always surrounded it, and from it hail, lightning and thunder came out. Actually the name Tlaloc shows this significance: "The name Tlaloc ('of the earth' or 'from the earth') alludes to mist or vapor rising from the earth to form clouds around mountain tops" (Townsend, 1992: 179). This mountain was located between Coatlinchan and Coatepec on one side, and Huexotzinco on the other (Durán, 1967: 2). Townsend explains that this mountain "is part of the forested sierra that includes the snowcapped peaks of Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl on the eastern side of the basin" (Townsend, 1992: 173). In this mountain, there was a shrine for Tlaloc. Inside the shrine there was a cult image of Tlaloc surrounded by small cult figures that represented the other mountains in the region: "Aquellos idolillos que estaban a la redonda del gran ídolo Tlaloc, acompañándole, como los demás cerros acompañaban a la sierra" (Durán, 1967: 82. The following translation is mine: Those small cult figures surrounding the great cult figure of Tlaloc, accompanying him, just as the hills accompanied the great mountain). The

temple at Mount Tlaloc "represented the womb of the earth as the source of life's annual renewal" (Townsend, 1992: 175). The procession to Mount Tlaloc took place at the peak of the dry season, when "the time of death must change to the time of rain and the rebirth of life" (: 174). Therefore, the purpose of Tlaloc's rituals was "to ensure the annual renewal of nature" (: 172). At the same time, they connected kingship to nature. Aztec kings performed these rites in the temple, and their actions legitimated their power. By performing the rituals to Tlaloc at its mountain, the rulers brought about the change of seasons, specifically the arrival of the rainy season. In this manner, they fulfilled their "religious obligation [...] to assure the renewal of the earth, the abundance of crops, and the order and continuity of society" (: 174). The rites to Tlaloc were performed on pyramids, fields and several mountains that surrounded the Valley of Mexico. (: 171), for the Aztecs considered that all mountains were related to the one known as Tlaloc, considered as the source of rain. Consequently, they were all represented as water providers. For instance, Ixtaccihuatl and Popocatepetl, which are very close to Mount Tlaloc, were "also major rain-producing heights that were worshiped in antiquity" (: 175).

Both Durán and Sahagún explained that mountains were the places where rain was stored. Durán said that they were named atoyatl:

*The name comes from atl (water) and totoca (it runs); as if to say 'running water.' The people here in New Spain, the people of old, said: 'These rivers come –they flow- there from Tlalocán; they are the property of, they issue from the sacred one, Chalchihuitlicue. (: 181).*

On the other hand Sahagún explained:

*And they said that the mountains were only magic places, with earth, with rock on the surface; that they were only like ollas (water jars) or houses; that they were filled with water which was there. If sometime it were necessary, the mountains would dissolve; the whole world would flood. And hence the people called their settlements atl tepetl (water mountain). They said, 'This mountain of water, this river, springs from there, the womb of the mountain. For from there, Chalchihuitlicue sends it –offers it (: 181).*

Johanna Broda and Richard Townsend state that the Nahua people considered the mountains as empty and full of caves. These caves were considered as wombs because they contained the essential sustenance: water and maize (Broda, 2001: 212 and Townsend, 1992: 180).

Furthermore, Townsend explains that mountains represented the "sexual act and a symbolic act of creation" because they were the sites where rain (water) fell into the earth through the caves that represented the opening to the womb. Consequently the purpose of rites was to reenact this creative event (: 180). Mountains then, represented at the same time the male act of creation by being the location where rain was formed but also the "female earth and procreative entity" (: 180).

The association between mountains and rain is especially clear in the ruins of Chalcatzingo, Morelos. In this site, there is a petroglyph that represents the cycle of fertility, for there is a royal figure, perhaps an ancestor, inside a cave "from which cloud-scrolls issue; above, rain clouds are shown with falling drops and circular 'precious' pieces of jade" (De la Fuente, 1992: 128). This petroglyph "was carved on the rock face looking toward Popocatepetl", thus it emphasized the

significance of this mountain as "a primary source of rain clouds and water for this entire upland region" (Townsend, 1992: 185).

According to Sahagún several of the pulque gods, including Tepoztécatl, completed the creation of pulque in the mountain Chichinauhia. Since the 'wine' foamed up, they called this mountain Popozonaltepetl (Sahagún, 1961: 193). This word recalls that of the Popocatepetl, the volcano that still threatens the valley of Mexico and the area surrounding it. The words Popocatepetl and Popozonaltepetl are semantically related, for the former comes from the prefix "popoca", which means to give forth smoke, and from the suffix "tepetl", which means mountain; whereas, the latter comes from the prefix "popozonalistli", which means foam, and altepetl, which means water and mountain and functioned as a difrasismo for pueblo (Kartunnen, 1983: 203). The "tepetl that gives forth smoke" is associated with rain, and the "altepetl that foams" is associated with pulque. It might be that both mountains refer to the same mythic place, and in this manner, the association between rain and pulque is very clear.

Mateos Higuera gives another example of the direct relationship between rain and pulque. He explains that the centzontotochtin were probably associated with the Tlaloque because the amount of juice that the maguey produced depended on the amount of rainfall (Mateos Higuera, 1994: 26). The mountain of the Tepozteco might be a further manifestation of this correlation. On one hand, it housed the local god of pulque, on the other, up to this day, each time it rains in Tepoztlán, the water runs with violence down the rocks that form the mountain, giving it the appearance of a fountain.

According to Townsend, the word teotl also referred to extraordinary geographic features such as "an awe-inspiring mountain" (Townsend, 1992: 174). "As used by the Aztec, teotl communicates the notion of life-force inherent in greater or lesser measure in minerals, plants, animals, and human beings, as well as in ritual objects and buildings" (: 174). This cosmology was animist. Everything was alive, and mountains with special traits, such as Mount Tlaloc, were not only alive but acquired the quality of teotl (: 174). The same could be said of the Tepozteco. Due to its rare formations, it can be described as an "awe-inspiring mountain." It housed the temple of the pulque god Tepoztécatl. However, it is very likely that the mountain itself personified this "god", this teotl. The Tepozteco might be one of the pulque deities because, like the Popocatepetl, it could have been considered as a source of the vital liquid in its two manifestations: water and pulque.

### **The four hundred gods**

"Sahagún reports that the Aztecs called pulque centzontotochtin, or 'four hundred rabbits, because of its almost infinite variety of effects on the behavior of those who drank it" (Taylor, 1979: 34).

The myth of the four hundred gods is common to the cosmology of the Mayas as expressed in the Popol Vuh and to the Aztecs as manifested in the legend of Huitzilopochtli's birth. On the other hand, the Codex Magliabechiano relates them to the agricultural cycle, for the Indians drank and danced to them after the harvest was completed.

In the Popol Vuh, the four hundred gods were the boys who attempted to kill Zipacna, and who later he killed burying them below the ruins of their own house. This myth resembles that of the completion of pulque by Sahagún, which narrates how the four hundred gods made pulque foam. After the boys thought they had killed Zipacna, they decided to make sweet drink, to let three days pass, and then to "drink to dedicate our hut" (Tedlock, 1996: 83). After the third day their drink was ready. They got very drunk, and Zipacna killed them bringing down their hut: "They die while in a drunken stupor, just as the four hundred rabbits of Nahua mythology do, and like those rabbits they were probably the patron deities of an alcoholic beverage and of drunkenness" (: 342). According to Tedlock, these four hundred boys became the Pleiades, and their death "corresponds to one of the two heliacal settings of the Pleiades, but after Hunahpu and Little Jaguar Sun avenge them they make their first appearance as the actual Pleiades, which would correspond to a heliacal rise" (Tedlock, 1992: 235).

In the Aztec mythology, the "Centzon Huitznahua, the Four Hundred (or innumerable) Southerners" are Coyolxauhqui's brothers. With her, they decide to kill their mother Coatlicue when they find that she is mysteriously pregnant. When they are about to do so, Huitzilopochtli is born fully armed at the mountain Coatepec. "Wielding his burning weapon, known as the Xiuhcoatl or Turquoise Serpent, he slays Coyolxauhqui and, cut to pieces, her body tumbles to the base of Coatepec [...] Having killed Coyolxauhqui, Huitzilopochtli chases the Centzon Huitznahua around Coatepec and slays vast numbers of his half-brothers, with only a few escaping to the south" (Taube, 1993: 47). Taube explains that 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..." (: 47).

In the tropical latitudes of Mesoamerica, it is easy to recognize the relationship between celestial phenomena (the movement of the sun, Venus, the Pleiades), weather, and the agricultural cycle. The Mesoamerican calendar was based on these connections (Broda, 2001: 223). The Pleiades were very important for the Aztecs. For instance, the celebration of the New Fire that marked the beginning of the fifty-two year cycle coincided with the date when the Pleiades passed through the middle of the sky at midnight. The movement of the Pleiades was symmetrically opposite to that of the sun. The sun's passing through the zenith in the middle of May coincided with the invisibility of the Pleiades. Six months later, in the middle of November, the Pleiades passed the Meridian at midnight. This date coincided with the sun's nadir. In this manner, the cycle of the Pleiades marked the beginning and the end of the rainy season. Thus, the Pleiades (as well as Venus) were associated with rain and maize (: 230). As a consequence, many temples of Mesoamerica were oriented with respect to the celestial happenings that took place during the dates that marked the beginning and the end of the agricultural cycle (: 223).

In the Maya culture, the Pleiades are still closely related to the agricultural cycle:

In today's Quiché thought the Pleiades symbolize a fistful of seeds. The planting season for high-altitude maize, in March, is marked by evening settings of the Pleiades, which leave them invisible for most of the night; by May, when low-altitude maize is planted, the Pleiades enter a period of complete invisibility (Tedlock, 1996: 246).

Broda indicates that the same association is still done in many towns in highland Mexico. The

disappearance of the Pleiades that marked the beginning of the rainy and the planting season is celebrated in the 'syncretic' festivity of La Santa Cruz, which takes place on May 3rd (Broda, 2001: 223), whereas the end of the agricultural cycle and the beginning of the harvest, celebrated in pre-Hispanic times in the last days of October, is commemorated on another 'syncretic' celebration: el Día de Todos Santos and el Día de Muertos, which take place on November 1st and 2nd (: 226).

### **Orientation of Tepoztlan's pyramid**

After measuring the orientation of the temple located in el Cerro del Tepozteco (known as La Casa del Tepozteco) and analyzing the celestial events that probably occurred at that place during the contact period (around 1550) Prof. Anthony Aveni concluded that it is aligned with the celestial events that mark the beginning and the end of the agricultural cycle (personal communication, March 2002). In the article "Xilonen in Tepoztlán: A Comparison of Tepoztecan and Aztec Agrarian Ritual Schedules", Thomas L. Grigsby and Carmen Cook de Leonard, draw a correspondence between the festivities of the veintenas as described by Sahagún ("the ritual maize cycle contained in book 2 of the Florentine Codex") and "the maize agrarian calendar of Tepoztlán" (Grisby, 1992: 108). In the Aztec and in the Tepoztecan calendar, the agricultural cycle begins around March or April. Prof. Aveni pointed out that La Casa del Tepozteco is oriented to the west. Furthermore, five hundred years ago in the last half of March and today in the first half of April, from the entrance to the temple but looking outwards to the west (25° NW), one can observe that in the evening, the Pleiades set west just where the sun had set, exactly on the axis of the pyramid (Prof. Aveni, personal communication, March 2002). Grigsby and Cook de Leonard indicated that "according to the Tepoztecans, the agricultural year begins with San Pedro's feast day on 29 April, because 'he has the keys that unlock the rain clouds.'" (Grisby, 1992: 111). Prof. Aveni indicated another interesting phenomenon. Around the middle of the sixteenth century, at dawn on April 29, the constellation "the keys of Saint Peter", located between Pisces and Aries, can be seen on the east. That day in the evening, the sun sets exactly on the axis of La Casa del Tepozteco (personal communication, March 2002).

One of the most important dates in the Mesoamerican calendar was October 30 because it marked the end of the agricultural cycle and the beginning of harvest. Therefore many temples were oriented to the special events that took place in the sky during that night (Broda, 2001: 225). Grigsby and Cook de Leonard stated that in the veintena Tlaxochimaco, which in central Mexico fell between July 15th and August 13th and in Tepoztlán, between October 11th and October 30th, the corn had already reached the milk stage (Grisby, 1992: 135, 116). During this veintena, the Aztecs offered flowers to Huitzilopochtli. Durán explains that another name for this period was Miccailhuitontli, "Little Feast of the Dead". Therefore, this veintena constituted the preparation for the feast of the Dead (Durán, 1967: 269). Grigsby indicates that these names imply "the end of the growing season and the death of vegetation" (Grisby, 1992: 116). Durán also explains that the reason for this celebration was that the Indians "temían la muerte de las sementeras con el hielo, para lo cual antes se apercebían con ofrendas y oblaciones y sacrificios en esta fiesta y en la del mes que viene" (Durán, 1967: 269. The following translation is mine: they feared that the sown land would be frozen to death, to prevent this, they performed offerings and sacrifice in this festivity and in that of the following month).

In October the time of harvest is approaching and so is the cold season. Thus, it is a time related to the death of plants and to the recollection of crops. This might be symbolized by the death of the Four hundred gods, killed by Zipacna in the Popol Vuh and by Huitzilopochtli in the Aztec mythology. These events may be related to the belief in the Valley of Morelos that during October 18, "Mictlan is opened and the souls leave to begin their way back to their ancient homes" (Grisby, 1992: 116). These symbolic meanings manifest themselves in a very literal and concrete manner in La Casa del Tepozteco. Prof. Anthony Aveni pointed out that on October 18, at sunrise, when the sun is about to come up in the east, the Pleiades set exactly along the axis of the building of La Casa del Tepozteco, which is oriented to the west. The Pleiades might symbolize the souls that leave Mictlan and that start their journey to the earth, which would be completed on November 1st and 2nd, as well as the death of vegetation, which preceded harvest. By building the temple of their main god with an orientation that coincided with the cycle of celestial bodies such as the Pleiades, the Tepozteicans very likely prepared the setting for a rite that commemorated the "dawning and the sowing" of the death and the life cycle, reenacted in the beginning and the end of the agricultural cycle.

## Conclusions

The conclusions of this first stage of the project can be summarized as follows:

- The legend of the pulque god Tepoztécatl might exemplify the cosmology of the region.
- There are no exact accounts of the legend in pre-Hispanic documents or in colonial documents about the Nahua culture.
- Tepoztécatl is mentioned in the Codex Magliabechiano and in the Florentine Codex as one of the four-hundred pulque gods.
- Pulque is related to fertility in several ways:
  1. Maguey in the form of the goddess Mayahuel is represented as a mother figure.
  2. In daily life, it was used to replace water in the dry season.
  3. The four hundred gods are related to the mountains which were considered as water providers.
  4. The mythic origin of rain and pulque might be found in the same place: Popocatepetl.
- La Casa del Tepozteco might represent the association between pulque and rain.
- The four hundred gods, common to Maya and Aztec cosmology, might represent the Pleiades, which in turn are related to the agricultural cycle and furthermore certain aspects of the myth may be related to the sacred geography and sky events in that place and time.
- Tepoztécatl, as one of the four hundred, might be related to the Pleiades and, therefore, to agriculture.

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