

Legend of the Tepozteco: *Popol Vuh* and Catholic mythology

Margarita Vargas-Betancourt
Latin American Studies, Tulane University

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Introduction

Tepoztlan, a town located south of Mexico City under a ridge of mountains known as the Ridge of Tepoztlan (Figure 1), 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), *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 (Figure 2), 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* and to Catholic mythology.

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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 (Table 1). In chronological order, the first three accounts are the ones Pablo González Casanova published in 1928 (versions A, B, and C).¹ In 1937, Apolonio H. Escalada published

1. Pablo González Casanova collected three legends. He transcribed them from the original Nahuatl version, and included a Spanish translation. The first is the transcription of a manuscript that the Tepoztecan Bernardino Verazaluze bequeathed to his son Genaro Verazaluze (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 (González Casanova 1928:26) (Version 1928C).

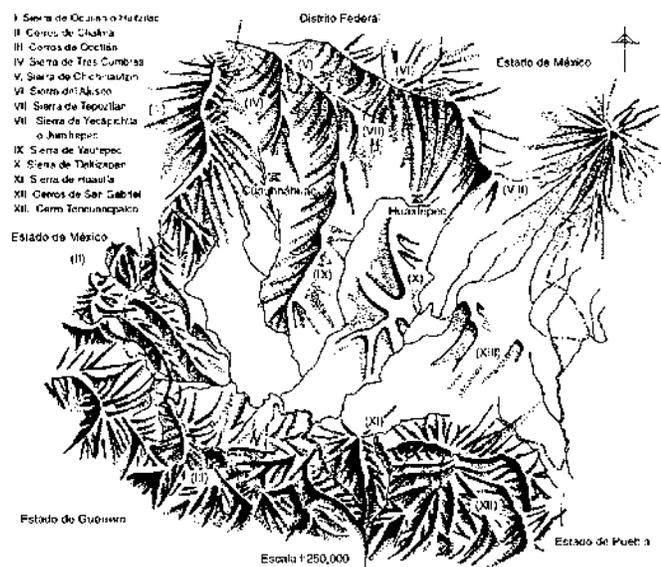


Figure 1. Ridges and hills of Morelos (after Maldonado Jiménez 2000:31 figure 2).

Year	Source	Type of Source
1928 (versions A, B, and C)	Revista Mexicana de Estudios Históricos	Academic journal
1937	Investigaciones Lingüísticas	Academic journal
1942	Horcasitas Papers	Unpublished manuscript
1949	<i>Historia Antigua del Valle de Morelos</i>	Congress paper
1959	Horcasitas Papers	Unpublished manuscript
1995	<i>Breve historia y narraciones tepoztecas</i>	Local edition
1998	<i>Tepoztlán, nuestra historia</i>	INAH edition
2001	Red Escolar	Government website
2002	Personal interview	Personal interview

Table 1. Versions of the legend of the Tepozteco in chronological order (table by the author).

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, followed by *El Tepozteco según Olivia*, a Spanish account that a Tepoztecan maid told Gail Giachini in 1959.² Angel Zúñiga Navarrete, a native of 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* was entered 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 Tepoztecs had kept until that moment, so that this would not be lost forever" (Tostado Gutiérrez 1998:10; translation mine). In

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



Figure 2. Tepoztécatl in *Codex Magliabechiano*, folio 48 verso (after Nuttall 1903)

1998, the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) published the stories included in this contest. The next version comes from 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>; translation mine). The last version of the legend was narrated by an elementary school teacher named Mario Flores Oropeza during an interview that I conducted on August 3rd, 2002 in Tepoztlan.

After collecting the different versions of the legend, I identified the main units of action of each one in order to test their concordance.³ 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.⁴ A third legend relates 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 Tepoztecs present every

3. The foundation of this methodology is Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*.

4. Pablo González Casanova published the two legends in 1928 in the *Revista mexicana de estudios históricos*.

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 (Table 2):

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 Ehecatepetl 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 a river or in a ravine so that when it rained, he would be carried 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) which 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 in 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).

I.	Tepozteco was conceived in an immaculate manner.
II.	Someone attempted to kill the baby.
III.	The baby was adopted.
IV.	Tepozteco became a marvelous hunter.
V.	Tepozteco decided to confront Xochicalcatl.
VI.	During his peregrination, he transformed and named the landscape.
VII.	He picked up flints.
VIII.	Once he arrived in Xochicalco, he began transforming himself into different animals.
IX.	Tepozteco defeated Xochicalcatl.
X.	He went to Cuernavaca and stole the <i>teponaxtli</i> .
XI.	Tepozteco fled to Tepoztlan.
XII.	He arrived at the Ehecatepetl Mountain and defeated the people from Cuernavaca.
XIII.	Tepozteco became the ruler or king of Tepoztlan.
XIV.	He raised the bells of Mexico City’s cathedral.

Table 2. Episodes of the Tepozteco legend (table by the author).

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 up 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 at the Ehecatepetl 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 one version, 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 (Karttunen 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 community 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 (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 spat 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 the mother.

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 maguay 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 maguery 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, Tlilha, 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 com-

munication, March 2002). According to Aveni, 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, March 2002). This event coincided with the beginning of the agriculture cycle. Therefore, it is very likely that for the Tepoztecos, as for the Quichés, the movement of the Pleiades marked this event.⁵

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 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 been cast with 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 (Tedlock 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 also arrived at Cuernavaca dressed in rags. 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*.

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

Finally, both stories justify hegemony: the *Popol Vuh*, that of the Quiché; 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 Tepoztecos 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 Postclassic one (Haskett 1991:9), Tepoztlan was an important settlement. However, during the colonial period and after Mexico's independence from Spain, many Tepoztecos 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 Tepoztecos let 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 in content and structure. However, there is a separate event in the *Popol Vuh* that resembles another part of 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. (Tedlock 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 convertiría 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, gavián, 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] (Translation 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 in 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 “motifs to Quiche mythology” into the “western Guatemalan area” (1985:111). One of these was the Hero twins' destruction of Seven Parrot and his sons, Zipacná and Earthquake.⁶ 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 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 papyrus reed basket that she left in the river. The pharaoh's daughter found and adopted him. The 1942 version of the Tepoztecan

6. “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 Ixixit (Maya Cak r Aqan). Their mother was Chimalmat (the mother of Quetzalcoatl as well).” (Edmonson 1985:111).

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 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.

Conclusions

The documentation and comparison of the legend of the Tepozteco with the *Popol Vuh* and with Catholic mythology has led to several conclusions. First, that the evolution of the Tepozteco story exemplifies a process – well known in other parts of the world – of the reshuffling of episodes to form longer and shorter versions of a legend. It has also drawn attention to the galvanizing effect of writing down oral history. It is very likely that the recording of the legend of Tepozteco into written accounts altered its evolution and resulted in the continuity of the story in an almost unchanged manner through a time span of seventy-four years.

The legend also reveals the process by which two mythologies have come together into Mexican folklore: Mesoamerican and Catholic mythologies. The story of Tepozteco and that of the *Popol Vuh* Hero twins have several elements in common: a miraculous conception, a confrontation, and a peregrination. Although these features are also universal, it is possible to identify certain aspects of the Tepozteco legend that might be truly Mesoamerican. Like Hunahpu and Xbalanque, Tepozteco was a trickster-hunter. His final association with Mesoamerican cosmology is that he is one of the four hundred *pulque* gods that are related to the mountains of central Mexico. Perhaps the reason for this is that the Tepozteco legend and the story of the Hero twins in the *Popol Vuh* might have originated from central Mexican traditions. To analyze this possibility, further study of the legend of Tepozteco should consist of a comparison between this story and that of Nahuatl divinities, such as Mixcoatl-Camaxtli, Huitzilopochtli, and Quetzalcoatl.

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