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## Aztec Festivals of the Rain Gods

Aunque contiene ritos indiscutiblemente agrícolas, el antiguo calendario festivo de veintenas (o 'meses') de la época azteca resulta totalmente desplazado en cuanto a las temporadas, puesto que carece de intercalados que adaptan el año solar de 365 días a la duración efectiva del año tropical. Creo haber demostrado en diversas publicaciones que las fiestas pueden ser interpretadas en rigor sólo en relación con su posición original, no corrida aún.

El presente trabajo muestra cómo los rituales y la repartición absolutamente regular y lógica de las veintenas, dedicadas esencialmente a las deidades de la lluvia - tres en la temporada de lluvias y una en la temporada de sequía - confirman el fenómeno del desplazamiento.

The Central Mexican festivals of the solar year are described with considerable detail in XVIth century sources and some of them have even been studied by modern investigators (Paso y Troncoso 1898; Seler 1899; Margain Araujo 1945; Acosta Saignes 1950; Nowotny 1968; Broda 1970, 1971; Kirchhoff 1971). New interpretations are nevertheless still possible, especially since the festivals have never been studied as a whole, with reference to the myths they reenacted, and therefore, could not be put in a proper perspective.

Until now, the rituals of the 18 *veintenas* (*twenty-day* 'months') have always been interpreted according to their position in the solar year at the time they were first described to the Spaniards. Such festivals with agricultural rites have been interpreted, for example, as sowing or harvest festivals on the sole ground that in the 16th century they more or less coincided with those seasonal events. Now it seems clear to me that in the 16th century, the *veintenas* and their festivals had slipped from their original place in the year. In articles published in 1976 and 1981, I have explained how the Mesoamericans did nothing to adapt their 365-day 'vague' year to the tropical year, thus permitting their *veintenas* - definitely with agricultural rites - to shift a day every 4 years and more than a month every 100 years. Certain 'month' names, those with a seasonal content, provide evidence in this sense. "Atemoztli", 'Fall of Waters', during which the gods of rain were celebrated, fell in December, i.e., in the middle of the dry

season, in the 16th century. If Atemotztli is returned to the place its name suggests, the middle of the rainy season, then Atlcahualo, 'Cessation of Waters' falls at the end of the wet season and Toxcatl, 'Dryness', in the dry season. Ochpaniztli, 'Sweeping of the Roads', designates the activity of the gentle winds which "sweep the roads which the rain travels" - at the beginning of the rainy season. Quecholli, Panquetzaliztli and Toxcatl, festivals of the solar gods, coincide once again with the summer and winter solstices. By making the 20th of Quecholli and the 20th of Toxcatl - i.e., the actual festivals days - coincide as closely as possible with the solstices, and by bearing in mind the meanings of the names of the various months, one can obtain a precise ritual calendar".

In 1519, the months were off by 209 days in relation to the tropical year and the seasons. Allowed to shift, they constituted an esoteric ritual year, the perfect image of the actual year but always ahead of it, permitting the anticipation of seasonal events with ritual. At Contact times, probably only the priests still understood correctly the situation and kept track of the days lost since the beginning of the shift in 680-684 A.D.; the common people tended to understand the festivals according to their new position and they explained them this way to the friars. There almost necessarily must have been some contamination of the ritual year by the real one. When rains were expected, the harvest rituals were considered of little help by the farmers; therefore sacrifices to the rain deities, the Tlaloque, were added in several unrelated festivals where originally they had nothing to do.

In this article I shall present an interpretation of the Tlaloque feasts as they really had to be understood, that is, according to their original position, before any shift. The text is mainly a translation of four chapters of my scarcely distributed 1980 dissertation.

The original ritual year had a very elaborate structure. It was divided into two parts. The nine twenty-day months of the rainy season, beginning in April with Ochpaniztli, the sowing festival, corresponded to the night, the time when the sun travels to the North, i.e. underground. The nine *veintenas* of the dry season (*tonalco*) corresponded to the day and began with Tlacaxipehualiztli, the first of a series of harvest festivals which lasted from the end of September to December. During the rainy season there were three evenly spread festivals dedicated in the first place to the Tlaloque; during the dry season there was only one, as shown in Table I. Furthermore the arrival of the rains was celebrated during the sowing festival in Ochpaniztli, as magnificently illustrated in the *Codex Borbonicus* (Graulich 1976, 1980 a, b, c, 1981, 1982, 1984, 1986).

**Table 1**

Rainy season:	dedicated to:	Dry season:	dedicated to
Ochpaniztli Teotleco <i>Tepeilhuitl</i>	Earth, Moon, Venus Fire, Venus <i>Water</i>	Tlacaxipehualiztli Tozoztontli Huey Tozoztli	Sun Earth Maize
Quecholli Panquetzaliztli <i>Atemoztli</i>	(Earth, Moon), Venus Fire, Sun <i>Water</i>	Toxcatl <i>Etzalcualiztli</i> Tecuilhuitl	Sun <i>Water, Earth</i> Salt
Tititl Izcalli <i>Atlcahualo</i>	Earth, Moon Fire <i>Water</i>	Huey Tecuilhuitl Tlaxochimaco Xocotl Huetzi	Maize Earth Fire

**I. TEPEILHUITL OR HUEY PACTLI  
(May 13-June 1 in 682; October 11-30 in 1519)**

*The names of the festival*

'Tepeilhuitl', meaning 'Mountain Feast', is the name mentioned in Sahagún, Durán, Tovar, the *Relaciones geográficas* of Tecciztlan and Acolman (Caso 1967: 35-38 and Tables X-XI; Broda 1969: 22; Kirchhoff 1971: 215-216). It directly refers to the principal ceremonies of the month. Durán (1967, 1: 279) also proposes 'Coailhuitl' which he translates as 'General Feast of the whole Earth' although 'Festival of Snakes' is just as well. We shall see the link between the Tlaloque and the serpents. Durán's interpretation is appropriated in the sense that by celebrating the omnipresent hills, the cities (theoretically on hilltops) were also celebrated.

The most frequent name however was Huey Pachtli, 'Great Pachtli'. It is found also among the Quiché and Cakchiquel Maya (Brinton 1893: 297-301) and the Otomi and Matlatzinca terms have the same meaning (Caso 1967: 223, 231). In 16th century dictionaries *pachtli* is translated as "a certain herb that grows and hangs in the trees". Modern authors identify it as Spanish beard *Tillandsia usneoides* L. (Molina 1970, 2: 79; Sahagún 1927: 174; 1950-1969, 2: 111 note 2). According to Torquemada (1969, 2: 299), this month and the previous one were called after these "dry and leaveless" epiphytic plants in order to signify that "the dry season, when trees lose their leaves and become like dry [...] had begun" - since in the 16th century the festival came in October. This unlikely statement

is contradicted by Durán (1967, 1:153; 1971:240) according to whom *pachtli* owed its grayish colour to moisture. "In that season - Durán goes on - the trees in the hills were filled with '*mal ojo*' (*pachtli*)". But he is no more convincing than Torquemada, for in the mountains, there is Spanish moss during the greatest part of the year. So there must be another explanation to the name of the festival.

This month is the 'Great' Pachtli because the preceding one is the 'Small Pachtli', i.e., the small festival of Pachtli. What is the common element between the two festivals? In some respects, Pachtontli is a 'small' pulque festival while the following feast is a great one. There is indeed an unclear relationship between pachtli and pulque: a priest whose duty was to serve pulque was called "the one of the pachtli" (*pachtecatl*) (Sahagún 1956, 1: 249). Chimalpahin (1958: 60-65; 1965: 131) mentions a ruler called Tzompachtli Totoltecatl, 'Pachtli-Hair Totoltecatl', the latter name designating a pulque deity. And in the *Wheel of Boban*, a post-Conquest calendar with glyphs or emblems for the months, Pachtontli is symbolized by a jar of pulque.

## ***The ceremonies***

Generally speaking, most sources corroborate Sahagún's description of the rituals of the month. Images of the Mountains were fashioned by covering roots or branches representing snakes, and figures of the wind gods, with a dough of amaranth seed (*tzoalli*). Likewise, Mountain images were made of those who had been buried because they had died drowned or struck by the lightning.

On the 19th day, the effigies were ritually 'bathed' by washing them at the Mist House (Ayauhcalli), a place dedicated to the rain gods. At midnight they were given life by painting their faces and adorning them with paper ornaments typical of the Tlaloque. The next morning they were given incense and food. Pulque was drunk and people sang for them.

This same 20th day, before sunrise, five slaves impersonators of mountains (*ixiptlauan tetepe*) were sacrificed; four of them represented the goddesses Tepexoch, Matlalcueye, Xochtecatl or Xochinahuatl and Mayahuel, who was also the maguery; a man impersonated Milnahuatl who was said to represent a serpent. Women carried the victims on litters in a procession. Then the victims had to ascend the pyramid of Tlaloc, the Tlalocan, where their hearts were cut out. Their bodies were cautiously brought down to be decapitated at the bottom of the pyramid, then they were brought to the ward houses (*calpulco*) probably to be eaten by the relatives and friends of the sacrificers, i.e., those who had supplied the victims.

On the following day, 1 Quecholli, the dough images were dismembered; pieces were put to dry on the roofs and eaten little by little (Sahagún 1927: 190-194; 1956, 1: 124-1255; 199-201; 1950-1969, 2: 121-123; also Motolinia 1970: 25; *Codex Magliabechiano*: 40; *Costumbres* 1945: 49; Tovar 1951: 31; *Codex Tel-*

*leriano-Remensis*: pl. 7, p. 165; Torquemada 1969, 2: 279-280; Serna 1892: 358; Paso y Troncoso 1905-1915,6: 216).

Obviously the dough 'Mountains' which anyone could fashion were substitutes of human victims within the capacity of everybody. According to Durán (1967, 1: 165, 279-80; 1971: 256), they were decapitated "with the same solemnity customary in slaying and sacrificing the men who represented the gods". The same author asserts that the 'Mountains' made of distorted branches were preferentially fashioned, sacrificed and eaten by the lame, the crippled, the maimed and those who suffered from pustules and paralysis, "in the belief that they could cure lameness and imperfections".

The human victims were many more than those enumerated by Sahagún in his description of the festival. In his lists of the buildings of the Templo Mayor and of the priests, he mentions several other slayings of slaves representing Tlaloque and Rabbits. On the other hand, Durán mentions sacrifices of children, who were the usual victims for the Tlaloque, and of impersonators of Mountains.

## The mountains

In the ritual year, Tepeilhuitl was the first great festival dedicated to the rains and the Tlaloque. The 'Little Molded Ones', the Tepictoton as were called the dough images, "belonged among the Tlalocs" (Sahagún 1950-1969, 1: 47). The mountains were believed to be huge vessels of water from which came all the running waters belonging to Chalchiuhtlicue. On top of the mountains dwelt the Tlaloque, and there they assembled the clouds (Sahagún 1950-1969, 11: 247-248). The Tlalocan, Tlaloc's abode, was a mountain, and so was his temple-pyramid. Moreover, according to Torquemada (1969, 2: 46), all the high mountains were divine and in each one of the lesser Tlaloque lived. Probably the Tlaloque were imagined as massive, hill-like beings, as among the Pajapan Nahuas today, who consider the inhabitants of Tlalocan as hairy giants made all of a piece, without legs (García de León 1969: 296).

The human victims mentioned by Sahagún in his description of Tepeilhuitl represented Tepexoch ('Mountain Flower'), Matlalcueye ('Blue Skirt' or 'Netted Skirt') - Tlaxcaltecan equivalent of Chalchiuhtlicue -, Xochitecatl ('She of the Flower') or Xochinahuatl ('Close to the Flower') - possibly another name for Xochiquetzal -, Mayahuel, goddess of the maguey, and Milnahuatl ('Close to the Field'), a 'serpent deity'. The Xochitecatl and the Matlalcueye (nowadays the Malinche) are mountains from the Puebla-Tlaxcala region (Torquemada 1969, 2: 291; Mönnich 1969: 132; Seler 1902-1923, 2: 264). We do not know the localization of the three other mountains. Durán mentions other mountains that were celebrated, principally the Tlaloc and the Iztaccihuatl, both to the east of Mexico City, and also the Chalchiuhtlicue, the Chicomecoatl, the Tlapaltecatl and the Cihuacoatl, about which nothing is known. Most often the mountains are obviously goddesses. The 'divine women' were said to be cloud deities to whom

1 Rain, the day "of the beginning of rain and of sowing time and of the first showers" was dedicated (Serna 1892: 430; Mönnich 1969: 62-63), and Chicomecoatl was the 'elder sister' of the rain gods (Sahagún 1950-1969, 1: 13).

Why did the Aztecs make 'mountains' with effigies of the wind gods? Because the Ehecatontin who swept the path of the rain deities were considered as Tlaloc (Sahagún 1958 a: 155). Similarly, the dead of which images were made were precisely those who had been designated by their type of death as chosen ones of Tlaloc and who therefore had become Tlaloc. The distorted branches, called cocoa, probably also were rain deities. Tlaloc's typical face mask is made of serpents and the Tlaloc are often figured holding a undulating serpent representing a thunderbolt. In both cases the serpent stands for fertility and he was mentally associated with the penis (*Codex Vaticanus A*: pl. 73, p. 167; *Codex Borgia*: 43: the penis of the nocturnal Sun who is fecundating the Earth is a serpent).

Among the present-day Totonacs the water deity rules over the Thunders and the Winds. "The conjunction of Thunder and Wind produces storm; the Lightning is loosened by Wind - or breaks off from Thunder's shoes - under the aspect of a snake called *kitsis-luwa*, i.e. *5 Serpent*. So Kitsis-Luwa directly symbolizes lightning and indirectly the rain which will fecundate the soil and allow maize to grow. He is also considered the Master of the local Maize". The Totonacs also mention a big useful snake living in the fields where he destroys rodents. He is regarded as the 'Mother of all serpents' and would be identical with *5 Serpent*, who also protects the fields and represents the five types of maize (white, yellow, red, black and purple) (Ichon 1969: 121-122).

Very similar associations of ideas probably prevailed among the Aztecs. Milnahuatl, 'Close to the Fields', the deity impersonating a snake, appears to correspond to the protector of the fields among the Totonacs. The cocoa would be the Tlaloc, as symbolized by their serpents-thunderbolts and their maize, because according to the *Costumbres* (1945: 49), it was not only distorted branches, but also old maize ears gathered in the fields that were coated with dough. It should also be remembered that the Tlaloc were the Masters of Maize, since according to myth they managed to take it away from the Tonacatepetl, the 'Hill of our Sustenance'.

Thus, by celebrating the Mountains, the Indians also celebrated the places of origin of the celestial and terrestrial waters, the Tlaloc and the earth, the maize and water deities belonging to them, the fertilizing lightning and the maize generated by them all. Such a festival was perfectly in its place shortly before the summer solstice, when the absence of rain could be disastrous for the harvests.

In the rainy season there were two festivals of the Mountains, this one, 40 days after the sowing ritual in Ochpaniztli, and Atemoztli, 60 days later. I conjecture a relationship between the fashioning of dough images of mountains and the fact that two times during the growth of maize, first when it spread out, and second when the ears appeared, the earth was 'hilled' (*motlaltepevia*), heaped up, around the stalks (Sahagún 1950-1969, 11: 283).

Turning to the individual plane, those who fashioned effigies of the Mountains were those who presented affinities with the Tlaloque: first, the common people, the peasants who depended directly on the rain deities and for whom the ideal afterlife was with the Tlaloque in Tlalocan; then those who were marked by the Tlaloque and bore a physical resemblance to them: the bubonics, dwarfs, hunchbacks and lame ones (*Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas* 1941: 211; Sahagún 1950-1969, 3: 45; Muñoz Camargo 1892: 154-155). Just like any sacrificer (i.e., subjects to whom the benefits of sacrifice accrue, or who undergo its effects: Mauss 1964: 10) in Mesoamerica, they symbolically died and resuscitated through their substitutes of victims, the Tepictoton, and thus 'paid their debt', as sacrifice was called. Evidence in this sense is the fact that the deformed persons hoped to recover, i.e. to die and to be born again, purified. Another case of dough substitutes confirms that the sacrificers were supposed to die through their victims. According to the *Historia de los mexicanos ...* (1941: 227), at the end of their peregrinations some Mexica grumbled at Huitzilopochtli who decided that in order to be pardoned, those who had thus 'sinned', like people with two faces and two tongues, had to fashion a dough effigy with two faces and two tongues, to sacrifice it by shooting arrows, and to eat it.

Having thus 'paid their debt' and acquired merit, the fashioners and sacrificers of Mountains now were in a position to ask, they had obliged the gods.

## The maize

In the *Codex Borbonicus*, Tepeilhuitl is presented as a continuation of the preceding festivals, in particular of Ochpaniztli. There is a representation of Tlaloc in a shrine on a mountaintop, of a procession of priests, one of whom has the dress and the insignia of Tlaloc, and of a litter of ears of maize, very similar to the one on which an impersonator of the goddess of water (or of Chicomecoatl according to Durán) was put to death when seeds were consecrated in the Ochpaniztli sowing festival (Graulich 1981). The ears are covered with typical offerings to the Tlaloque: paper strainers splashed with black liquid rubber.

There is nothing that allows to identify those ears as the ones that were covered with dough in Tepeilhuitl. However, since the 'litter' is similar to the one of Ochpaniztli, it probably also refers to a ritual related with sowing. Here too the traditions of the present-day Sierra Totonacs prove very useful. The end of sowing was celebrated among them some 40 days after its beginning. Paper effigies representing the different kinds of maize, bananas, melons and water-melons are made and exposed in staged litters, to be next buried in the fields. Moreover, four maize ears of every kind are wrapped up in paper and consecrated, to be used in the following year's seed-time (Ichon 1969: 303, 280). Perhaps in the *Codex Borbonicus* also, the ears are those of the end of sowing-time.

## The pulque

Tepilhuitl-Huey Pachtli was also the main festival of the 400 Rabbits, as the pulque deities were called. Their mother, Mayahuel - or closely related Xochiquetzal according to the *Codex Magliabechiano* (p. 40; on the relationship: Graulich 1979: 452) - was put to death, as well as impersonators of Tepoztecatl, Toltecatl, Papaztac, Ometochtli, Tezcatzoncatl, Ometochtli Yiauhqueme, Ometochtli Tomiyauh, Ometochtli Tlilhua, Ometochtli Acalhua, Ometochtli Nappatecuhtli, Opochtli and Zapotlantlacatl, all of them gods of pulque (Sahagún 1950-1969, 2: 167, 173, 176, 199, 201; 1956, 1: 75; 1958 a: 156-157), although Nappatecuhtli, Opochtli and Tomiyauhtecuhtli were firstly Tlaloque (Sahagún 1956, 1: 64-65, 70-71; 1958 a: 130, 138, 140; Broda 1971: 310-311). There was a mountain called Yiauhqueme (Sahagún 1956, 1: 109-110).

There is nothing surprising in the assimilation of Tlalocs with Rabbits. The latter were lunar beings, as well as the Tlaloque; the Tlalocan was supposed to be on the moon (*Codex Vaticanus A*, pl. 2, p. 11); the moon was thought of as a huge vessel of water, like the mountains. Tlaloc was said to signify 'the earth's pulque': even if this etymology suggested by Rios' (*Codex Vaticanus A*, pl. 55, p. 131) informants is improbable, it indicates current associations of ideas made in that time; Ruiz de Alarcón states that Tlaloc's wife 8 Flint was a pulque deity (Alarcón 1892: 213).

According to the *Costumbres* (1945: 49) the lords became inebriated and among the common people everyone invoked the pulque god he preferred. The unknown author of the *Codex Magliabechiano* (40 vo) writes that among the Tlalhuica, nine or ten years old boys and girls were made drunk (*pilauano*) and danced together and misconducted themselves and fornicated. We may suppose that this licentiousness during the festival was also intended to favour the growth of the maize. During the months of Tozoztli and Tozoztontli half a year later, people also got drunk and invoked the Rabbits to celebrate the harvests (Graulich 1984).

## The city

If we are to believe the *Codex Magliabechiano*, Tepilhuitl was the 'feast of the city', and the author of the *Codex Telleriano-Remensis* (pl. 7, p. 165) says that the protector deities (of the cities) were celebrated. This is easy to understand when we know that in nahuatl a city was called *altepetl*, 'water-mountain'. By celebrating the Mountains, they also celebrated the cities and their patrons, the 'hearts of the *altepetl*' (López Austin 1973: 60). López Austin (1973: 61-65) rightly states that as protectors of cities the patron deities were often associated with water and snakes (*Codex Magliabechiano*: 40). In the *Codex Azcatitlan*, he

goes on, the gods of peregrinating peoples are all figured with rattlesnake tails. They are *cocoa* in the full sense of the word.

Moreover, the gods of pulque were mostly patrons of cities, as indicated by gentilitial names such as Tepoztecatl, 'The one of Tepoztlan', Totoltecatl, 'The one of Tollan', Zapotlantlacatl, 'The Man of Zapotlan', Chimalpanecatl, 'The one of Chimalpan', and so on.

To sum up, Tepeilhuitl or Huey Pachtli was the first great festival of the Tlaloque, to whom three *veintenas* were dedicated during the rainy season. The rituals were aimed at obtaining the indispensable rains and water for the growth of maize. The Tlaloque were celebrated under the aspect of the mountains where all kinds of moisture originate. Simultaneously, the deceased who went away to become Tlaloque themselves, the snakes who protected the fields and the lightning-serpents who fertilized them, the pulque deities, the cities and their patrons were also celebrated. But Tlaloque, snakes, deceased elected by Tlaloc, pulque deities and protectors of cities were all closely related or assimilated to each other. It was the feast of the abundance and consumption of pulque and the end of seed-time.

## II. ATEMOZTLI

(July 12-31 in 682; December 10-29 in 1519)

### *The names of the festivals*

There are no nahuatl variants for 'Atemoztli', translated in all the sources as 'Coming Down of the Waters' or 'Fall of the Waters'. In Otomi and Matlatzinca, the *veintena* was called the same way (Caso 1967: Table XI and p. 223-224, 232; Broda 1969: 23; Kirchhoff 1971: 218-219).

The Yucatec Maya name, 'Mol', means 'Collecting' or 'Gathering', and very probably refers to the gathering of rains or of clouds, as suggested by the central element of the glyph, representing water (Thompson 1950: 110). The Cakchiquel name, 'Ibota', 'Obota', or 'Botam' has been translated as 'The Season of Various Colours', or, 'of Mats Rolled Up' (Brinton 1893: 299), but what is alluded to is unclear.

'Coming Down', or, 'Fall of the Waters' certainly refers to rainfall, as is demonstrated by several illustrations. The *Boban Wheel* represents the *veintena* with flows of water falling from heaven. The *Tovar Calendar* (1951: pl. XII) displays Tlaloc pouring water from a jar and brandishing a thunderbolt. In the *Codex Magliabechiano* (p. 44), the god is figured surrounded with drops of rain. Furthermore, to the ancient authors the 'waters' evidently meant rain. Sahagún's informants comment the name as signifying 'The Tlalocs Descend'. But the fact that in the XVIth century Atemoztli fell in the middle of the dry season has puzzled the Colonial chroniclers as well as the modern scholars. Some ancient

authors tried to explain that in December "there used to be rain", or, on the contrary, that "it was a marvel when it was raining", or that it had stopped raining but for a few places, or that it was going to rain in January or February, or that "this feast was a plea for rain in the springtime" (Torquemada 1969, 2: 299-300; *Codex Telleriano-Remensis*: pl. 10, p. 171; *Costumbres* 1945: 52; Tovar 1951: 33; Durán 1967, 1: 287; 1971: 462; *Codex Magliabechiano*: 43 vo).

Regardless of the facts, some modern investigators have suggested new interpretations of 'Atemoztli'. Paso y Troncoso (1898: 261-262) for example, following Veytia (1907: 32), translates: 'Going Down of the Waters', because, he explains, during the rainy season the level of the waters goes down. However, *temo* in no way has this meaning. Selser (1899: 123) ventured 'That by which rain is besought'. More recently, Carrasco (1977: 281) asserted that 'Atemoztli' meant 'Descent to the Waters' and alluded to the sun's crossing of the river of the underworld in December. It should be remembered that generally, Mesoamericanists consider that it was the dry season with its shorter days that corresponded to the night and the sun's subterranean travel (e.g. Selser 1902-1923, 3: 507; Gonzáles Torres 1975: 75). Such an interpretation may be true for our latitudes, where nighttime may be much longer than daytime and where the winter sun is feeble and rare, but less so in Mexico. The Aztecs called the dry season *tonalco*, that is, the period of the *tonalli* or scorching sun, and very soon the Spaniards started calling *tonalco*, wintertime, summer (Molina 1970, 2: 149). Now, even if one admits with Pedro Carrasco that the dry season was that of the sun's travel in the underworld, the sun certainly would not have entered the Land of the Dead in that period, but earlier, at the equinox, and the winter solstice would have corresponded to the *middle* of the voyage. Anyway, there is nothing in the ceremonies of the festival that indicates any relationship with the sun.

Furthermore, even if the new interpretation of 'Atemoztli' by Paso y Troncoso, Selser and Carrasco were proven true, which is unthinkable, the problem of Atlcahualo, 'Cessation of the Waters' (February-March in 1519!) would remain unsolved in their view.

Let us pass over those dubious interpretations. 'Atemoztli' does mean 'Fall of the Rains', as evidenced by the Matlatzinca and Otomi equivalents, by the statements of the XVIth century authors and by the illustrations. If 'Fall of the Rains' happened to be in the middle of the dry season in 1559, it was simply because the ritual calendar was off by 209 days in relation to the tropical year.

## ***The Festival of the Tlaloque***

The ceremonies of the rainy season's second feast of the Tlaloque were very similar to those of Tepeilhuitl.

## More images of the mountains

Once again, dough effigies of the Mountains-Tlaloque (*tepictoton*) were fashioned, and in particular of the Yoaltecatl, the Cuauhtepetl, the Cocotl, the Yiauhqueme and the Tepetzintli. Those substitutes of human victims were mostly made by Tlaloc's usual chosen ones and devotees - for instance, those persons who almost died drowned - who wanted to die symbolically through them and thus 'pay their debt'. The sacrificers also erected poles with paper banners stained with rubber (*teteuitl*). The effigies were arrayed and adorned and offerings of food and pulque were brought to them. During the night before their sacrifice, they had to 'keep awake', exactly like human victims. The first day of the following month, they were put to death by priests who cut out their 'hearts' with weaving sticks (*tzotzopaztli*) and put them in a green gourd bowl (*xoxouic xicalco*). Their paper vestments and the little wooden oblation vessels were burned; the reed mats on which they had stood and other paraphernalia were left in the Mist House. Then the sacrificers offered a banquet and ate and drunk in honour of the Mountains. The women brought grains or ears of maize. According to the illustration in Sahagún's *Primeros Memoriales*, pulque played an important part in these rituals. The poles with sacrificial papers were brought to certain places in the laguna or to the mountains, probably where human sacrifices took place (Sahagún 1956, 1: 128-129, 214-216; 1927: 218-223; 1950-1969, 2: 139-142; also Motolinia 1970: 26, 24; Torquemada 1969, 2: 283-284).

The reason why the images were put to death with a *tzotzopaztli* is not clear. Weaving stick belongs to the insignia of protectresses of weaving such as Xochiquetzal, Cihuacoatl and Chantico. Today, the Nahuas of Pajapan assert that the *chilobos*, the unshapely inhabitants of Tlalocan, cannot be killed by bullets or side-arms, but only by weaving sticks. One is remembered of the mythological Mountain of Sustenance which could be opened only by a thunderbolt (García de León 1969: 296-297; Leyenda de los Soles 1938: 339).

## Human sacrifices

Sahagún does not mention human sacrifices in Atemoztli but other sources do. The *Codex Magliabechiano* (43 vo) describes immolations of slaves on the top of mountains and of children drowned in the laguna. According to Motolinia (1970: 34), a boy and a girl were taken from Mexico and thrown in the lake together with offerings. In the *Primeros Memoriales* a woman is figured, dressed in blue like a water goddess and holding in her hand a staff decorated with rubber-spotted paper. She is probably a victim impersonating a Tlaloc-Mountain, possibly Chalchiuhtlicue who is mentioned by Sahagún among the Mountains celebrated in Atemoztli and who is represented in the *Codex Borbonicus* at Tlaloc's side in a mountain shrine.

Children were the Tlalocs' preferred victims. They impersonated them, for they were adorned with the ornaments of these gods. Probably they were supposed to look like the Tlaloque who were mis-shapen, very short-legged dwarfs who walked with difficulty (*Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas* 1941: 211). They were killed there where the Tlaloque dwelt: on top of mountains or in the lake, and more particularly in the whirlpool of Pantitlan which conducted to the underworld, to the ocean and to Tollan, all places identifiable in some way with the Tlalocan (Durán 1967, 1: 91; Sahagún 1956,3: 351; Graulich 1979: 263-264).

## The rain

The ceremonies were intended to obtain rain. Torquemada (1969, 2: 284) explains that by sacrificing dough images the Indians wanted to oblige the Tlaloque and thus to compel them to make the rain fall. According to the *Codex Magliabechiano*, the sacrifices of children had the same purpose. Sahagún (1950-1969, 2: 139) describes an interesting ritual in which the priest of the temple of Tlaloc tried to bring about showers by imitative magic:

And when the rain threatened, then he forthwith arose and took up his incense ladle, the stem of which was long and rounded, and it rattled. The incense ladle ended [in the form of] a serpent. And the head of the serpent also rattled; it also [was] hollow. Then he speedily fanned the coals into a flame. Then he swiftly filled it with incense [*yiauhtli*], doing only this. Then he offered incense, raising the ladle as an offering to the four directions, rattling [the ladle] greatly, to and fro. Then he went to all the courtyards of the temples, offering and burning incense everywhere. Thus he besought and called upon the Tlalocs. Thus he prayed for rain.

In this way the priest produced clouds, lightnings and rain. The clouds were the smoke of the *yiauhtli*, also called 'cloud herb' (Sahagún 1950-1969, 6: 35; Sullivan 1965: 43); the thunderbolt was the handle in the form of a serpent and, sometimes, of a fire serpent (Seler 1902-1923, 2: 856, fig. 57, 860-861, fig. 60); the rain corresponded to the rattling of the ladle.

## The fields

Atemoztli obviously was a festival of the rainy season and of the period of growth of corn. According to the *Costumbres* (1945: 52), people went to the fields in order to burn copal and incense in honor of the Tlaloque. Ponce (1965: 126)

and Ruiz de Alarcón (1892: 167-168) assert that such offerings used to be made in summertime, when the rain gods' protection against the rodents had to be obtained.

### ***The commemoration of the flood***

Not only had regular rainfall to be secured, but it was equally necessary to take steps in order to avoid a flood similar to the one which put an end to a previous era or 'Sun' and "made all the mountains perish" (*Leyenda de los Soles* 1938: 327). The author of the codices *Telleriano-Remensis* (pl. 10, p. 17) and *Rios* (pl. 70, 72, p. 161, 165) assert that in Atemoztli the flood and the survival of mankind were commemorated. I would have left the assertion out of account, considering it as a mere attempt to explain the name of the month, if there had not been other allusions to previous Suns. Concerning Izcalli, two months later, the same authors explain that this time, it was the festival of fire and "of mankind which never disappeared when the world perished". Every four years, they go on, people fasted "in memory of the three times the world perished". On the other hand, Tovar (1951: 34) mentions a ceremony in Tititl that was intended to avoid the destruction of the universe by violent winds. So, apparently, in Atemoztli, Tititl and Izcalli, the destruction of the world by a flood, by winds and by fire was commemorated. The order of the previous eras (Water, Air, Fire) corresponds to the one given by Rios and to iconographical evidence (Franco 1958; Graulich 1983). We shall see that the *veintena* after Izcalli, Atlcahualo, reenacted the beginning of the present, Mexica era.

So here we have a series of three months connected by the commemoration of the past Suns. Among the Quiché Maya these months were also linked together since they were called 'First, Second and Third [festival of the] Word'. Taking into account that the previous Suns constituted the common element in the three feasts, it is quite possible that the 'Word' alludes to these eras. In the *Popol Vuh* (1971: 10-11), the three successive creations resulted from the divine Word.

To conclude, 'Descent of the Waters' was a festival dedicated to the Tlalogue. They were addressed to because any lack or excess of rains could have disastrous consequences for the harvests. Simultaneously the flood was remembered and another one avoided. The festival was perfectly in its place in the rainy season. Its rituals almost reproduced those of Teppeilhuitl.

### III. ATLCAHUALO OR CUAHUITLEUA

(September 9-29 in 682, February 13-March 4 in 1519)

#### *The sacrifice of children to the Tlaloque*

After Tepeilhuitl and Atemoztli, Atlcahualo was the third *veintena* of the rainy season dedicated to the Tlalocs. The principal ceremonies consisted in immolations of children. Sahagún says that those sacrifices were carried on during the following months of Tlacaxipehualiztli, Tozoztontli and Huey Tozoztli, that is, until the rains came, for the 20th day of Huey Tozoztli corresponds to April 22 in the friar's correlation.

In Atlcahualo, the sacrifices of children were the core of the festival, but not so in the following feasts. It is very clear that the constituent rituals of Tlacaxipehualiztli, Tozoztontli and Huey Tozoztli had little to do with the rain deities (Graulich 1984). Therefore the immolations of children that took place in these 'months' did not really belong to them: they were circumstantial and bound to the tropical year, to the actual seasonal phenomena: for a matter as essential as the arrival of the rains in due time, the ceremonies performed unseasonably in the shifted ritual year probably appeared as insufficient. I conjecture that in March and April sacrifices were offered to the Tlaloque, independently from the *veintenas*, in order to obtain their benevolence, to oblige them, to urge them to appear in time.

In the 15th and 16th centuries, Atlcahualo had slipped until February-March, so that the immolations of children typical of this month coincided with those linked to the tropical year; moreover, they even seemed to form the beginning of the series. The festival aimed at obtaining the last rains the maize needed and at giving thanks to the Tlaloque for their favours, now came to be the first of a series of fixed rituals aimed at obtaining the start of the rainy season! From this peculiarity an easily understandable contamination resulted. Certain details suggest that when the Mexicas performed the rituals of Atlcahualo, they had at least as much the beginning rainy season in mind as the ritual finishing one.

#### *The names of the month*

There are several nahuatl names for this month. 'Atlcahualo', 'Cessation of the Rains', was current among the Mexica and in many cities of the Valley of Mexico. A variant, 'Atlmozacuaya', means 'Shutting off, Stopping of the Water' (Durán 1967, 1: 240; 1971: 413). The feast was dedicated to the Tlaloque, so the name undoubtedly refers to the end of raining.

In the region of Tlaxcala and among the Otomis the month was called resp. 'Xilomaniztli', 'Offering of *Jilotes*' (tender ears of maize), and 'Ambuoendaxi', 'Growth of *Jilotes*' (Caso 1967: 35 and Table X; Broda 1969: 19-20; Kubler and Gibson 1951: 35-36).

In the XVIth century, Atlcahualo fell on the end of the *dry* season, a circumstance which gave rise to embarrassed and contradictory statements from the ancient authors. Durán (1967, 1: 240; 1972: 413) for instance explains 'Stopping of the Water' by the fact that "in March a few showers began to fall and the cornfields, which had been irrigated up to that point, no longer needed the water". "For the same reason", he goes on, "the fourth name of this day was Xilomaniztli", which means that "there already was fresh and tender corn".

For Torquemada (1969, 2: 295), things were quite different.

Atlcahualo, he says, means: when water is wanted, or when there is cessation and shortage of water; because in these times of February, there is no water, for rain starts in April, although sometimes there are some showers in March, which are very useful in order to start sowing corn and maize.

Concerning Xilomaniztli he explains that the veintena was called this way

not because [*jilotes*] were offered then, as some wanted to believe, for then they aren't sown yet, as everybody knows and as it is very notorious in the whole country; but because in this province of Tlaxcala, they begin to sow in the highlands in this month of February, which was the first of their year; and [it is] in solemn thanks for having been permitted to reach the time of sowing the grains of their food that they had to make the said offering of grains of maize [...].

Serna (1892: 323) avoided the problem by translating 'Atlcahualo' as 'Buying the Rains', which cannot be substantiated. In the *Codex Magliabechiano* (28 vo), 'Cessation of Water' is explained by the fact that the fishermen then stopped fishing! Veytia (1907:33-4) resumes this interpretation while observing nevertheless that actually, fishing stopped only in May. He furthermore confirms that it is senseless to speak of *jilotes* in February. For Clavijero (1964: 290). 'Ceasing of Water' refers to the end of the winter rains in the Northern countries where, in his opinion, the Mexican or Toltec calendar originated.

These explanations are obviously whimsical. Coming 60 days after Atemoztli, 'Descent of Water', Atlcahualo means the end of raining and of the rainy season. 'Xilomaniztli' does not invalidate this interpretation: in September there still could be tender ears in the fields.

Another Nahuatl name, 'Cuahuitlehua', 'The Three Rises' (or 'The Trees Rise'), was equally wide-spread. Durán (1971: 413, 467) makes the following comment:

Cuahuitlehua, which means When the Trees Begin to Walk or When the Trees Begin to Rise. This meant that the trees, which were drooping and had withered with the frost of winter, now rose, budded,

and gave forth flowers and leaves. And in truth that is when trees become green again and become covered with flowers and life.

In another chapter he gives information on the ritual related, at least in his opinion, with the name:

As we have stated, the word means To Bud or When the Trees Grow Green. [...] Trees were honored, set up; and therefore a ceremony was made to extol the festivity. Long branches with their twigs were stuck into the ground near the places of sacrifice and along the streets.

We already know that actually, the erection of poles occurred in other festivals of the Tlaloque as well and that it has little to do with budding trees. But there was another ceremony that justified the name Cuahuitlehua, or 'Pariche', 'Among the Trees', and 'Che', 'Tree', as the Cakchiquel and the Quiché called the feast (Brinton 1893: 300). One or several trees were erected, probably with the object of sustaining the heavens, for the period was a critical one. It was equinox, a moment of transition and of fragile equilibrium. The rainy season ended and the dry season, with the mythical emergence of the sun from the underworld, was anxiously hoped for. Moreover, during the three preceding months, the destructions of previous ages had been commemorated; therefore the beginning of a new era, the present one, was to be reenacted, and any transition from one age to another was dangerous and required precautions, the most important of which certainly was to support heaven or to lift it up again, as had been done by trees at the beginning of the present age (*Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas* 1965: 32). In the 'parallel' *veintena*, Xocotl Huetzi, exactly half a year later, at the spring equinox and at the end of the dry season, a tree that rose up to heaven and sustained it was also erected.

## ***Analysis of the rites***

### **The immolations of children**

According to Sahagún, people 'paid their debt' to the Tlaloque by killing children and by erecting poles with sacrificial paper banners. The victims, children designated as chosen ones of Tlaloc by their favorable day signs and (or?) by two cowlicks of hair, were bought from their mothers. They were processionally carried in litters adorned with quetzal feathers to dwellings dedicated to Tlaloc, the Mist Houses, where they spent the night in vigil. People wept and if the children also went crying, their tears were regarded as promises of rain.

The day of the feast, the victims were conducted to sacrifice. They went all richly adorned with green feathers and jade bracelets and necklaces, and their faces were painted with liquid rubber. They impersonated six gods and a goddess. Groups of victims representing Cuauhtepetl, Yoaltecatl, Cocotl, Yiauh-

queme and PoyauhtecatI were put to death on the mountains whose names they bore. At Tepetzinco, a rocky islet in the laguna where a mythical nephew of Huitzilopochtli, Copil, had been killed, a little girl named Quetzalxoch and dressed in light blue was sacrificed. At Pantitlan, the whirlpool in the middle of the lake, the victims impersonated Epcoatl (epithet of Tlalco) (Sahagún 1956, 1: 109-110, 139-142; 1927: 55-60; 1950-1969, 2: 42-45, 165).

The CuauhtecatI, the YoaltecatI, the CocotI and the Yiauhqueme were situated respectively North, South, West and East of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, Pantitlan was also to the East but, being an opening in the middle of the lake and a place of communication with the underworld and the Tlalocan, it represented the center of the world (Graulich 1979: 264).

The *Primeros Memoriales* state that the victims were accompanied to the places of sacrifice by the whole population of the city, noblemen and common people alike (Sahagún 1974: 19-21). The illustration shows a procession conducting a child to a shrine on top of a mountain.

Olmos, Motolinia (1970: 24, 34) and Durán (1967, 1: 240, 292) mention immolations of only two victims, a little boy and a girl, impersonating Tlaloc and Matlalcueye, 'Blue Skirt'. Motolinia specifies that they were children of noblemen or dignitaries and that they were decapitated and buried in a stone box.

According to the *Codex Magliabechiano* (28 vo) and Cervantes de Salazar (1971: 42), the victims were conducted by boat to the lake and drowned.

At Acolman, the lords and the commoners ascended the mountains to offer sacrificial papers and cotton mantas to the statues of the gods. The offerings were left to rot on the spot (Paso y Troncoso 1905-1915, 6: 217). And finally, the *Codex Vaticanus A* (pl. 55, p. 131) mentions a divinatory aspect of the sacrifices of children: in order to know if the coming year would be favorable, a paste made of maize and beans was put in the wombs of the victims before they were buried. If after five days the paste was rotten, the year would be prosperous.

First of all, there are undeniable similarities between the rituals of Atlcahualo and those of Tepeilhuitl and Atemoztli. Once more the victims represent Mountains-Tlaloque, YoaltecatI, CuauhtepetI, CocotI and Yiauhqueme, that is, four of the seven deities enumerated by Sahagún, had already been sacrificed in Atemoztli under the aspect of images of dough. Moreover, Quetzalxoch almost certainly corresponds to XochitecatI, also mentioned in Atemoztli. During this month, paper banners were also erected. And lastly, in Atlcahualo also, pulque played an important part. In his list of "those who served in the homes of each of the gods", Sahagún (1950-1969, 2: 197) says that a priest impersonating a Rabbit god offered pulque to the king and that everybody, men, women and children, got drunk.

### **Durán's feast of the tree**

In connection with the *veintena* Huey Tozotli, Durán (1967, 1: 82-93) describes ceremonies very similar to those of Atlcahualo. Some days before the feast, people went to the hill of Colhuacan to cut the tallest, fullest and most

beautiful tree they could find. They carried it to Mexico with great care, so that no branch would touch the ground, and planted it before the pyramid of Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc. Four lesser trees, forming a square, were placed around the first one which was called Tota, 'Our Father'. They were tied to each other with ropes and the square was arranged as a artificial garden.

On the eve of the feast, the kings of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, Texcoco and Tlacopan and the hostile rulers of Tlaxcala and Huexotzinco went with a great retinue to the base of the Tlalocan mountain. At dawn they conducted a little boy in an enclosed litter to a shrine of the Tlalocs on top of the mountain. Priests cut the throat of the child, in the litter, "to the sound of many trumpets, conch shells, and flutes". The kings and their retinues went in turn to adorn the statues and bring them offerings of quetzal feathers, jade and food, and to anoint them with the victim's blood. Then everybody but a hundred soldiers left to guard the offerings, returned to Mexico.

Meanwhile, in the city a little girl dressed in blue, impersonating Chalchiuhtlicue, goddess of waters, springs, lakes and rivers, had been brought, also in a covered litter, to the artificial garden. There she was set down near the big tree. They sang before her until news arrived that the lords were ready to cross the lake. Then living goddess and the Father tree were conducted to the lakeshore and embarked. At Pantitlan the flotillas coming from the city and the Tlalocan joined each other. The tree was "thrust into the mud next to the spring or drain" and they killed the little girl by cutting her throat with a pronged harpoon. Her blood nourished the waters and so did her body, which was cast into the whirlpool together with great quantities of jewels, gold, precious stones, feathers and other riches. Then everyone returned home in great silence. The tree was left there until it rotted. Durán asserts that the victims were the proper boys and girls of the Mexicas.

The similarities with Atlcahualo are evident: the imposing processions, the litters, the precious offerings that were left to rot. There were two victims, like in Atlcahualo according to some sources, and they were children of the Mexica. The boy almost certainly represented Tlaloc. As for Chalchiuhtlicue, 'Jade Skirt', Tlaloc's wife, who was put in a garden that probably represented the paradise of Tlalocan-Tamoanchan, she seems to be very close to Xochiquetzal, Tlaloc's first wife whose life in paradise has been described by Muñoz Camargo (1892: 154-155). She corresponds to the bluedressed Quetzalcoch, or to Matlal-cueye, 'Blue Skirt'.

There remains the tree, or the trees. But one of the names of the month we examine is precisely 'The Tree Stands Up'. Now this tree implied by 'Cuahuitlehua' had to be of the greatest importance since in the *Codex Vaticanus A* (pl. 55, p. 131; pl. 133, p. 287) the illustration shows Tlaloc under the aspect of a leafy tree. Elsewhere in the same codex, as well as in the *Wheel of Boban* (Caso 1967: 73 fig. 22) and in Serna's manuscript (Kluber and Gibson 1951: fig. 14), the glyph or emblem of the month is also a tree. In Durán's *Album* (1967, 1: pl. 52), it is a big tree with imposing foliage.

The quest for a tree described by Durán is very similar to the one which occurred in Xocotl Huetzi, Atlcahualo's parallel month, half a year later (Table I). In Xocotl Huetzi however, at the end of the dry season, it was a leafless tree that was erected, while the tree of the end of the rainy season as figured in the manuscripts was gloriously foliated.

There is every reason for supposing that Durán's 'feast of the tree' actually was Atlcahualo. The author however maintains that it fell on the 29th of April and that it *coincided* with the festival of Huey Tozoztli "which, therefore, was a double festival". In other words, in Durán's mind it was a 'movable' feast which casually coincided with the twentieth day of Huey Tozoztli - but, strangely, he assigns fixed Christian dates to movable feasts (1967, 1: 105)! In fact, we do not know of any festival bearing any resemblance whatsoever to the 'festival of the tree', and the rituals of Huey Tozoztli were also completely different, according to all the other sources (Broda 1971; Graulich 1984). As far as I am concerned, I think that Durán has been mistaken and that the ceremony of the tree belonged to Atlcahualo, as indicated by the name 'Cuahuitlehua', by the similarities between the rituals and by the illustrations in the codices. Durán's explanations of the monthly festivals are often rather confused, and it may be revealing his description of the festival of the tree directly precedes that of Tlacaxipehualiztli.

His error may have originated in the fact that until Huey Tozoztli, there were sacrifices of children. In the *Codex Borbonicus*, the ceremonies for Tozoztontli and Huey Tozoztli are not the typical ones of these months, but those dedicated to the Tlaloque and bound to the real, tropical year. The illustration for Huey Tozoztli even represents a person carrying an impersonator of Tlaloc on his back and heading for a mountain topped with a shrine of the rain god. Possibly Durán made use of the codex and it was this illustration which convinced him that the feast of the tree fell on Huey Tozoztli.

## The Tlaloque of Tollan

To go back to the sacrifices of children in Atlcahualo, we do have information on their mythical origin. According to Motolinia (1970: 35), they began at a time a severe drought afflicted the country during four years. In fact, this drought was the one which sealed Tollan's fate. The *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* (1938: 99-100) say that it lasted seven years and that in order to appease the Tlaloque, ruler Huemac had to sacrifice his own children "in Xochiquetzal's water" and on two mountains. According to the *Leyenda de los Soles* (1938: 375-382) the famine resulted from an error of Huemac. Having defeated the Tlaloque at the ball game, he was inconsiderate enough to demand jade and green feathers instead of the young green-leaved ears of maize the gods proposed him instead. After four years of total disappearance and famine, the Tlaloque came back with corn but announced the end of the Toltecs and the rise of the Mexica, to whom maize would belong henceforth. In exchange, the Mexicas had to offer them 'their daughter', Quetzalxoch, the daughter of their king, at the whirlpool of Pantitlan. After that there was rain again and maize, the Toltecs perished, and

Huemac fled to the House of Corn (Cincalco). (The relationship between Quetzalcoch's immolation and this myth had already been noticed by Lehmann 1938: 379-380 footnote 3, Nowotny 1968: 103 and Broda 1971: 273-275).

The ceremonies of Atlcahualo reenacted and expanded those sacrifices from the end of Tollan. Weren't the victims 'children of the Mexica' since they were bought from Mexica women? Doesn't Motolinia state that they were children of noblemen? The immolations took place in the presence of the king. And, of course, the victim was called Quetzalcoch and her equivalent in Durán was killed at Pantitlan.

In the ritual, a point was made of avoiding Huemac's excessive desire for greenstones and precious feathers. The victims were abundantly adorned with such riches and great quantities of them were thrown into the whirlpool. This way the Tlalocque received their due, the Aztecs paid for the rains they had benefited from during the whole past season.

The very position of Atlcahualo, between Izcalli and Tlacaxipehualiztli, is most interesting. Izcalli, the festival of fire and the commemoration of the igneous cataclysm that had put an end to a previous era, preceded Atlcahualo the way the drought, "burning the way fire burns" (*Anales de Cuauhtitlan*) preceded the abundance in the myth. In the *Leyenda de los Soles*, when the Tlalocque came back, there was ceaseless rain during four days and "water was eaten", *atl cuallo*, by the earth: the expression certainly must be understood as a pun on Atlcahualo. After that, the maize got ripe, the Toltecs perished and Huemac entered the Cincalco: it is the following *veintena*, Tlacaxipehualiztli, feast of the emergence of the sun, of the extermination of the 'autochthon's and of harvest (Graulich 1982). In Atlcahualo it was already made clear that the autochthons would die: during this month, the valiant warriors who were to be sacrificed in Tlacaxipehualiztli were exhibited to the people and their immolation was simulated with knives made of ground corn (Sahagún 1950-1969, 2: 44).

The end of Tollan and the advent of the Mexica correspond to a passage from one era to another (Graulich 1987). Atlcahualo therefore mythically reproduced the restoration of the world and this gives us one of the reasons why Tota and four other trees were erected in the center and at the four corners of the world: they had to sustain the vault of heaven.

Atlcahualo and the myth of the end of Tollan according to the *Leyenda ...* are a good example of the remarkable way in which the Mexica reinterpreted certain feasts. They opportunely introduced the reenacting of their mythical advent as the new masters of Mexico and as new sun (Graulich 1983) at the right place: just before the festival of sunrise and at the end of the rainy season. But there is a wrong note. In Durán's version, Quetzalcoch was killed at Pantitlan. This sacrifice is diametrically opposite to Coyolxauhqui's immolation according to certain sources.

Tezozomoc (1949: 30-36; 1878: 226-230) and Durán (1967, 2: 32-34) narrate that during their peregrinations, the Mexica settled at Coatepec, nearby Tollan. They set up a ball game court with in the middle a hole from where water issued, and they constructed a dam that transformed the landscape into a paradisiacal one, a true image of the Promised Land. So true, in fact, that some of

them, the 400 Huitznahua priests and a woman called Coyolxauhqui, decided to stay. But the irate Huitzilopochtli thought otherwise. At midnight he decapitated Coyolxauhqui right on the hole of the 'divine ball game court' and he killed the Four Hundred; at sunrise he destroyed the dam and everything dried up.

That dreadful day at Coatepec clearly stands for a year, with the rainy season corresponding to the night, and the dry season produced by the emergence of the sun. The essential moistness comes from the centre of the court, but when Coyolxauhqui - the waning, sterile moon - is killed there, it means the coming of drought at dawn.

In my opinion, there is an obvious relationship between the hole in the ball game court nearby Tollan and the hole in the lake at Pantitlan. Water and fertility issue from both, for according to Durán (1967, 1: 89; 1971: 166), "during the rainy season a great quantity of water burst forth [from Pantitlan]". On the other hand, the fertility associations of the ball game are well known, and illustrated on reliefs at Chichen Itza, Aparicio and in the Escuintla department in Guatemala. Now, if the aged Coyolxauhqui's death resulted in the coming of the dry season, young (i.e., waxing moon?) Quetzalcoch's sacrifice on the hole of Pantitlan should have had an opposite result since according to myth, its consequences at Tollan were the return of the Tlaloque and of maize. But Atlcahualo is the *end of the rainy season!* There must have been contamination somewhere. When the Mexica reinterpreted and modified the festival, possibly one century before the Spanish Conquest, Atlcahualo fell on the end of March, that is, shortly before the rainy season. The immolation's effect was the coming of water; still, the Mexica knew that in the ritual year harvest was about to begin, since in the myth, the harvest and the end of the Toltecs immediately follow the abundant rainfall.

So what was Atlcahualo before the arrival of the Mexica? Naturally a festival of the Tlaloque, since the 3rd, 6th and 9th *veintenas* were dedicated to these gods; a festival intended to secure the last indispensable rains and to 'pay the debt'. A feast of the heaven-sustaining tree also, for it was equinox and passage from one season and one era to the other.

#### IV. ETZALCUALIZTLI

(December 19-January 7 in 682, May 24-June 12 in 1519)

##### *The names of the month*

'Etzalcualiztli', the only nahuatl name of the month, means 'Eating Etzalli (boiled corn and beans)'. One of the principal ceremonies consisted precisely in eating this food considered as very rich (Caso 1967: 35; Broda 1969: 21; 1971: 282; Kirchhoff 1971: 210; Jiménez Moreno 1974: 34; Durán 1967, 1: 259). The

Otomi name, 'Flesh of Turkey', also designates a very appreciated food (Soustelle 1937: 526).

### *The ceremonies*

Etzalcualiztli was dedicated to Tlaloc and Chalchiuhtlicue. According to Motolinia (1970: 33), impersonators of the god and of his wife, the water goddess, lived together during 20 days and were immolated at midnight; their bodies were buried. The *Costumbres* (1945: 43) and the *Primeros Memoriales* (Sahagún 1974:34) also mention a sacrifice of Tlaloc. Olmos (Motolinia 1970: 25) on the other hand speaks of the immolation of ten to twenty persons in honour of the god. According to Pomar (1964: 168), at Texcoco, fifteen children were sacrificed in the mountains.

As usually, Sahagún (1956, 1: 115, 161-171; 1950-1969, 2: 74-85) gives the most detailed version. First there were several four day periods during which the priests fasted and practiced different kinds of penances and mortifications. Such exercises were common practice for the priests, especially before immolations of human beings. In Etzalcualiztli however they were of exceptional importance because this time the priests were also the principal sacrificers since Tlaloc was their patron deity. Wasn't 'Tlamacazqui', 'Priest', one of the god's epithets? Etzalcualiztli was the great festival of the clergy, in a part of the year, the dry season, in which the different parts of Mexica society were successively honoured: the warriors in Tlacaxipehualiztli, the peasants in Tozoztontli and Huey Tozoztli, the king in Toxcatl, just before the priests, the lords in Tecuilhuitl and Huey Tecuilhuitl and the deceased in the two last months.

The 20th day in the evening, vigil was kept with the impersonators of the Tlalocs in the Tlalocan, the temple of Tlaloc. At midnight, prisoners of war who had to serve as a 'litter' for the impersonators were sacrificed, then these were killed by tearing out their hearts which were deposited in a blue 'cloud vessel' (*mixcomitl*). At the same time sacrificial rubber-stained papers, precious feathers and perfect jades were burnt. Meanwhile, the bystanders fanned themselves and their children with artemisia flowers (*iztauhyatl*), thus frightening away the worms ...

Then the priests went by boat to the 'water cave' (*aoztoc*) of Pantitlan. There a 'fire priest' cast the cloud vessel with the hearts into the 'hole', together with jades and sacrificial papers. Some papers decorated with precious stones were tied to the trees surrounding the whirlpool. Finally the fire priest lifted an incense ladle with sacrificial banners and cast it into the water.

In his book on the gods, Sahagún (1956, 1: 50-51; 1927: 8-10; 1950-1969, 1: 21-22) gives more information on the rituals in honour of Chalchiuhtlicue. In the Tlalocan her effigy was made by adorning a wooden framework with her clothes and attributes. First, offerings were made to her, then an impersonator bought by the water merchants was put to death before the effigy and the king himself

came to pay her homage with incense and by decapitating quails. It was said that this way, he gained rain (*qujauhtlatlanj in tlacatl*). However, as far as we know there seems to be an inconsistency here: for Chalchiuhtlicue was the water (*iehoatl yn atl*, 'she the water'), and, more precisely, the water that was drunk, from springs, rivers and lakes, but not the rain (Sahagún 1950-1969, 1: 21). Therefore, it is probable that the rituals performed by the king in Tlaloc's shrine were addressed to the rain deity rather than to Chalchiuhtlicue. All the sources mention the eating of *etzalli*.

### ***Analysis of the rituals***

Situated in the middle of the luminous, male celestial part of the year. Etzalcualiztli was the only festival in this season dedicated to the god who represented the male aspect of the earth. As a matter of fact, in this month Tlaloc was celebrated in the first place under his aspect of a telluric deity, as expressly stated in the *Costumbres* (1945: 44), and as apparently corroborated by the very structure of the series of months pertaining to the dry season. In the first half of the year, the first, fourth and seventh months (Ochpaniztli, Quecholli and Tititl) were in various degrees dedicated to chthonian deities (Toci, Coatlicue-Chimalman, Ilamatecuhtli-Cihuacoatl); but in the second half the second, fifth and eighth month (Tozoztontli, Etzalcualiztli and, originally, Tlaxochimaco) are those concerned with the Earth (Coatlicue, Tlaloc and Xochiquetzal). Besides, it was certainly not by accident that Huitzilopochtli-Sun and Tlaloc-Earth stood so to say side by side in the parallel *veintenas* of Panquetzaliztli and Etzalcualiztli (see Table I): they were 'neighbours' exactly in the same way as on top of the main pyramid of Mexico-Tenochtitlan; together, they represented Heaven and Earth and the two aftermaths for deserving deceased, the House of the Sun and the Tlalocan, the paradises of, respectively, the burned and the buried ones. And finally, Tlaloc was anyway in the first place a deity of the earth, as indicated by his name, translated by the ancient authors for example as 'Earth which Produces Abundantly', 'Road Under the Earth', 'Great Cave', 'Earthy', and signifying probably 'Full of earth', 'Covered with Earth', or 'Earthmade' (Pomar 1964: 162; Durán 1967, 1: 81; *Codex Magliabechiano*: 43 vo; Sullivan 1974: 215-216).

For being situated in the middle of the dry season, Etzalcualiztli was the beginning of the afternoon, that is, of that part of the day, of the year or of an era - both assimilated to a day - that corresponded to the Tlalocan-Tamoanchan, the original paradise. So it was quite logical to celebrate at that time the Lord of Tlalocan. The midday sun was thought to become Tezcatlipoca, Tepeyollotl (the Earth Jaguar, 'Heart of the Mountain') or Tlaloc (Graulich 1981; *Codex Borbonicus*: 16). It may be interesting to note that among the Maya, the month's patron glyph represents "an anthropomorphized feline, whose features recall those of the jaguar but are also reminiscent of those of the sun god" (Thompson 1950: 115).

Perhaps the fact that it was the beginning of the afternoon also explains one of the rites of Etzalcualiztli, consisting in a dance of young men holding sticks with flying birds attached to them (Sahagún 1974: 34-35; 1958 a: 62-63). Afternoon was that part of the day in which the warriors who had accompanied the sun to the zenith now became birds and "scattered out everywhere, sipping, sucking the different flowers" of paradise (Sahagún 1950-1969, 6: 163).

Since it was the middle of the dry season (always, of course, in the *ritual year*), the Earth had to be nourished in order not to dry up. Therefore warriors and children were sacrificed on its behalf and it was married to the Water. Furthermore, Etzalcualiztli stood at equal distance from the end of the past rainy season (Atlcualalo) and from the beginning of the new one (Ochpaniztli). So it was advisable, on the one hand, to thank Tlaloc for the good harvests he had allowed and, on the other hand, to obtain his benevolence for the coming year. In some respects, the ceremonies were very similar to those of Atlcualalo, during which the 'debt was paid' to the god by giving him human victims, sacrificial papers, jades and other precious goods. However, there were also similarities with Ochpaniztli, the first month of the rainy season. Sahagún (1950-1969, 2: 82-83) describes a strange preliminary ritual of Etzalcualiztli in which the fire priest, representing Tlaloc,

placed [upon the mats] four round green stones. And when he had placed them there, then they gave him a small wooden hook, stained blue, wherewith he struck each of the green stone balls. As he went striking [each one], he turned around.

I do not know the significance of this behaviour. Possibly it was intended to bring about rain. The ritual probably took place in Ochpaniztli also, for it seems to figure in the *Codex Borbonicus* illustration of that month, precisely in connection with other rites supposed to bring about rain.

Etzalcualiztli was also a festival of abundance. Like in the preceding *veintenas* (Graulich 1984), prosperity was celebrated, this time by offering pop-corn to each other and to Tlaloc and by eating *etzalli*,

a sort of bean stew containing whole kernels of corn. It is considered very tasty, so coveted, so greatly desired, that it is small wonder it had its own special day and feast [...] This is considered costly, and not all can afford it (Durán 1971: 430-1).

There was rejoicing and people danced brandishing ears of corn and jars of *etzalli* (Sahagún 1950-1969, 2: 79; *Codex Magliabechiano*: 33 vo; Motolinia 1970: 25, 33; *Codex Vaticanus A*: pl. 60, p. 141; Paso y Troncoso 1905-1915, 4: 218; 6: 216).

The same as during the preceding harvest feasts, food was redistributed. Young men, and valiants, or peasants according to other documents, disguised themselves as Tlaloque and went from door to door to collect victuals and stew, "telling the people that it was because of the workers that they enjoyed the seed for bread and the maize whose symbol they carried and that for this reason they should recompense them" (Tovar 1951: 25). In the same way as in the preceding

months also, people purified themselves, not only by "frightening away the worms", but also by extracting blood from their genitals (*Codex Magliabechiano*: 33 vo).

The crops having been gathered in, the agricultural implements could at last be left to rest. They were placed upon a platform in the houses and oblations of food and pulque were made to them and they were thanked for their help (*Codex Magliabechiano*: 33 vo; Durán 1967, 1: 259-260; 1971: 431-432). Incidentally, it is worth stressing that the rite is perfectly logical in the ritual year but not at all if one considers that there was no shifting of the calendar and that Etzalcualiztli really belonged to May-June, as in the 16th century. For in this period of the year, after sowing, the fields do require constant care, they must be cleaned and harrowed and there could be no question of allowing the instruments to rest.

Chalchiuhtlicue was celebrated, not only as Tlaloc-Earth's complement, but also as an aliment for men. Sahagún's (1950-1969, 1: 22) informants say that the Indians then remembered "that because of her we live. She is our sustenance. And thence come all things that are necessary." She was worshipped for the same reason as the Maize, Chicomecoatl, and the Salt, Huixtocihuatl. Together they were the sustenance of the people. With her feast started a series of four *veintenas* during which the basic aliments were celebrated together with another product of the earth: flowers, or the Earth herself. Tecuilhuítl was dedicated to Huixtocihuatl, Huey Tecuilhuítl to Xilonen, the *jilote*, and Tlaxochimaco to Xochiquetzal. The goddesses of these four *veintenas* from Etzalcualiztli to Tlaxochimaco were also the four wives of the dark Tezcatlipoca-Moon in the rituals of the month Toxcatl, and the divine woman companions of the sun from noon to sunset. The quarter of the year beginning with Etzalcualiztli really corresponded to Tlalocan and abundance and to the afternoon, when women relieved men as companions of the sun (Graulich 1984, 1986).

### ***Quetzalcoatl and Xolotl***

In some regions Quetzalcoatl and Xolotl appear to have played a part in Etzalcualiztli. The *Codex Borbonicus* represents them one in front of the other, dressed in a similar way. They dance in company of five persons and a drummer, all of them adorned like Xolotl. The author of the *Codex Magliabechiano* (33 vo) also mentions the worship, in this month, of Quetzalcoatl, 'god of the wind', 'friend of relative of another who was called Tlaloc and brother of another one, called Xolotl'.

Perhaps the two brothers were celebrated here in the first place because they were gods of the wind and companions of Tlaloc. Their clothes and their ornaments, as well as those of the dancers, have typical rounded ends (*tlayavaluhtlatectli*) similar to those of the Tlaloque Ehecatotontin, the 'Little Winds' whose images were shaped in the form of Mountains (Sahagún 1958 a:

154-155; Seler 1908-1909, 2: 143). Moreover, it was said that Ehecatl loved rounded forms (Soustelle 1955: 46). He was the roadsweeper of the rain gods; as for Xolotl, they invoked him in cases of extreme drought (Muñoz Camargo 1892: 167). Quetzalcoatl and Xolotl were also called upon for agricultural labour. Being the good of everything double, twin and abnormal, Xolotl represented among other things the double ear of maize (Ponce 1965: 126-128; *Codex Telleriano-Remensis*: pl. 24, p. 225).

In Etzalcualiztli the agricultural implements were at rest: but precisely, Quetzalcoatl was the patron of the coatl, the digging stick, possibly because his name could also be translated as "precious (quetzal) digging stick" (Ponce 1965: 126). Xolotl may have been associated to the same implement, for he was the god who opened the way into the earth, e.g. as the dog who guided the dead to Mictlan (*Codex Borgia*: 65, 37-38; *Codex Telleriano-Remensis*: pl. 24, p. 225; Sahagún 1927: 298).

Among the Cakchiquel the name of the month was Uchum, which may mean 'To Grind' (Brinton 1893: 298). There existed a relationship between Xolotl and the grinding stone, as indicated by the god's name. For xolotl means 'page', 'servant' or 'slave' - and therefore, perhaps, domestic implement, the more so since Molina (1970, 2: 160-161; 1: 81 s.v. *mano de morteza* and 2: 112 s.v. *texolovia*) translates the verb *xolouia* (*nitetla*) as follows: "to grind (for someone) on the metate with the grinding stone". These etymologies give us one possible reason why in certain myths Xolotl is said to have nourished the first human beings with ground corn (*Histoire du Méchique* 1905: 28-29; see also *Codex Magliabechiano*: 60 vo). However, it is particularly the to-and-fro movement of the grinding stone which characterizes Xolotl. He presides over the day Movement (Nowotny 1961: 225) and, together with Quetzalcoatl, he is one of the gods of the ball game (*Codex Magliabechiano*: 60 vo), the game where the rubber ball continuously passes from one side to the other.

Being the god of movement and of everything double, Xolotl is of course associated with the alternation. He is the setting sun with respect to Quetzalcoatl as rising sun (*Codex Nuttall*: 76; *Codex Vaticanus B*: 64; *Codex Vindobonensis*: pl. 20, p. 93), he is the evening star with respect to Quetzalcoatl as morning star: As a turkey (*Histoire du Méchique* 1905: 29), he is closely related to Quetzalcoatl's opponent, Tezcatlipoca (false bird, false sun). His typical movement is downwards, from light to obscurity and to the interior of the earth. As a dog conducting to the underworld, he is related to Chantico *Cuaxolotl* 9 Dog (!) who had been transformed into a dog and expelled to the underworld at the beginning of the present era for having illicitly made fire (*Codex Telleriano-Remensis*: pl. 28, p. 233; *Codex Vaticanus A*: pl. 49, p. 115).

In the *Codex Borbonicus*, Xolotl is figured bigger than Quetzalcoatl, so at this juncture he is more important. Is it because in the afternoon the evening star or the setting sun prevails over the morning star or the rising sun? Is it because Xolotl was going to conduct Quetzalcoatl into the underworld? Or were the two gods celebrated together only as companions of the Tlaloque and patrons of the implements left to rest? The data at our disposal unfortunately are too scarce to allow a definitive answer.

To conclude, Etzalcualiztli, in the middle of the dry season and of the day, was a festival of abundance whose rituals prolonged those of the preceding months. It was the main feast of Tlaloc as the male aspect of the Earth and Lord of Tlalocan, of the afternoon and of the rains. The Aztecs paid for his past benefits and besought him to bless the forthcoming season. The harvest being gathered in, the instruments were allowed to rest and received oblations. Quetzalcoatl and Xolotl were celebrated, because of their links with the Tlaloque, raining and agricultural labours, and possibly also because one replaced the other as important heavenly body.

Etzalcualiztli was also dedicated to Chalchiuhtlicue, Tlaloc's partner, who prevented the earth from drying up and who quenched mankind's thirst. And, last but not least, it was the big festival of the priests whose patron was Tlaloc.

Etzalcualiztli was but one of the four festivals mainly dedicated to the Tlaloque. Grantedly, these gods also intervened in other festivals: Ochpaniztli, Tlacaxipehualiztli, Tozoztontli, Huey Tozoztli, and even Toxcatl, but only accessorially, and for the last four months mentioned their presence is only circumstantial and due to the shifting of the ritual year.

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