

THE DISCOVERY OF CORN

by SELMA E. ANDERSON.

It is man's nature to wonder about the beginning of things: his own origin, the origin of the world and the things in it. In history and in nature he seeks to discover how and from whence he came. When what he finds is insufficient, he juggles and elaborates upon the facts or creates entirely new ones to satisfy the eternal question in his mind.

We live in a modern world; our concepts of our own origin have kept pace with our growing ability to probe into the past and make it speak. The Náhuatl thinker did not have this advantage. He had to seek his answers only in what he could observe and what had been verbally handed down to him by his ancestors. His answers, then, were not logical conclusions but the expression of an impression made upon his mind by legend and nature. He could not dissect and analyse natural phenomena to see what made them so; he could, however, invent a story to account for a particular phenomenon. This he did. He directed his highly-developed sensitivity and creative capacity to the satisfaction of his own questioning. The result was a wealth of fanciful, colorful legends, many of which have been passed down to us. We have long since ceased to give any intellectual assent to such legends; however we cannot help feeling their appeal. Through them we catch a glimpse not only into the mind but into the heart of the Nahuas; we can conceive not only how they thought but how they felt about life. What we see attracts us.

Probably the most well-known legend in the Náhuatl tradition is that of the creation of the earth itself. According to this tradition, there have existed on the earth five epochs, or Suns: 1) The sun of 4 *ocelot* whose symbol was a reed

and which ended with its inhabitants being devoured by tigers, 2) the Sun of 4 Wind, symbolized by flint and ended by great winds, 3) the Sun of 4 Rain which was destroyed by a rain of fire, 4) the Sun of 4 Water, symbolized by a house and destroyed by water. The fifth Sun, that of Movement, is the present age, and was created in Teotihuacan at the whim of the four sons of *Ometeotl* the Dual god. This is the legend: Two of these gods, *Tezcatlipoca* and *Quetzalcóatl*, sent down from heaven the Goddess of the Earth, a horrible monster full of eyes and biting mouths. The earth was then full of water, left from the previous destruction, and over the water moved the monster. The two gods decided that the earth must be given form; whereupon they transformed themselves into two enormous serpents. One of them took the Monster by her right hand and left foot, and the other took her by the left hand and right foot. Together they stretched and pulled until she separated into two parts. The lower part rose and formed the heavens; the upper part formed the earth.

Then the rest of the gods descended to console the Goddess of the Earth and to give her gifts. In compensation for her sacrifice it was permitted that from her body should come all that which man needed to live in the world. Her hair became grass, trees and flowers. Her skin became the grass of the meadows and the flowers that adorn it. Her eyes became small caves, cisterns and springs; her mouth, large caves. Her nose was transformed into mountains and valleys.¹

After the world was created there was a need of man to inhabit it. There are various legends as to the origin of man himself. To relate two:

One day early in the morning the Sun threw an arrow from heaven. From the opening it made in the rock where it landed rose a man and a woman. Both were incomplete, however, being created only from the chest up. These two went leaping over the fields and latter, through the union of a kiss, was born a man who was the ancestor of all men.²

Another which attributes the creation to *Quetzalcóatl*:

One day *Quetzalcóatl* went to *Mictlan* (the land of the

¹ *Epica Náhuatl*, compiled by Angel María Garibay K., U. N. A. M., Mex., 1945, pp. 3-4.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

dead). He approached *Mictlantecutli* and *Mictlancíhuatl*, the lord and lady of the land of the dead, and demanded the precious bones that they guarded. When asked what he wanted with them, *Quetzalcóatl* replied that the gods were worried that there were no men on the earth. *Mictlantecutli* responded that he would give him the bones if he would make his snail shell to sound and if he circled his magic circle four times. The shell had no holes; therefore *Quetzalcóatl* summoned the worms to make holes. Then the bees entered the shell and with their humming made it sound; at which *Mictlantecutli* gave him permission to take the bones. Later he repented and wished for *Quetzalcóatl* to return them, but he refused and fled with the bones. *Mictlantecutli* sent his servants ahead to prepare a pitfall for *Quetzalcóatl*. He fell dead into the pit and the scattered bones were pecked and damaged by quail. Later *Quetzalcóatl* revived, gathered the remains of the bones and took them to *Tamoanchan*. There *Cihuacóatl* ground them and put them in a precious vessel. *Quetzalcóatl* sprinkled them with his own blood and the other gods all did penance. From this was born man. Therefore man was created through the penitence of the gods.

To live, man must eat. Thus rose legends accounting for the abundance of food found on the earth. The legend which I have translated has to do with that which was, for the Indian, by far the most important of his foods: corn.

In each of the five epochs a particular food had been provided for the people: in the first Sun, this food was acorns; in the second, *aciciutli*, a seed resembling wheat which grew in the water ("water corn"); in the third a seed similar to corn called *cinocopi* ("almost corn"). As is evident, the sustenance of each succeeding epoch had evolved more and more toward the corn of today. We are not told the name of the food of the fourth epoch, but we may assume that it followed this evolution. And in the fifth Sun, the Sun of 4 Movement, appeared corn in its modern form, created by the gods and given to man by *Quetzalcóatl*.

It has been said that as wheat is the basis of European alimentation and rice of the Orient, corn (probably first developed in MesoAmerica) as basic food of the Western Hemisphere. In the Indian cultures of Mexico this economic dependence is most pronounced. And certainly in Pre-Conquest

times before the invasion of modern products the importance of maize to the Indian's subsistence must have been even greater. The *tlaxcalli* (*tortilla*), along with the *etl: frijol* (bean) formed the greater part of the daily fare supplemented by more corn products: *atole*, *tamales*, *elotes*, etc.

Naturally a product so essential to the maintenance of life was bound to be echoed in the cultural and economic activities of the people. The Indian man's daily life revolved around the care of his corn crop; the woman's around the preparation of *tortillas*. If the crop failed, the people went hungry; therefore the utmost care was taken to keep happy all the gods who had any influence on the corn crop.

The legend of how their "staff of life" came to be must have been one of the most beloved in the folklore of the nahuas. It has come down to us as a delightfully fantastic and colorful little tale. The figure of *Quetzalcóatl* as *Providor* is significant; he was looked upon by the nahuas as the creator-benefactor of the early toltecs. It is he who brought agriculture, cultural development, and a period of general plenty in the Valley of Mexico. This powerful figure negotiating with the tiny ant, the towering mountain with its store of corn, *Cipactonal* and *Oxomoco* casting lots, *Nanáhuatl* peering at the situation from above and dramatically splitting open the mountain, and the colorful *Tlalloques* (gods of rain) coming from the four corners of the earth to snatch the exposed corn—all of these paint a picture in our minds of considerable color and drama. How much more it must have excited the people who created it and believed it!

1. Ye no ce(p)pa qutoque:
2. ¿Tlein quicuazque, teteoye?
3. Ye tlatemohua in tonacayotl.
4. Auh niman quicuito in azcatl
5. In tlaolli in itic tonacatepetl.
6. Auh niman ye quinamique in azcatl
7. in Quetzalcohuatl. Quilhui:
8. Can oticcuito? Xinechilhui.
9. Auh amo quilhiznequi.
10. Cenca quitequitlatlania
11. Niman ic quilhuia:
12. Ca, nechca.
13. Niman ye quihuica,

14. Auh niman ic tlilazcatl mocuep in Quetzalcohuatl
15. Niman ye quihuica,
16. Niman ye ic callaqui.
17. Niman ye ic quizazaca nehuan.
18. In tlatlahqui azcatl in mach
19. oquihuicac in Quetzalcohuatl
20. tlatempan quitlatlalilia in tlaolli.
21. Niman ye quitqui in Tamoanchan
22. Aun niman ye quicuacua in teteo.
23. Niman ye ic totenco quitlalia
24. inic tihuapahuaque.
25. Auh niman ye quitohua,
26. Quen ticchihuazque in tonacatepetl?
27. Auh niman zan ya quimanaznequi.
28. In Quetzalcohuatl quimecayoti,
29. auh amo queuh.
30. Auh niman ye quitlapohuia
31. In Oxomoco.
32. Auh niman no ye quitonalpohuia
33. in Cipactonal, in icihuah Oxomoco.
34. Ca cihuatl in Cipactonal.
35. Auh niman quitoque in Oxomoco
36. in Cipactonal.
37. Ca zan quihuitequiz in Nanahuatl
38. in tonacatepetl ca oquitlapohuique.
39. Auh nima(n) ye netlalhuilo in tlaloque
40. In xoxouhqui tlaloque,
41. iztac tlaloque, cozauhqui tlaloque,
42. tlatlahqui tlaloque.
43. Niman ye quihuiteque in Nanahuatl
44. Auh niman ye namoyello in tlalloque
45. in tonacayotl.
46. In iztac, in yahuitl, in coztic,
47. in xiuhtoctli, in etl, in huauhtli,
48. in chian in michihuahtli.
49. Ixquich namoyaloc in tonacayotl.

Translation:

1. Thus once more (the gods) said:
2. What shall they eat, O gods?

3. Let our sustenance come down.
4. And then the ant goes to gather
5. Shelled corn from within the mountain of our sus-
[tenance.
6. *Quetzalcóatl* affronts the ant.
7. He asks him:
8. Where did you go to gather it? Tell me!
9. But he does not wish to tell him.
10. (*Quetzalcóatl*) urges him.
11. Then he says:
12. "Well... there!"
13. Whereupon he takes him.
14. Promptly *Quetzalcóatl* changes himself into a black ant.
15. Then he guides him,
16. And thus introduces him(to the corn.)
17. They go out together.
18. It is said that the red ant
19. Guided *Quetzalcóatl*
20. To the foot of the mountain where they placed the
[corn.
21. Then he (*Quetzalcóatl*) carries it on his back to *Ta-*
[moanchan.
22. Whereupon the gods eat and eat.
23. Then they put it into our mouths
24. So that we might be made strong.
25. And then they say
26. "What shall we do with the Mount of our sustenance?
27. For now it will only wish to remain where it is."
28. *Quetzalcóatl* pulls at it,
29. But he cannot (move it.)
30. Then *Oxomoco*
31. Draws lots.
32. And likewise *Cipactonal*, the wife of
33. *Oxomoco*, draws lots.
34. (For *Cipactonal* is a woman.)
35. *Oxomoco* and
36. *Cipactonal* say:
37. "If only *Nanáhuatl* will send a bolt of lightning
38. To the Mount of our sustenance. (Because we drew
[lots.)"
39. Then the gods of rain were gathered together:

40. The blue-green gods of rain,
41. The white gods of rain, the yellow gods of rain,
42. The red gods of rain.
43. At once *Nenáhuatl* sends a lightning bolt.
44. Then our sustenance was stolen
45. By the gods of rain.
46. The white, the dark corn, the yellow,
47. The red corn, the bean, the blades,
48. The oil-giving seeds:
49. All our sustenance was stolen (for us.)

Grammatical and ideological analysis

1. *Ye no ce(p)pa quitoque* Thus once more (the gods) said

Ye: So, thus; at end of a verb, indicates vocative case

no: also

ce(p)pa: Once; at one time

qu-ito-que: *qu-* from *qui*, relative particle

ito- verb *itoa:* to say

que- added to the verb, indicates plural

The Náhuatl pantheon was quite extensive. The gods stem from the great dual god *Ometeotl*, with his masculine and feminine forms of *Ometecuhtli* and *Omecihuatl*, respectively. From this dual god came four sons, originally the four *Tezcatlipocas* of different colors. Later on in Aztec thought they became *Tezcatlipoca*, (Lord of the smoking mirror), *Quetzalcóatl* (feathered serpent), *Tlaloc*, and *Huitzilopochtli*. The rest of the gods likewise stem from or were related to these, sometimes as different phases or feminine counterparts of these same gods.

2. *tlein quicuaunque teteoye?* What shall they eat, O gods?

tlein: what

qui-cua-z-que: *qui-* relative particle

cua- to eat

z- at end of verb, indicates future tense

que- particle indicating the plural

teteo-ye: *teteo:* *teo*, god; *teteo*, gods. Plural formed by the repetition of a syllable.
ye- vocative particle

3. *Ye tlatemohua in tonacayotl* Let our sustenance come down

Ye: So, thus.

tla-temo-hua: *tla-* indicates the presence of a non-personal object

temo- to descend or come down. Intransitive (*temouia-* to bring *something* down)

(*o*)*hua-* indicates impersonal voice

to-naca-yotl: *to-* possessive pronoun: *our*

nacayotl- food, sustenance

naca(tl)- meat, food

yotl- suffix denoting an abstract or collective noun.

Here the sense is not so much of the sustenance, or food literally descending from above, but rather being *provided* with a similar connotation as "give us... our daily bread".

4. *auh niman quicuito in azcatl* And then the ant goes to gather

auh: then (copulative or implicative, not temporal)

niman: then; thereupon; thereafter

qui-cui-to: *qui-* relative particle

cui- to take (with the sense of taking with the hand)

to- particle indicating action away from the subject: *goes to gather.*

5. *tlaolli in itic tonacatepetl* Shelled corn from within the Mountain of our sustenance

tlaolli: shelled, dried corn

in: variable particle, roughly equivalent to the article in English.

itic: within

to-naca-tepetl: *to-* our

naca(tl)- sustenance

tepetl- hill or mountain

Here the corn is already in existence. According to legend, it was first created in this manner: One day the gods descended into a cavern. From the union of the god *Xochipilli* (Princechild) and the goddess *Xochiquetzal* (Precious flower) was born a god called the God of Corn. This god was buried in the earth and from his hair, ears, nose, etc. sprang cotton, seeds, and various items basic to life. From his nails came the corn which is the foundation of human sustenance.³

6-7. *Auh niman ye quinamiqui in Quetzalcóatl* affronts the *azcatl in Quetzalcohuatl*. ant. He asks him:
Quilhui:

Auh: then
niman: then; thereupon; thereafter
ye: temporal particle— verbal form of *yauh:*
then, before, etc.
niman ic (or *niman ye ic*) modal expression: “for this”, or temporal “immediately after that—”
qui-namiqui: *qui-* relative particle
namiqui- to encounter someone; to come to meet.
azcatl: ant
Qu-ilhui: *qu:* *qui-* relative particle
ilhui- verb *ilhuia:* to say; to tell.

Quetzalcóatl is one of the most important and most confusing of the ancient gods. As mentioned above, he is said to have been one of the four sons of *Ometeotl* and to have fulfilled a creative function in the history of the nahuas. However, there is another tradition that says he was a bearded, whiteskinned human who arrived by boat on the eastern coast of Mexico and who later fled in the direction from which he came in a boat made of serpents.⁴ Whatever his origin, he is remembered as a kind and beneficent god, opposed to human sacrifice, who brought with him abundance and happiness and who taught his people the arts of weaving, metal

³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁴ PRESCOTT, *History of the Conquest of Mexico*, Modern Library, Random House, U. S. A.

working, government and many others. Here he provides the people with their basic food.

8. *can oticcuito? Xinechilhui!* Where did you go to gather it? Tell me!

can: where. Also is a locative suffix, as in *Coyahuacan*- "the place of those who have coyotes"

o-ti-c-cui-to: *o-* indicates simple past tense

ti- indicates second person singular

c- indicates presence of a complement or direct object.

cui- to take or gather

to- indicates action *away from*: "go to take"

Xi-nech-ilhui: *xi-* particle denoting the imperative mood

nech- "to me" —object of the action

ilhui- verb *ilhuia*: to tell, to say.

9. *Auh amo quilhuiznequi.* But he does not wish to tell him.

Auh: then

amo: no; negative

qu-ilhui-z-nequi: *qu- qui:* relative particle

ilhui- to say; to tell (verb *ilhuia*)

z- indicates future. Not translated with the future tense in English but with future implication.

nequi- to want or wish something.

(Formation of verb plus infinitive (wish to tell) by using a future tense with a present. (*ilhuiz-nequi*)

10. *Cenca quitequitlatlania.* (*Quetzalcóatl*) urges him.

cenca: much; very

qui-tequi-tlatlania: *tequi-* to cut. Sometimes used to imply insistence

tlatlania- to ask (something of someone)

11. *Niman ic quilhuia*: Then he says:

ic: for which; because of which. *Niman ic*: then.
qu-ilhuia: *qu-* *qui-* relative particle
ilhuia- to say, to tell

12. *Ca, nechca!* "Well . . . there!"

Ca: affirmative adverb: well, yes, so. It is also a verbal form of "to be", *i. e.* "to exist."
nechca: there. (location)

- 13-14. *Niman ye quihuica*, Whereupon he takes him;
Auh niman ic tlilazcatl mocuep in Quetzalcohuatl.
 promptly *Quetzalcóatl* changes himself into a black ant.

Niman ye; *niman ic*: then; immediately
qui-huica: *qui-* relative
huica: to carry or take (guide)
 something or someone
tlilazcatl: black ant.
mo-cuep: *mo-* reflexive
cuep- verb *cuepa*: to transform.

- 15-16. *niman ye quihuica* Then he guides him, and
niman ye ic callaqui. thus introduces him (to the corn)

call-aqui: *calli-* house
aqui- enter
 "enter into the house"
 Literally to put within: to *introduce*.

17. *Niman ye ic quizazaca nehuan.* They go out together.

quiza-zaca: *quiza-* verb *quixtia*: to take (something) out; to leave.
za- repeated to show intensity or repetition of action.
ca- indicates permanent action.

18. *In tlatlauhquiazcatl in mach* It is said that the red ant.

tlatlauhqui-azcatl: *tlatlauhqui*: red

azcatl: ant

mach: it is said, one says, they say. (Rare form)

19. *oquihuicac in Quetzalcohuatl* Guided *Quetzalcóatl*

o-qui-huica-c: *o-* indicates simple past tense

qui- relative

huica- verb (*h*)*uica*: to take, to guide

c- also indicates simple past tense corresponding suffix.

20. *ilatempān quitlatlalilia in tlaolli* to the foot of the mountain where they placed the corn.

ila-tem-pan: *ila-* indicates presence of an object
tem- from *tentli*: lip, edge. (place of entrance)

pan- shows relation of direction or destination "towards" or "in" something.

qui-tla-tlal-ia: *qui-* indicates plural: they

ila- repeated syllable.

tlal(ia)- to put or place

ia- indicates imperfect tense

tlaolli: shelled, dry corn.

21. *niman ye quitqui in Tamoanchan*. The he (*Quetzalcóatl*) carries it on his back to *Tamoanchan*.

qu-itqui: *qui-* relative

itqui- to carry upon the shoulders or back

Tamoanchan ("home from which we descend")⁵ seems to be a mythical, mystical place of origin of the nahuas. It is

⁵ LEÓN-PORTILLA, Miguel: *La Filosofía Náhuatl estudiada en sus fuentes*, México, 1956, p. 320.

said to be the first city that the first persons established who came by boats over the sea— or in other words, the place from which procede all other cities. It is sometimes identified with *Omeyocan*, place of duality with *Tlalocan*, the mythical paradise.⁶

22. *Auh niman ye quicuacua in teteo* Whereupon the gods eat and eat.

qui-cua-cua: *qui*- relative
cua- to eat
cua- to eat, sense of repetition or abundance by the repetition of the verb. "To chew"
te-teo: *teo*- god; *teteo*, gods

- 23-24. *niman ye ic totenco quitlalia* Then they put it into
inic tihuapahuaque. our mouths so that we might be made strong.

to-tenco: *to*- our
tenco- mouth (site of the lips)
ten(tli)- lip; *co*- locative suffix
qui-tlalia: *qui*- relative
tlalia- to put or place. (This time the *tla* indicating the object is omitted).
inic: in order that; so that
ti-huapahua-que: *ti*- we
huapahua- to fortify; to make strong
que- at end of verb, indicates plural

25. *Auh niman ye quitohua* And then they say

qu-ito-hua: *qui*- relative
ito- verb *itaa*, to say
hua- indicates impersonal voice (impersonal they).

26. *Quen ticchihuazque in tonacatepetl* "What shall we do with the Mount of our sustenance"

⁶ *Loc. cit.*

<i>Quen:</i>	how; what; in what manner
<i>tì-c-chihua-z-que:</i>	<i>tì-</i> we <i>c-</i> indicates presence of an object <i>chihua-</i> to do (something) <i>z-</i> indicates future tense <i>que-</i> denotes plural of the verb.
<i>to-naca-tepetl:</i>	<i>to-</i> our <i>naca(tl)-</i> meat, sustenance <i>tepetl-</i> hill, mountain

(Ordinarily with the addition of a prefix (here the possessive *to*) the “tl” ending of the noun is lost. In this particular case it is retained.)

27. *auh niman zan ya qui-manaz-nequi* For now it will only wish to remain where it is.

<i>zan:</i>	only
<i>ya:</i>	temporal particle— verbal form of <i>yauh</i> ; then, before, now, etc.
<i>qui-mana-z-nequi:</i>	<i>qui-</i> relative <i>mana-</i> to stay; to remain <i>z-</i> indicates future <i>nequi-</i> to wish, to want

(Again the future plus present tense [*manaznequi*] to express a verb plus an infinitive [wish to remain].)

- 28-29. *in Quetzalcohuatl quimecayoti, Quetzalcoatl* pulls at it but he cannot (move it).

<i>qui-mecayoti:</i>	<i>qui-</i> relative <i>mecayoti-</i> from <i>mecatl</i> , cord; <i>mecayotl</i> , abstract form (“lineage”); <i>mecayoti</i> , verbal form. Meaning: to pull.
<i>auh:</i>	then, but
<i>amo:</i>	negative; no
<i>qu-euh:</i>	<i>qu-</i> relative <i>euh-</i> verb <i>ehua</i> , to be able. Also means “to lift.”

- 30-31. *Auh niman ye quitlapohuia* Then *Oxomoco* draws
in Oxomoco. lots.

qui-tlapohuia: *qui-* relative
tlapohuia- to draw lots
tl- indicates object
pohuia- to count

32-33-34.

Auh inman no ye quitonalpohuia And likewise *Cipactonal*
in Cipactonal, in icihuauh Oxomoco *nal*, the wife of *Oxo-*
Ca cihuatl in Cipactonal. *moco*, draws lots.
 (For *Cipactonal* is a
 woman.)

Auh niman no ye: then also; likewise

qui-tonal-pohuia: *qui-* relative
tonal- from *tonalli*, day, destiny, or lot
pohuia- to count.

The compound verb means "to decipher" or "to prognosticate" (to count destinies): *to cast lots*

i-cihua-uh: *i-* his
cihua- from *cihuatl*, woman; wife
uh- possessive suffix

ca: because, for (conj.)

Commentary on lines 32-33-34:

Cipactonal and *Oxomoco* are the "Adan and Eve" of the Nahuas. They were begotten at the same time by *Ometecuhtli* the supreme dual god and were ordered one to cultivate the earth and the other to sew and weave. They had magical powers which they taught to men, sometimes using grains of corn in their encantations.⁷ They were also charged, along with *Quetzalcóatl*, with the creation of the Mexican Calendar. And it was these same two gods who taught astrology and the use of medicinal herbs to the toltecs. There seems to be some controversy over which of the two was masculine and

⁷ *Diccionario de Mitología Náhuatl*, compiled by Robelo, C. A., Mexico, 1911, p. 104.

which feminine. Most of the texts indicate that *Oxomoco* was the male, *Cipactonal* the female.⁸ However, Sahagún contradicts this point and reports *Oxomoco* as being female and *Cipactonal*, male.⁹ Line 34 seems to bear on this point. The line in its context seems to make very little sense unless taken as a parenthetical expression emphasising the femininity of *Cipactonal*.

- 35-36. *auh niman qitoque in Oxomoco Oxomoco and Ci-*
in Cipactonal pactonal say:

qu-ito-que: *qu-* relative
ito- verb *itōa*, to say, to tell
que- indicates plural

37. *ca zan quihuitequiz in Nanáhuatl* If only *Nanáhuatl*
will send a bolt of
lightning.

ca: if
zan: only
qui-(h)uitequi-z: *qui-* relative
(*h*)*uitequi-* from *Vitequi*, to punish,
to wound— or to send a lightning
bolt.
z- indicates future tense

Nanáhuatl means “the one covered with sores”. It is he who was converted into the 5th Sun, in this manner:

Before the era of the fifth sun, everything was dark. The gods gathered at Teotihuacan and determined to create a sun. They asked for volunteers among the gods to form this new sun. Immediately the Snail God volunteered, but no one else was willing; all were afraid. Finally *Nanáhuatl* was picked as the other candidate. The two gods fasted and did penance for four days—the Snail God with elaborate instruments and ceremonies, and *Nanáhuatl* with plain maguey thorns

⁸ *Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas*, Nueva Colección de Documentos para la Historia de México, III, pp. 228-229; also, *Anales de Cuauh-titlan*, Translation by Velázquez, Mexico, 1945, p. 4.

⁹ SAHAGÚN, *Historia de las cosas de la Nueva España*, V, 1, p. 307.

and with real sacrifice. At the end of the four days, the two gods were dressed for the ordeal—the Snail God in elegant finery, and *Nanáhuatl* in garments of paper. Both stood facing the enormous fire which had been prepared during their four days of penance. The gods gave the signal for the Snail God to cast himself into the fire. He ran towards the flames, but upon nearing, the flames and heat filled him with such fear that he turned back. Again he ran toward the fire and again turned back. A third and a fourth time he tried and failed and the gods refused him another chance. Then it was *Nanáhuatl's* turn. He closed his eyes to keep from being afraid, ran directly toward the fire and threw himself in. At this, the Snail God was so ashamed that he also threw himself in the fire. As the flames consumed them, the gods waited to see emerge the new sun. Finally it rose in the East, and with it came the first dawn of the fifth era. Since *Nanáhuatl* had thrown himself into the fire first, naturally he was the first to be converted into a sun. But the Snail God followed him, equally bright although in a secondary position. This did not seem right to the gods, so they wounded the face of the Snail God with a rabbit and formed the lesser light of the Monn.¹⁰

38. *in tonacatepetl ca oquitlapohuique* te the Mount of our
sustenance (Because
we drew lots)

o-qui-tlapohui-que: *o-* indicates past tense

qui- relative

tlapohui(a)- to cast or draw lots

que- indicates plural

39. *auh nima(n) ye netlalhuiilo in* Then the gods of rain
tlaloque were gathered together

ne-tlalhui-lo: *ne-* indefinite personal pronoun. Here it has almost a reflexive function—to gather *themselves* together.

tlalhui(a)- to summon or call together; or to gather in one place. Here, because

¹⁰ *Epica Náhuatl, op. cit.*, pp. 11-19.

of the particle *ne* the latter meaning seems most likely.

lo- indicates passive voice.

The *tlaloques* were the gods of rain subject to *Tláloc*, the Lord of the Rain and of the East, and king of *Tlalocan*, the earthly paradise— also sometimes designated as the after-world in which dwell all those who on earth met their death by water. *Tláloc* was charged with making fertile and lush all the earth.

40-41-42.

In xoxouhqui tlaloque,
iztac tlaloque,
cozauhqui tlaloque,
tlatlahuqui tlaloque.

the blue-green gods of rain,
the white gods of rain,
the yellow gods of rain,
the red gods of rain.

xoxouhqui: blue-green
iztac: white
cozauhqui: yellow
tlatlahuqui: red

The nahuas divided their universe into four sections corresponding to the cardinal points. Rather than being a simple direction, however, each "point" included a quadrant of the earth—a quadrant formed by the horizontal division of the earth with a large X. To each quadrant, or direction, was assigned a color: to the east, red; to the north, black, to the west, white; and to the south, blue. Thus the representative colors of the *tlaloques*.

43. *niman ye quihuitequi in Nanáhuatl* At once *Nanáhuatl*
sends a lightning
bolt.

qui-huitequi: *qui-* relative
huitequi: to punish, to wound, or to send
a bolt of lightning.

44-45.

auh niman ye namoyello in tlalloque Then our sustenance
in tonacayotl was stolen by the
gods of rain.

