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A PENITENTIAL RITE

OF THE

ANCIENT MEXICANS

BY

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WITH 5 PLATES AND 8 TEXT ILLUSTRATIONS

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PENITENTIAL RITE OF THE ANCIENT MEXICANS.

WHATEVER views may be held concerning the religion of the Ancient Mexicans; whether we adopt the ideas promulgated by the Berlin school of Mexican mythology, which speaks of a Mexican "pantheon," and crowds its labyrinthian passages with innumerable "gods" and "goddesses;" or whether, as many analogies indicate, the Ancient Mexican sociological and religious system was a development on the same lines of thought which produced that of the Zuñi and Pawnee people of today, there is one point on which all must agree, namely, that the Ancient Mexicans practised their religion with a zeal and devotion worthy of a better cause.

It was not only the priesthood which subjected itself to a stern discipline which enforced prolonged fasts and excruciating self-torture, but the painful rite of drawing blood from one's body and offering it to the deity, commonly practised by all persons, young and old, was a feature of everyday life. Some time ago, whilst making a special study of the rituals of the Ancient Mexicans, I collected and translated, from the works of various writers, a number of passages relating to the native rite of drawing blood from the ear, the tongue, and other parts of the body. The fact that, in passages describing the rite of blood-sacrifice, the piercing or cutting of the helix of the ear is usually mentioned first, tends to show that a particular sanctity or significance was associated with this particular organ. The precedence accorded to this rite, which must not be confounded with the ceremonial of piercing the lobe of the ear for the purpose of wearing ear-ornaments, is particularly interesting in connection with Miss Alice Fletcher's recognition of the importance attached to the ceremonial piercing of the ear amongst the tribes of the Siouan group.

It has seemed to me that the most satisfactory method of presenting the material which I have collected from the writings of Friars Sahagun, Motolinia, Duran, Mendieta, the Chronicles of Tezozomoc and other authorities, would be to present literal translations of such passages as best preserve details and local coloring.

In honor of the Lord of the Night, this being one of the



FIG. 1.

many titles bestowed upon Tezcatlipoca, the Lord of the North, of the Underworld, etc., a festival was held once or twice a year on the day Nahui Ollin. According to Sahagun the priests fasted during the four days preceding this festival and, at noon, blew conch-shells, flutes, and whistles, and then passed slender twigs or sticks through their tongues. An interesting bas-relief preserved at Jalapa (Fig. 1) illustrates

this painful rite, the most graphic description of which is given by Friar Mendieta in his *Historica Ecclesiastica Indiana* (chap. xvii): "At Tlaxcalla . . . the priests . . . performed an unheard of and horrible self-sacrifice . . . the servitors of the temple brought together a great quantity of sticks, as long as an arm and as thick as a wrist. These had been manufactured by a number of carpenters who had prepared themselves for doing so by fasting and praying during five days. The master stone workers, after praying and fasting, also made many black obsidian knives which were to be used in perforating the tongues of the priests and which, after having been sanctified, were laid on a clean cloth."

"They first performed a dance with songs and beating of drums. Then a master who was an expert in this office came with the obsidian knife, and made a large opening in the tongue of each of the principal priests . . . The Achcauhtli, or high priest then drew through his tongue, on that day, four hundred of those sticks. Other old, practised and strong-minded priests, imitating his example, also drew the same number of sticks through their tongues. The less aged priests used three hundred sticks, some of which were either as thick as a thumb, as a great toe or as the index and middle finger together. Younger priests did not employ more than two hundred sticks, but all according to their strength and valor, performed this rite, at the termination of which their aged leader intoned a chant, although he could hardly raise his voice on account of his lacerated tongue. All made efforts, however, to sing and offer sacrifices and then those of the temple began an eighty day fast during which, at intervals of twenty days, they drew the sticks through their tongues four times . . ."

In chapter xviii Mendieta specially describes the ear sacrifice performed by the priests who fasted during periods of four years and who, at intervals of twenty days, passed through the holes, cut in their ears, sixty pieces of cane, as long as an arm, some thick and some thin. "These blood-stained offerings were placed in a heap, in front of the idols and were burnt at the end of the four years . . ." Friar Sahagun relates that, every day of the year, the priests offered blood from their ears

to the sun at sunrise and also at noon, on the day *Nahui Ollin*, when all persons, old and young, also drew blood from their ears in strictly observed silence and in front of the sculptured and painted image of the Sun which was in the temple named *Quauhxiccalco*. This image, the Friar adds, represented the sun as a human face encircled with rays. The partly unpublished MS. of Sahagun's work, preserved in Florence, contains an interesting illustration to this passage, in which the image of the sun is held by a man whose body is partly hidden, and two men, seated opposite to each other in the foreground, are in the act of piercing the helices or external borders of their ears (Fig. 2). On the same day and at the same hour, blood was



FIG. 2.

also drawn from the ears of "babes in their cradles," who were thus made to participate in the general blood-offering. All adults made offering of their blood during five days preceding the fixed festivals held at intervals of twenty days. The men made incisions in their ears and painted lines on their faces with the blood thus obtained. The lines they drew were straight and extended from the eyebrow to the jaw-bone. The women drew circles on their faces and, as an act of special devotion, sometimes offered blood in this way during a consecutive period of eighty days, cutting themselves at intervals of three or four days. This ceremony was named *Nenacaztequilitzli* (lit. the ear-cutting).

Another rite, named *Tlazcaltiliztli*, was performed, as an

act of homage to the sun or to the element fire, whenever any one finished building a new house, or when the sign of the sun reigned in the native Calendar.

This rite consisted in drawing a drop of blood from the ear and catching it on the nail of the first finger and filling it towards the sun or into the fire.

Sahagun distinctly states that this rite was the same as that named *Acxoiaternaliztli* which he describes as follows: "As an act of devotion some offer their blood in the temples during the vigils of the festivals. In order to make their offering more acceptable they first went and gathered branches of the wild laurel named *Acxoiatl* which grows in great quantities in their woods, and brought them to the *calpulcos* or houses of communal government, situated in their respective quarters



FIG. 3.

of the city. There they took two of the sharp points of the agave leaf and drew blood from their shins, then carried these blood-stained points to the temple where they offered them to the god to whom they rendered devotion on a sort of circular cushion or mat made of the young branches of the wild laurel." Sahagun's association of this ceremony with the drawing of blood from the ear, is corroborated by an illustration contained in the Anon. Hispano-Mexican MS. preserved in the National Library at Florence entitled "The Book of the Life of the Ancient Mexicans" (Fig. 3).

This represents a step-pyramid surmounted by an image of the "Lord of the North or of the Underworld," and the per-

formance of what the text designates as "a penitential rite" in his honor.

The penitents who are respectively piercing tongue and ear, also exhibit bleeding wounds in other parts of their bodies. At the base of the pyramid, on a mat of leaves presumably of the wild laurel, lies the ball of woven grass, which Sahagun names the "cacatapayolli," in which two agave points are sticking.

The above illustration accords with Friar Duran's statement (*Historia*, vol. II, p. 195) that, at a certain festival, "all priests and dignitaries took small obsidian sacrificial lancets and made incisions in their tongues, ears, breasts, arms, and legs. Some penitents pierced the ears and pushed many reeds through the opening — others perforated their tongues and drew a number of straws through them . . ." The above references to the rite as being penitential are corroborated by Duran's distinct statement that, "according to the number of grave offences committed by a penitent, he or she took a number of straws, of the kind used for making brooms, each one a handbreadth in length. With these he went to the temple, perforated his tongue with a lancet and passed the straws through it, and then threw these in front of the idol . . . Later on, the priests gathered up all these blood-stained straws and burnt them in what was called the 'divine brazier,' after which the penitents were declared free of their offences."

The same author describes (vol. II, p. 244) as follows, the penitential rites performed by the priesthood during the festival *Etzalqualiztli*: — "The priests fasted for four days, and each night, after midnight, went to where the agave points were kept which had been cut on the previous day and had been brought sticking into pieces of the fleshy agave leaf. They then cut their ears with small obsidian knives and stained their faces and the agave points with blood. According to the devotion of each priest the number of the agave points he stained with his blood was five or more or less." Elsewhere it is stated that each priest carried with him a piece of the fleshy part of the agave leaf, into which he stuck the thorns used in performing the penance. The duty of collecting and preparing the agave leaf points used in the performance of penitential rites devolved upon the larger boys who were being educated, by the priesthood, in the *CalmeCAC*. According to the *Codex Ramirez*

(Ed. José Vijil, p. 113): "after the performance of certain rites, the priests went, at midnight, into a wide room in which there were many seats" — a fact to which I will revert further on. "The priests, being seated, took either an agave point or an obsidian lancet and pricked or cut their ankles. They then smeared their blood on their temples as well as on the agave points or lancets and stuck these into the prepared grass balls, which were afterwards usually placed between the turrets on the wall enclosing the courtyard. These balls were allowed to remain there so that all should see that the penitential rite had been duly performed by the priests on behalf of the people."

"In the great temple there was always a large number of these lancets and agave points because those stuck in the grass balls were constantly being removed and replaced by others. They were never used twice and were preserved with great reverence, in memory of the blood offering made to their god." The foregoing mention that the thorns were reverently preserved is of special importance and is further corroborated by Friar Sahagun's statement that Vitztepealco, the name of the 23rd edifice of the great temple, signified literally: the place wherein the thorns or agave points are thrown. This structure is, moreover, described as "a square, surrounded by a low wall, into which the priests cast the agave points with which they had performed penance. Pieces of green reeds or cane, stained with blood, were also thrown there, as an offering to the gods."

A perusal of the following detached quotations teaches further that, in Ancient Mexico, according to circumstances, the performance of the rite of blood sacrifice, constituted an act of humility, of thanksgiving, of penitence, or of propitiation. A passage in the Chronicle of Tezozomoc (p. 639) relates how certain representatives of a conquered tribe, on reaching the Mexican capital, first went to the temple of Huitzilopochtli where, "as a sign of true humility and abasement, they pierced their ears, arms, the calves of their legs with agave points and then betook themselves to the house of Montezuma." Duran records (vol. I, p. 424) that on a certain occasion, the Mexican ruler "bled his ears and limbs as an action of thanksgiving" and it was possibly as such that the rite was solemnly performed by the newly elected rulers of Mexico during the elabo-

rate ceremonies which accompanied their inauguration. The following curious details are preserved in Duran's account of the preparation made for the ceremonies of Montezuma's inauguration. "On the floor of the temple, near the brazier, were laid the royal robes and diadem, an incense-burner and three sharp-pointed bones . . . After his investment with the royal insignia Montezuma burned incense in honor of the god of fire and then pierced his ears with the sharp-pointed ocelot or tiger bone, incised the fleshy part of his arm with the puma's bone, and his shins with the eagle's bone." Later, in the great temple, on the "Stone of the Eagles," he again drew blood from the same parts of his body, with the same bone instruments, observing the same order. In the discourse addressed to him on this occasion by the ruler of Tezcoco, Montezuma is exhorted to attend to his new duties, one of which was the observation of the stars, another that of sacrificing his blood and offering it to the gods on behalf of the people. Montezuma's use of an ocelot bone for piercing his ears is corroborated by Tezozomoc who repeatedly alludes (pp. 573, 577, 587) to the thin, sharp instruments made of ocelot or puma bones, which were used by the same ruler for bleeding his ears and limbs. In describing the inaugural festivities of Tizoc, Duran states that the sharp ocelot bone instrument used by the ruler was "garnished with gold" (vol. II, p. 310). Finally the same author relates of Ahuitzotl that:—"after sacrificing quails before the idol of Huitzilopochtli, he asked for the bone of an ocelot. An extremely pointed and sharp one having been handed him, he perforated the helix of his ears, . . . his arms and legs . . . (vol. II, p. 376). On another occasion, however, when Ahuitzotl entered the temple at Chalco in which the idol of Tezcatlipoca was a special object of worship, he "sacrificed a number of quail and then, asking for an eagle's bone, bled his ears, arms, and shins . . ." (vol. I, Duran, p. 378).

The following passage demonstrates that the performance of the rite was supposed to insure success in the hunt. "On the seventh day of the hunters' festival, Quecholli, there was a great gathering in the courtyard of the temple of Huitzilopochtli. A large number of arrows were ceremonially manufactured and all participants" cut and bled their ears. If any

one omitted this rite he was fined by the men named Tepanmani who took his mantle from him and never returned it. All of the youths assembled were sent up to the temple of Huitzilopochtli where they were obliged to cut their ears and anoint their faces and brows with their blood. "This rite was called *momaçação* (lit., the deer sacrifice), because it was performed with reference to the deer the youths were going to hunt." (Sahagun, book I, chap. xxxiii).

During the fifteenth festival period named Panquetzaliztli, the following rite was performed "by those women who were going to sacrifice slaves. They went to bathe in the stream which flowed past their dwellings, each woman carrying four agave points. Before bathing they cut their ears and after smearing blood on the agave points they cast one of them into the water; they stuck one in the bank of the river, and offered the remaining ones to the idol in the adjacent oratory. . . "

Sahagun relates that when the youths who were being educated in the Calmecac, wish to perform voluntary penance, they "set out alone and walked towards the hills, woods and rivers. Each one carried pine torches, a bagful of copal gum, an incense burner, a conchshell trumpet, and agave points. When he reached his destination he bled himself with the latter and inserted them into the grass ball, and then returned homeward, alone, blowing his conchshell." It is also recorded that the priests of the Calmecac used the agave points in inflicting such minor punishments upon their pupils as pricking their ears or bodies, or beating them with nettles. In the description of a certain festival it is recorded that the priest used a flint knife to cut the ears of the youths who displayed a lack of self-control and succumbed to fatigue on reaching the summit of the temple after a certain race. The same priests are said to have tortured their prisoners by "piercing their ears, arms, and legs with agave points, making them cry out in pain."

The following passage affords a somewhat more pleasing glimpse into the life of Ancient Mexico:

"Every fourth year, in the last day of the eighteenth festival period named *Izcalli*, the ears of all children born during the preceding three years were bled. This rite was performed by means of a sharp bone instrument and the wound was sub-

sequently dressed with parrots' down and pine-pitch." The children's parents appointed so-called "aunts and uncles" to act as "sponsors" during the operation, after which they made offerings of a paste made of the seeds of a kind of salvia, named Chian. In recognition of their services the parents presented an "uncle" with a red or fallow Tilmatl or mantle and an "aunt" with a Huipil or sleeveless upper garment. The friar records that, while their ears were being pierced, the children made a great outcry, and that, immediately afterwards, their sponsors led them to a bonfire prepared for the purpose around which they were made to walk. They were then taken to their respective homes, where their sponsors feasted with them and all danced and sang together. At noon all returned to the temple with jars of pulque, the native agave-wine, and there performed a dance the sponsors carrying their respective charges on their backs. Then each child was given some pulque in a tiny bowl, for which reason the festival was also known as "the intoxication of the children."

In the description of the same quadriennial festival in Serna's "Manual de los Ministros," chap xi, it is stated that besides piercing the ears of the girls and boys, the high priest perforated the lower lip of the boys so that they could subsequently wear labrets.

Sahagun alludes to the latter custom in the appendix to book II of his *Historia* where he states that it was "in honor of the devil, that the natives pierced their ears and wore earrings and pierced their lower lip and wore labrets;" operations which were respectively designated by the Nahuatl words: *Nenacaxpotlaliztli* (lit., the ear perforating) and *Netenxapotlaliztli* (the lip perforating).

While it is thus evident that the ceremonial piercing of the ears and of the lips was associated with religious or superstitious ideas, it is evident that, in the case of the little children, all was done in order to palliate the pain inflicted and to make the occasion one of festivity and rejoicing.

We are indebted to Serna for the record of the peculiar circumstance that during the joint festival of Chicome Xochitl= Seven Flower, the patron of the painters, weavers and embroiderers, and of Xochiquetzal, the inventress of weaving, the

principal offering made by their devotees was blood drawn from the fingers or eyelids.

During the third movable festival all married people made offerings of blood drawn from the left breast or from their eyelids, the blood being caught on strips of paper which were then thrown into earthen jars and burnt in front of certain idols.

In the "Book of the life of the Ancient Mexicans", published by the University of California, and elsewhere, it is recorded that men, desiring offspring, offered blood drawn from their organs of generation.

During the sixth movable festival those who rendered homage to the god Quetzalcoatl sent to the temple what are described by Serna as "small salt-cellars" containing eight to ten drops or more of their own blood, absorbed by means of strips of paper which were subsequently burnt, with copal gum, on the altars of the temple. The allusion to tiny earthen vessels in connection with similar blood-offerings naturally suggests an explanation for the purpose of the small terra-cotta dishes and particularly of the enigmatical receptacles with two deep holes which are found at Teotihuacan in great numbers.

The question as to the origin of the peculiar sanguinary rites of the Ancient Mexicans is next to be considered. According to Friar Duran, the custom of piercing the flesh with agave points was first taught to the priesthood by "Quetzalcoatl of Tula" (vol. II, p. 244) and his testimony agrees with that of the commentator of the Codex Telleriano Remensis. Other evidence tends to prove, however, that the origin of the rite was assigned by the Ancient Mexicans to remotest antiquity and to the gods themselves. In the creation-myth as recorded in chap. VII of the Codex Fuenleal,* the gods Quetzalcoatl and Tlalocantecuhtli "fasted and drew blood from their ears" before creating the sun and the moon. In chap. VIII it is related that later on, at a certain date, the god Camasale (Camaxtli) also named Mixcoatl, "performed penance with agave leaf points, drawing blood from his tongue and ears, and for this reason it is customary to draw blood from the same whenever one made any petition to the gods."

*The Codex Fuenleal or "Historia de los Mexicanos por sus pinturas," published in Vol. II of the Anales del Museo Nacional, 1882.

Sahagun's version of the creation of the sun and moon (book VII, chap. II) differs from the foregoing and relates that it was Nanaoatzin who, "after offering agave points stained with his blood and stuck into grass balls," voluntarily cast himself into the fire and became the sun; while Tecuciztecatl, following his example became the moon.

From Bishop Diego de Landa, who devotes a whole chapter to the "Cruel and obscene rites of the Yucatecs," we learn that similar forms of self-torture were practised in Yucatan. The ear-sacrifice is described as follows: "They sometimes made an offering of their own blood by making incisions all around the external border of their ears, leaving the lacerations as records of their penance" (ed. Brasseur de Bourbourg, p. 161). Bishop Landa expressly states that "the women of Yucatan did not make blood-offerings although they were very

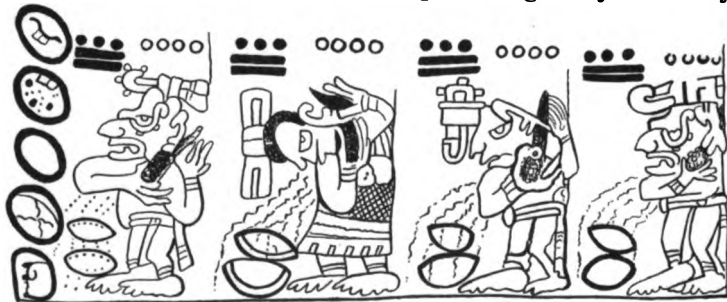


FIG. 4.

devout." It is therefore remarkable that the Maya Codex, named Troano, contains representations of three men and one woman in the act of piercing their left ears, from each of which a stream of blood falls into what are presumably small bowls placed in front of each penitent (Fig. 4). The finely carved bas-relief from Menché (Yāxchilan) which was presented to the British Museum by Mr. Alfred P. Maudslay proves that tongue-perforation was also practised in the Usumasinta valley. It represents a seated personage in the act of drawing a cord, with thorns, through his protruding tongue.

Briefly summarized; the foregoing evidence establishes that while blood was drawn from different parts of the body and offered to the gods, it was the ear-sacrifice that constituted

the salient characteristic features of the ancient native religion, being practised in every day life, by persons of all ages. After having been offered, the blood-stained pieces of cane, agave points, obsidian lancets or straws employed in the performance of the penitential rite were carefully preserved. In some cases the instruments themselves, in others strips of paper saturated with blood, were burnt, and their ashes deposited in some sacred spot. It is recorded that a feature of the great temple of Mexico was the square enclosure into which were thrown the agave points, etc., used by the priests in performing penitential rites. No documentary evidence has, however, as yet been found indicating the place where the high-priests and rulers preserved their blood offerings after performing rites, which, in their case were of such special sanctity.

On the other hand the National Museum of Mexico possesses some monuments exhibiting sculptured representations of the performance of the ear-sacrifice which yield valuable information on the subject.

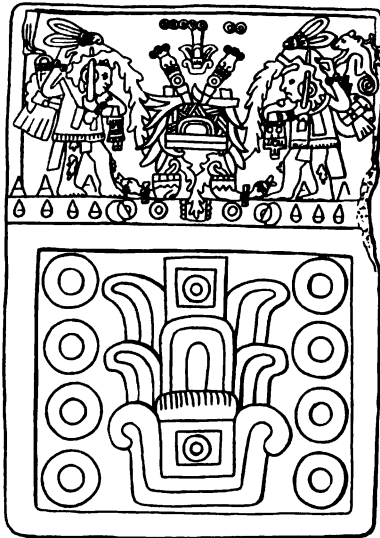


FIG. 5.

The first (Fig. 5) is the well-known historical bas-relief representing the Mexican rulers Tizoc and his successor Ahuitzotl,

each with an incense-burner at his feet in the act of piercing their helices. Between them and on a stand surrounded by laurel leaves, lies the round cushion into which two bone instruments with handles in the form of a flower, are inserted. A stream of blood falls, from each ear, into an open jaw carved in the symbolical border beneath the figures. The date recorded in the bas-relief is that of the dedication of the Great Temple and it is evident that this sculptured slab must have been inserted in some wall or monumental structure. Besides commemorating the historical event and the performance of the sacred rite it may have also marked the site where the blood offerings of both rulers were reverently deposited. Figure 6 (*a* and *b*) represents the square stone box which is preserved at the National Museum of Mexico and has been identified by different authorities as a funeral urn, or "a receptacle for the

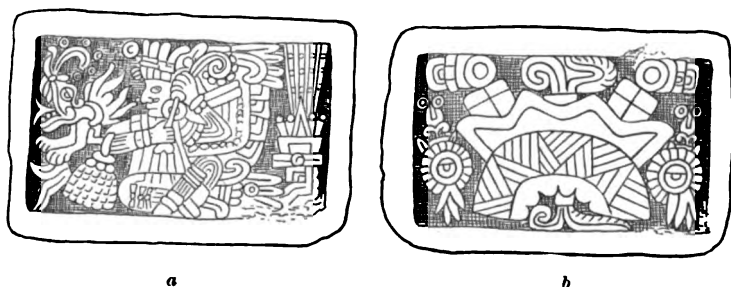


FIG. 6.

blood of human victims." The fact that a seated, one-footed personage (*a*) in the act of piercing his ear is carved on one of its sides, and that on the opposite side (*b*) is carved the grass cushion into which bone instruments are inserted appears to me to establish, beyond a doubt, that the stone receptacle was destined to receive the blood-offerings of the high-priests and rulers who performed the ear-sacrifice represented, in carving, on the box itself. An interesting detail is that, behind the seated figure, the form of a serpent is distinguishable, whose tail and head, with a recurved armlike projection, studded with star-symbols are like those of the twin serpents on the great Calendar Stone. The symbols of fire, carved on the two sides of the box, and the star-symbols accompanied by conventionalized flowers, which

figure at each side of the bone instruments, furnish evidence that the rite was associated with the god of fire and the festival of Flowers, Xochilhuitl, at which a certain form of star-worship took place. It was on this festival that, once a year, certain loaves of bread, named Xonecuilli, were eaten. The shape of these loaves resembled that of the constellation Citlal-xonecuilli, Ursa Major or Minor, described as "situated in the trumpet of the North and composed of seven stars, which formed a separate group and are resplendent" (Sahagun, book VII, chap. III).

The low square hollow stone "seat" preserved at the Royal Ethnographical Museum at Berlin (Fig. 7) is of particular interest

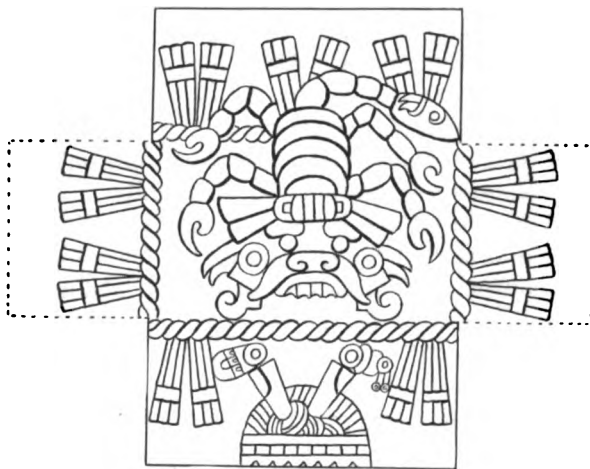


FIG. 7.

in connection with Sahagun's statement, cited above, that the hall in which the priests assembled to perform the penitential rites, "contained many seats," . . . This object was obviously associated with such rites, because its front is carved with a representation of the familiar grass cushion and the sacrificial bone instruments. Its top and back are covered by the figure of a large scorpion whose tail ends in a *tecpatl* or flint-knife, the native symbol for the North. This carved scorpion, before which lie the woven grass ball and the bone instruments, is particularly significant because Sahagun distinctly states that the Mexicans

gave the name of "Citlal-colotl," = Star-scorpion, to the northern constellation, Ursa Major, "because it resembled the figure of a scorpion" (op. cit. book VII, chap. IV). The existence, in Mexico, of a similar hollow stone cube, much too small to have been used as a seat, but which exhibits, on its sides, two penitents piercing their ears and on its top a shallow circular receptacle, throws some doubt as to the Berlin Museum "seat" having really been intended as such.

The most important monument, which exhibits proof of having been associated with the native penitential rite and star-cult is the great statue of a crouching ocelot or native tiger (Pl. I, 1, 2, 3), which was discovered in December 1901 in the courtyard of the new Palace of Justice in the City of Mexico, by Captain Diaz, the son of the President.

This imposing monument which is the finest piece of animal sculpture that has as yet been found on the American Continent, is of particular interest, on account of its form and the association of the Mexican god Tezcatlipoca not only with the ocelot but also with the constellation Ursa Major.

According to the well-known myth, Tezcatlipoca, when cast down from heaven by Quetzalcoatl, "fell into the water where he transformed himself into an ocelot" and arose to kill certain giants. During the period of six hundred and sixty-six years Tezcatlipoca "went about in the form of an ocelot" and all "this appears in the sky for they say that the constellation Ursa Major descends to the water *because it is Tezcatlipoca* and is on high in memory of him."*

While the foregoing myth suffices to show that the great statue of an ocelot must have been considered as an image of the god Tezcatlipoca, the fact that his insignia are worn by the two personages which are carved in bas-relief on the bot-

*Historia de los Mexicanos por sus pinturas, Anales del Museo Nacional, vol. II, p. 88. The Spanish text is as follows:—" . . . Quezalcoatl fué sol y dexalo de ser Tezcatlipoca porque le dio con un gran baston y lo derribo en el agua y alli se hizo tigre y salio a matar los gigantes, y esto parece en el cielo, porque dicen que la Ursa Mayor se abaxa al agua porque es Tezcatlipoca y está alta en memoria del . . . y así andava hecho tigre . . ." In my publication, "The Fundamental Principles of Old and New World Civilizations" (vol. 2 of the Peabody Museum Papers), by some unaccountable mistake, which I deplore, the name Huitzilopochtli was substituted for that of Quetzalcoatl in my quotation, of the above myth on page 8.

tom of the deep circular receptacle in the back of the statue positively proves the association of the god with the monument.

The relative proportions of the latter and of the stone receptacle, as shown in Pl. I, 1, 2, 3 reveal that this was an accessory only.*

The bas-relief carved on its bottom clearly indicates the purpose for which the receptacle was destined (Fig. 8).

It represents two seated personages in the act of piercing



FIG. 8.

their ears with bone instruments. In front of each is an object of the shape of an isosceles triangle, into which four agave thorns are inserted.

As in the case of the penitent carved on the stone box (Fig. 6a) both individuals are minus one foot, with the peculiarity

*It was strictly in accordance with native usage to make some form of receptacle in stone idols, for the reception of different kinds of blood-offerings. "The Book of the Life of the Ancient Mexicans," for instance, describes how bowls of human blood were poured on the head of a certain idol which presumably had, like a native stone image in my possession, a bowl-like hollow on its head.

that in one case the right foot and in the other the left foot is missing. This seemingly insignificant detail assumes a certain importance when it is realized that it recurs in the two figures sculptured in bas-relief on the rocks at the Peñon Viejo, situated near the City of Mexico (Pl. II, 1, 2) both of which likewise display the same insignia as the two personages carved on the bottom of the receptacle. A comparison of Pl. II, 1 with the carved personage to the right in Fig. 5, reveals a striking identity, for in both cases the left foot is missing, the same feather head-dress, with Tezcatlipoca's hieroglyph (the Smoking Mirror) at its side and a recurved ornament above the forehead, is worn and the identical nose-ornament and band over the face is displayed. As carved on the rock the personage thus arrayed, like the similarly one-footed victors on the Stone of Tizoc, is erect, armed with spears, and grasps the hair of a warrior who bends before him and lowers the bundle of spears held in the left hand, his right hand being uplifted and holding the atlatl or spear-thrower in the position for throwing the spear.

The date, I Tecpatl, carved beneath this group corresponds to A. D. 1480 in which year, according to the Aubin MS. the Mexicans conquered the people of Quauhnahuac or Cuernavaca, in this case the island town situated in the lagoon of Xochimilco and depicted in the Map by Alonzo de Santa Cruz preserved at the University of Upsala, Sweden. The reader is referred to the Chronicle of Tezozomoc for an interesting and graphic account of the warfare waged by the Mexicans upon the Tecpanecans and inhabitants of Xochimilco, etc., at this period, which resulted in their complete subjugation.

A comparison of the figure to the left in Fig. 8, with Pl. II, 2, reveals that, in both cases also, the right foot is missing, a similar head-dress with Tezcatlipoca's glyph is worn and as far as can be distinguished the face bands are alike.

In Pl. II, 2, the individual also stands, but is unarmed and grasps what appears to be a tree, in blossom, issuing from a circle in a square—evidently the hieroglyph of a locality. The semi-effaced date carved beneath this figure which incontestably belongs to the same period as Pl. II, 1, seems to be the year III Tochtli — corresponding to 1482, a date two years later than that carved on Pl. II, 2.

The striking identities which have been pointed out and especially that of the same feet being missing, appear to justify the inference that the two individuals carved on the bottom of the receptacle in the ocelot's back were historical personages, represented as wearing divine insignia, in accordance with established custom. The peculiarity that, in the group, both figures display both rows of teeth causes it to appear as though they wore death-masks under their face-bands — a fact which is explainable since one of Tezcatlipoca's titles was "Mictlantecuhtli," or the "Lord of the North," the Underworld, and by extension, of the dead who go there.

The indications that the above individuals were historical personages not only accord with the evidence furnished by the commemorative tablet described above (Fig. 5) but suggest the interesting explanation that the sculptured ocelot was also commemorative and possibly votive, and dates from after the year 1482. The view that the ocelot was an actual image of the god Tezcatlipoca and that the ear-sacrifice was particularly associated with his nocturnal worship, is sustained by the following significant details.

A critical examination of the sculptured ocelot discloses that the large side whiskers at each side of its head are undoubtedly purely conventional. The ocelot does not possess them in reality and their existence could not have been suggested to the sculptor by a study of the animal from life. Thus far no other similar representation of an ocelot with side whiskers, is known to exist in Mexican carving or painting — the usual mode of figuring the sparse bristly hairs on the upper lip of the ocelot being more true to life.

Strange to say, the only similar instance I have found, of the ocelot with conventionalized whiskers, is that carved on a slab discovered by Dr. Le Plongeon at Chichen Itza, Yucatan.*

While this remarkable coincidence, which is in keeping with other analogies between Chichen Itza and Mexican art, furnishes fresh food for reflection, it is well to bear in mind that other sculptured representations of the ocelot also exist at Chichen Itza and do not exhibit the conventional feature.

*An illustration of this slab was first published by Dr. Le Plongeon opposite to p. 86 in "The Sacred Mysteries of the Mayas." New York, 1886.

What is more: The only native American beast of prey which possesses a similar hairy fringe is the wild cat, the lynx or *Felis rufus*, which is remarkable for its brilliant eyes and habit of prowling about at night.

Whilst the possibility naturally suggests itself that the native sculptor might have purposely combined the features of both beasts of prey in order to add to the impressiveness of his statue, the indications are that his aim was not to produce a naturalistic image but an imposing idol of Tezcatlipoca under the form the god had according to the myth assumed and borne for "six hundred and sixty six years."

A side light is thrown upon the symbolism of the hirsute appendages and the reason for their presence by one of the bas-reliefs carved on the remarkable stone box* which belonged to the late Señor Islas de Bustamante, the photographs of which are published here, for the first time (Plates III, IV and V).

The bas-relief (Pl. III, 2), exhibits a seated personage with crossed and sandalled feet, in the act of piercing his ear with the usual bone instrument. To his right lies a smoking incense-burner whose handle terminates in a serpent's head. To his left, standing upright, is the same pointed object which figures in the bas-relief on the bottom of the receptacle in the back of the ocelot. It is noticeable that this object is of the same form and exhibits the same markings, resembling a woven pattern, that recur on the four agave points stuck into it. This circumstance and the incisions at its base and side appear to indicate that it was the thick fleshy top of an agave leaf such as Sahagun describes as having been used by the priesthood as cushions for the thorns employed in performing their penance.

The most important and interesting features in connection with the seated figure are that he not only displays a peculiarly shaped beard, resembling the hairy appendages of the ocelot statue, but is also associated with the ocelot itself. At the back of his head, above his left hand, the head of an ocelot is visible, whose skin hangs behind his back, the tail ending below his knee. Besides this the personage wears leggings made of the spotted ocelot skin and a rattlesnake girdle from which hang two conventionalized hearts.

* Dimensions: 34 X 52 centimetres, interior depth 16 centimetres, exterior height 30 centimetres.

It is interesting to find that in a note written beneath its photograph the late Señor Islas de Bustamante, independently identified the above figure as a representation of "Ocelotl-Tezcatlipoca," or Tlatoca-ocelot, lit. the Lord Ocelot (a title which is also recorded by Serna in chap. ix) and described as wearing "the beard of the mask of Tezcatlipoca." Pointing out that in the above figure, as in the ocelot statue, there is a combination of the ocelot, the beard and the ear-sacrifice, I will briefly review the sculptured figures on the other three sides and on the interior and exterior base of the stone box under discussion.

Plate III, 1, exhibits a seated personage in the same attitude and with the same accessories as in Fig. 6, but displaying the same head-dress with Tezcatlipoca's glyph, and the same face markings as those of the left figure of the group in the ocelot receptacle (Fig. 8). A noticeable difference is that, in one case the right and in the other the left foot is missing.

A third seated and one-footed personage also exhibiting Tezcatlipoca's insignia, is carved on the side of the stone box (Pl. v, 1) which has unfortunately been mutilated, a hole having been bored through it and a lead pipe inserted by a previous owner, in order to employ the box as a water fountain. The symbols carved on the fourth side of the box (Pl. iv, 1) closely resemble those on the stone box of the National Museum (Fig. 6).

The grass ball which figures in both of these recurs on the bottom of the stone box under discussion (Pl. iv, 2), while a remarkable and unidentified monster, covered with spines, and figured as on water, covers the exterior of its base (Pl. v, 2).

A résumé of the foregoing archaeological material brings out the interesting fact that there are known to exist no less than ten sculptured representations of individuals performing ear sacrifice.

In the case of the commemorative slab the personages are unquestionably historical and the performance of the rite associated with the dedication of the Great Temple of Mexico. The two one-footed personages carved on the bottom of the receptacle of the ocelot statue appear to be identical with the con-

querors carved on the rocks at the Peñon with the dates I Tecpatl and III Tochtli (A.D. 1480 and 1482).

These conquerors, like the sixteen carved on the so-called "Stone of Tizoc," the penitents carved on the bottom of the ocelot receptacle and those on the exterior of two of the stone boxes described, making a total of $2 + 16 + 2 + 1 + 3 = 24$ individuals, are, with only one exception, one-footed, while all exhibit the insignia of the god Tezcatlipoca. This overwhelming evidence, by the way, amply substantiates my identification of the one-footed god depicted in the Codices as Tezcatlipoca.* The sixteen one-footed warriors on the "Stone of Tizoc" and those on the Peñon rocks — all of which may, possibly, represent one and the same person — either prove that a native conqueror existed who was actually one-footed and had adopted the insignia of Tezcatlipoca, or that it was customary, in representing living personifications of the god, to emphasize one of his symbols, the lame foot, even if the mutilation did not exist in reality.

I am indebted to Father Hunt Cortès for the interesting fact which he has also published, that after having been tortured by the Spaniards, the unfortunate Quauhtemoc the last of Mexican rulers, was named Xonecuiltzin = the lame lord; a title or nickname which may well have previously been bestowed on other personages equally lame.

To Don Mariano Rojas, the oldest inhabitant of the town of Tepoztlan (Morelia) in which the Nahuatl language is not only spoken, but cultivated, I am indebted for the interesting personal communication that one of his earliest recollections is that of his old grandfather pointing out to him the seven stars of the constellation of Ursa Major and telling him that its name was Xonecuilli.

This valuable testimony in conjunction with Sahagun's statement that "the stars which are in the mouth of the trumpet of the North were named citlal-xonecuilli and that the

*See *Fundamental Principles of Old and New World Civilizations*, p. 10, etc. Dr. Theodor Preuss has criticised this identification of mine, stating his opinion that in a certain case, the god appeared to be "Tlauizpantecuhtli." I merely point out here that the latter name is a title only: "the lord of the dawn" and that, in several publications, Professor Selser has observed that "Tlauizpantecuhtli not only wears the same insignia as Tezcatlipoca but may be regarded as a form of this god."

natives figured its seven stars in a group of the shape of an S, definitely associates the name Xonecuilli with one or both of the Ursa constellations,* and with Tezcatlipoca who is found figured in painting and sculpture as a Xonecuiltzin or "lame lord."

While the bas-relief figures described definitely connect one-footedness with Tezcatlipoca, they also prove the association of the ocelot with this god. The representation of the ear-sacrifice on the exterior of three and interior of one in the stone receptacles clearly indicates, moreover, the purpose for which the latter were destined; namely to contain the blood-stained thorns, sticks or papers, which constituted the sacred offerings, or their ashes.†

In conclusion: The main result of the foregoing investiga-

*Rejecting Sahagun's testimony in this case and stating that the friar "could not have meant what he wrote," Professor Selser prefers to adopt the statement on the subject made by Don Hernando Alvarado Tezozomoc who is supposed to have been born in 1520 and to have written his work at the age of 78.

In Tezozomoc's description of the ceremonies held in honor of the inauguration of Montezuma II as ruler of Mexico, he gives a résumé of the exhortation addressed to the new ruler by the twelve electors. In this Montezuma is enjoined particularly to yield homage, at the break of day, to "the star Xonecuilli, which is the cross of St. Jacob, which is in the region of the South, in the direction of the Indies and the Chinas."—(Cronica Mexicana, p. 574.)

I cannot but think that Professor Selser and his follower Dr. Preuss will find it difficult to persuade American scholars to accept as authentic the Mexican priest's allusion to "the direction of the Indies and Chinas;" to interpret this direction as that occupied by a Southern constellation; and to prefer Tezozomoc's evidence so clearly tinged with European influence, to that preserved in the notes written by Friar Sahagun under the dictation of the aged and most learned of native chieftains whom he gathered around him in Texcoco and questioned about their ancient beliefs, etc.

‡In a recent publication, the Spanish translation of which was published in the *Anales del Museo Nacional de Mexico* (tomo VII, p. 260), Prof. Edward Selser, on account of the carved feather-frieze on the interior wall of the receptacle in the Ocelot statue's back, pronounces *ex cathedra*, that this monument is a "Quauhxicalli" or vase destined to hold the hearts of human victims. In making this identification Professor Selser entirely overlooks what appears to be so obvious a fact, namely that the scene carefully depicted on the bottom of the receptacle furnishes more important testimony as to the object for which it served than the decorative feather frieze, which is a mere accessory. It stands to reason that a "vase of the eagles destined to receive the hearts and blood of human victims," would be more likely to exhibit carved representations of eagles, human hearts and human sacrifices, than the images of two persons in the act of drawing blood from their ears.

What is more: in treating of this native statue of an ocelot Professor Selser ignored the relation of this animal to Tezcatlipoca, just as he passed over in silence not only the existence but the prevalence of the rite of ear-sacrifice in his discussion of its performance by the two sculptured personages whom he identifies as "gods" or "Tezcatlipoca under two forms."

tion is a recognition of the hitherto disregarded fact that the rite of voluntarily drawing blood, principally from the ear, was a feature of every-day life in Ancient Mexico which was performed by young and old. It is but just to recognize what a meritorious deed the Spanish Conquerors performed when they summarily abolished so barbarous a practice, which, of itself, sufficed to fill them with disgust for the native ritual.

The other results obtained are the certainty that the three stone boxes described and possibly the "seat" in the Berlin Museum, as well as the receptacle in the back of the ocelot statue, were destined to hold ear-blood offerings made to Tezcatlipoca; that the ocelot-statue was an image of this god under the form he had mythically assumed for 666 years; that a close chain of evidence connects Tezcatlipoca with the circumpolar constellations and establishes his identity as the one-footed or lame star-god of the Codices, the personification of Xonecuilli or of Ursa Major, who, like pole-star gods in other parts of the world, was conceived by the Mexicans as fastened by one foot to the pole and performing a perpetual circuit around it by means of the foot which remained free.



FIG. 1.



FIG. 2.

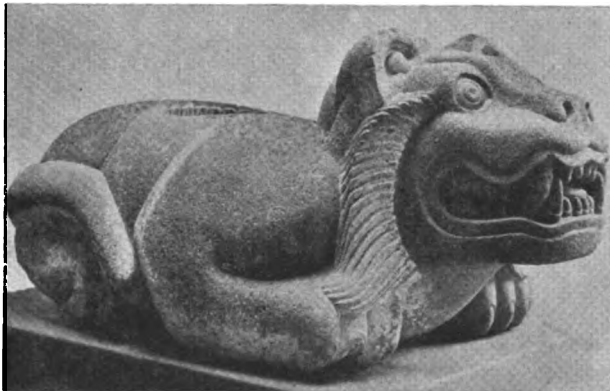


FIG. 3.



FIG. 1.



FIG. 2.



FIG. 1.



FIG. 2.



FIG. 1.

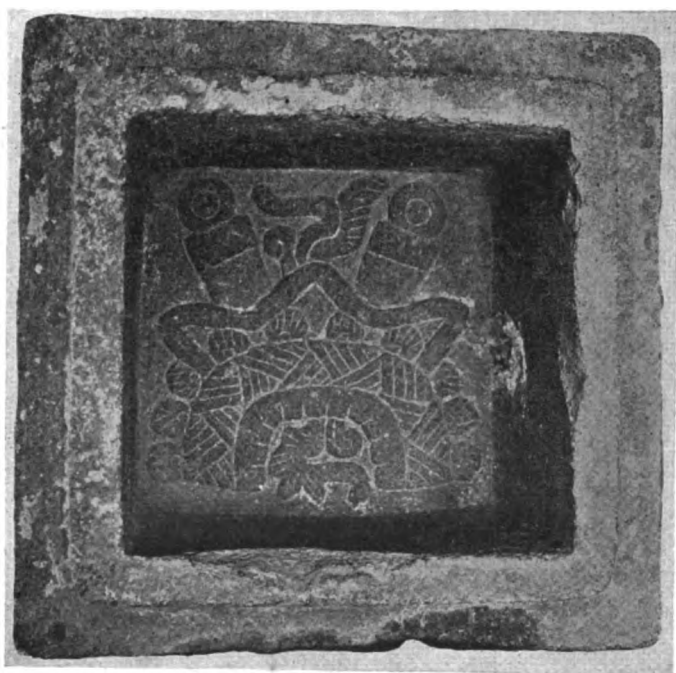


FIG. 2.



FIG. 1.



FIG. 2.

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