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In 1519, Hernando Cortés sent his first letter from Mexico to Charles V and included with this communication various objects he thought to be of interest and value to his sovereign. Among the curios were two volumes, later described by Peter Martyr d'Anglieri as books “such as the Indians have,” square in form and painted on native paper from the bark of the wild fig tree. Some scholars (Nuttall 1902:9-11; Caso 1950:9; Dark 1958a:10; Adelhofer 1974:9-11) believe these books to have been two manuscripts from the Mixteca (an area in what is now the western part of the State of Oaxaca, southern Puebla, and eastern Guerrero) — Codex Zouche-Nuttall and its “sister” manuscript, Codex Vindobonensis Mexicanus I, hereafter called Vienna.

The identification of these two Mixtec documents with the books “such as the Indians have” is not secure, for there are discrepancies between Peter Martyr’s description and the form and materials of Codices Vienna and Zouche-Nuttall. Rather than square, the Mixtec documents are decidedly rectangular. Nor are they painted on native paper. Instead, they were executed on strips of deerhide that were cut to approximately the same width, sized with a mixture of starch and gypsum, and folded—accordion style—into pages. Thus, neither is technically a codex, or bound book; their form is more accurately described as screenfold.

Still, the theory cannot be discounted altogether. Peter Martyr may have used the term “square” in its generic sense, that is, having four sides, much as we might describe an oval object as “round.” Then, too, loose sheets of native paper arrived early in Europe, and perhaps Peter Martyr simply assumed that the two books were painted on the same material. The pages of both Vienna and Zouche-Nuttall are coated with gesso, and inasmuch as only a careful examination reveals the deerhide beneath, the leaves might easily have been taken as heavy parchment.

An additional difficulty—how Oaxacan documents
fell into Cortés’ hands on the east coast of Mexico—is not so easily resolved. The fifty-two pages of the front, or obverse, of Codex Vienna were originally painted as a map (Burland 1960; Jansen 1976), delineating how the land was revealed by the Mixtec culture hero, 9 Wind (who is named for the day in the Mixtec calendar on which he was born), divided into distinct units, and associated with the gods and divinatory dates, and perhaps with lineages and dynasties (J. L. Furst 1978a). The manuscript might have been sent to Tenochtitlan to settle a prehispanic land dispute. Records from early Conquest times confirm the frequency of such quarrels in the Mixteca, and indeed, they are still not uncommon. From Central Mexico, in turn, Codex Vienna might have been relayed to the Gulf Coast, where it came into the hands of Cortés. Zouche-Nuttall, on the other hand, is primarily a genealogical document. The forty-six pages of its so-called back, or reverse, were actually painted first (N. P. Troike 1974), and these record the life of 8 Deer “Jaguar Claw” who came from Tilantongo, an important town in the Mixteca Alta—the Mixtec highlands—of Oaxaca. The front, or “obverse,” consists of thirty-eight pages. The first twenty-three pages present genealogical information with a strong mythological component. Why Zouche-Nuttall should have been sent from the Mixteca to the Gulf Coast or to Tenochtitlán is a mystery, unless it also figured in the hypothetical land dispute.

Arguing in favor of inclusion with Cortés’ first letter is the evidently early arrival in Europe of at least one of the two manuscripts, Codex Vienna. A Latin inscription on Folio 2 verso states that it was once owned by King Manuel I of Portugal, who died in 1521. The next shipment of curios did not reach Spain until 1524; the Codex could not have been part of it and still have belonged to King Manuel “the Fortunate.” But there is also evidence that the inscription may have been added some years later and may not have been an accurate record of who owned the codex at what time.
(for a discussion of the theory, see Adelhofer 1974:9-14). In any event, it was assuredly in Europe by 1650, when Job Ludolf copied part of page XII (Vienna reverse). The manuscript was in Weimar at the time (Adelhofer 1974: 15-18). Of Zouche-Nuttall's early history, little is known beyond its discovery in the mid-nineteenth century in the Library of the Monastery of San Marco in Florence, and its acquisition by the fourteenth Baron Zouche. Zelia Nuttall, an early student of Mesoamerican culture, examined the manuscript and was in part responsible for the publication in 1902 of a hand-drawn facsimile of the codex (Nuttall 1902:1-5), the edition from which the photographs used in this study were made.

The problem may never be resolved entirely. However much these two exquisite manuscripts may deserve a romantic history, we cannot be certain that they reached Europe within a year or two of Cortés' arrival in New Spain. But they are fascinating documents nonetheless, with many as yet undeciphered pages. Let us first briefly examine the relationship between Codex Vienna and Codex Zouche-Nuttall, list some of the Mixtec pictorial conventions whose meanings are known, and then read the first seven pages of the so-called “obverse” of Zouche-Nuttall that tell the story of a magically-born ancestor named 8 Wind “Flinted Eagle.”

The Relationship Between Codices Vienna and Zouche-Nuttall

As noted above, the obverse of Codex Vienna is a map (Burland 1960; Jansen 1976; J. L. Furst 1978a) that defines the relationships between sites and natural features for one part of the Mixteca. But it is more than a mere map. It is also a record of events from the primordial “first times” that describes the birth and exploits of the Mixtec culture hero—a male deity named 9 Wind for his day of birth in the Mixtec count of days—who was probably the prototype for the later Aztec wind god Ehécatl (see Nicholson 1978). In Vienna, the culture hero is born from a stone blade, lifts the waters from the earth, reveals the Mixtec dry land, dispenses or affirms the attributes of the gods, and is instrumental in establishing the ritual consumption of the sacred hallucinogenic mushroom. The manuscript further recounts stories of the birth of the Mixtec gods and nobles from a sacred tree at Apoala (a small but ideologically important site in the Mixteca Alta), the first pulque ceremony, rites to insure the growth and harvesting of the maize, the first appearance of the Sun in the sky, the division of the land by the gods into distinct and related territorial units, and finally, the association of these places with divinatory dates, gods, and perhaps lineages as well (Nowotny 1948; Caso 1959, 1963; J. L Furst 1977, 1978a). Alfonso Caso (1950), the Mexican scholar responsible for stimulating renewed interest in the prehispanic books, demonstrated that the thirteen painted pages of the Vienna reverse were executed by a different artist, perhaps at a later time. These pages are an abbreviated version of the life and lineage of 8 Deer “Jaguar Claw” of Tilantongo. The back, or genealogical, side of Vienna need not concern us, and henceforth, the name Vienna will refer only to the obverse.

The life the same 8 Deer “Jaguar Claw” is the major focus of the so-called reverse of Zouche-Nuttall. The first twenty-three pages of the “obverse” also present abbreviated dynastic records, with many individuals who do not occur elsewhere in the manuscript or in other Mixtec documents. The first seven pages, heretofore undeciphered, narrate the life of 8 Wind “Flinted Eagle,” an ancestor who will be the subject of the commentary. Then the marriages and offspring of some of his descendants appear, the manuscript continues with the genealogy of a site called by Caso “Hill Split by Hands-Insect,” a brief account of the lineage of 8 Deer “Jaguar Claw,” and ends with a dynastic list for a town called “Quetzal River-Plain with Bleeding Feathers” (Caso 1964b) and a pilgrimage of the gods.

The Zouche-Nuttall obverse is primarily concerned with genealogies, and hence with historical matters, but the life histories of individuals are told in terms of ceremonies, of re-creating primordial gestures and rituals of the deities, of consultations and conflicts with the gods, and the intervention of divinities in human affairs. No clear distinction is drawn between what we would consider “history” and “mythology.” That distinction is arbitrary and Western. Perhaps the Vienna obverse might be characterized as a mythological document that establishes the historical validity of land boundaries, and the Zouche-Nuttall obverse a historical document that is phrased in terms of re-creating mythic events.

The problems of deciphering a pictorial manuscript lacking any kind of post-Conquest glosses
are formidable, and it is not surprising that a number of scholars have been preoccupied with various aspects of the Zouche-Nuttall obverse. In 1902, Zelia Nuttall wrote the first commentary on the manuscript, and in the face of considerable advances in Mixtec archeology and ethnohistory, her study stands up remarkably well. James Cooper Clark (1912) focused on the life of the Mixtec conqueror d’8 Deer “Jaguar Claw” (a figure shared with Zouche-Nuttall) in Codex Colombino, another Mixtec screenfold manuscript, and Richard Long (1926) on interpreting the Zouche-Nuttall Codex. Herbert Spinden (1935) attempted to define the important Mixtec pictorial conventions, and although his work has since been superseded, it forms the basis for later reading of any prehispanic Mixtec document. Caso did not write a commentary on the Zouche-Nuttall obverse, but his statements regarding the relationships of individual figures and scenes to other codices are invaluable (1950; 1954; 1955b; 1958a; 1958b; 1959; 1960b; 1963; 1964a; 1964b; 1966). His article, “El Mapa de Teozacoalco” (1949), established the Mixtec authorship of the codices and outlined basic Mixtec conventions. Philip Dark (1958a; 1958b) has been interested in distinguishing among types of gestures, postures, and positions of figures to refine our knowledge of these pan-Mixtec conventions and in speculating on the prehistory of the area.

More recently, as noted above, Nancy P. Troike (1974) has demonstrated that the so-called front of Zouche-Nuttall was painted last. Emily Rabin (1974) has been concerned with problems of chronology in the manuscript and has found that it is not always possible to read every date in the Mixtec codices in literal sequence. M. E. Smith (1973a) has established the identity of numerous place signs pictured in the screenfold books and in other Mixtec documents. Recent work by Wigberto Jiménez Moreno and Maarten Jansen (1976) may add to our knowledge of the toponyms and the identity of the towns they represent.

This synopsis hardly does justice to the efforts of these scholars, but it is probably sufficient to demonstrate that deciphering a codex, or even one or two of its pages, requires the cumulative efforts of many people. The work is slow, and its success depends upon simultaneously advancing our knowledge of Mixtec archeology, history, mythology, linguistics, chronology, and geography.

The obverse of Vienna and that of Zouche-Nuttall are “sister” manuscripts. They are remarkably similar in style, and although they were probably not painted by a single artist, some figures from each could almost be by the same hand. Both manuscripts are read from right to left in a vertical pattern indicated by red guide lines. The pages of the Zouche-Nuttall obverse are correctly numbered, but at some point in its European history, the Vienna obverse was incorrectly numbered from left to right with Arabic numerals. Page 52 is actually the first, and page 1 the last. Pages from Vienna are usually given in this manner. In this study, pages from both codices will be cited by the numbers drawn on them and the vertical reading columns will be labelled, from right to left, with a small letter, beginning with “a” on the right, going to “b,” “c,” and so forth (e.g., 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b). The first two pages of Zouche-Nuttall have no red guide lines, but in the commentary I have drawn dotted lines that seem to conform to the narrative sections. Scenes from page 1 will be designated as occurring on 1a or 1b, even though these pages have no physical divisions. Because the first seven pages of the Zouche-Nuttall obverse cannot be presented in screenfold form, their logical reading pattern is obscured. I have included three asterisks at the point where each page begins.

In addition to style and reading pattern, the two codices also share gods, divinatory dates, place signs, ceremonies, and specific, if as yet unidentified, symbols. In Vienna, these figures, rites and motifs occur more frequently and in a wider variety of contexts, so that their values and functions may be more certainly determined. The decipherment of the Zouche-Nuttall obverse depends in part on knowing the meaning of the symbols, gods, dates and rituals in Vienna. This supporting material from Vienna will appear in notes at the end of the commentary. Also used as supporting material are examples of individuals, place signs, dates, and gods that verify the information in Zouche-Nuttall but that are represented in other Mixtec codices executed in what Donald Robertson (1959:61-67; 1962:254) has called the native style, that is, documents without traces of European stylistic or iconographic influence whether they were painted before, during or soon after the Conquest. Those cited in this section and in the notes include the Mixtec genealogical-historical codices Bodley 2858, Selden 3135 (A.2), and Colombino (see Caso 1960b; 1964a; 1966; Smith 1966), and two prehispanic screenfold manuscripts that deal with ritual and
divinatory matters—Codices Borgia and Vaticanus 3773. These two ritual books may or may not be Mixtec (see Nicholson 1966; Robertson 1966; Chadwick and MacNeish 1967), but accumulating evidence suggests they may indeed be of Mixtec authorship (J. L. Furst 1978b).

In many cases, the painter of Vienna seems to have been more knowledgeable about iconography and more precise in his rendering of details than was the artist responsible for the Zouche-Nuttall obverse. For example, one ubiquitous but undeciphered symbol that occurs in both is the so-called “bound volute” (Figures 1a and 1b). In Vienna, the bound volute consists of four curls, each of a different color, bound together. The object appears at conferences and ceremonies, but little more may be said about it beyond that. We do not even know the material of which the bound volute is made, if indeed it actually existed. It may, in fact, be a visual pun, standing for an entirely different object or concept. In any event, it is used in the same way on the first seven pages of Zouche-Nuttall, and on page 4c it is shown below a mat with a knot of grass in its center that is used for bird sacrifices (Figure 1b). On that page, the bound volute is pictured as two elongated ovals joined by a center strap, rather like two green sausages taped together. Vienna’s painter seems to have a more accurate idea of how this puzzling object is supposed to look; we should rely on his iconographic knowledge when there is a question of interpretation.

It should be noted, too, that in two other Mixtec codices, Bodley and Colombino, bound volutes are depicted in the more ornate Vienna form (Figures 1c and 1d), again suggesting that Vienna is more in line with standard Mixtec iconography.

**Mixtec Pictorial Conventions**

The Mixtec codices probably served as mnemonic devices that reminded the educated prehispanic reader of the general thread of his story. Writing in the

seventeenth century, the Dominican Fray Francisco de Burgoa states that young nobles were schooled for years in the techniques for painting the manuscripts and in the narratives that accompanied the finished books (1934a [1674]: 210; 1934b [1670]: I, 288). The mastery of this aristocratic art required decades, and each scene, and perhaps each figure, might have suggested tales of traditional rivalries and friendships, genealogies, and interactions with the gods. We have only the barest of outlines in the codices, and unfortunately little ethnographic material was recorded in Oaxaca during the first few centuries after the Spanish Conquest. One wishes that Fray Bernadino de Sahagún, author of the monumental General History of the Things of New Spain and in a very real sense the “father” of Mesoamerican ethnography, had entered the Dominican order and worked in the Mixteca instead of Aztec Central Mexico so that the written sources might aid in decipherment of the screenfold books.

At this point, the general content of the first seven pages of the Zouche-Nuttall obverse should be briefly summarized. Page 1 presents the miraculous birth of 8 Wind “Flinted Eagle” from the earth; a bird sacrifice in his honor; and his travels to Apoala, the origin place of the Mixtec gods and kings, perhaps to verify his status as a divinely born ancestor. On page 2, ceremonies to affirm 8 Wind’s right to rule specific sites are performed on his behalf by attendants. The first two pages establish at the outset 8 Wind’s nature, status, and association with territory that is probably in the Mixteca Alta. This is a crucial statement, for we discover on the next two pages, 3 and 4, that 8 Wind lived and reigned during a war of succession that involved a number of towns. On page 3, the war with the “stone men” apparently occurred during the same year that 8 Wind verified his right to rule (on page 2), and it may have been the reason why the rituals to assert his authority were undertaken. Or he may have acquired these territories during the war.
The reasons for this war are unknown, but it was sufficiently important to be shown not only on Zouche-Nuttall 3, but again on page 20a-b and on Bodley 3-II, III, and 4-III; its consequences are hinted at on Codex Selden 6-II. As Alfonso Caso has pointed out (1960b: 28-30; 1964a: 32-34, 79-81), changes in dynastic lines are recorded at this time throughout the Mixteca, and at some sites the legitimate lineages fought to maintain themselves.

On Zouche-Nuttall 3, the war is conducted on one side by figures who are represented in Vienna as gods, presiding over their towns, but who in Zouche-Nuttall appear at the sites engaged in combat as if they were alive at the time of the war. Perhaps they can be understood as lineage ancestors recalled to defend their territories. As we shall see, even 8 Wind’s activities are phrased in terms of divinely instituted gestures and ceremonies. In asking whether these figures are divine or human, or whether they are deified ancestors or if the gods were the Mixtec progenitors, we may be posing the wrong questions. In Mixtec, the word for “god” is the same as that for “ancestor” — nuhū (Alvarado 1964 [1593]: 81, 160; Arana and Swadesh 1965: 110-111). Although the term is not completely understood, it suggests that the Mixtecs did not draw a distinction between the “ancient ones” who founded their dynasties and supernatural beings who were personifications of plants and natural phenomena (J. L. Furst 1977; 1978b). To the prehispanic Mixtec reader, the personages who appear in early times were probably considered to be of more or less the same substance — sacred and fabulous.

On the other side of the war are the so-called “stone men.” Stone is conventionally pictured by diagonal multicolored stripes, and it is most frequently shown in place signs. But the stripes are also applied to human figures (see Figure 9f). M. E. Smith (1973b: 68-71) suggests that these stone men may represent the original non-Mixtec speaking inhabitants of the Mixteca, who are mentioned by Fray Antonio de los Reyes in his grammar for the Teposcolula area in the Mixteca Alta, Arte en Lengua mixteca. In his introduction (1976 [1593]: II), Reyes summarizes a legend in which the first Mixtecs were called tay nahu and came from the center of the earth. Smith translates tay nahu as “men of the earth” (1973b: 68).

It is possible, and even likely, that the men of the earth are the stone men of the codices, and in that case the war of succession is fought on one side by the original inhabitants of the Mixteca and on the other by the ancestors and gods who would later take possession of, or become associated with, the Mixteca. It is interesting to note that on Zouche-Nuttall 1a, 8 Wind “Flinted Eagle” is shown emerging from the earth. He is therefore described as an original Mixtec who may be entitled to his territories by right of first possession. It also suggests that 8 Wind is on the losing side of the war between the stone men and the victorious Mixtec-speakers, and yet manages to keep his lands. The first seven pages of Zouche-Nuttall repeatedly make the point that 8 Wind is earth-born, for he is shown on 1a emerging from the earth, on 1b with his foot in an opening in a river (see below for a description of this and other Mixtec pictorial conventions), perhaps emerging from a hill on page 2, and on 5a with his foot inside V-shaped clefts, as if he were again emerging, in a building and a plain. These scenes are probably not narratives of his emerging or re-emerging; rather, the manuscript may simply be reiterating the fact of his miraculous birth.

The Vienna obverse gives a different version of the origin of 8 Wind, one that is a visual equivalent to another legend recorded by Reyes. According to this legend, the Mixtec-speaking kings and gods who finally occupied the Mixteca were born from a tree at Apoala, a site in the Mixteca Alta:

It was a common belief among the native Mixtec-speakers that the origin and beginnings of their false gods and rulers was in Apoala, a town in the Mixteca, which in their language is called yuta tnoho, which is “river where the rulers come from,” because they are said to have been split off [lopped off] from some trees that grew out of that river and that have special names. They also call that town yuta tnuhu, which is “river of the lineages,” and this is the more appropriate name and the one that fits it best (Reyes 1976 [1593]: I; translation mine).

Nearly a century later, an abbreviated version of the same myth was recounted by Fray Francisco de Burgoa. In this variant, the Mixtecs attributed [their] origin to two trees, . . . on the riverbanks of . . . Apoala . . . With the underground water of this river, the trees grew that produced the first native rulers, male and female . . . and from here each generation grew and extended, populating a great kingdom (Burgoa 1934a [1674]: I, 274; translation mine).
Thus, both post-Conquest documents tell us that the prehispanic Mixtec-speaking nobles claimed
descent from some trees at Apoala. This mythological
event is represented on Vienna 37b (see J. L. Furst
1977) and ♂ 8 Wind is listed among the offspring of the
birth tree (Vienna 35a). Perhaps the first seven pages
of Zouche-Nuttall insists on ♂ 8 Wind’s birth from the
earth in order to indicate on which side of the war he
fought.

On Zouche-Nuttall 4, a battle takes place between
the Mixtec gods and red-and-white striped males who
descend from the heavens and are made captive by the
deities. In yet another pictorial document whose
authorship may well be Mixtec, Codex Borgia, a similar
red-and-white striped male comes down from the sky
and decapitates himself (Borgia 18). On Borgia 19 and
21, a series of scenes present red-and-white striped
males with their arms bound and their chests pierced
by flint knives. The identity of these figures is still a
mystery, but their function is clearly that of
descending to be captured and killed. On Zouche-
Nuttall 4, their voyage to earth is in some manner
connected with the deaths and resuscitation in the
underworld of two Mixtec gods who play prominent
roles in Codex Vienna—♂ 4 Motion, who is the
guardian of the entrances to the underworld, and ♂ 7
Flower, the divine patron of precious objects (J. L.
Furst 1978a). In the heavens, before the descent of the
red-and-white striped males, appear the name of ♂ 7
Flower and the day 2 Alligator, the day of the gods’
funeral rites or of a heart sacrifice performed by ♂ 4
Serpent.

The relationship between pages 3 and 4 is still
somewhat unclear. The two battles may be episodes in
the same war, or they may represent two separate
conflicts. In any event, the manuscript has first
established ♂ 8 Wind’s magical birth, his status as an
ancestor, and his right to rule. Then the war of
succession is depicted, during which ♂ 8 Wind
apparently managed to keep his lands. On page 5, the
codex introduces a new subject—events in the
ancestor’s ceremonial and personal life. Two bird
sacrifices are performed in his honor (5a), and he is
ritually anointed by a rain deity (5b). Then he appears
at places identified pictorially as “Tree with Blossoms
on a Platform” and “Monkey Hill” (5b) to be married
for the third time (5c). His first two wives are
represented on 6a and 6b, and his offspring on 5c and
perhaps on pages 6 and 7 as well. On 7d, he is shown old,
and he speaks to a figure who is shown again on page 8,
♂ 2 Rain “20 Jaguars.” ♂ 2 Rain is pictured on Zouche-
Nuttall 24b and Bodley 5-1 as the last of his line. As
Caso (1960b: 31-33; 1964a: 80-81) has pointed out, ♂ 2
Rain was a descendant of ♂ 8 Wind. With this
conference, the commentary comes to an end, for the
life and early death of ♂ 2 Rain “20 Jaguars” is another
story. Let us return now to the problem of Mixtec
conventions.

The Mixtec artists developed pictorial symbols for
natural and man-made features, including hills, rivers,
buildings, ballcourts, and the like. To the basic form,
for example the symbol for river, were added various
motifs (e.g., quetzal birds, arrows, flowers) to
distinguish which river (or site with river in its name)
was intended. The basic element for river appears in
cross section as a U-shape containing blue water, often
with a border of reeds (Figure 2a), but the form rarely
occurs alone. In Figure 2b, the artist has drawn a
human hand grasping a bundle of feathers in the water,
and this simple addition alters the meaning from
generalized “river” to “Apoala,” a specific site in the
Mixteca Alta. In Mixtec, the name of the town was
yuta tnoho (Apoala is an Aztec name of uncertain
derivation). Yuta means river, and tnoho has as one of
its meanings “to pluck”; the hand is apparently
plucking the feather bundle as one would pluck a bird
(Smith 1973a: 75). Similar motifs are joined to almost
every natural and man-made feature.
Hills (Figure 3a) appear in the Mixtec codices with green bell-shaped tops and pairs of curls on their perimeters to indicate a rough texture (Smith 1973a:39). Or hills are represented as half-ovals, sometimes with large spirals in their interiors that depict caves. In Figure 3b, the hill has three such symbols, and its top has a wide U-shaped opening. This hill occurs on Zouche-Nuttall 3a with a face, perhaps that of κ S Wind, in the aperture. The opening may be an emergence hole rather than a cave. In one creation myth recounted by Reyes (1976 [1593]: II), the original inhabitants of the Mixteca emerged from the center of the earth, suggesting that the Mixtecs shared the widespread Mesoamerican belief in emergence holes.

Plains are represented as feather carpets—long rectangles with scalloped overlapping green and white feathers (Figure 4a). In Mixtec, the word for plain is yodzo, which may also mean “large feather” (Smith 1973a: 40-41). Clearly the pictorial convention is a pun. The skyband (Figure 4b) is shown on Zouche-Nuttall 4a as a band of blue with stars in the form of eyes. Friezes patterned with multi-colored steps stand for the word ŋu, “town,” “site of a town,” or “place of” (Figure 4c; Smith 1973a: 38-39).

Man-made features are also depicted in the codices. Buildings appear as post and lintel structures, usually with only one of the posts shown, so that the upper facade is seen from the front and the door frame from the side (Figure 5a). Platforms are represented in profile, as bases for buildings and supports for other motifs (Figure 5a). Enclosures, shaped like brackets with bar sides down and decorated on the outside with multi-colored steps (figure 5b), are most often attached to buildings. Ceremonies are performed within the enclosures, suggesting that they are sacred precincts. On Zouche-Nuttall 5a, the enclosure's right side is cut away and it is attached directly to a hill; a bird sacrifice is performed inside, so that it still functions as a sacred precinct.

Markets or plazas, shown from above, appear as
circles divided into four alternating yellow and black quarters that are often marked by human footprints (Figure 6a), perhaps to suggest that they are busy places (Smith 1973a:46). In Vienna, however, the market or plaza is not merely a public or commercial site, but may instead function as an entrance to the underworld. On Vienna 24b, a figure leaves Apoala and descends into the underworld. His descent begins specifically at the town plaza (there may not have been a market at this small village). Moreover, in Vienna, toponyms with plazas as elements are placed under the auspices of the god who is the guardian of entrances to the underworld, $\mathfrak{r}^4$ Motion (J. L. Furst 1978a). Just as the wide U-shaped opening on the top of a hill may be an emergence hole, the market or plaza symbol may be a place of descent into the earth.

Also associated with the underworld in Mixtec manuscripts, and with the god $\mathfrak{r}^4$ Motion, are ballcourts, pictured from above as rectangles with I-shaped playing fields and bands of stone on either side to fill out the rectangular forms (Figure 6b). The structures are often divided into two or four differently colored sections. On Vienna 19a-b, the god $\mathfrak{r}^4$ Motion is associated with no less than five ballcourts, and when a bird sacrifice is performed on behalf of this god, on Vienna 20b, he appears at a ballcourt. On Zouche-Nuttall 4b, $\mathfrak{r}^4$ Motion is first shown dead and then (4c) in the underworld at a ballcourt and a market, each of which is supported on a green circle patterned with black dots and with two pairs of flames on its side. In his commentaries on the genealogical documents, Caso called these circles flaming copal balls, an identification that may or may not be correct. In any event, in both Vienna and Zouche-Nuttall, ballcourts and markets are under the auspices of the god who guards entrances to the underworld.

This list of elements used in toponyms is by no means complete. There are other conventions for different types of terrain, but these are the natural and man-made features that appear on the first seven
Figure 7. The Year 1 Reed, day 1 Alligator (a), Year 5 Flint, day 7 Flower (b), Year 5 House, day 7 Serpent (c), and Year 13 Rabbit, day 2 Deer (d).

The Mixtec codices also tell the reader when events occurred. Years are indicated by a characteristically Mixtec symbol, the interlaced A-O Year sign (Figure 7a-d). Like many other Mesoamerican peoples, the Mixtecs measured time in cycles of 52 named solar years of 365 days. Each year was designated by one of four “year bearers” repeating themselves in fixed order—Reed, Flint, House, and Rabbit—and by a number from one to thirteen (Figure 7a-d). The 52-year cycle began with the first year bearer, Reed, and the number 1 and continued with 2 Flint, 3 House, 4 Rabbit, 5 Reed, 6 Flint, and so forth, until the last, or fifty-second year, 13 Rabbit. Then another cycle began, again with the year 1 Reed. In the codices, the year bearer is placed in the center of, or attached by a black line to, the interlaced A-O year sign, while the numbers from 1 to 13 are shown as dots attached to the year bearer or to the A-O year sign.

52 years may be named with this system (4 year bearers times 13 numbers), each year occupying the same position within its cycle. The Year 1 Reed, for example, is always the first, and the Year 13 Rabbit always the last. But there seems to have been no way of distinguishing years in one 52-year cycle from years with the same names in other 52-year cycles. Time is cyclical rather than linear (i.e., measured from some distant Year Zero in the past), and the particular 52-year cycle in which an event occurs may be determined only from the context. For example, if an activity occurs in the Year 2 Flint during an individual’s life and another event in the life of his adult grandson or great-grandson takes place in the Year 4 Rabbit (or two years later in a single cycle), we may assume that the two events were 54 years, rather than only 2 years, apart. This method of determining the sequence of events is not foolproof, and much of the apparent chronology in the Mixtec manuscripts is still problematical.

Accompanying the year sign is a day sign composed of a number, again from 1 to 13, and one of twenty day signs that repeat in a fixed order. The day count starts with the day 1 Alligator and continues with 2 Wind, 3 House, 4 Lizard, and so on, until the last day, 13 Flower. Then the day count begins again with 1 Alligator. The year bearers also appear as day signs, but there is little confusion about their function, inasmuch as when they serve as year bearers, they are clearly attached to the A-O year sign.

Only 260 days may be named with this system (20 day signs times 13 numbers), but there are 365 days in a solar year. Thus, the first day and the 261st day in a given solar year have the same name, but the first day...
of the following solar year, 105 days later, is different. After 52 solar years, the day count has been repeated 73 times (365 days times 52 years = 18,980 days = 260 days times 73 cycles); thus, every 52-year cycle begins and ends on the same day. It is not known whether the Mixtecs named their years for the first or last days, as was done elsewhere in Mesoamerica (Caso 1951; 1955a; 1956; 1960a; 1971); I think a different system was used. The Mixtecs may have begun the 52-year cycle during the Year named 1 Reed, but on the day 1 Alligator, the first of the 260-day ritual count—a combination frequently represented in Mixtec pictorial documents (Figure 7a).

This brings us to some final observations about the Mixtec calendar: it may not have been a calendar in the Western sense of the word. As noted above, the Mixtec system of measuring time is cyclical rather than linear, and it does not provide a means of determining in which 52-year cycle a date occurs. Furthermore, the Mixtecs may not have corrected for leap years, so that every 52 years the calendar would have fallen behind 13 days. Thus, it would quickly have become useless in marking seasons. True, in most cases dates follow in plausible chronological sequence. For example, at the bottom of Zouche-Nuttall 5c, 6a, and 6b, the ancestor 8 Wind “Flinted Eagle” marries his first wife in the Year 11 Rabbit (the 24th in the 52-year cycle), his second wife in the Year 12 Reed (the 25th), and his third wife in the Year 2 Rabbit (the 28th). The three marriages probably occurred in this sequence over a period of four years. But in other cases, dates do not seem to be related in chronological order, suggesting that at least in part, they are a reflection of a divinatory calendar with some years and days being auspicious for certain types of activities.

The Year 1 Reed, day 1 Alligator is an excellent example of a date with a divinatory meaning (Figure 7a). In Mixtec codices it accompanies the establishment of lineages, first marriages in new dynasties (Caso 1950:29; 1954:15; 1956:493), and the emergence and re-emergence of individuals from the earth. On Vienna 14b, it is the “time” particularly associated with the fertile, life-giving earth personified as a goddess named 9 Grass and with the proper growth of the maize (J. L. Furst 1978b). The date clearly means “beginning.” On Zouche-Nuttall 1a, it is the “time” of the birth of 8 Wind “Flinted Eagle” from the earth, and it seems to function as a metaphor, telling us that as the sacred maize springs from the ground, so does the sacred progenitor. Furthermore, when the painter has finished describing the ceremonies to establish 8 Wind’s right to rule (pages 1 and 2) and recounting the war with the stone men and the red-and-white striped males (3 and 4), he repeats the Year 1 Reed, day 1 Alligator (5a), as a signal to the reader that he is returning to the beginning of the story to narrate events in 8 Wind’s ceremonial and personal life.

The Year 1 Reed, day 1 Alligator is not the only date to carry a specific divinatory meaning. The Year 5 Flint, day 7 Flower on Zouche-Nuttall 5a, for example, is also a metaphor, even where it fits into the chronological sequence (Figure 7b). In Vienna, its year bearer is name of the goddess of the young maize, 5 Flint (Nowotny 1948:170), and its day sign the name of the god 7 Flower, patron of precious objects and substances, including tobacco, pulque, chocolate, paper, implements for making paper, and hallucinogenic mushrooms (J. L. Furst 1978a). When the god’s name appears as a day sign, it seems to mean that “precious objects are being received from afar,” and almost invariably individuals travel and receive gifts or are honored by ceremonies (e.g., Selden 7-1 and Bodley 2-IV). On Zouche-Nuttall 5a, the ancestor 8 Wind “Flinted Eagle” travels to hill with a sacred precinct attached to it that contains the head of a rain deity. The progenitor is honored by an elaborate bird sacrifice.

Other dates with special meanings include the Year 5 House, day 7 Serpent (Figure 7c), which refers, in Vienna, to the activities of a pair of gods, 4 Serpent and 7 Serpent, who are the offspring of the Mixtec creator couple. It also labels events in primordial times on Vienna. On Zouche-Nuttall 3a, the Year 5 House, day 7 Serpent fits into the chronological sequence, and at the same time it refers to the participation of 7 Serpent and 4 Serpent in the war of succession. It may also phrase the territorial dispute in terms of a primordial conflict. The Year 13 Rabbit, day 2 Deer (Figure 7d) is consistently used in Vienna as a time of conferences and preparations, particularly where the aged priest-shaman 2 Dog is involved. On Zouche-Nuttall 4c, the date is employed in the same manner; 2 Dog directs a conference after which 4 Motion, guardian of entrances to the underworld, and 7 Flower, patron of precious objects and substances, are resuscitated in the underworld.

Inasmuch as dates may have divinatory or chronological functions, I have indicated in the
commentary the position of each year in the 52-year cycle. The Year 5 Flint, day 7 Flower, for example, appears as Year 5 Flint (18), day 7 Flower, as it is the eighteenth in the 52-year cycle. Bearing in mind that a date may function in both ways at the same time, the reader may be able to decide in many cases when a date is intended to be read only in chronological sequence.

In addition to providing chronological and divinatory information, dates also accompany place signs, and associations between certain signs and specific dates are quite consistent from one manuscript to another. For example, on Zouche-Nuttall 1a, 8 Wind is honored by a bird sacrifice at a hill containing in its right side a dead human being wrapped in white cloth tied with rope. A white banner is stuck into or attached to the rope. The funerary bundle is placed on a red and white platform, and above it is a rosette. The Year 1 Reed, day 1 Alligator appears above the hill, suggesting at first that 8 Wind attends the ceremony on this date. But the date may instead be connected to the place sign, for on Vienna 40c, the same site, in slightly different form, is also labelled by the Year 1 Reed, day 1 Alligator (Note 3, Figure 14b). Why dates and places are associated is still a mystery, but the fact should be noted. Perhaps, again, the key lies in the little understood concept of the āuku, for this term means time and space (Arana and Swadesh 1965:110-111) as well as god and ancestor. Dates and places share some quality with one another, and perhaps with the gods themselves.

Finally, dates provide names for individuals. People were named for the day in the 260-day ritual calendar on which they were born. Both men and women could have the same calendrical names, and dozens of individuals might be born on the same day, making the writing of records confusing, if not impossible. But this problem is more apparent than real, for the Mixtecs gave a second name to an individual for which Nancy P. Troike uses the term "personal name." This useful term suggests nothing more than what we can see — it is a person's name. Among other things, personal names are derived from the natural world (e.g., 8 Wind "Flinted Eagle" or 10 Eagle "Quetzal-Spider web" on 6b), from garments (e.g., 10 Deer "Jaguar Quechquemitl" on 5c, from the diamond-shaped woman's garment worn with the long points in front), and from man-made objects (e.g., 5 Deer "Arrows in Warband" on 6c). Most names may be given to either males or females, although a few are reserved for one sex (e.g., names with "Quechquemitl," a woman's garment, are given only to women), and many individuals have more than one name (e.g., on Zouche-Nuttall 6b, 10 Eagle "Quetzal-Spider Web"). How these personal names were selected is not known, but many are shown in Vienna as attributes of the gods (e.g., 8 Deer "Jaguar Claw" is called by the insignia of 7 Deer, who is accompanied by a jaguar's claw on Vienna 29c). The combination of calendrical and personal names is an effective method of differentiating one person from another, and of nearly two thousand people represented in the Mixtec pictorial documents, there is confusion in perhaps no more than half a dozen cases. Occasionally, acceptable variations in a personal name cause difficulties; such is the case with 8 Wind "Flinted Eagle."

8 Wind "Flinted Eagle" also appears on Bodley 5, 6-V and Selden 5-III (Figure 8a and 8b; Caso 1960b:30; 1964a:31-32, 78-79). On Selden 5-III, he is accompanied by his third wife, Deer "Jaguar Quechquemitl," the garment being shown on this page as a quechquemitl with a jaguar's tail. Here, 8 Wind wears the costume of a red eagle and he is surrounded by twenty red dots, suggesting that he was known to the painter of Selden as 8 Wind "20 Red Eagles." On Bodley 5, 6-V only the calendrical and personal names of 8 Wind and 10 Deer are represented. Her calendrical name is attached by a black line to a "Jaguar Quechquemitl," pictured as a quechquemitl with a jaguar's head on top. 8 Wind's personal name is given as "20 Grey Eagles." On Vienna 35a (Figure 8c), 8 Wind is listed among the offspring of the birth tree at Apoala, wearing the costume of a grey eagle surrounded by twenty dots, so that he is again named "20 Grey Eagles." Thus, on only the first seven pages of Zouche-Nuttall is 8 Wind given the personal name of "Flinted Eagle." The other three codices agree on the name "20 Eagles." Despite the differences in his personal name, the same individual appears in all four manuscripts; his association with 10 Deer "Jaguar Quechquemitl" confirms his identity.

Finally, conventions also describe the nature of events and activities in the Mixtec codices. On Zouche-Nuttall 5c, 8 Wind "Flinted Eagle" and 10 Deer "Jaguar Quechquemitl" are shown as married by placing them on a long yellow rectangle with a flowered vessel of chocolate or pulque between them. His first and second wives appear behind 10 Deer on 6a and
6b, and his offspring are listed above the wedding scene on 5c and on pages 6 and 7.

Males are distinguished by sandals (females are always barefoot), a loincloth, most often white rather than in color, and by the xicollis, a rectangular men's garment usually white with a black pattern or red that has a wide multi-colored fringed border. The xicollis looks as if it has sleeves on Zouche-Nuttall (e.g., δ 12 Alligator on page 2). Females are dressed in skirts, quechquemitls, and huipils (the waist-length rectangular woman's garment). Occasionally, women have red "bangs," a symbol of fertility in Vienna (J. L.)
Figure 9. A bird sacrifice with attendants bringing the bird (a), a bundle of wood (b), a handful of powdered tobacco (c), a xicolli (d), a torch (e), a conch shell trumpet (f), and reeds (g). The bird is decapitated over a mat with a knot of grass on its center (h).
Furst 1978a). Age is attributed to individuals by a single tooth in the corner of the mouth, and people who speak or sing have multi-colored scrolls ("speech scrolls") in front of their mouths.

Ceremonies are also conventional ways of telling us about the status of individuals. Bird sacrifices were an important part of Mixtec ritual life, and 8 Wind "Flinted Eagle" is honored by no less than five such rites on the first seven pages of the Zouche-Nuttall obverse. Consistently, they are performed by lesser figures for a more prominent person. The complete range of objects brought to the ceremony appear in Figure 9a-h, a scene with figures assembled from several bird sacrifices. These objects include the bird (a), a bundle of bound wood (b), a handful of powdered tobacco (c), a xicolli (d), a torch, presumably to set fire to the bundle of bound wood (e), a conch shell trumpet (f), and reeds (g). The bird is decapitated over a mat (h), shown from above as a circle of overlapping green scallops with a knot of grass in the center. In Vienna, these knots are given to the earth (J. L. Furst 1978a). The bird's head and the bundle of wood were placed on the mat (Figure 10), and sometimes the round mat rests on a second, larger rectangular mat. The significance of this ceremony is still unknown, but it was an honor granted only to important individuals.

As noted earlier, the first four pages of the Zouche-Nuttall obverse are particularly concerned with succession and with taking or keeping possession of lands, and in part, this is also the interest of the Vienna obverse. In Vienna, sites are placed under the auspices of the gods or ancestors. This so-called ritual manuscript is of great value in deciphering the symbols and ceremonies at the beginning of Zouche-Nuttall.

8 Wind "Flinted Eagle" is accompanied on Zouche-Nuttall 1 and 2 by two attendants, 11 Flower.
and \( \sigma \) 12 Alligator, whose calendrical names are two consecutive days in the ritual calendar, and who hold on \( \sigma \)'s behalf a red-and-white bundle staff and a red staff marked by five small white circles, called the “quincunx” staff in Caso’s commentaries on the Mixtec genealogical codices (Figure 11a). The exact significance of these staffs is unclear, but on page 1a, they are the first objects to be associated with the ancestor. They also appear in Vienna (Figure 11b).

On Vienna 48c, the quincunx staff and the red-and-white bundle staff first appear in the heavens, where two old primordial gods present them to the Mixtec culture hero, \( \sigma \) 9 Wind. At the same time, \( \sigma \) 9 Wind also receives his costume (J. L. Furst 1978a). The quincunx and red-and-white staffs are inside two small buildings, and they are accompanied by a third building containing a white bundle tied with white rope and a building with a white conch shell on top. Below on 48c, the Mixtec culture hero descends to earth, and on the following pages he performs the great and important tasks of lifting the sky- and water-bands from the earth to reveal its features (page 47b), dispensing or affirming the attributes or insignia of the gods (30a), dividing the Mixtec landscape into related territories that may be properly associated with the gods (31a and 10), and establishing the consumption of the sacred hallucinogenic mushroom (24a).

The red-and-white staff and the quincunx staff are also prized possessions of sacred ancestors on Zouche-Nuttall 14 and 18b. On the former page, they are carried by two attendants on behalf of \( \sigma \) 5 Flower and \( \sigma \) 3 Flint “Shell Quechquemel,” who have descended from the heavens and who perhaps acquired the two staffs, as well as the white bundle and white conch shell, in the sky. On page 18b, the divine progenitor \( \sigma \) 12 Wind “Smoking Eye” comes down from the sky and is accompanied by attendants who bring the two staffs, the white bundle, and the white conch shell. These objects are carried with the ancestors on the pages that recount events in their lives (14 to 22). It should be noted, too, that on Zouche-Nuttall 14 and 18b, the white bundle is associated with a fire drill.

The red-and-white staff and the quincunx staff are objects of celestial origin. They are given in primordial times to the Mixtec culture hero, who after receiving them, begins his cosmic work, and they are also acquired in the heavens by divine progenitors who return to earth to establish their dynasties. This suggests that the two staffs are symbols of authority that entitle their possessors to undertake various ritual activities, including the division and acquisition of land. On Zouche-Nuttall 1a, \( \sigma \) 8 Wind “Flinted Eagle” owns these objects of authority from the moment he is born from the earth. Again, the manuscript is concerned with presenting \( \sigma \) 8 Wind’s right to his territory.

Also associated with validating right to land are several symbols on Zouche-Nuttall. Here again, Vienna is of help in deciphering their meanings, for the painter of Zouche-Nuttall seems to have been confused about, or perhaps even ignorant of, their precise order and content. The last two figures participating in the bird sacrifice on page 2 hold three plants each (Figures 9g and 12a). Reeds are sometimes offered at bird sacrifices, so that the plants may be part of that ceremony. On the other hand, three plants are also used in Vienna in a ritual performed, with a fire drilling, to place lands under the auspices of a god (Figure 12b).

In Vienna, when a deity is about to become associated with his or her sites, four buildings are listed (Figure 12d). The first contains an eye, the second a bird, the third a vessel filled with blood, and the fourth bleeding cacao pods. These are probably not literal sites, any more than are the four buildings shown in the heavens with \( \sigma \) 9 Wind on Vienna 48c. Instead, they have some ritual, if yet undeciphered, meaning. After the four buildings, a ceremony is performed in which three plants, bound together in white paper, are held up in front of place signs by an attendant on behalf of the major god or gods. This rite is followed by a fire drilling, again undertaken by an attendant. At this point, the territory is officially placed under the auspices of the deity (J. L. Furst 1978a). Inasmuch as the sequence is pictured ten times on the Vienna obverse (32d-31a, 21, 19a, 18b-17a, 16b, 14a, 13a, 11b, 10, and 5), it must be the standard for comparison.

The same ritual sequence is represented on Zouche-Nuttall 2, but out of order. The ceremony of the three bound plants may be appended to the end of the bird sacrifice, with only one of the two males actually bringing reeds to the sacrifice, and the other instead performing the ritual of the three bound plants. The fire drill appears below, without an attendant, and only then do the four buildings occur (Figure 12c). Clearly, the painter of Zouche-Nuttall did not know exactly how the sequence was to be assembled. Furthermore, two of the four buildings are empty. If
Figure 12. The ceremony of the three bound plants and fire drilling on Zouche-Nuttall 2 (a) and Vienna 21 (b). The four ceremonial structures on Zouche-Nuttall 2 (c) and Vienna 21 (d).
altered to conform to the order in Vienna, the second and fourth structures should contain a bird and bleeding cacao pods, respectively; the artist apparently did not know what belonged in them. Thus, the elements for this ritual sequence enabling a god or an ancestor to take possession of his lands are present in Zouche-Nuttall, but they are incorrectly arranged.

Inasmuch as a conflict over succession occupies pages 3 and 4 of Zouche-Nuttall, many gestures refer to war. Capture is shown by one individual grasping the forelock of another (Figure 13a), or by the binding of the arms of an enemy (Figure 13b). If not actively engaged in combat, a person who is made prisoner and is sacrificed carries a white banner (Figure 13c). The “warband”—a thin band marked by a red, black, and white chevron pattern—is used only as a personal name on Zouche-Nuttall 2 (Figure 13d). In other manuscripts, battles occur on the warband, suggesting that it means “going to war.” An arrow is stuck into the warband, and this is a symbol for the conquest of a place. The dead appear with their bodies wrapped in mats or white cloth tied up with rope, and sometimes a white rectangular banner is attached to the funeral bundle (Figure 13e).

At this point, we are prepared to read the first seven pages of the Zouche-Nuttall obverse. Each page of the codex is accompanied on the facing page by a brief explanation of the activities depicted, with the comments more or less in the same position on the page as the events they describe.

Figure 13. Mixtec Conventions for capture of an enemy (a and b), having been captured and later sacrificed (c), going to war, or “warband” (d), and death (e).
♂ 1 Rain brings a xicolli and ♀ 1 Reed holds a bundle of wood.

♂ 8 Wind is honored by a bird sacrifice.

♀ 12 Alligator again accompanies ♀ 8 Wind "Flinted Eagle” and holds a second symbol of ♀ 8 Wind’s authority, the quincunx staff.

Mat with a knot in center, to catch the blood of the decapitated bird.

The Year 1 Reed (1), day 1 Alligator is here associated with

♀ 8 Vulture brings the bird for sacrifice and is accompanied by ♀ 10 Lizard.

“Hill with a human "Monkey Hill” funerary bundle and a jewel inside”

“Stone Ballcourt”

♂ 7 Monkey and ♀ 7 Jaguar bring xicolli to ♀ 8 Wind.

♂ 3 Eagle brings a bird for sacrifice a flaming torch.

In the Year 7 Flint (46), day 1 Motion, ♀ 8 Wind makes a pilgrimage to Apoala, perhaps to confirm his status as a divinely-born ancestor, He is accompanied by ♀ 11 Flower, At Apoala, ♀ 8 Wind is honored by a bird sacrifice. The ancestor stands above a river near Apoala, perhaps the seasonal river that runs through the Apoala valley. His foot is enclosed in an opening in the surface of the river; this is probably a reference to his magical birth from the earth on 1a.

In the Year 1 Reed (1), day 1 Alligator, at “Building Containing Flames-Stone Ballcourt,”

♀ 12 Alligator holds the red-and-white staff, a symbol of authority, and accompanies

♀ 8 Wind “Flinted Eagle” as he emerges from the earth.

***
Wind offers a handful of powdered tobacco, 5 Flower blows a conch shell trumpet, and 2 Lizard holds a flaming torch.

10 Jaguar and 2 Water hold handfuls of reeds. These reeds may be brought for the bird sacrifice or they may be used in a ceremony to establish 8 Wind’s right to rule his lands. The ritual of three bound plants, with a fire drilling and four ritual buildings (shown below) must be performed and assembled before sites are placed under the auspices of a god or an ancestor.

In the Year 7 Flint (46), day 1 Motion, 8 Wind “Flinted Eagle” and two attendants, 11 Flower and 12 Alligator (whose calendrical names are two consecutive days in the 260-day count) arrive at “Rain Deity Hill.” 8 Wind is honored by a bird sacrifice and ceremonies are performed to establish his right to rule over specific sites.

In the Year 3 Reed (29), day 4 Flint, four ritual buildings (I-IV) are listed. These are part of a ritual sequence of objects and rites that enable 8 Wind to become associated with six place signs (A-F).

I: “Building Containing a Vessel of Blood”
A: “Building with a Pulque Drinker Inside”

C: “Building with Arrows inside”
B: “Flaming Ballcourt”

IV: Building (that should contain bleeding cacao pods)
D: “Oval Stone on a Hill”
E: “Eagle Hill”
F: “Quetzal Hill”

***

“Rain Deity Hill” also appears on Vienna 47b and 45d.
Plate III. Zouche-Nuttall 3.
The end of the war may be celebrated by the making and drinking of pulque. The maguey plant is personified as ? 11 Serpent,2 who on Vienna 3b is the patron of “Flaming Ballcourt with in a Hill,” and pulque is made from the maguey cactus. The goddess is accompanied by her companion animal (perhaps a raccoon, badger, or opossum), three unnamed females bearing bowls of pulque with flints on top, and four day signs—11 Alligator, 11 Serpent, 7 Serpent, and 5 Serpent.

On an unspecified plain, a stone man named 5 Dog is captured by an unnamed male and ? 7 Dog.

In the Year 5 House (31), day 7 Serpent, ? 6 Eagle is taken prisoner at “Hill of the Flowered Jewel” by a stone man with the personal name “Wasp.” ? 7 Serpent, dressed as a “Flinted Serpent” descends, perhaps in the Year 5 House (31), day 4 Dog, given as the capture of ? 9 Monkey at “Rain Deity Hill” by the Stone Men.

In the Year 5 House (31), day 4 Dog, ? 7 Wind returns to “Bleeding Frieze on a Hill,” the site he rules on Vienna 3b, with ? 8 Deer.

In the Year 5 Reed (5), ? 7 Motion captures and kills a stone man at “Hill Containing a Round Jewel-Hill Containing an Upside-down Feather Bundle.” On Vienna 4b, ? 7 Motion, and his wife, ? 12 Vulture, are shown as patrons of this site.

In the Year 5 House (31), ? 7 Wind captures a stone man at “Hill with a Black Flaming Top,” perhaps in the Year 5 House (31).

In the Year 5 Reed (29), day 6 Dog, the same year in which ? 8 Wind confirms his right to rule (page 2), a war of succession is fought. Its cause is given as the capture of ? 9 Monkey at “Rain Deity Hill” by the Stone Men.

Day 4 Wind

Day 8 Wind

Year 5 House

In the Year 5 House (31), day 4 Dog, ? 7 Wind captures a stone man at “Hill Containing a Round Jewel-Hill Containing an Upside-down Feather Bundle.” On Vienna 4b, ? 7 Motion, and his wife, ? 12 Vulture, are shown as patrons of this site.

In the Year 5 House (31), day 4 Dog, ? 7 Wind returns to “Bleeding Frieze on a Hill,” the site he rules on Vienna 3b, with ? 8 Deer.

Day 8 Wind

Year 5 House

In the Year 5 House (31), day 4 Dog, ? 7 Wind returns to “Bleeding Frieze on a Hill,” the site he rules on Vienna 3b, with ? 8 Deer.

? 8 Deer captures a stone man.

Descent of ? 8 Wind “Flinted Eagle” below “Place of the Drum, heart and Jewels” (?) Emergence of ? 8 Wind “Flinted Eagle” from a hill with three caves (?)..

* * *
Plate IV. Zouche-Nuttall 4.
5 Flower attends a bird sacrifice that may be held in honor of the four figures who confer below or in honor of 4 Motion and 7 Flower. 1 wind brings the bird. He is accompanied by three unnamed males. The first holds a bag for ritual paraphernalia, the second a bag and reed, and the third a flaming torch.

10 Death, 9 Monkey (who was captured at the beginning of the war with the stone men on 3a), an unnamed male with the circle around his eye that is characteristic of rain deities, and 2 Dog, the archetypal priest-shaman in Vienna, confer in the Year 13 Rabbit (52), day 2 Deer. Their consultation precedes, and perhaps results in, the revival of 4 Motion and 7 Flower in the underworld.

4 Motion and 7 Flower appear in the underworld, shown here as a ballcourt that rests on a "flaming copal ball" and as a market or plaza that is supported on an oval stone and a flaming copal ball. They are attended by two females, and the day signs 7 Alligator, 8 Wind, and 11 Serpent, a bird, and a pulque vessel are represented above and within the market or plaza sign. The two gods are dead, but they have apparently been revived in the underworld.

The day 7 Motion is a day of descent into the underworld on Vienna 24b, and it probably refers here to the deaths of the two gods. Their funeral rites are attended by two unnamed males, one with three lobes on his head and the other bald. Both speak or sing. On Vienna 37b, these figures are among the offspring of the birth tree at Apoala.

In the Year 6 Rabbit (32), day 2 Motion or day 2 Alligator, the bodies of 4 Motion, guardian 4 Motion or day 2 Alligator, the of entrances to the underworld, and 7 Flower, patron of precious objects and substances, are fed the blood from the heart and body of a bird and are burned. They may have been killed during the battle with the red-and-white striped males.

4 Serpent sacrifices an eagle, or a figure dressed in an eagle costume, named 1 Jaguar, in the Year 12 Flint (38), day 12 Motion. The day sign 2 Alligator may refer to this sacrifice or to the funeral ceremonies above.

Three red-and-white striped males descend in the Year 12 Flint (38), on the days 7 Alligator and 8 Wind.

They are captured by 7 Motion and 4 Serpent in the Year 10 House (23), day (?) Flower and Year (?) House, day (?) Reed.
The pair has two daughters:

♀ 2 Serpent  
"Serpent-Quetzal Feathers"  
♀ 6 Reed "Sun—Quetzal"

Their offspring include the twins,

♂ 3 Lizard  
"Jeweled Bear"  
♀ 3 Lizard  
"Jeweled Hair"

♂ 2 Reed "Bleeding Arrow" is born in the Year 2 Reed (41), day 2 Reed.

Children follow the marriage pair.

A double-headed unnamed male brings a torch to the sacrifice and an unnamed male with a stone arm carries the tail of the mythical "Fire Serpent." 

The head of a decapitated bird rests on a bundle of bound wood placed on round and rectangular mats.

♂ 8 Wind "Flinted Eagle" travels to "Hill next to the Sacred Precinct of the Rain Deity" to be honored by a bird sacrifice in the Year 5 Flint (18), day 7 Flower, a date used as a metaphor for "precious gifts from afar," in this case, a ritual.

After the bird sacrifice, ♂ 8 Wind "Flinted Eagle" is anointed with water by a rain deity. The unnamed god pours the water from a pitcher and holds a wavy staff representing lightning. The ceremony, whose meaning is still unknown, occurs in the Year 9 House (35), day 1 Eagle. The day 1 Eagle is the calendrical name of ♀ 1 Eagle, the aged goddess of rivers and steambaths in Vienna.

♂ 2 Reed "Bleeding Arrow" is born in the Year 2 Reed (41), day 2 Reed.

In the Year 2 Rabbit (28), day 13 Grass ♀ 10 Deer "Jaguar Quechquemitl" and ♂ 8 Wind "Flinted Eagle" marry.

Year 9 Flint (22), day 6 Flower is perhaps associated with the site that ♂ 8 Wind rules, "Monkey Hill."

A bird sacrifice is performed in honor of ♂ 8 Wind. ♂ 7 Monkey brings a torch and a handful of reeds, and ♂ 2 Dog holds plants. ♂ 6 Water blows a conch shell trumpet, while ♂ 6 Death anoints the sacrificial bird with powdered tobacco.

The head of a decapitated bird rests on a bundle of bound wood placed on round and rectangular mats.

♂ 8 Wind "Flinted Eagle" travels to "Hill next to the Sacred Precinct of the Rain Deity" to be honored by a bird sacrifice in the Year 5 Flint (18), day 7 Flower, a date used as a metaphor for "precious gifts from afar," in this case, a ritual.

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♂ 2 Reed "Bleeding Arrow" is born in the Year 2 Reed (41), day 2 Reed.
♂ 9 Motion “Flinted Heron”.
♂ 5 Deer “Conquered Warband.”
♂ 5 House “Flint Helmet-Coyote”.
♂ 9 Eagle “Sun Quechquemitl” carries a staff that is also part of her personal name. In Codex Bodley, the staff has a diamond-shaped top that resembles the Huichol thread cross.

♂ 7 Flower “Serpent Supporting the Sky” (see 4b and 4c).
♂ 12 Alligator “20 Eagles-Jeweled Circle.”
♂ 6 Motion “Skeletal Legs-Bird’s Wing” wears the headdress of ♂ 4 Motion, guardian of the entrances to the underworld. The references to an underworld deity in ♂ 6 Motion’s costume may also explain the use of “Skeletal Legs” as a personal name. The bird’s wing is an insignia of ♂ 2 Dog (Vienna 30a).
♂ 12 Dog “Jeweled Necklace” wears and carries a jeweled necklace. The eagle claw in her left hand may also be a personal name. It is an attribute of the god ♂ 9 Motion on Vienna 29c (see also the offspring ♂ 9 Motion of page 6d). Several of the progeny on this and the following page are given insignia of the gods as their personal names.

♀ 9 Monkey “Skull-Hummingbird-Spindle Whorl.” Her marriage to ♂ 2 Lizard “Quetzal-Jaguar” and their offspring appear on Zouche-Nuttall 10b-11a. ♀ 9 Monkey may or may not be the female of the same name who is taken prisoner on 3a and who attends the conference on 4c.
♂ 4 Serpent (see page 4a).

Three, and perhaps four, offspring follow who may wear the attributes of gods with the same calendrical names.

♀ 9 Hummingbird-Spindle Whorl.

The codex records two previous marriages of ♂ 8 Wind “Flinted Eagle” to:
♀ 10 Eagle “Quetzal-Spider Web”
♀ 5 Grass “Eagle Foot Jeweled Headband”

in the Year 12 Reed (25),
in the Year 11 Rabbit (24), day 3 Eagle.

The offspring of these wives are listed on this page and page 7. No attempt is made to show who was born of which mother.

* * *
In the Year 4 House (43), day 1 Rain, the aged 9 Eagle Wind “Flinted Eagle” speaks to his descendant (through 9 Quetzal-Feathers on 5c), perhaps about 9 Rain’s part in the war of succession (pages 3 and 4). 9 Rain appears on page 8. The jeweled red and white object in front of 8 Eagle Wind, and the human hand projecting from the spider web do not occur elsewhere in the codex. After this point, 8 Eagle Wind disappears from the codex. Presumably he dies at an advanced age, but no death is given, nor are funeral ceremonies represented.

“Monkey Hill.”

9 House “Eagle Claw on a Frieze.” The bird on her headband may be part of her personal name.

9 House “Eagle Claw Staff-Necklace.”

9 Deer “Staff-Flower (?).” Her helmet refers to her calendrical name.

9 House “Quetzal Feathers-Spider Web wears a quetzal helmet as a reference to her personal name. The flower and feathered staff she holds may not be a name.

2 Flint “Frieze with Flaming Feathers” has elements of her personal name repeated three times. Her personal name appears in front of her, and she holds a short staff topped with flaming feathers. The white flower projecting from the feathers of her headdress is a substitution for flames.

9 Jaguar “Flower” holds her personal name and has it placed in front of her as well. Her jaguar helmet may refer to her calendrical name rather than being a second personal name. Frequently on Zouche-Nuttall, day signs of calendrical names are worn as headresses and personal names are repeated two or even three times.

9 House “House Head-Descending Eagle” is named in part for the god 7 Serpent, whose insignia is “Descending Eagle” on Vienna 30a (see also page 3a). 9 House’s marriage to 11 Alligator “Bony Eye” and their offspring appear on page 13.

5 Motion “Eagle on a Flaming Copal Ball.”

** 13 Reed “Flaming Torch Under the Sky” is dressed in details of the costume that in Central Mexico characterize the old fire god, including the brazier on his chest, the curved staff, beard, and headband with a small animal on the front. No fire god has yet been identified in the Mixtec codices, but his calendrical name may have been 13 Reed (if this male is dressed, as are the three previous males, like a god with the same calendrical name). 13 Reed’s personal name suggests a connection with fire.
Figure 14. Places that may be shared by Vienna and Zouche-Nuttall, including "Building Containing Flames" on Vienna 5 (a), "Hill Containing a Human Funerary Bundle and a Rosette" on Vienna 40c (b), "Flaming Ballcourt" on Vienna 19b (c), "Building Containing Arrows" on Vienna 21 (d), "Hill with an Arrow in its Flaming Black Top" on Vienna 43b (e) or Vienna 44d (f), and "Sacred Precinct Containing the Head of a Rain Deity" on Vienna 39c (g).
Notes

1. Vienna and the Zouche-Nuttall obverse share some of the same place signs. Sites appearing in both codices include Apoala (Zouche-Nuttall 1b and Vienna 35b, 34d-33a, 27a, 25a, and 24a), "Hill with a Jewel inside-Hill with an Upside down Feather Bundle inside" (Zouche-Nuttall 3b and Vienna 44d, 4b), "Hill with a Bleeding Frieze on Top" (Zouche-Nuttall 3b and Vienna 42b, 3b), "Hill Containing a Flaming Ballcourt" (Zouche-Nuttall 3c and Vienna 44a, 3b), and perhaps the "Ballcourt on a Flaming Copal Ball" and the "Market or Plaza on a Flaming Copal Ball" (Zouche-Nuttall 4c and Vienna 19b). Other toponyms represented in Zouche-Nuttall are similar to signs in Vienna and may or may not be the same sites. These include "Building Containing Flames" (Zouche-Nuttall 1a and Vienna 31b and 5; Figure 14a), "Hill Containing a Human Funerary Bundle and a Rosette" (Zouche-Nuttall 1a and Vienna 40c; Figure 14b), "Flaming Ballcourt" (Zouche-Nuttall 2 and Vienna 19b; Figure 14c), "Building Containing Arrows" (Zouche-Nuttall 2 and Vienna 21; Figure 14d), "Hill with a Flaming Black Top" (Zouche-Nuttall 3b and Vienna 43b or 44d; Figure 14e-f), and "Sacred Precinct Containing the Head of a Rain Deity" (Zouche-Nuttall 5a and Vienna 39c; Figure 14g).

The site over which 8 Wind "Flinted Eagle" rules in Zouche-Nuttall may appear as two different places in Codices Bodley and Selden. On Zouche-Nuttall 5b, 8 Wind is associated with a place shown as a hill with a monkey inside—"Monkey Hill"—on top of which is a building on a platform. On Bodley 5, 6-V, the calendrical names of, 8 Wind and his third wife, 9 Deer "Jaguar Quechquemitl" are represented with "Tree with Blossoms on a Platform" (see Figure 8a). The couple is pictured at the same town on Selden 5-III (see Figure 8b). In neither genealogical manuscript is "Tree with Blossom on a Platform" considered to be the same as, or adjacent to, "Monkey Hill." Place signs including monkeys as elements are depicted on Bodley 13-III and Selden 18-III (Figure 15a-b). But in neither example is the monkey contained in a hill. The two signs may or may not be "Monkey Hill." In any event, the site is not presented in exactly the same form outside Zouche-Nuttall.

2. 11 Serpent, the personified maguey plant from which the sacred pulque is made, appears on Vienna 28d, wearing her own decapitated head as her insignia (Figure 16a). On Vienna 22a, 19a, and 13a (Figure 16b), she bears two pulque vessels topped with flints, and she is accompanied by her companion animal. On these pages, she is decapitated and has her heart cut out, just as the maguey is decapitated and its center removed for the production of this mildly intoxicating beverage. On page 31 of Codex Vaticanus 3773, she is shown with her companion animal and the maguey cactus (Figure 16c). Here, the goddess merges with the plant.
Figure 16. The personified maguey cactus on Vienna 28d (a), Vienna 13a (b), and page 31 of Vaticanus 3773 (c).

Two other deities who also appear on the Vienna obverse are 4 Serpent and 7 Serpent. They are accompanied by their insignia, “Fire Serpent” (30a) and “Descending Eagle” (30b), respectively.

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Talk about talk in Yucatec Mayan includes things akin to literary criticism such as the following statement made one day by Alonzo: "When he (another narrator) tells a story you can see it happening right in front of you like in a movie!" Verbal involvement in narrative genres can also go so far as "jumping into" stories through the role of "respondent." The respondent sits across from the primary narrator and adds sound effects, answers many of the questions posed in the narratives, and poses questions to be answered in the story. Sometimes talk about talk becomes introspective. What does talk look like on paper? What are some things to talk about? The point is, tales, myths and other "ethnoproductions" do not appear from the collective or individual unconscious of a Maya community. Instead, they arise from people thinking and talking about the world as they know it.

The following selections do not fall neatly into any established categories of verbal art. They were chosen because they exhibit how one narrator, Alonzo, talked and thought about talk. Several items were dictated by Alonzo when I asked him to tell me about the stories he knew. Others were written by him and placed in a notebook that he kept after I had left his town. But even though the elections deny easy categorization, they are striking. For one thing, many of them have a couplet organization about them, similar to that found for the Popol Vuh by Munro Edmonson. In the translations that follow, I have used an italic type face for the second part of each couplet. Many of these couplets are syntactic, others are semantic. In a few cases three are couplets embedded within couplets. The content of some of the items is surprising. Some are kernels of longer stories and myths like the talk about Mani: references are made to the ancient prophecies of Chilan Balam wherein the end of the world is divined to the conquest of the new world and the race between the Maya horse and the Spanish horse. Others involve incipient riddles and plays on words that were a common feature of pre-columbian Mayan literature.
1. Prologue to conversations in Mayan. (Dictated)

*Tzicbalo'ob ich Mayab/Conversations in Mayan*

I’m going to bring you something,
   *I want to talk in Mayan like this.*
When I’m done, I’ll translate it into Spanish
   *And English.*
To do all of this, you have to write each line on the paper,
   *Just as I’m telling you right now.*
There are things I’m going to talk with you about that are big.
   *There are things I’m going to talk with you that are small.*
There are things strange;
   *There are things regular.*
Maybe a small story can be put onto paper like this;
That’s good.
   *Or if a small story can’t be pulled out,*
   *Then that’s fine too.*
That’s how it will be.
Perhaps you’ll have to write twenty pages just for one thing;
You’ll have to do it.
   *Just the same, if you have to write one page about something;*
   *That’s what I’ll bring you too.*
I Want to bring you a lot of things in Mayan.
   *I want to see how the words come out,*
   *I want to learn how the words go.*
*I want to understand how they are sent around the world.*
Tzicbalo’ob ichile’ maako’ob/Conversations among people

If you want a couple of stories, I’ll want to tell them to you.
Likewise, if you want conversations about how stories are heard
in the fields or in the huts or in a house,
Likewise, if you want more “examples” or “counsels,” they’ll be told to you.
Or jokes. The “Counsel of the Rope,” “How They Made the Churches in Merida,
Ticul and Uxmal.”
“The Man Who Wanted to Make the Devil his Copadre.”
Or any of the other conversations.

Nohoch balo’ob/Big Things

The Chilan Balam.²
The Old Lady of Mani.
How the well will go dry, how this generation will end here, how
the last generation ended, how the generation began.
The Epoch of Miracles, long ago.
How men got firewood long ago, how the corn grew long ago. How
the corn was harvested long ago, and all the other things that
happened in the Epoch of Miracles,
Frightening things.
How many there are, what their forms are, how they live, how they grow.
   How they kill, how they are driven out.

Bixu vida’i huntul ’otzil maak/How one poor person lives

How he found his life long ago.
How he finds his life today
   How he’ll find his life tomorrow.
How a person is born,
   How he grows among everything.
How a boy learns to work,
   How a girl learns to work too.
How the boy finds a sweetheart,
   How they “close their paths.”
How they die too.
   How a funeral is made for them
For the dead.
**Ba’alo’ob kuyuuchultech/Things that happen to you**

What Merida looked like the first time you were there.  
*And all those things like that.*

How things are made in a house,  
*How a kitchen is made to cook with too.*

The house: How a house is built  
*What a house is for, too.*

Corn: How it grows  
*What it is for.*

The town: What it is for,  
*What people do in it,*

How it grows.

How a person goes hunting in the forest,  
*How a “communal hunt” is made to find deer in the woods.*

How you catch gophers in the fields,  
*How you bake the meat.*

How a “canteen” is made by people in the fields.

How things are made with honey and with bees.

How corn drinks are made, how a woman makes a meal,

Whatever you want to talk with me about.

---

2. From Alonzo’s Notebook. (Written)

(no title)
February 24, 1972

Well there in the town of Mani there is a deep well.  
*There’s a huge box there.*

There’s a huge rope there,  
*Rolled up in the box.*

It’s a thick rope.

The thing is, the rope lives;  
*It has blood.*

Tumen there in the middle of the town of Mani it is rolled up.  
*Half of the rope.*

When it is cut.  
*Blood runs out.*

When you try to roll it up again,  
*It won’t go.*

Long ago it was cut like that,  
*It was put in two huge boxes.*

That’s the only way it can be rolled up,  
*Because one box can’t carry it.*
Tumen there at the deep well there in the middle of the center of Mani,
\[ \text{There is water.} \]
Tumen the well is enchanted.
\[ \text{It was made that way by the ancient "Makers".}^{4} \]
It was spoiled in the old times.
\[ \text{At midday strange things are heard,} \]
Roosters sing and turkeys shout
\[ \text{People talk, dogs bark.} \]
Burros shout, pigs, goats, cows, horses,
\[ \text{It's enchanted like that.} \]
There is a big path inside the Deep Well that runs to the town of Ho' (Merida).
\[ \text{There underneath the cathedral the big path comes out.} \]
That road keeps going,
\[ \text{It doesn't have an end.} \]
It just keeps going,
\[ \text{It doesn't have an end} \]
Because the path that runs there goes all the way to Jerusalem too.
\[ \text{That rope goes from Mani to Ho'.} \]
There is where the "poor people's horse" is going to run—the squirrel.
\[ \text{There is where the "rich people's horse" is going to run too—} \]
\[ \text{A real Spanish horse.} \]
There they will be sent to get som hot tortillas from Ho'
\[ \text{And bring them to Mani.} \]
When the horse gets on, it alls because its feet slip like that.
\[ \text{Because it can't go like that.} \]
That "horse of the poor people"—the squirrel—has feet too.
\[ \text{When it grabs the rope—the horse of the poor people—with its} \]
\[ \text{claws, then it can't fall like that.} \]
"T'a, t'a, t'a" it goes like that.
\[ \text{It comes right away running with the hot tortillas to Mani too.} \]
There is the Old Witch Who Sells Water too.
\[ \text{There is the Feathered Serpent.} \]
There water will be sold:
You'll be given a little nut-shell of water,
\[ \text{You'll give one boy child for it like that.} \]
These things are coming to pass.
\[ \text{The day is growing closer too.}^{5} \]

(no title)
February 21, 1972

Tumen long ago people started to make things.
There weren't huge buildings cut from stone long ago.
There weren't any like there are today.
They were all made.
They thought up the idea in their minds to make a huge building in Ho'
(Merida), Kul (Ticul) and Uxmal.
It was said that whoever finished at midnight would ring a bell.
Then the huge building would be finished like that.  
This was all the work of the Hunchbacks long ago.  
Well, when the morning came  
The building was complete like that by the Hunchbacks.  
That's how it came to be long ago.  
Like "Ho" "pulled out" was the name it was given  
That's how "Kul," "sat down" got its name.  
"Uxmal" wasn't completed, it was just "one-third built."  
It wasn't finished, so it was left like that.

**Beh/Path**

July 23, 1971

One path.  
When it is made there,  

> It is slashed open.  

Afterwards the trees are cut back too.  

> They throw the trees aside as they are cut like that.  

The jungle is opened about six meters wide.  

> The path is the width of a measuring rod.  

It isn't the work of just one person,  

> A lot of people work there at the road.  

So it can be finished in a hurry.  
When it is finished like that,  

> The path is left like that.  

It is for the people of the milpa to travel on,  

> It is for the carts to travel.  

It is for bringing corn from the fields.

**'Uh bolada'i huntul serfora yetilu palalo'ob/The joke about the woman and her children**

May 16, 1972

Well, this old lady had a lot of children.  

> She was 97 years old and had twelve.  

The woman was an elder.  
Well, the elder woman got sick and was put in her hammock,  
the mother of the children.
Well, for a long time she hung there in her hammock in agony. 
She says, "Oh God, I have a lot of sins."
She says that to God because she's paying for what she did here on earth.
Well, because the woman got worse her daughter said,
"Ay mama, is there anything you want to eat?"
"Oh daughter, I can't eat."
"Why?"
"Because I have no appetite," she says.
Daughter, you can bring me a chicken to eat,
Bring me lots of good food to eat,
But the thing I want to eat most of all is a head."
"Ay mama, what kind of head do you want to eat?
A head of a pig or a head of a cow or a head of a chicken or
a head of a turkey or a head of a deer?
Whatever you want, we'll make it.
Any food made from a head, we'll make.
But mama, tell me what head it is you want to eat."
"Ay daughter, the head that I want is so tasty,
There isn't any other kind of head that is as sweet as the sweetest head on earth.
Ay the head, ay the head that I want so bad to eat..."  
"Ay mama, what head is it?"
"Ay daughter, it is the head of a prick that is the sweetest in the world.

---

**Na’atelO'ob (dictated) / Riddles**

January 21, 1971

Goes in hungry,  
A bucket.

Goes in full  
Comes out full.

Goes in full  
Comes out hungry.

A skyrocket.

There is a fruit tree with 24 leaves  
12 black and 12 white.

The world.

There it is! There it is! There it is!

Your hand.
Bolada de finado (written)/A joke of the anniversary

May 12, 1971

A woman talks like this:
"It's already time to celebrate the anniversary of the funeral.
I'm so poor, I don't have any money to make the celebration.
That's what she says like that.
"How can I make the celebration."
Like this: "Well, in place of making the food, I'll put the table up.
Because my poor husband has already been dead a year.
In place of offering him some sweets, well I'll get up on the table.
I'll take off my clothes so when my husband comes,
Instead of eating chicken...
Well, when he sees me lying there on the table,
When he comes, I'll open up my legs.
When the spirit comes, he'll eat me.

Bok (written)/Odor

August 5, 1971

The thing there is smelling
   Because it has begun to have an odor.
The vultures arrive because the thing has begun to rot.
   A horse or a cow.
They all die like that.
   They are carried to the edge of town and thrown out
To become food for the vultures too.
The thing there has a good smell,
   Like a flower of a tree like that.
They are all smelling good like that.
   Like the things that women put on.
The thing they buy to put on themselves,
   What a sweet smell it has: perfume!
**Leti’e toho’ yetel weech (written)/That Motmot and the Armadillo**

May 7, 1971

There is a man who catches armadillos.

*He went and caught an armadillo.*

After he caught the armadillo,

*He began to take the armadillo with a friend.*

There were two people like that.

As they are walking along he says to him,

"Careful, that armadillo can do you wrong."

*So he says to him, "no, it can't do a thing."*

While he's talking like that,

*A Motmot comes along and says,*

"Tokti’, tokti’, tokti’."

*That’s how the Motmot talks to them.*

So the man says, "how can I leave it?

*I have it right here."

The man says, "well, things that are mine are mine,

*Whether God likes it or God doesn't like it.*

The thing rips open his stomach,

*And out comes his guts.*

The man says, "look what happened to you!"

*The Motmot says again, "tokti’, tokti’, tokti’."

The man says, "what can he leave?

*He’s already dead.*"

---

**Puro ba’alo’ob haasah ‘oolob (written)/Just things that frighten one**

March 3, 1971

That phantom goes to a dark road.

When some looks,

*They see a woman standing there.*

When you walk by

*She comes to embrace you.*

So I said, "where are you going?"

*"I'm going to my house.*

"It’s far from here, won't you join me?"

*"No, let me go by myself."

"No, let's go together.

*I'll take you there.*"
When the man hears that,
He's captured by the phantom.
The man says, "let me go."
"I won't let you go until we get to your house."
The man tries to speak,
But the phantom squeezes him hard.
It says to me, "show me your face,
I want to give you a kiss."
When it loosens the thing on its face and the man sees it,
He looks at the thing and is scared out of his wits.
The man says, "let me go! You aren't a real thing!
You're a putrid thing by God!"
So the man begins to pray.
The Xtabay throws the man down.
When the man gets up, he starts screaming,
"I've been taken by the Xtabay!"
It's over.

Hechiceros (written)/Wizards

March 2, 1972

There is a Maker
That knows how to cure illness.
He knows how to cure sickness too.
For if there is a person who makes you sick,
Or who makes you ill with things,
Who hates you like that,
Who is going to make something happen,
Who is going to cast a spell on you like that,
That person goes to a Maker and talks like this:
"How much will it take to get you to make that woman sick?"
"Well, what particular sickness do you want me to make?
Do you want me to make her sick for the whole year?
Do you want me to make her shit worms or piss blood?
Or do you want me to make her shit snakes?
Or do you want me to make her give birth to a gopher?
Or do you want me to frighten her?
There are phantoms of cats,
There are phantoms of dogs too.
There are phantoms of pigs too.
There are phantoms of goats too."

When one of these phantoms is desired,

_The Maker can do it in her house like that._

You've gone to a Maker.

Well, you talk like this:

"I've just now arrived here in your presence, old man,

_So you can advise me with your saastun._ 8

Is there anything wrong with me?

_I want to know what it is like that._"

"Well, lady, let's see what sickness you have,

_What sickness brought you here._

I need a candle and a quart of liquor and a claw from a rooster too."

Well he grabs the liquor

_And throws it in a glass._

Then he grabs the saastun

_He puts it into the liquor too._

He puts the saastun into the liquor three times like that

_Until it is done._

Then he grabs the candle,

_Then he lights it like that._

Then he begins his work like this:

He begins to Talk in Secret.

_He says your name._

Then when he is done with the Talk in Secret like that,

_He pulls the saastun out for the last time._

Then he looks to see what will appear there in the saastun.

"Well lady, here is what made you so sick:

_It is a sickness thrown on you too._

I'll have to cure it,

_I'll have to pull it out._

The thing that made you sick like that,

_It is a big cockroach in your stomach._

There is some medicine that will let you pass the big cockroach out.

_Wait here while I make up the medicine._"

He grabs the claw and a red rose and breaks them apart in water.

_Then he puts all of it into a bottle like that._

It is to drink so that the big cockroach will pass.

Well, when he is done with that,

"I'm going to prescribe an herb bath too."

_Some of the herbs are "Albajaca," "Siipche," "Siinanche," "Ruda._"

He tears up the herbs like that on Friday and Tuesday.

That's how Makers work.

There are phantoms of bats too.
There are phantoms of snakes like that.
They can be brought into a house like this:
He puts water into a trough,
He puts a Ch’om flower in.
Then this is poured over a person’s head.
Then when someone wakes up like that,
When they lean over like that,
Then their head will fall off like that.
Perhaps the husband is watching what happens,
When she is seen,
When the wife is looked at,
When the head is seen like that,
Then the head falls off.
The eyes on the head just roll around like that.
You grab the head like that.
You put it into some lime powder.
You put the head in like that.
When it comes out,
When the wife comes out like that,
Then she wants to grab the head, but can’t.
Then tears begin to come out of the eyes like that.
“Oh my husband, give me my head.
Oh my husband, you don’t love me. Give me my head right now.”
He doesn’t give her head back like that.
He grabs the body,
He puts it in a house.
Then he grabs the head,
And puts it in a box like that.
After that the husband isn’t left alone because of the head.
When he looks at it it is looking cross-eyed like that.
The head is witching him like that.
The head of the poor wife.
When the husband looks at it
It is looking cross-eyed like that.
“Oh my husband, give me my head. You don’t love me,” it says, “poor me.”
The husband is made to think all of this by the phantom.
Because he had been witched by his wife who is a phantom.
Because she is the return of the evil things like that.
She came to look for her husband so that she could take him too.
When a sickness like this comes about,
The husband begins to hop like an armadillo,
Until he is killed.
There it ends.
Tabi' (written)/Tabi

February 23, 1972

That Tabi, long ago in the time of slavery,
There were so many things that were hard then.
They whipped you in the old days,
In the time of the Rich People long ago.
They put your name on the list too.
If you answered to your name or if you didn't,
If you weren't there and didn't answer,
You were shipped by the Big Man.
They grabbed you and took you away with the people who worked you.
They threw you over the sacks of corn,
Took off your shirt.
If you had done something really wrong,
They gave you twenty-five lashes.

Notes


2. The Chilan Balam are the sacred prophecies about this, the “fourth generation” of the world. The term has also been used to describe the existing manuscripts of Maya knowledge dating from the time of the Conquest.

3. The village of Mani is about 30 kilometers from Ticul where Alonzo lived. It is purportedly the home of one of the last and most famous of the prophets of Yucatan.

4. The word used here, *hmeeno’ob* is often translated as “shamans,” but the root of the word means, “to make or create.”

5. “These things are coming to pass/the day is growing closer too” is a stylized ending that was used when the end of this world was being discussed. In this selection drought will be the key factor which reduces the population.

6. The puns derived from the place names of these towns were considered a kind of “humorous etymology.” Such place name puns were also found in pre-columbian literature such as Ralph Roys (1933) *The Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel.* Publication No. 438, Carnegie Institute of Washington, D.C.

7. This bird sound is similar to someone saying “leave it! leave it!”

8. This was translated by Alonzo as “canica” (Sp.) “marble.” The object is a clear crystal used in divination.

9. Tabi was once one of the large henequen or sisal plantations in Yucatan.
Everett Fox

The Samson Cycle in an Oral Setting

We proceed from the insight that the Bible stems from living recitation and is intended for living recitation, that its true existence may be found in speech, that writing ("Scripture") is merely its form of preservation.

—Martin Buber

In recent years scholars have begun to apply the findings of researchers in oral and epic literature such as Olrik, Propp, and Lord to the narrative texts of the Hebrew Bible. While at this stage a great deal still remains to be clarified, it is now conceded by many that the Bible bears traces, strong at times, of oral composition. Structural characteristics—particularly the use of stylization and repetition—seem to point to a tradition, the transmission of which was fluid in its early stages. The oral nature of the text was taken for granted during the Biblical period itself; one need only glance at the command given to Joshua (Joshua 1:8): "Let not this Book of the Teaching depart from your mouth, recite (more properly: murmur) it day and night... then will you make your way succeed." The practice of keeping the text alive in recitation, at the same time that written copies existed, was scrupulously followed by Jews, not only in Talmudic and medieval times, but in some cases into the modern period as well.

It is therefore both surprising and ironic that translators over the past several centuries have by and large treated the Bible as if it were a purely written document. In the West it is known as "Scripture" or "Writ"; it is described as a text rather than as a work which is to be spoken and heard. Translators have consciously or unconsciously tried to convince their audiences that Biblical narrative resembles conventional prose. In the past two decades in particular, they have aimed at a lucid and "readable" English style, whose purpose is to transmit the message of a given text, without much regard for the form in which it is cast. In the process, a good dealing of inner substance has been translated out.

Students of folklore and traditional literatures are well aware of the interdependence of form and content in such literature. Through the oral poet's feeling for sounds, and only through it, the religious experience allows itself to be grasped and, if the art is of a high level, reproduced. The combining of meaningful phrases, allusions, words pregnant with associative value, provides a mechanism for the transmission of a sacred event in the life of a people which would otherwise be lost.

This experience is rarely a living one any more in the West. Indeed, it would be naive to expect that a renewal of the sacred, or of the oral means by which the sacred has frequently been apprehended, will take place in the foreseeable future. For the moment, then, there remains only one criterion for assessing the validity of an oral approach to the Bible. We may cast it in the form of a question: To what extent can techniques of oral-textual analysis add measurably to our understanding of the text?

There are strong indications from the past that such an approach can be fruitful. Traditional Jewish exegesis often made use of concepts of repetition, word-play, and other forms of interpretation, and in general regarded its externally wide-ranging subject matter as organic and interconnected. But a systematic approach to the Bible, specifically informed by the principles of oral literature study, has not emerged until the twentieth century—in various commentaries and primarily in one translation.

Beginning in 1925, Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig undertook a German translation of the twenty-four books of the Hebrew Bible. As the project evolved, it became clear to the translators that their goal should be the recreation of the spoken aspect of the text, thus also making it possible for the reader to sense and search for the self-interpretative power of the original. Accepting the reality that one cannot
determine precisely where the Bible lies on the spectrum from prose to poetry, Buber and Rosenzweig pressed for recognition of a third, intermediate form, rather different from anything that exists in Western literature outside the theater. This they accomplished by setting out the text in cola, in “breathing-lines” which were to coincide with units of meaning. In addition, they adopted with precision the text’s use of repetition, avoided by most translations as stylistically inelegant, in order to make clear the mechanism through which the ancient hearer “got the message” of the text. The Buber-Rosenzweig rendition dramatically demonstrates the Bible’s use of allusion through sound, by means of which elements in a story, a cycle of stories, throughout a book, or even between separate books, link up in a manner that can only be termed organic. The units of this technique were termed “leading-words” by Buber; they are the key to understanding the Samson cycle as well as other texts.

A brief example may serve as a preliminary illustration of the working out of these principles in Biblical narrative. The well-known story of the near-sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22 presents considerable problems of interpretation when taken on its own. In the larger context of the Abraham cycle, however, an important structural function of the story becomes apparent. Genesis 22 points back to the beginning of the Abraham stories in Genesis 12; the first and last tests to which Abraham is subjected are presented in parallel terms. This is brought out by means of the sound structure:

HE said to Avram:
Go-you-forth
from your land
from your kindred
from your father’s house
to the land which I will let you see. (Gen. 12:1)

After these events it was that God tested Abraham
and said to him: ....
Now take your son
your only-one
whom you love,
Yitzhak,
and go-you-forth to the land of Moriyya,
and offer him up there for an offering-up
upon one of the mountains
which I will tell you of. (Gen. 22:1, 2)

Read aloud, the connections become clear, from the repeated “go-you-forth” (a form which occurs nowhere else in Genesis), to the groups of three (describing first Abraham’s homeland and then Isaac), to the equivalent phrases, “which I will let you see/which I will tell you of.” In simplest terms, we are meant to draw the parallel between Abraham’s first journey, where he is asked to abandon the past, and his last one, where a demand is made upon him which will entail giving up the future.

These connections reverberate in the original, but if one reads a contemporary translation, they fade into the realm of the literary critic’s tools of psychology.

Yahweh said to Abram,
“Go forth from your native land
And from your father’s home
To a land that I will show you.”

Some time afterwards, God put Abraham to the test. He said to him, . . . “Take your son, your beloved one, Isaac whom you hold so dear, and go to the land of Moriah, where you shall offer him up as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will point out to you.”

Such a translation is an unnecessary distance from the original. In its effort to be stylistically acceptable, it glosses over the inner form and hence over much of the implied content.

The stories which have been collected around the figure of Samson (Judges 13-16) provide a stunning example of oral influence in the Bible. Although this cycle may be related to the strong-man tales of the Aegean peoples, and although it may have consisted at some point of different Israelite traditions, it has come down to us as a unity whose elements are almost totally interrelated. By means of thematic, formulaic, and word repetition, the Biblical editor has woven his material into a remarkable tapestry. At the same time, he has given us the mechanism by which the text may be unraveled and hence understood. Using a rendition along the lines of the Buber-Rosenzweig translation, in which this mechanism is reproduced along with the story line, it should be possible for the English reader to participate fully in the process of interpretation. Such a rendition follows.

By way of introduction to the text, it should be noted that the Samson cycle is set at the end of the Second
Millenium B.C., in the “heroic” period of ancient Israel. Like the stories which surround it in the Book of Judges, it seeks to recount the divine deliverance of the kingless Israelites from their oppressors. In the eyes of the Biblical historian, of course, the oppression has taken place because the people have forsaken God. Here, however, the similarity between the Samson material and the rest of the book ends, and one is confronted with a strange figure. Samson, unlike his colleagues, is neither a military leader nor a religious charismatic. He is instead a man obsessed with his own private (in this case, sexual) concerns, and he becomes a part of a larger historical picture only on their account—that is to say, quite accidentally. Not even at the heroic moment of his death does he see himself as the other Judges do, as a representative of God.

The issue is further clouded by the centrality of the institution of Naziriteship—being “One Consecrated to God”—in the stories. According to Numbers 6, a man may take an “extraordinary” vow, abstaining from alcohol, letting his hair grow, and avoiding contact with the dead.11 Not only is Samson a Nazirite by another’s choice (God’s), not only is his term for life, but he seems to act in utter disregard of the vow. This strange mixture of the religious and the secular, which underscores the Samson cycle, needs clarification.

A close analysis of the oral aspects of the text will reveal its intent and place within Biblical literature, as well as its internal cohesion. First, however, the reader should be allowed to hear the text in its entirety, and given the opportunity to sense the inner connections of the story. The English rendition is based on the Hebrew text as understood in an early (c. 1934) and late (1968) edition of the Buber-Rosenzweig version of Judges. I have introduced some changes, made necessary either by the demands of English or by my disagreement with the translators. I have maintained their translation of the divine name YHWH by means of capitalized personal pronouns; they felt that this best reflected the sense of the numinous with which the name was pronounced in antiquity. The episodic divisions which I have imposed upon the text are by no means absolute; I have adopted them for the sake of convenient reference in my subsequent analysis of the text.

As with any translation of such a text, this rendition should be considered only one particular “performance.”

I

Now the Children of Israel continued to do what was ill in HIS eyes, so he gave them into the hand of the Philistines (for) forty years.

There was a man for Tzor’a, from the clan of Dan, his name was Manoah, his wife was barren—she had not borne. Now HIS messenger let himself be seen by the woman and said to her: Now heed, you are barren—you have not borne, but you shall conceive—you shall bear a son, so then, now guard yourself well, do not drink wine or intoxicant, do not eat anything tainted, for heed, you are about to conceive, you shall bear a son: a razor must not go upon his head, for the boy shall be One Consecrated to God
from the womb on,
he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines.
The woman came and said to her husband, said:
A man of God came to me,
the sight of him like the sight of a messenger of God,
exceedingly fearsome,
I did not ask where he was from,
his name he did not tell me,
but he said to me: Take heed,
you are about to conceive—you shall bear a son,
so then:
do not drink wine or intoxicant,
do not eat any kind of tainted-food,
for the boy shall be One Consecrated to God
from the womb until the day of his death.
Manoah entreated HIM, he said:
O my Lord,
now may the man of God whom you have sent come to us again
and instruct us as to what we are to do with the boy who will be born.
God hearkened to the voice of Manoah,
God's messenger came to the woman again,
now she was sitting there in the field, her husband Manoah was not with her.
Quickly the woman ran and told it to her husband, she said to him:
Heed, the man who came to me during the day has let himself be seen by me.
Manoah arose and went after his wife,
his came to the man and said to him:
Are you the man who spoke to the woman?
He said:
I am.
Manoah said:
So then, should your words come to pass,
what will be the manner of the boy and his deeds?
HIS messenger said to Manoah:
From all of which I spoke to the woman she shall guard herself,
from all which comes from the vine she shall not eat,
wine and intoxicant she must not drink,
all things tainted she must not eat,
all that I have commanded her, she shall guard.
Manoah said to HIS messenger:
Now may we detain you
to prepare a goat-kid for you?
HIS messenger said to Manoah:
If you detain me, I will not eat of your food,
but if you wish to prepare an offering-up for HIM, you may offer it up.
For Manoah did not know that he was HIS messenger.
Manoah said to HIS messenger:
What is your name?
— that we may honor you, should your words come to pass.
HIS messenger said to him:
Why do you ask about my name,
for it is extraordinary!
Manoah took the goat-kid and the gift
and offered it up on the rock-slope to HIM.
He did extraordinarily — Manoah and his wife saw it:
it was,
when the flame went upward from the altar to heaven:
HIS messenger went up in the flame of the altar.
Manoah and his wife saw it,
you fell upon their faces to the earth.
HIS messenger was henceforth seen no more by Manoah and his wife,
but now Manoah knew that he was HIS messenger.
Manoah said to his wife:
We are going to die, yes, die,
for we have seen Godhood!
His wife said to him:
Had HE desired to have us die
he would not have taken offering and gift from our hand,
he would not have let us see all this,
at that moment, he would not have let us hear in that way.

The woman bore a son,
she called his name Shimshon.
The boy grew up, and HE blessed him.
And HIS spirit began to stir him up
in the camp of Dan, between Tzor'a and Eshtaol.

II

Shimshon went down to Timna,
he saw a woman in Timna from the daughters of the Philistines,
he came up again and told it to his father and to his mother, he said:
I have seen a woman in Timna from the daughters of the Philistines,
so then, take her for me as a wife.
His father and his mother said to him:
Is there no woman among the daughters of your brothers and among all my people,
that you must go and take a woman from the Philistines, the Foreskinned-Ones?
Shimshon said to his father:
Take her for me, for she is right in my eyes.
Now his father and his mother did not know that it was from HIM,
that he was seeking an opportunity from the Philistines,—at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.
Shimshon went down with his father and his mother to Timna, they had come as far as the vineyards of Timna,
when here: a young lion, roaring to meet them!
HIS spirit rushed upon him,
and he ripped him up as one rips up a kid, without a thing in his hand.
Now he did not tell his father and his mother what he had done.
He went down, he spoke to the woman, yes, she is right in Shimshon's eyes.
He returned after some days to take her (to wife).
He turned aside to see the fallen lion, and here: a swarm of bees in the lion's body, and honey!
He scraped it off into the palm of his hand.
He went, and ate as he went.
He went back to his father and to his mother, he gave them, and they ate.
But he did not tell them that he had scraped the honey from the lion's body.
His father went down on account of the woman.
They made Shimshon a drinking-meal there, for that is what young men do:
it was when they saw him, that thirty feasting-companions took him in and remained with him.
Shimshon said to them: Now let me riddle you a riddle!
If you can tell, tell me the answer during the seven days of the meal, and can get it,
I will give you thirty linen shirts and thirty outfits of clothes.
But if you are not able to tell me the answer, you will have to give me thirty linen shirts and thirty outfits of clothes.
They said to him: Riddle your riddle, we will hear it!
He said to them: Out of the feeder came food, out of the fierce one came sweets.
They could not tell him the riddle's answer for three days.
And then on the fourth day it was that they said to Shimshon's wife: Entice your husband, that he may tell us the riddle's answer, otherwise we will burn you and your father's house with fire—have you called us here to disinherit us?
Shimshon's wife wept over him, she said: You only hate me, you do not love me, you have riddled the riddle to the sons of my people and have not told its answer to me!
He said to her:
But here, I have not told it to my father and to my mother—
shall I then tell it to you?
She wept over him for the seven days during which they held the drinking-meal,
then it was—on the seventh day—that he told it to her, for she was pressing
him hard,
and she told the riddle's answer to the sons of her people.
The men of the city said to him
on the seventh day, before the sun had come in:
What is sweeter than honey?
What is fiercer than a lion?
He said to them:
If you had not ploughed with my heifer,
you would not have gotten my riddle!
His spirit rushed upon him,
he went down to Ashkelon,
he struck down thirty men of them,
took their armaments,
and gave them as outfits to those who had told the riddle's answer.
Still his anger fumed,
and he went up to his father's house.
Shimshon's wife was (given) to one of his fellow-companions
who had been his fellow-wooer.

III

It was after some days, in the days of the wheat-cutting,
that Shimshon visited his wife with a goat-kid,
he said: I will come to my wife in the chamber.
But her father did not give him leave to come in.
Her father said:
I said (to myself), said:
Indeed, you bear hatred, hatred towards her,
so I gave her to your fellow,—
but is not her sister more good-looking than she?
now let her be yours in her place!
Shimshon said to them:
This time I will be more blameless than the Philistines,
if I do ill with them!
Shimshon went,
he caught three hundred foxes,
he took torches,
wound tail to tail,
placed each torch between the two tails, in the middle,
ignited fire in the torches,
and set them loose in the stalks of the Philistines;
he ignited from sheaf to stalk and from vineyard to olive-grove.
The Philistines said:
Who has done this?
They said:
Shimshon, the son-in-law of the Timnite,
for he took away his wife and gave her to his fellow.
The Philistines went up and burned her and her father with fire.
Shimshon said to them:
Is this what you do?
When I have revenged myself upon you,
only afterwards will I stop!
He struck them down, hip and thigh,
a great striking-down,
he went and settled in the gorge of Etam's Rock.

IV

The Philistines went up and encamped in Judah,
they spread out at Lehi.
The men of Judah said:
Why have you come up against us?
They said:
We have come up to bind Shimshon,
to do to him as he has done to us.
Three thousand men from Judah went down to the gorge of Etam's Rock
and said to Shimshon:
Do you know that the Philistines have dominion over us?
what then are you doing to us?
He said to them:
As they have done to me, so I have done to them.
They said to him:
We have come down to bind you, to give you into the hand of the Philistines.
Shimshon said to them:
Swear to me that you do not want to come at me yourselves.
They said to him, said:
No,
we want to bind you, yes, bind you,
but death, we do not want your death.
They bound him with two new ropes,
and led him up from the rocky ground.
He had come as far as Lehi,
the Philistines shouted meeting him,
and HIS spirit rushed upon him;
the ropes which were upon his arms
became like threads of flax which one ignites with fire,
his bonds melted away from his hands.
He found a fresh jawbone of an ass,
he stretched out his hand and took it
and struck down a thousand men with it.
Shimshon said:
With the jawbone of an ass,
heaping mass upon mass,
with the jawbone of an ass
I have struck a thousand men!
It was when he had finished speaking:
he threw the jawbone from his hand,
—so they called that place Ramat Lehi/Jawbone Hill.
He was exceedingly thirsty, and he called out to HIM, and said:
You yourself have given into your servant’s hand
this great deliverance,
so now shall I, dying of thirst,
fall into the hand of the Foreskinned-Ones?
God split open the cavity which was in Jawbone Rock,
water came out it, and he drank,
his spirit returned, and he revived.
Therefore they called its name Spring of the Caller,
which originates in Lehi,
until this very day.
He judged Israel in the days of the Philistines, for twenty years.

V

Shimshon went to Gaza,
there he saw a woman, a whore, and came to her.
Among the Gazites it was said:
Shimshon has come here!
They circled around and set an ambush for him the whole night at the city gate,
they kept quiet the whole night, they said:
Until morning-light! Then we will kill him!
Shimshon lay until midnight,
he arose at midnight,
he seized the doors of the city gate
along with the two posts,
he pulled them up, together with the bolt,
took them upon his shoulders
and brought them up to the top of the mountain which faces Hevron.
VI

It was after this
that he fell in love with a woman in the Wady of Vines,
her name was Delila.
The Philistine tyrants went up to her and said to her:
Entice him and see
whereby his might is so great,
whereby we can overcome him,
that we may be able to bind him, to humble him,
and we ourselves, each man, will give you a hundred and a thousand pieces
of silver.
Delila said to Shimshon:
Now tell me,
whereby is your might so great,
whereby can you be bound, to humble you?
Shimshon said to her:
If they bind me with seven
damp gut-strings, which have not been dried,
I become weak,
I become like
one of humankind.
The Philistine tyrants brought up to her seven gut-strings,
damp ones, which had not been dried,
and she bound him with them.
Now the ambush was sitting for her in the chamber.
She said to him:
Philistines upon you, Shimshon!
He burst the strings,
as hempen cord bursts when it smells fire.
And his might was not made known.
Delila said to Shimshon:
Here, you have made of me a fool,
you have spoken lies to me,
O tell me now,
whereby can you be bound?
He said to her:
If they bind me, yes, bind me with ropes,
new ones, with which no work has been done,
I become weak,
I become like
one of humankind.
Delila took new ropes
and she bound him with them,
and she said to him:
Philistines upon you, Shimshon!
Now the ambush was sitting in the chamber.
He burst them
from upon his arms like a thread.
Delila said to Shimshon:
Until now you have made of me a fool,
you have spoken lies to me,
tell me:
whereby can you be bound?
He said to her:
If you weave
the seven locks of my head
in the loom....
She made them tight with the pin,
then she said to him:
Philistines upon you, Shimshon!
He awoke from his sleep
and tore apart the pin, the web, and the loom.
She said to him:
How can you say: I love you,
when your heart is not with me!
Three times now you have made of me a fool,
you have not told me
whereby your might is so great!
It was
when she had pressed him hard with her speeches every day
and had tormented him, so that his soul was cramped to death:
he told her all his heart,
he said to her:
No razor has gone upon my head,
for I have been One Consecrated to God from my mother's womb on:
If I am shaven,
my might leaves me,
I become weak,
I become like
all of humankind.
Delila saw
that he had told her all his heart,
she sent and called the Philistine tyrants together, saying:
Come up this time,
for he has told me all his heart.
The Philistine tyrants went up to her,
they brought the silver in their hand.
She lulled him to sleep upon her knees,
called for a man and had the seven locks of his head shaven off,
she began his humbling,  
and his might left him.  
She said:  
Philistines upon you, Shimshon!  
He awoke from his sleep,  
he said to himself:  
I will get away as (I did) time after time,  
I will shake myself free!  
He did not know that HE had left him.  
The Philistines seized him,  
they dug out his eyes,  
they brought him down to Gaza and bound him prisoner with double-bronze,  
his was forced to grind (grain) in the prison-house.  
But his hair began to grow again, as soon as it had been shaven off.

VII

The Philistines gathered together  
to slaughter a great slaughter-offering to Dagon their god  
for (a feast of) rejoicing.  
They said:  
Our god has given  
into our hand  
Shimshon our foe!  
The people saw him  
and praised their god, by their saying:  
Our god has given  
into our hand  
(Shimshon) our foe,  
destroyer of our land,  
who multiplied our corpses!  
It was, since their heart was in good humor,  
that they said:  
Call out Shimshon, that he may dance for us!  
They had Shimshon called out of the prison-house,  
and he danced before them.  
Now they had him stand between the standing-pillars.  
Shimshon said to the boy who held him by the hand:  
Let me rest,  
let me feel the pillars upon which the house is founded,  
so that I may recline upon them.  
Now the house was full of men and women,  
all the Philistine tyrants were there,  
and upon the roof about three thousand, man and woman,
who saw Shimshon dance.
Shimshon called to HIM,
he said:
My Lord, THOU,
now remember me,
now strengthen me,
just this one time,
O God,
I would take revenge, revenge at once for my two eyes
from the Philistines!
Shimshon embraced the two middle pillars
upon which the house was founded,
he leaned heavily upon them,
one at his right (hand), one at his left.
Shimshon said:
Let my soul die
with the Philistines!
He bowed with (all his) might,
the house fell
upon the tyrants,
upon all the people who were in it.
The dead whose death he caused in his death
were more than those whose death he had caused in his life.

His brothers and all the house of his father went down,
they lifted him, brought him up and buried him
between Tzor'a and Eshtaol, in the burying-place of his father Manoah.
He had judged Israel (for) twenty years.

At first glance, the overarching theme of the Samson cycle appears to be the breaking of the Nazirite vows.\(^1\) Samson’s behavior is the exact opposite of what is required of a Nazirite; the story recounts his systematic violation of every tenet of the vows. It has been pointed out\(^3\) that the verb “bind,” so prominent throughout the cycle, is used elsewhere in the Bible in intimate connection with the making of vows.\(^1\) The narrative, then, directly links Samson’s unacceptable behavior to his downfall. His crossing of taboo boundaries leads in the end to his being physically bound, and to death.

As important as is the theme of Naziriteship, however, emphasizing it means emphasizing Samson as an individual in total control of his own destiny. The text seems to be aiming at something quite different. Here, as so often in Biblical literature, the human hero recedes in favor of the divine one.\(^5\) Samson’s violations of the Nazirite vows, his thoughtless rages, and his lust for women—all of which are in normal circumstances highly inappropriate for a leader in ancient Israel—serve only as vehicles for the fulfillment of the divine historical plan. It is the classic Biblical pattern: human beings act upon their emotions, they play out their instinctual feelings into action; but in the final analysis, the action really takes place on a different plane. One is reminded particularly of scenes in the lives of the Patriarchs. God promises Abraham numerous descendants, but when the time comes to fulfill this pledge, it occurs, not by heaven-directed family
planning, but rather through the medium of fierce rivalry and jealousy between two sisters for the love of one man (Jacob). In the Joseph story, an entire people is saved for its future role in Biblical history, above and beyond economic and political reasons, because of the personal history of fraternal hatred in the central family. The Samson cycle continues the pattern, and spells it out unmistakably (14:4): “Now his father and his mother did not know that it was from HIM; that he was seeking an opportunity from the Philistines.” The text has further linked the two levels of history by connecting a major theme of the Book of Judges, political anarchy, with Samson’s personal life. The ending of the book (21:25), “In those days there was no king in Israel,/ every man did what was right in his own eyes,” is echoed by Samson’s emotional request of his parents (14:7; cf. v. 3), “Take her for me, for she is right in my eyes.”

This tension between the divine and the human is maintained by the theme of secrecy, which runs through the entire narrative and basically holds it together. Everything is meant to lead up to the dramatic revelation of Samson’s secret in the Delilah episode (one could also include the death scene as a second climax). On a continual basis, this major thematic thread is underscored by the use of three leading-words: tell, know, and see. Secrets are withheld from every character at some point—Manoah in episode I (he is, interestingly, never specifically told about the prohibition against his son shaving), both parents in II, Samson’s wife and her countrymen in II, Delilah in VI, and the unsuspecting Philistines in VII. Dominating them all is the towering figure of the protagonist, ironically the most unaware character in the entire story. Significantly, the narrator rarely makes use of the verb know in relation to Samson himself, preferring instead to use seeing as his central metaphor. In episode I, seeing is believing; it involves the announcement of God’s plan. Immediately in II, it becomes the vehicle for Samson’s getting into trouble (but also of his doing away with Israel’s enemies); it recurs with much the same meaning in V. Episode VI introduces the motif in a somewhat different light: it means finding out. In the great final scene of the cycle, seeing is mentioned only in connection with Samson’s humiliation, yet the absence of sight, referring to the hero himself, is quite obvious.

By stressing the centrality of seeing, the narrator has made a highly loaded choice. The seer in the Bible is usually the man of God, one who is perfectly and often painfully aware of what God wants of him. This kind of seeing is crucial in understanding the traditions about both Abraham and Moses; it stands at the very heart of the Balaam narrative (Numbers 22-24) as well. But Samson is a totally different kind of seer, more voyeur than visionary. He rarely sees further than either his anger or his lust. In this vein, later Jewish interpreters felt that Samson’s punishment was entirely appropriate: he who was led astray by his eyes, lost them. And so Samson emerges from our text as a meaningful parody on two sacred Biblical types—Nazirite and prophet.

Beyond thematic considerations lie the remarkable structural elements of the Samson cycle. These have been dealt with rather widely by a number of skilled and sensitive interpreters; nevertheless, we may re-examine the structure at this point. Such an analysis, albeit on a limited scale, will serve to illustrate the value of an oral-oriented reading of Biblical narratives.

Firstly, there is the matter of the internal cohesion of separate episodes of the story. Three examples may suffice. Already in part I the technique is established: not only are individual words utilized as structural pillars (e.g. see as a verb seven times, guard three times), but whole lines recur in formulaic emphasis (e.g. “for the boy shall be One Consecrated to God,” “should your words come to pass,” “Manoah and his wife saw it”). The backbone of the narrative is provided by three statements of the prohibitions surrounding the mother (threelfold prohibitions, naturally), and by the three questions which Manoah asks (and to which he receives an equal number of ambiguous answers).

Part II receives its structure from repetitions such as take (in marriage), my people, and riddle a riddle (each three times), not telling (four times), and the rhythmic Timna, accompanied by a preposition (five times). The major encounters of the story are usually preceded by Samson’s going down to the Philistine town; this verb is punned in Hebrew with the one for scraping, conveniently producing a similar sound-pattern seven times.

Episode VI is built upon a rich texture of formulae, many of which occur three times and which tend toward a three-beat line in the original. The text is one of the most stylized in all of Biblical literature. Phrases such as,“whereby is your might so great,” “whereby can you be bound, to humble you,”“now the ambush
was sitting (for her) in the chamber,” and “Philistines upon you, Shimshon!” create an aural tension which is relieved only by the inevitable outcome, the binding and blinding of the unaware, helpless hero.

As we have previously suggested, such tension is important for more than aesthetic reasons; it provides a mechanism for interpretation. In this case, a troubling question needs to be answered: How does Delilah know that Samson is at last telling the truth about himself? The narrator hints at the answer by shifting the wording of Samson’s reply the third time it occurs. Instead of the familiar (“I become weak, I become like) one of humankind,” one hears, “all of humankind,” and that change is highlighted by the threefold statement which surrounds it: “he told her all his heart” (the pronouns change, but not the key word all). In the light of such internal motion in the text, it seems to me that to emend the text back to one, as many scholars have done, is to miss the point entirely.

The reader, then, who wishes to examine all the episodes of the Samson cycle will find that each has its own instinct identity. Yet the achievement of different traditions, or of separate strands within the tradition, pales in comparison with what the final editor of our material has accomplished. This can best be illustrated by means of the chart on the following page. It has been drawn up rather loosely, including both motifs and specific words (here italicized) which appear in the text. I have made no attempt to cite motifs in the order of their importance in the story, but have merely listed them in the sequence in which they appear. Despite the informality of the chart, however, an impressive architectonic emerges from it. In each of the first five episodes of the cycle, words, phrases or motifs are introduced (and reinforced) which foreshadow Samson’s downfall in VI and VII. Seeing and enticing, knowing and telling, death and deliverance are all brought together in a dazzling display of narrative art. There is almost no element which does not reach its most pointed meaning in the final episodes; and even those which are not mentioned there by name (e.g. spirit, deliver, and Philistine rule) are clearly dealt with by implication. In the story of Samson’s seduction and enslavement, and in the account of the blind hero who, mocked by his enemies, wreaks full vengeance upon them, can be found the high watermark of Biblical narrative and its oral antecedents. That this has been accomplished without the destruction of the individual integrity of the episodes is a tribute to the hand of a master.

The concept of foreshadowing leads to a final observation about the figure of Samson. Can we understand him only as a parody on Biblical leadership, or as the recast version of Herakles in Hebrew garb? It should also be clear by now that he bears little resemblance to what his later readers in the West have made of him; he is neither a symbol of despair turned into faith (Milton) nor a national liberator who sadly forgets himself in the bedroom (Saint-Saëns).

Samson may appear, rather, as a partial foreshadowing of another, more tragic Biblical figure: King Saul. Like Samson, Saul does not possess the definitive character traits necessary for successful leadership. He can only lay the groundwork for the eventual unification of the kingdom and the concomitant defeat of the Philistines (the same Philistines whom Samson likewise only “begins” to defeat). Both men, at least, are granted a heroic death, yet one is struck by their common portrayal—the portrayal of the spirit gone awry. No more moving or frightful description of this process exists than the one in I Samuel 18:10, where Saul’s one-time possession of (or being-possessed-by) God’s spirit is replaced by his torment at the hands of an “evil spirit,” which also, in the Biblical scheme of things (I Samuel 16:14), comes from God. For Samson as well, the spirit is not a force that can be controlled to avert personal tragedy.

Yet for the Hebrew Bible, tragedy is not a personal affair; it is, rather, a communal one. Samson’s era is not Job’s, and his heroism, his blundering, and even his tragedy are swallowed up for Biblical man in the all-encompassing relationship of the Hebrew God with his treasured people. Samson in the end functions as the symbol of the straying, suffering, and, for the Biblical writer, triumphant folk from which he comes.
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<th></th>
<th>I 13:2-25 (Birth)</th>
<th>II 14:1-20 (Wedding)</th>
<th>III 15:1-8 (Revenge)</th>
<th>IV 15:9-20 (Jawbone)</th>
<th>V 16:1-3 (Gaza)</th>
<th>VI 16:4-22 (Delila)</th>
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Notes

1. Martin Buber, "Eine Uebersetzung der Bibel" (1926). In Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, Die Schrift und ihre Verdeutschung (Berlin, 1936), p. 307. This quotation was used in 1971 at the beginning of an unpublished paper by David Roskies (to which the present writer contributed the translation) entitled, "The Samson Cycle: A Form-Study in the Biblical Epic." I have drawn many of my conclusions here from that work, and wish to express my gratitude to Professor Roskies for a stimulating collaboration.


3. For a thoughtful presentation of the current state of affairs in the field, see Robert C. Culley, Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Narrative (Missoula, Montana, 1976).

4. One common ancient Hebrew name for the Bible was miqra'-the Calling-Out.

5. Notably in studies by Umberto Cassuto on Genesis and Exodus.

6. It was completed by Buber in 1961. For a more detailed analysis of the work, see my Afterword to In the Beginning, Response no. 14 (Summer 1972), pp. 143-157, and my dissertation, "Technical Aspects of the Translation of Genesis of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig" (Brandeis University, 1975). The translation is currently available as Die Schrift Koeln: Jakob Hegner Verlag) in four parts: Die Fuenf Bucher der Weisung (1954), Bucher der Geschichte (1956), Bucher der Kuendung (1958), and Die Schriftwerke (1962).


10. E. Margaliyot, "The Parallels between the Samson Story and the Stories of the Aegean Sea Peoples" (Hebrew), Bet Miqra'27 (1966), pp. 122-130. The parallels are of less interest and significance in the light of the major personality differences between the two heroes, as well as the primacy of God (rather than Samson himself) in the Judges account.

11. The passage setting forth the Nazirite laws is itself an excellent example of how Biblical laws are often cast in a spoken mold. It reads as follows (Numbers 6:1-8):

HE spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the Children of Israel, say to them: When a man or a woman makes an extraordinary vow, the vow of a Consecrated-One, consecrated to HIM:

- from wine and intoxicant he shall consecrate himself, what is fermented of wine, what is fermented of intoxicant, he shall not drink,
- any juice of grapes, he shall not drink, grapes, fresh or dried, he shall not eat:

All the days of his consecration, from all that is made from the wine-vine, from pulp to skin, he shall not eat.

All the days of his consecrated vow a razor must not go upon his head;

until the days are fulfilled which he consecrates to HIM, it shall be holy, he shall let the long hair of his head grow.

All the days which he consecrates to HIM, near a dead body he shall not come,

by his father, by his mother, by his brother, by his sister, he shall not (let himself) become tainted by them when they die, for the consecration-sign of his God is upon his head:

all the days of his consecration he is holy to HIM.


14. The passage, from Numbers 30:2-3, 4, 5, reads as follows: Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes of the Children of Israel, saying:

This is the word which HE has spoken:

When a man vows a vow to HIM or swears a sworn oath, to bind his soul by a bond, he may not violate his word;

according to all that comes out of his mouth, he shall do. And when a woman vows a vow to HIM, and binds herself by a bond . . . all her vows shall stand, and all the bonds whereby she has bound herself shall stand.


17. This is analyzed in Robert Alter's "Biblical Narrative," *Commentary*, vol. 61, no. 5 (May 1976), pp. 62-3. Alter also comments on the fire imagery of the Samson cycle as indicative of the hero's emotions. To this might be added the constant "up and down" motion within the story, which seems to me to be an apt description of his anger as well.

18. *Sotah* 9b (Babylonian Talmud).


Testimonies

Introduction

The stories which follow share a religious theme, but to classify them merely as religious narrative is to deny their power and overlook the special place that the language of testimony occupies in the speech categories of evangelistic fundamentalist Baptists and Pentecostals. Let us hear what these people understand the word testimony to mean:

A testimony is not focussed on any one certain thing, but it's on the blessings that the Lord has given you. (Jesse Comer)

A lot of people have a testimony on their heart that they want to share with somebody else. And what I mean by testimony is something that's happened to them that they feel like that God's blessed them in a certain special way and they want to share it with somebody else. (John Sherfey)

Testimony is a recounting of what God has done in one's life. It need not be a narrative; it may simply be a short expression of general gratitude, such as "I want to thank the Lord for all that he's done for me. He saved my soul and he's healed my body a-many of a time. And I just want to thank him and praise him for all that he's done." If it is a narrative, it is sometimes relatively mundane, as, for example, a story of how a prayer to find a lost pair of gloves was answered. A story like this will be told only a few times at most. But other narratives are more important, they are retold often, and, though the form changes according to the context of their telling, the sequence of their events is stable. In leisurely conversation these narratives will expand and fill with detail; at a church testimonial meeting when others are waiting to take their turn the story will be shorter but the essential elements will be there; in a sermon a preacher may invoke a story from his experience which is already familiar to the congregation. These recurring testimonies fall into a relatively small number of subject categories, as, for example, conversion narratives, visions, and miracles, all of which the individual testifier must have experienced personally. (Son House's conversion narrative may be heard on the plastic soundsheet accompanying Alcheringa, NS 2:1 (1976), while John Sherfey's may be read in Alcheringa, NS 3:2 (1977).)

Some churches, particularly those with a large membership, hold special "testimonial meetings" in which the central activity is testimony from individuals in attendance. At such meetings there is considerable pressure to stand up and testify before the group. In other churches, such as Fellowship Independent Baptist Church in Stanley, Virginia, where Reverend Sherfey is pastor, a special time for testimony is set aside during the worship service. In Reverend Sherfey's church it follows the altar call (invitation) at the close of the sermon, and Reverend Sherfey invariably introduces it by asking, "Anybody got a word on your heart?" Sunday school teacher Jesse Comer explained why: "Because a testimony comes from the heart, of what the Lord has blessed you with."

"Is that the heart that pumps blood?" I asked. "No," Comer replied. "That's from the center of man, the Spirit that God puts in man, the center of him that man believes with. It's hard to explain, but it's that part of man that God has come into, and it's the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that's within a saved person." A person who has not accepted Christ but still attempts to live by the Golden Rule is not saved, Comer went on. He has "head-religion," but without the indwelling Spirit he is likely to lose his head in a crisis. "That's the difference in head-religion and heart-felt salvation," Comer said. "One will take you to heaven, and one won't lift you as high as the ceiling from the floor."

Like all sacred speech, including song, prayer, preaching, and teaching, the words of testimony have power to "bless" the Christian and to bring the sinner "under conviction"—that is, to make him feel guilty for his sins and condemned to hell. But if the word can convict, it also has the power to save, for the Bible is the word of God and Christ is the Word, the incarnate expression of the divine. Moreover, confession of sin
and acceptance of Christ must proceed "by mouth"—in an audible voice, via the spoken word. When Reverend Sherfey repeats, "There's power in the word," he invokes one of the crucial metaphors (power) and the central symbol (the word) in evangelical fundamentalist Christianity, where word-centered activity—that is, sacred speech—occupies the preponderant position, whereas action-centered ritual, such as communion, is secondary. Pentecostals carry this position the farthest, in that speaking in tongues, the initial evidence of the infilling of the Holy Ghost and the audible evidence of salvation, is their *rite de passage*. In this connection it is worth noting that Bill Arnold, song-leader at Broadview Pentecostal Church in Bloomington, Indiana, told me: "The tongue is the most unruly member of the body. It's the last thing you surrender to God. When God's got your tongue, he's really got control of you."

Another word for testimony is *witnessing*, and this stresses the personal aspect of testimony, the eyewitness account. It also throws into relief the extended metaphor of trial and judgment, the legal language which runs through these people's mouths as they describe the salvation process: guilt, conviction, condemnation, testimony, witnessing, evidence, judgment, and so forth. A testament is, of course, a covenant; and to testify is to declare solemnly and publicly.

As public statements, the examples of testimony which follow do not need explication; however, I have identified in-group references in footnotes, and it may be worth providing a scattering of observation and background information on them here. Rachel Franklin, born in 1899 near Shaw, Mississippi, is the daughter of Reverend E. J. Pittman, who began his Baptist ministry just after Emancipation; she is the mother of the dean of black preachers, Reverend C. L. Franklin, and the grandmother of the singer, Aretha Franklin. Three testimonies, a sermon, several photographs and a biographical sketch of Reverend Sherfey appeared in *Alcheringa, NS* 3:2 (1977). The photographs accompanying this group of testimonies show Mrs. Cubbage testifying in church. Although she speaks to the congregation as a whole, she faces Reverend Sherfey in the pulpit. Punctuating her testimony with "amen" (truly) from time to time, he is attentive—as some others are not. Mrs. Cubbage's metalinguistic observation in the midst of her testimony—"I got to tell this every once in a while 'cause God puts it on my heart"—is neither apologetic nor boastful. When God puts a testimony on one's heart she is obliged to speak it. Reverend Sherfey's allegorical vision takes on special poignancy in that the Buddy Wayne of the story was his son, whose death at the age of five marked the onset of Sherfey's coming under conviction. Like Mrs. Franklin and Mrs. Cubbage, he is overcome by emotion as he re-lives the vision while narrating it; the joy in his heart produces tears and turns his speech toward chant. His two versions of the miraculous healing of Holt Herrell invite comparison, as do Mrs. Cubbage's two narratives (in different contexts) of her vision. Ken George's attempts to obtain Herrell's version of Sherfey's story ended when he learned from some people near Brummett's Creek that after a successful career as a preacher, Holt Herrell had died forever.

The George A. and Eliza Gardener Howard Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Humanities provided me with fellowships which made possible some of this field research and the writing. We are grateful to these organizations and to the people whose words are printed exactly as they spoke them in the testimonies which follow.

**Directions for reading:**

New line, double space: pause about 1 sec.
New line, single space, indented: pause about ¼ sec.
New line, single space, return to full left margin: read without pause as continuation of prior line.
Triple-spaced break between words within line: read without pause as continuation of prior line.
Standard (roman) type: ordinary volume and intonation.
**Boldface type:** increase volume and expand intonation range.
**Italic type:** decrease volume and compress intonation range.
Half tone grey type: chanted speech, approaching regular rhythm and intonation contour.
[Brackets]: paralanguage; or listener's response.
I Wanted to be sure

Told by Rachel Franklin
Context: Interview in New Bethel Baptist Church, Detroit, Michigan, after morning service, 11/13/77.
Preceding questions: “Do you remember when you were converted?” A.—“Yes, I was converted around twelve years old.” Q.—“Did—did you see a vision of anything, or—?”
Collected and transcribed by Jeff Titon

Yes. I-I-I wanted to be sure.
You know I-I wanted
sometime when you are seeking you soul's salvation
you-you
kind of want you know a lot of I say “evidence.”
that you have been borned again because you don't you don't
want to come up here you know or go a long ways and then turn a-
round and come back and go over that same road.
And I went back to the Lord to find out sure was I converted.
I prayed to him.
I member one day I got up
went out and I walked—that was in the country
and uh
with my hands behind me and I was talking to the Lord
and the tears was just streaming down and I asked told the Lord
I said, “Lord now if you have did anything for me
if you, if I'm converted, if you have
delivered me today let me know
Give me a sign,” and the sun was just at the top of the
trees and that sun just went
reeling and rocking and going up and down
and I just threwed my hand up and said, “Thank God, thank God.”
The Ordaining of Holt Herrell, version 1.

Told by Reverend John Sherfey.
Context: Interview in Rev. Sherfey's home in Falls Church, Virginia, 7/28/75. Also present: his wife, Pauline. Preceding questioning: a story about a divine healing.
Collected and transcribed by Ken George

After I started preaching I went I was
called over into Brummett's Creek North Carolina

And uh
*well my wife will vouch this we*

I first told 'em I couldn't come. They called for me to come, I was working in Kingsport and I told 'em I couldn't come, I had to work.

But the urge hit me so strong to go
*so I just told 'em in Kingsport I was going you know and uh*
we went over there one day and it was snow and ice on that mountain, had to cross Iron Mountain you know and get over into uh Brummett's Creek
and uh

when we started off the other side she got ahold of the door handle. She said, "If it slides I'm going out of here," said, "I'm going to jump out," and I told her, "It ain't going to slide." We went up in that holler and snow on them roads and everything, and when I got there one of the deacons in the church said uh "I know what you're here for." I said, "Yeah I've come to tell you that I've come for the revival."

So I started that revival on, I went there on Monday, we started
well I got over there on Monday evening
and uh
when I got there the first thing they done they said uh
"We want you to go with us."

So we went down in the holler back up in the holler there to uh Holt Herrell
where he lived and uh, they said, "Now we want you to see this man."
And I'm definitely God led me in that community just on account of Holt Herrell.
And uh [clears throat] so *when we got there* we went in to see Holt and there he laid in the bed, he was dying.

And uh
I *talked to him a few minutes and*
and uh *I took a tape that I had, a gospel tape and wanted to play that and so I left*
*I left it there for them to play*
*I left. And when I come back he they hadn't played it, see*

*And uh*

*so uh we played some of the tape for him and then*
we went on to Marion North Carolina for the boys to get 'em a haircut, came back, and when I got pretty close to the house I heard his wife coming through the house a-jumping and a-hollering and a-screaming and saying, "My companion is gone he's gone." So we went on in the house and uh *got into the where we seen him* and he—he looked like he was dead.

So we started praying and talking with him and directly he revived, he looked up at me. And when he did I *spoke* to him, and out he went again. She done the same thing, she went back through the house just a-screaming and a-hollering, and
so we kept praying *and*
and uh in a little bit he revived *up*, and I said, "Holt"
*I said, "I've got to ask you a question" and I said, "I want you to answer me," I said*

"God did put it on my heart while we was driving to Marion that I should ask you when I was in here" and I said, "I asked these men to hurry back"
I said, "Has God ever called you to do anything and you haven't done it?"

And he looked at me with those dying eyes
and he said, "Preacher God called me to preach *nine years ago and I been running.*"
I said, "Holt, God tells me to tell you that if you don't repent of this and confess it and promise..."
him you'll go preach you'll die right here on this bed.”
   And he says, “Pray for me, anoint me with oil” and he said,
   “If that’s what it is I’ll go.”
   And don’t you know before I closed that revival Holt Herrell
   walked in in that revival meeting
   and the last I counted I had of him which has been about seven
   years, seven or eight years ago
   he’s pastoring four churches, doing fine.

   So now that shows that
   God
   knows what he’s doing see, and God led me there, that’s why
   he impressed me to go in the revival, not that I could heal Holt
   Herrell, not that I was anything but
   God used me to warn Holt Herrell to-to do that

   He was running from it, see, that’s what happened, he’d
   run
   And he’d spend his-his spent all of his money and everything
   and doctor bills hospital bills and everything but he got no
   better, he got worse all the time, see?

The Ordaining of Holt Herrell, version 2

Told by Reverend John Sherfey
Context: Interview in Rev. Sherfey’s home in Falls Church, Virginia, 7/9/76. Also present: his wife, Pauline. Preceding question: “When Ken told me about his talk with you, he said that you told him a story in which you had gone down I guess it was an icy road to save a man named Holt Herrell who had been called to preach but wouldn’t recognize it, or something like that.”
Collected and transcribed by Jeff Titon

Yeah that was uh back

uh I can’t recall the amount of years but
uh
   I was living in the tri-city area in the between Kingsport
and Blountville Tennessee at that time
and uh
I got a call for a revival meeting at the Brummett’s Creek North Carolina.

And at first I told ’em I couldn’t come because uh I had a job I had to work and all this you know but

uh later in a few weeks the Lord impressed me to go in this revival.

And so one evening I well one morning rather I got off and got home I told my wife I said “Get ready we’re going to North Carolina.”

So she got ready and we had to cross this Iron Mountain out of Erwin Tennessee going over into North Carolina and when we got on top of the mountain why it was a solid sheet of ice down the other side.

And I started on down you know no chains on or anything, had an old ’49 uh

uh can’t remember the car now just exactly was but uh Oldsmobile, ’49 Oldsmobile.

And she reach over and gotten ahold of the door handle and she said “If it slips I’m going out.”

I said, “You better not, just stay with the car.”

And of course that makes me think about the time you know when Paul and them was on the ship you know and the Lord said a angel visited Paul that night and said, “If you’ll stay with the ship there’ll not one of you’ns be lost.”

And of course they did but we stayed with that old car and it didn’t slip a bit of course.

Went off of that mountain and up through this holler—we had to go way back up through this holler to the man’s house, one of the deacons

and uh we got there, why uh I got out of the car and there’s snow on the ground and started up toward the house and he said, “I know what you’re here for.

I know just what you’re here.”

And I said and “I come about the revival” and he said, “I knew it I knew it,” he said, “we’d been praying about it.”

And of course uh they wanted then
to go to Marion North Carolina.
And so I got in the car with them to go to Marion.
But on the way to Marion we had to go right pretty close to
Holt Herrell's house.
And they wanted to stop and see Holt, they wanted me to see him.
Well we went in the house and
and uh I talked to Holt a little bit you know and
we left going on and he was he was very sick.

And uh
we went on going on the way to Marion
God impressed me to,
said, "Why didn't you ask him
if I had ever
asked him to do anything and he didn't do it?"
So I looked at the man was driving and I said, "How long
are you going to be in Marion?"
And he said, "Long enough to get a haircut."
And I said, "Well I got to get back to Holt's just quick
as I can."
And uh so we went on and they got their hair cut, him, there was two deacons
and they got their hair cut

came on back and uh
when we got to the house
almost to the house
his wife came running through the house screaming and a-hollering, "He's gone
he's gone."
So uh
we kept going you know as
we walked faster
and uh
when we got in the room
she was met us at the door and of course she said that "My husband's gone, he's
dead."
And we went on to the bed and of course he was did look like he had you know
he'd done turned blue and
all colors, I never seen such a mess in my life and
so we started praying and in a few minutes he come to.

And just as quick as he come out of it I spoke to him and
right back out he went again.
And she done the same thing, she went leaping through the
house and a-screaming and a-hollering saying "My companion's gone, he's gone."
And we kept praying, we didn't let up till
in a few minutes he revived again and when he did, why
I looked at him.

Just like I'm looking at you.
And I said, "Holt
God impresses me to ask you this and I'm going to ask you.
Did God ever call you to do anything and you didn't do it?"
And them dying eyes looked up at me
and he said, "Preacher
God called me to preach nine years ago and I've been running."
I said, "Holt God impresses me
That if you don't take that vow that you promised God when
he called you
if you don't take it
you're going to die."

He said, "I'll go, I'll do anything God wants me to do."
And he said, "I want you all to pray for me anoint me with
oil*
and we did
and I was over there for two weeks in that revival
and before I closed that revival
Holt Herrell come walking down the aisle in that church.
And then the last 'count I had of Holt Herrell
he was pastoring four churches.
Doing a great work for the Lord.

So you can't run and get away from God because God's everywhere see.
He's a big God.
That man had a big farm, he had
a-a good job he lost his job on account of his health, he lost his-his farm, he sold
everything off and all he had left
was the house that he lived in.
That's all he had and just a little lot around it.
He'd sold it all, paid it out in doctor bills
and where if he'd have answered the call for God see it wouldn't have been
like that.
It wouldn't have happened.
But
uh it's uh the Bible teaches us that it's a terrible thing
to fall in the hands of a living God.
So
it's uh it's-it's real uh
encouraging for us to know that we have a God that loves us that much, see?

*Anointing with oil is part of the healing ritual prescribed in James v:14-15 and followed by Rev. Sherfey.

A Vision of Heaven

Told by Edith Cubbage.
Context: Night service, Fellowship Independent Baptist Church, Stanley, Virginia. Testimony portion of service. 7/17/77.
Collected by Jeff Titon and Ken George.
Jeff Titon, transcriber

You know I'm proud that I'm saved. I don't think that I'm going to see that* 'cause the good Lord has made a place for me and I'm a-going there before that time comes.

You know because he showed me places that he had prepared for me and I know I'm a-going there 'cause and I got friends that I know's there.

'Cause I got some people that's gone. My mother's went and I believe firmly on my heart that she's in heaven today, tonight.

And she's rejoicing to think that we're saved, 'cause she rejoiced when she went out when she went to sleep. She didn't go like some people do, she didn't suffer but she just asked the Lord to have mercy on her.

And I went so far with her and I believe that I was caught up. I can't tell it myself but I really seen a real place when she went to go.

But I wasn't fit to go. I just felt like if I would have been I could have went with her but I couldn't.

But you know after ever ever since then I've always thought about these things and I've always prayed about it and I think that she's there.

I know that she's there 'cause she said she was a-going and I went so far with her but I wasn't able to to the rest of the way because I wasn't I wasn't fit to go there.
That's what it was.

But you know I been a-looking all the time. Every time I hear a song sung about mother gone home
I think about her. She talked to me so much about things you know like that when she got so bad I—

She told me she loved me and she wouldn’t hurt me for nothing and I don’t believe she would.

And but when she left this world I hated to see her go but you know I wouldn’t bring her back if I could because she’s resting.

When we got all those trials and troubles to go through with I got to tell this every once in a while ’cause God puts it on my heart to tell it but I-I’m so proud and thankful that I know that that’s where she’s gone.

I’ve got others that’s gone but I can’t say where they’ve gone because I don’t know.

But I do believe and firmly from my heart what God showed it to me that she’s in heaven, she’s a-resting.

[Crying:] You know that’s enough to make you rejoice in things. If you’ve got one that’s done so much for you and when you get there that you’re going to see her. I believe she’s awaiting to see me come home, yes I do.

"The seven-year period of tribulation (Revelation vii:14).

A Vision of Heaven

Told by: Edith Cubbage
Context: Interview in Mrs. Cubbage’s home in Stanley, Virginia, 8/12/77. Also present: her husband, Clyde.
Preceding question (Titon): “Is there anything that either of you would like to say to begin this tape for the folks at the Library of Congress?“
Collected by Jeff Titon and Ken George
Jeff Titon, transcriber

Well I’ll tell you for the starting of me getting saved and this is the way it was.

My mother was sick and she was bad, she was awful bad off and she told me that she believed she was a-going out of her mind, but I wouldn’t be—you know, that she wouldn’t hurt me ’cause she

she loved me. And I said, “Mama, I know you do.”
And she said, “But I’m a-going home,” she said
“and I want you to meet me.”

Now this is the first starting of me getting saved.
Well I told her I said, “Well I’ll meet you.”
I said, “If there’s any way in the world I’ll meet you be­
cause I know that I’m going to be saved and go with you.”
So when she left out of this world—I believe sometimes, I
always thought maybe
the good Lord seen fit to take her maybe to save me.
You know I always felt like that.
And so brother Cave* was the one that baptized me, I never will forget it.
I told him I said, “Brother Cave,” I said, “Mother went
on and I felt like that I could have went to heaven if I would
have been ready but I wasn’t ready.”
But I honest, I did see something, this is the truth I’m
a-telling y’all.
I seen the beautifullest place that I ever seen in my life
the morning that she left home.
Now I'm a-telling you this and this is the truth and God knows it's the truth or he wouldn't give me the remembrance of it.

And I never could—I never seen a place like that since, nor I never seen it before that, but I seen it then.

It was one of the beautifullest-looking places that I ever seen.

Well I said, "If that place is that beautiful just for me going by her leaving and a-going, I'm going to accept the Lord as my savior."

And so I just felt like when she was buried—now this is the truth—when they buried her I was sorry that I was going to miss her and all like that but I could just rejoice of it you know to think that she had gone home.

Now that's a long story on that but you know I'm just proud that I'm saved and I'm proud that I know that the Lord did save me.

I say I've made mistakes along the road and we all have.

But you know God's children he forgives.

*G.A. Cave, Methodist preacher, d. 1973.*
A Vision of Heaven

Told by: Reverend John Sherfey.
Context: End of sermon, Fellowship Independent Baptist Church, Stanley, Virginia, Homecoming Service, 8/7/77.
Collected by Jeff Titon and Ken George.
Jeff Titon, transcriber

I think I told you this before a long time ago.
Uh Pauline*remembers very well I—I—some of you’s maybe never heard me tell this, I—I just feel like telling you this morning.
I was laying flat on my back in the bed, I don’t know what happened.
I can’t tell you. I—I’m like Paul, I was caught up into the 3rd heaven.
But I seen something I can tell you about.
I can see something I can tell you about.
Whether in the flesh or out of the flesh I don’t know, in the Spirit or out of the Spirit I don’t know*[Belvin Hurt:***
"Bless him Lord."] I can’t tell you. [Hurt: "Bless him."]
I was laying flat on my back.
Brother and I thought I was dead.
I thought I was gonna die that time.
And I—I was laying there that day and something happened to me, I don’t know what happened.
But I do know one thing.
I got up in about twenty feet.
I was climbing this narrow path.
Somebody said it was a vision, I don’t know whether it was or not
but I was going this narrow path and just room for me to walk on it
And somebody caught me around the shoulders
and tried to throw me off
and I remember very well I did thisaway [rolls shoulders to his right]
and they went down into the pit a-hollering, they went out of sound
out of—they just kept on going
hollering and screaming
and I kept on walking.
And when I got in twenty feet of that door
the beautiful gate
and I got in twenty feet of it Jesus and Buddy Wayne**** walked by Buddy Wayne was on and he walked this way
the most beautiful hill I ever seen in my life.

[Crying:] I haven't got there yet, I'm still trying to make that twenty feet
but bless God I'll soon make that twenty feet, amen? [Hurt: "Amen."]
Praise God this morning. [Hurt: "Bless the Lord."]
And when Buddy Wayne spoke to me that's when I come out of whatever I was in.
I come out of it and thanks be to God this morning I'm still traveling that narrow path [Hurt: "Amen."]
and I'm gonna keep on traveling it.
Praise God this morning God is so real.
I feel him in my soul.

*Pauline Sherfey, wife of the speaker.

***For this and the reference to the 3rd heaven, see II Corinthians xii:1-4.

***Belvin Hurt, member of the congregation, speaking from his pew.

****Buddy Wayne Sherfey, dead son of the speaker. See introduction.
The Killing of the Moss Falls Windigo

"I heard this from Sam Amoowewuch ... who said he told it most every winter. There was an old man named Pupasikosiw who lived north of here ... about four days, mostly walking from here.

Near his camp was a place to sit by a waterfall. It was a good place to fish ... there was excellent fishing in the pool below the waterfall. In winter, yes even then. The water ran down ... all through winter it ate up any ice that formed. It had steep cliffs on either side. They looked very high up to see the top. If sun was glinting off the ice, into their eyes, they got the utikimayum ... it was a joke among them then that the ptarmigans would come and scratch at their eyes. They rubbed their eyes from looking up there.

So, that is how the place was ... how it looked.

Well, one day this man Pupasikosiw, and some others, went to fish there. They walked there. This was in winter. They walked to this place, and when they arrived they looked at the falls ... and they saw a strange thing!

It was ... that thick moss began to grow, JUST THEN, it grew in daylight. Before, there was no moss on the cliffs ... they were certain of this memory from other fishing times there. All ... each of them said he was certain of this, out loud.

There had been no moss on the cliff walls, but now they saw it, WATCHED ... this rowing. Thick.

On both sides of the falls it grew, all the rest of the day. Birds who sat on the cliff had to leave ... a few winter birds who did not want the moss to grow over their feet. They would be trapped! They flew away ... saying, "Something brings trouble here!"

"Something ... brings ... trouble ... here," they said, as one voice.

The men went on fishing two days ... but ...

Here I tell this: that only at night they HEARD the moss grow. Heard it, then. Finally it was that thick moss covered both sides of the falls ... both the cliffs.

Looking at this, Pupasikosiw said, in a fearful voice, he asked the others, "Should we stay here, or not?"

One other man then said ... whose children came into him then ... he said, "Yes, we need the food, but let’s pay attention to things carefully now." This was agreed upon their faces, looking at each other.

So it was they went on fishing there. That night ... the night after this agreement. ... Pupasikosiw was picked out.

It was this way, that the others slept well, but Pupasikosiw heard something calling his name.

Maybe the other sleepers heard their own names, but theirs called them
But Papasikosiw heard his own name calling him ... out, to someplace near.

At first hearing it was unclear to him what was being moaned out by the voice of the wind, but soon it became clear ... it was his very own name, yes. It said, "PAPASKIKOSIW ... PAP ... AS ... IK ... OOOO ... SIW! Come to the moss, and climb up it!"

He could have ... probably, if it was any other loud sound, he would have put his hands over his ears, and tried to go back to sleep. Or said, "I am only dreaming."

But this was different.

He got up, and began walking TOWARD THE WATERFALLS.

Toward the waterfalls ... the moss falls ... he walked. When he got to them, he began to climb the slippery moss, he tried this. He began to grip it ...

Then, he stopped. He listened during this time ... to ... the sound of water going away.

The sound of water falling was going away, he heard this.

So, then, he knew something was wrong. He said to the falls, "Stop, do not go away, you are not in a flock (fading) in sound ... into the distance ... you are not flying with your flock of waterfalls, to south for the winter!"

Papasikosiw ... Papasikosiw was talking to the falls. Then everything seemed quiet, and muffled ... the way moss talks.

Just before climbing again, Papasikosiw thought clearly enough to call out to the others who were still asleep, but when he did this his voice went into the moss!

"Get out of there, voice!" he said to it. But his voice stayed in the moss.

With that, he heard that wind voice call out again, "Soon all the voices will be in maaaaawwwwssss!" The voice ... the wind voice lasted a long time, though finally it stopped, but it had caused some rocks to fall from the top of the cliffs.

Then ... Papasikosiw began trying to climb up the moss again. He was having great difficulty, and kept falling down ... sliding down the moss. He tried again with failure.

He tried again, and he got a short way up the moss ... then ...

Then he looked down and saw he had THE FEET OF A LYNX, he had ... lynx paws, instead of his own human feet! And with these he could get a better grip. Still, he had slipped some, but shortly he saw his hands, too, had become lynx paws! these ripped long strips of moss away, and he gripped the rock ... firmly.

Now those parts of him were a lynx climbing moss.

He climbed up more, and when he reached half way to the top he suddenly felt a huge wind at his back. He gripped the rock hard ... then this wind began pushing him into the moss ... and swirling moss over him ... OVER HIM ... doing that!

Papasikosiw was being pushed into moss.

Then he found himself trapped under it ... under the moss. He was having trouble breathing then, because he was trapped! He was trying to climb up the rock, under the moss he climbed ... you could see this ... his shape climbing up.

The other fisherman woke up then, and began looking for Papasikosiw. They saw what was going on!

They saw ... it was a Windigo.
They saw it was a Windigo trying to trap Pupasikosiw under the moss, to save him for later to eat. It was clear to them what was going on. The Windigo then saw these men... He saw these men too... and flung them into the moss! They all gripped the moss and began sliding down, but then that huge wind...

Again, it started up.

This wind pushed them into moss... again it covered people with it. All of them were under moss now. You could see their shapes under there, their stretch-moss shapes...

Except for Tawipussawao, except for him, the one fisherman who was not captured. He had hid in bushes and saw everything that happened. Now he watched the Windigo sit and look at the men struggling under moss... waited for them to stop moving. He knew at that time the Windigo would begin eating them.

He thought out loud, “Why was I named this”? It was then Yawipussawao set out for the south. He was just developing his conjuring powers which he learned from his grandfather, and decided this would be a good time to use them, quickly. He conjured himself south... far to the south, where summer was living.

Summer lived there... it was hung inside a mataghwan, and protected by Grog and Heron. They always guarded summer. When Tawipussawao arrived, they grew suspicious. They made him sit many steps away, and speak up. Tawipussawao said, “A Windigo has trapped some humans under moss... I need summer to melt his heart. Can I take it?”

Frog and Heron agreed this was important. They answered, “Yes, we’ll get summer up there, quickly. We’ll send it up with a runner.”

“Good,” said Tawipussawao, “Why not send it up with a swift deer?”

“Because deer run in zig-zags,” Heron said. “I have watched this from the air. We’ll send it up more quickly with a moose, who will run in a straight line and snort down anything in its way.”

This they did. The moose carried summer on its back, and ran and swam, and walked over ice to the north. When he arrived at the moss falls he had a little back hair singed. The Windigo heard this. The moose set down summer, which made a sizzling sound in the snow, the Windigo... turned... toward this smell.

Then... came running toward the moose.

Tawipussawao had arrived then. He took some sturgeon glue and put it on the deer hide which held summer inside. Then he flung summer at the Windigo. The hide full of summer stuck to the Windigo’s chest. And there was... a great HOWLING... a howling of... all animal voices at once.

More rocks fell. Many things in the region held their ears against this loud howling. Summer was melting the Windigo’s heart then. But it still had enough strength to climb the moss, biting at it... it climbed to the top. It laid down up there to die. This is why there still is a dripping sound there... why it is heard... because of the sound of its heart melting from up there. It was too late to save the men, whose shapes are now rocks. But the Windigo died, and the place remains... it remains to remind us what happened. That is how it happened according to Amoowewuch.”
Notes

1. Tale was told in August, 1974; (Amoowenuch means “Beehive.”) in the Swampy Cree dialect, by Job Walks.)


3. Utikimayum generally refers to caribou tracks, but more specifically here refers to evidence of caribou having scuffed up snow in order to reach edible ground cover. This activity leaves a sequence of splotches on the snow: like the spots one often sees after a flash-bulb photograph is taken, when the fishermen looked up into the sun they had in their eyes splotches akin to ones on the snow made by caribou. The joke—warning about the arrival of ptarmigan, comes from knowledge of one temporary relationship between ptarmigan and caribou (verified by my own observations in the field, that of many Cree & several Canadian boreal-region biologists, in the literature) in connection with the presence of snow cover which hinders the obtaining of food. Analogous observations, from other parts of the world, are chronicled in the work of A. N. Formozov:

Byalynitski-Birulya (1907), during a winter on the New Siberian Islands, made very interesting observations on the behavior of willow ptarmigan (northern Siberian subspecies). “I was interested,” he says, “how the ptarmigan obtained their food from under the snow and partly even from under the icy crust which usually covers parts of the tundra which had been blown free of snow by the wind. It appeared that the ptarmigan in this case used the services of the reindeer which dug the snow with their feet. On the deer pastures there are always found many ptarmigan trails. While hunting deer in the late fall one can frequently see how a flock of ptarmigan unconcernedly wandered about between the deer's feet, intensively searching over the places dug out by deer...” Later Tolmachev (Tugarinov and Tolmachev, 1934) observed similar relationship between two species of ptarmigan and the places where herds of domesticated reindeer had grazed. At the beginning of May, on the way from Khatanga north to the Novaya River, he often saw willow ptarmigan near campsites, “where they had gathered in order to more easily obtain food at the places which were dug out by deer.” Rock ptarmigan were also noted in great numbers on 15th of May “on the places dug out by deer.” Kreps and Dementov-Tyan-Shanski (1934) noted that in Lapland on the Monche and Tehuna tundra, rock ptarmigan are constant companions of the wild reindeer during the second half of winter. “Their usual food of berries and green parts of alpine vegetation is almost everywhere at this time of the year covered by a compacted snow which the birds are not able to dig out. At the places where the deer have dug feeding craters in the snow, they can easily get to the beloved berries of a crowberry (Empetrum nigrum) and other plants.” Similar phenomena but in other species of animals can be observed in the central part of the country. While hunting for hares in the vicinity of Go’ki during the period from 1911 to 1918 I often saw how grey partridge had fed at the places where hares grazed. Hares, in the middle of winter, feed more often on cover crops, especially on hillocks where the snow is not so deep. On the feeding areas in the morning one can see from afar the dark patches 1.5 to 2 meters square which have been cleared of snow. Here and there between clods of earth are present half plucked green leaves of cover crops. At sunrise grey partridge come here. Their trails lead from one set of hare workings to another. Bogdakov (1871) earlier observed this in middle Povolzhesia, and more recently, A.V. Fedyushin in Belorusssia. I would hardly be mistaken if I said that in earlier times, when many tarpans, saigas and kulans grazed on the steppes, the little steppean birds had the opportunity of feeding near the herds in winter. (A.N. Formozov, “Snow Cover As An Integral Factor Of The Environment and Its Importance In The Ecology Of Mammals And Birds;” English edition published by Boreal Institute, Univ. of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada)

The study of snow cover, its advantages and disadvantages to humans and other animals, has lent insight into some of the predatory behavior of Windigos, as described by Cree informants.

4. Pecheyow, means approximately “inwardly, into the body,” here referring to a voice calling from within, rather than, in this case, Windigo’s voice — one man said pecheyow is like “being lowered down into yourself, past fears, until you feel safe.”

5. The pause, in this telling indicated about how long Papasikosiw listened.

6. Teller’s tone of voice indicated that, at least this kind of talking, to the waterfalls was abnormal, under abnormal circumstances certainly, a bit crazy.

7. Spoken softly.

8. A brief, introductory discussion of moss in relation to Windigo behavior is important here. It is generally believed that Windigos are omnivorous, are often referred to as “moss-eaters.” What is indicated in this particular tale, and corroborated by several informants, is that a Windigo carries out a kind of moss agriculture, and besides foraging for moss, may have “moss farms” many places. In further discussions about Windigo behavior, it was mentioned that — such as at Moss Falls — often times cliffs or trees hung with moss act as a sort of spider web, of moss. As when this Windigo was waiting for the men to simply smother and die, then eat them at its leisure. Usually, however, confrontations with Windigos are generally said to be voracious, cannibalistic and manic-al to varying degrees. People thought to be Windigos may have their teeth checked for greenness, bits of moss, etc.)

9. Tawipussawao means “He hits him in the breast.”
10. He doesn't realize, until this moment, why he was named so. Job Walks suggested that the name was given by someone in the village who obviously — by intuition or another sort of oracular understanding, knew this confrontation would occur.

11. A dwelling, hut.

12. Several generally acknowledged methods of killing a Windigo — though specific variations occur in different Cree regions. One is to melt its ice heart. (see Wishing Bone Cycle, trans. by H. Norman, the tale Wichikapache goes walking, walking . . . where the trickster-figure has a weasel crawl down a Windigo's throat and bite its heart, killing it.)

13. Windigos can juxtapose human senses, i.e. can smell sounds, or hear smells.

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Jimmie Killigivuk, performer
Tom Lowenstein and Carol Omnik, translators

Kipauglautchiaq

Here is Kipauglautchiaq, a hunter, a whale hunter.
And a niviaqsiaq lived in the village with her aana,
in Tikigaq, where Kipauglautchiaq came from.
And the niviaqsiaq was hardly very old. It was the time of whaling.
And she went down to the ice when the hunters caught a whale
and hauled back meat and blubber.
And when Kipauglautchiaq caught a whale she went down to his camp
and brought back meat and blubber for her aana.

So now this Kipauglautchiaq has caught a whale,
he walks around while they are butchering it.
And the niviaqsiaq has come down on the ice,
and when she reaches Kipauglautchiaq,
she bumps him with her shoulder, she bumps him on purpose.
Kipauglautchiaq didn't have a woman.
When she bumped his shoulder, she would say to him,
'How come you brush against me with your shoulder? I'm not your woman.'
And Kipauglautchiaq didn't have a woman.
She used to say that to him
even when the other hunters caught a whale.
First she brushed him with her shoulder, then she said,
'How come you brush against my shoulder. I'm not your woman.'
And one time after she had said this to him,
because the men had heard her speak to him,
Kipauglautchiaq followed when she left for home.
She left the ice for Tikiqaq.
The men who’d heard her speak to Kipauglautchiaq
told him to go home with her. The men whaling told him.
And when she reached her iglu, Kipauglautchiaq followed.
It didn’t seem a big place to him, the aana’s iglu.3
That night he took her for his woman, and stayed there.
They stayed there for a while, and then they quarreled.
Kipauglautchiaq took his woman to his iglu. They still quarreled.
One day she vanished. Kipauglautchiaq couldn’t find her.
He went to all the other houses in the village, but he couldn’t find her.
‘Where did you get your daughter?’ Kipauglautchiaq asked the aana.
‘From the Katchigmiu people,’ the aana told him, ‘from those Katchigmiu.4

Kipauglautchiaq left the aana’s iglu, and he travelled to the river.
When he was approaching Katchiq, where the Katchigmiut people lived,
Kipauglautchiaq saw an iglu; and a woman stood outside in front of it.
It was his woman, unexpectedly to Kipauglautchiaq, the one standing.
She was carrying a child. Insider her parka she was carrying a child.
She must have given birth after she’d left Tikiqaq.5
Before he got to her, she went inside, before Kipauglautchiaq reached
He went in after her. He said, ‘I want to take you back to Tikiqaq.’
So they went back together. They had a son. It was a caribou.
They went back towards Tikigaq. A little caribou, their son.
She put it on her back and carried it.

But they went no further
than Ipiutaaq. She insisted that they put a tent up there,
and stay away from Tikiqaq. They camped at Ipiutaaq she insisted.6
So when it grew, it started to run round, that little caribou.
And these Tikigaqmiut had heard that Kipauglautchiaq had a caribou.7
They teased him constantly about it. They asked him,
‘Kipauglautchiaq, how’s our caribou-nephew?’
And the caribou knew who was saying this about him.

Now Kipauglautchiaq and his woman went to Tikigaq,
and the caribou went with them, going on ahead of Kipauglautchiaq.
And as he went ahead, he saw a man approaching.
He recognised a man who’d teased his father,
one who’d asked him how ‘our caribou-nephew’ was doing.
They reached each other. The caribou knew him, and struck him
with his antlers.
He threw him up on his antlers and let him land on them again.
The caribou killed two men that way, because they’d taunted
Kipauglautchiaq.
And the caribou became a man as soon as they reached Tikigaq.

And Kipauglautchiaq and his wife were owners of an umiaq.8
Samaruna didn't tell me about Kipauglautchiaq's parents.9
And whenever the man-caribou was hungry, Kipauglautchiaq's woman

cut up his meat for him.
She had to cut his meat before he'd eat it.
And when Kipauglautchiaq and his woman caught a whale,
she'd put the cut-up meat beside the qulliq.10
She had a son who wasn't human in some ways,
and Kipauglautchiaq's woman had to cut his food up for him.

He wasn't human in some ways, the caribou.
He grew up. And they had visitors from Kivaliñiq and from Kuuvak.11
One of these, a woman, was a niviaqsiaq.
And the one who was a caribou and not a human asked his mother,
'What should I do? Should I go and get the niviaqsiaq, and bring
her home with me?'
Because he wanted her for his wife. So he went and fetched her,
and she got herself a man who was a caribou, the niviaqsiaq.

Now one time when Kipauglautchiaq caught a whale,
the niviaqsiaq had cut some meat up for the caribou.
He couldn't cut his meat. So she cut his meat, and put it by the qulliq.
And now it's his wife, and not the mother who prepares his meat for him.

And one time, when some people caught a whale,
the niviaqsiaq had cut some meat up for him,
and she left it for him and went back to the ice to fetch more
whale meat.
When she went down on the ice, she left the caribou behind.
And he got his antlers caught on the panniqsiun:12
it was by the qulliq,13 and he drowned in the oil of the qulliq, somehow
It must have been his meat that he was getting into.
When his wife came back, she did nothing.
The niviaqsiaq did nothing with him.
She left the body in the place she found it lying. The caribou.
Later, since it was inside the house, she smelled it.
And when she slept with the carcass, the caribou hair came off on
her side.
When she lay by the caribou, the hair came off on her. The caribou
that drowned in the qulliq.
And when it was near qauggraq,14 some time later,
she took her caribou's remains out of the house to the pisiktagvik.15
The caribou's father, Kipauglautchiaq, and his woman helped her.
When they reached the pisiktagvik, the mother and her daughter-in-law
began building a large fire.
The pisiktagvik's on the north beach, near the point at Tikigaq.
A long time ago, the men made images of caribou from snow,
and practised shooting arrows at them.

Later, they moved the pisiktagvik to near Qaŋmaqtuuq, and faced south.
But before they moved it, the pisiktagvik was in line with an iglu
belonging to an aamagiik: a great-grandmother-and child.
It was a little iglu, but the shooters had to aim directly in its path.
It was at the edge of the village. And somehow, one day,
the men found their bow-strings were no longer tight enough to shoot with.
They aimed directly in the line of the iglu.
But the aana had done something to their bow-strings,
for fear her grandchild would be wounded by an arrow.
After that they moved the pisiktagvik.
Now after they had passed out the whale flippers,
and done the skin-jump at the whaling festival,
the mother of the caribou built a fire by the remains of her son.
They piled the wood up till the fire was burning hot,
and when the fire was very hot, the mother jumped into the fire:
she too was a caribou.
She had been a human being while she built the fire.
Kipauglautchiaq put his son's remains into the fire.
And when the fire burned out, when it was completely dead,
Kipauglautchiaq saw the antlers of a female caribou appearing gradually
It was Kipauglautchiaq's wife and his son.
They left the place where they'd come up from.
A female caribou and her fawn. And they started to run inland.
The mother took her fawn with her. They left Tikigaq. That was Kipauglautchiaq.

After his wife left him, Kipauglautchiaq found another woman.
This time it was a real person.
And they left Tikigaq, and went north to near Nuvugaluaq, not far from Tikigaq.
They put a tent up near the sea, and spent the day there.
Then Kipauglautchiaq said to his wife, 'My mind is thinking of going further.'
They were camped just north of Pinu. 'I want to go further north,
to Qautaich,' Kipauglautchiaq said.
He took his kayak, and went north towards Qautaich.
When he crossed the inlet, he went towards Qautaich, where there are mountains.
Then he left his kayak, and began walking.
He stopped, and said aloud (and there was no one listening), ‘My mind is thinking that I want to jump into the water. My mind wants me to jump.’ When he said that, he ran toward the waves. He started running towards them.

He jumped towards the water. He landed on the water, but his feet did not sink in.

Having tried that, Kipauglautchiaq went back to the shore. He walked around the beach in search of something. At last he found the dead body of a lemming. He picked it up and walked back to the water.

He took the lemming with him. And said to himself, ‘I still want to jump.’ This time, when he jumped, he sank right into the water. He was carrying the lemming.

When he reached to bottom, he saw a trail that went out to the middle of the sea.

He started following the trail. Onto the trail old ivory had drifted. The old ivory had heaped up on the trail. He went on, and saw a house in front of him.

It was right in front of him. He was getting closer to it.

When he reached it, while he was outside it, a woman came out of the house.

She said to him, ‘Qamma pigaaatiiñ (You are wanted).’ He went in. When he entered, he saw a man in there. The man said to him, ‘It was who wanted you. It was I who made you come. I want you to take a piece of my parky. That is what I made you come for.’

The man turned out to be a whale: this section of the whale has white spots on the skin (i.e. under the lower jaw).

Then he said, ‘When you go back, don’t let that piece I gave you shrink to nothing before you get there.’

The man in the sea was an anatkug. Kipau glautchiaq was an anatkug.

‘If you get this piece home before it shrinks to nothing the rest of the whale will follow. If you can take a small piece back to where you came from, the rest of it will follow.

If the weather is good, the whale will drift in to where you are staying. That was at Nuvugaluaq. That is where they used to hunt belugas, long ago. Kipau glautchiaq ate a piece of maktak, and wrapped the rest up in his raincoat.

He went back. And he had been told, ‘Tell your children to watch the horizon of the sea tomorrow. The rest of the whale will come if it wants to.’ He had been told by the man who had invited him, to try to keep the
maktak the same size
But when he reached his camp, the maktak started shrinking.
That piece of maktak kept him busy. When he reached his place, he
only had a small piece with him.
So he told his children to watch the sea’s horizon the next morning.
The next morning they woke up, and the day was clear
The children watched the sea. And then they saw something approaching,
and they shouted, ‘Something’s coming! Something black is coming!’
It turned out to be a dead whale. It was floating towards them.
It came in where they were camping, and drifted up onto the beach.
They started butchering the whale. Kipauglautchiaq and his family had
a whale.
And when they’d gotten everything they wanted out of it, they stopped.
It had been a whole whale.
And Kipauglautchiaq took the jaw bones. It was hardly a small whale.
They set the jaw bones up at Nuvugaluaq.
And people started coming out from Tikigaq to where they were camping,
to find out what was going on.
Now the people started quarreling with Kipauglautchiaq over the jaw
bones.
They wanted to take one of the jaws with them. They wanted the jaw
bone from one side.
The next winter, when Kipauglautchiaq was in Qaniliqqpak, while he was
sitting in his qalgi, he said to the young men, ‘Go and fetch the jaw bones of my whale, from
Qautaich.’
So they took an open sled, and went north to fetch the jaw bones.
They didn’t have to pull hard. They brought the bones in easily.
The jaw bones were not heavy. The young men ran with them, over the
young beach-ice.
But when they reached a place where there were footprints, the sled stopped.
The load got heavy.
And they took the bones that Kipauglautchiaq had gotten, and placed
them,
one across the ceiling at one end of the qalgi, the other at the far
end of the qalgi.
This one was the jaw bone that the people had quarreled over.
That same winter when a member of the qalgi was dying, the jaw
bone that was quarreled over cracked.
It is a sign that if there is a crack in a whale's jaw bone, the
qalgi owning it won't prosper.
The jaw bone that they quarreled over cracked.

That same winter, Kipauglautchiaq spent the night out on the ice,
seal hunting.
Then the wind came up from the south. Bad weather set in and he went back to Tikigaq.
While he was at home during the bad weather, some one called in through the igalaaq,
‘Kipauglautchiaq, your nephew has drifted out. Your nephew’s drifted from the south side towards the north!’
Kipauglautchiaq didn’t keep his silence for too long. He said, ‘Manaun isn’t quick enough. That is why he’s drifted out.’
And Kipauglautchiaq started to go out. But he didn’t lower his feet through the katak. He went head first.
He went out, looking for his nephew. He saw the tracks of a polar bear, and followed them.
And he found Manaun facing the wind and weeping all alone.
When he reached him, he said, ‘Stop crying, nephew, and get on. Put your gear on your back.
Manaun saw a polar bear floating near him in the water.
He got onto the bear, and put his arms around the bear’s neck
The wind was blowing from the south, and blowing hard.
When they were getting near to shore, Kipauglautchiaq said, ‘You must use all your strength to get to the other side, to land, while you can.
If you don’t make it, you’ll go under. If you don’t make it your first try, you will go under.
It’s up to you to use your strength to get there.’ His nephew watched the land.
The wind was high
The land appeared to swing towards them, and then back again.
But Manaun jumped; he reached land, he got home. Kipauglautchiaq had turned himself into a polar bear, and brought his nephew home.
He had a polar bear charm. To be sure, he had a polar bear charm.

Told in Iñupiaq (north Alaskan Eskimo) by Jimmie Killigivuk (born 1891), and translated by Carol Omnik and myself in Point Hope (Tikigaq), Alaska, Spring 1976, this text is one of about seventy unipkaat (legends, ancient stories) and uqaluktuaq (ancestor histories) that I recorded between late 1975 and summer 1977. This story is unipkaaq, though the contextual details of Tikigaq life (scenes at whaling camp and in the ceremonial house etc.) suggest that elements from more recent ancestor stories of the last two hundred years or so have been combined with the older mythic form.

In this prose version, I have attempted to follow the movement of the narrator’s voice by giving each rhythmic unit of Iñupiaq a line of its own, though without trying to reproduce the subtleties of spoken Eskimo: for there is nothing remotely equivalent in English. There are, however, three linguistic elements which I have tried to keep in balance here: 1) the structure of the original narration, literally translated from tape, with all repetitions and narrator’s comments preserved, so as to give a sense of the specific
performance; 2) the idiomatic energy of Carol Omnik’s language: her English deriving much of its force in the translation-context from the fact that she is thinking in two languages at once as she speaks her English version (peppered as it is with Ifupiaq, which I have kept); 3) my own clerical/editorial adjustments, involving lineation mainly: this means playing back the Ifupiaq tape with Carol’s translation to guide me, and trying to find a language which will preserve and combine the linguistic character of 1) and 2).

The first part of the story presents Kipauglautchiaq as an ambiguous character: he is represented as a whale boat owner (umialik), and yet in terms of post Birnirk whale-hunting culture (c. A.D.600-1977), this would have been impossible without the practical and ceremonial collaboration of a wife. Also, an umialik would certainly never have been the butt of his own crew’s sexual badinage, let alone the object of a young woman’s sexual offensive in the context of the ice camp, where female avoidance was a primary rule.24

The drama of what follows the sexual encounter issues to some extent from these contradictions having been set up: for it turns out that the woman is not originally from Tikigaq, but comes from a (possibly mythological) nunamiviuq (caribou-hunting, inland) Eskimo group, having been adopted, at some unspecified time, by the aana (grandmother). Her funny, coarse behavior on the ice is thus both excused and ridiculed by the taqiugmiut (maritime Eskimo) story teller, the comedy of the situation deriving part of its sweetness from its dangerous proximity to the taboo mentioned above. The events which follow — sexual victory, then a sequence of humiliating disasters — represent a frightening interpenetration of opposing worlds which eventually Kipauglautchiaq crowns with his own initiation as an anatkuq (shaman). But the direction of Kipauglautchiaq’s fate has already been suggested at the beginning of the story, for he has plunged headlong from the ribald company of men, into the realm of an aanagiik (grandmother-and-grandchild) with its inevitable associations in the minds of an Eskimo audience with the supernatural; and the supernatural is contagious.

The episode of the caribou-man and his mother, (being for Kipauglautchiaq, part punishment and part initiation,) would require more discussion-space than is available. Briefly, the underlying drama lies, I think, in the uneasy mutual competition and dependence that existed between nunamit (inland) and taqiugmiut (maritime) Eskimos, each group being ontologically identified with the principle animal of its ceremonial/subsistence sphere (i.e. whale and caribou).

Throughout northern Alaska, the two groups met annually for summer trading: but despite the necessity for this (particularly among the nunamit who required seal and whale oil more than the taqiugmiut needed the caribou skins the former offered in exchange) there was still a good deal of hostility between them, and they avoided one another as far as possible at other times. The mockery directed at Kipauglautchiaq and his caribou-son, and the caribou’s eventual drowning in the seal oil lamp while he was trying to get at his whale meat thus has part of its explanation in this traditional rivalry.

Out of this first chapter of the story flows Kipauglautchiaq’s initiation as an anatkuq (shaman). His alliance with a woman who is seen simultaneously as belonging to another tribe and another dimension of reality must be taken as the equivalent of the initiatory shamanic vision. In effect, the whole phantasmagoric episode of his marriage and paternity, is a visionary experience, outside the contour of ‘normal’ village life, in which Kipauglautchiaq, as actor plays only a minor, shadowy art. On the departure of his caribou family for the inland hills, Kipauglautchiaq is suddenly re-established at the center of the story and promptly marries a ‘real person’ (Ifupiaq: real human, i.e. Eskimo) and plunges straight into the exercise of shamanic power.

Now he takes a spirit journey to the sea bed at Qautaich, about sixteen miles north of Tikigaq village.25 He accomplishes his descent by means of a charm (aannuaaq) associated with the place, rather than with his person, which is unusual. On the sea bed, Kipauglautchiaq meets a man who is possibly the iñua (owner, spirit) of Qautaich. But he is also a whale or the ilitquesiq (spirit) of a whale recently dead, whose carcass Kipauglautchiaq is promised, on the fulfilment of certain conditions, the next morning. The whale arrives, and its jaw bone is later installed in the qalgi (ceremonial house): Kipauglautchiaq’s shamanic tour de force is thus seen to re-integrate him into the very center of the whale-cult ceremonial from which his previous (caribou oriented) experience had separated him.

The final episode, in which Kipauglautchiaq assumes the shape of a polar bear, illustrates the function of the shaman’s personal aannuaaq (charm). The snout of the
polar bear was considered perhaps the most powerful *aanuq* in the shamanic range, implying as it does that the helping spirit (*tuunnuaq*) of the shaman comes from the polar/bear itself. Only the most powerful shamans would have access to this source of medicine, coming as it does from the sea: all other *aanuqs* (apart from bird charms) having their origin in land animals (brown bear, squirrel, wolf, peregrine, etc.)

Having entered history on the sea ice, in the secular role of *umialik* (whale boat owner), Kipauqautchaq has now returned—via a process of disintegration—and the story leaves him at the height of his now sacred powers, on the sea ice once again, once more integrated—this time fully—with the sea, as is proper for a Tikigaqmiu.

**A Note on Pronunciation:**

vê approximates French *r*

q—uvular stop

n—nasal velar, as in *singer*

Examples:

- Kipauqautchaq: Kip-or-lo-chak
- Tikigaq: Tik-er-ak
- taqiuqmiu: tar-i-o-miu
- aanuq: ahh-n-ahk
- tuunnuaq: toon-n-ahk

**Notes**

1. woman between 14 and 20

2. grandmother

3. sod house

4. a group of inland, caribou-hunting Eskimos

5. parka - contemporary Eskimo-American usage

6. Two miles inland from Tikigaq

7. people of Tikigaq

8. skin boat

9. storyteller's comment Samaruna: the storyteller's uncle

10. seal oil lamp

11. south of Tikigaq

12. drying rack

13. seal oil lamp

14. whaling festival

15. The area the men use to practice shooting arrows.

16. one of the *qaliich*, ceremonial houses.

17. Tniupiaq - real person, or Eskimo

18. shaman

19. storyteller's comment

20. whale skin and blubber

21. one of the *qaliich*, ceremonial houses. (singular: *qalga*)

22. iglu skylight

23. entrance hole

24. Cf Rasmussen’s *Alaskan Eskimos*, XVII: ‘A hunter must keep animal and woman hunting separate. Women are *agdarmartut* (subject to cult rule). And the animals dread women’s impurity. (In Point Hope dialect, *aglaigitchuq*.)

25. It is no coincidence, surely, that fossil mastodon ivory is still to be found on the beach from which Kipauqautchaq leapt onto the ‘path of ivory.’

26. The whale charm, *agviqaq*, was an effigy, and did not come from the actual body of the animal, as did all the other animal charms.
This Ainu mythic song of the Iburi Ainu was recorded in writing and published by the talented young Ainu woman of Horobetsu, Chiri Yukie. The text, together with Yukie's Japanese translation, is in *Ainu shinyō shū* ("Ainu god-songs") (Tokyo, Kyōdo Kenkyū Sha, 1923). The song was sung with the burden Konkuwa. The meaning of the burden is not clear.

The speaker is the Owl God (*kamui-chikap kamui*). In this song, the Owl God is residing in the land of the humans, of which he is the guardian. But at the end of the song, his work completed, he ascends into the heavens, leaving "a most mighty warrior, a youthful warrior" (*shino rametok, upen rametok*) behind him to watch over the human homeland.

The other personages who appear in the song include a crow boy (*pashkur okkayo*), a mountain jay (*metot eyami*), and a dipper boy (*katken okkayo*). The crow is the hondo jungle crow (*Corvus coronoides*), a type of crow which was disliked by Ainu. The dipper (the Siberian black-bellied dipper, *Cinculus pallasii pallasii*) was regarded as a particularly auspicious bird by the Hokkaido Ainu and frequently appears in their epics as a messenger.

In this song, the Owl God sends a messenger to the heavens to find out the reason why famine has broken out in the land of the humans. The Owl God teaches the humans how to observe the proper hunting and fishing rituals in order to prevent recurrences of famine in the future.

This song, which is especially important from the mythological point of view, was introduced in outline by my friend David Guss in a previous issue of *Alcheringa* (vol. 3, no. 1, p. 24).
If only there were such a one, 
I would send him as a messenger 
to the heavens 
bearing five 
and a half messages!"

While saying these words, 
I beat time 
on top of the lid 
of a wine-tub with a hoop around it. 
Then someone [appeared] 
at the door [and said:] 
"Who but me 
is eloquent enough 
to be trusted 
with a message?"

At these words, 
I looked and saw 
that it was 
Crow Boy. 
I invited him in. 
then I began 
to beat time 
on top of the lid 
of the wine-tub with a hoop around it 
while I recited 
the message 
which Crow Boy 
was to bear. 
Three days went by. 
When I was just reciting 
the third message, 
I looked up and saw 
that Crow Boy 
had dozed off, nodding his head 
behind the hearth frame. 
When that happened, 
I flew into 
a terrible rage. 
I thrashed Crow Boy, 
feathers and all, 
and killed him. 
Then once again, 
I began to beat 
on top of the lid 
of the wine-tub with a hoop around it, [saying:]
"I wish for someone who might be trusted as a messenger! If only there were such a one, I would send him as a messenger to the heavens bearing five and a half messages!"

When I said this, again someone [appeared] at the door [and said:] "Who but me is eloquent enough to be sent as a messenger to the heavens?"

At these words, I looked and saw that it was Mountain Jay. I invited him in. Then once again I began to beat time on top of the lid of the wine-tub with a hoop around it while I recited the five and a half messages. Four days went by. While I was just reciting the fourth message, Mountain Jay dozed off, nodding his head, behind the hearth frame. I got angry, thrashed Mountain Jay, feathers and all, and killed him. Then once again I began to beat time on top of the lid of the wine-tub with a hoop around it, [saying:] "I wish for someone who is eloquent enough to be trusted"
yayotuwaship
an yakne
kanto orun
sonko emko
e-iwan sonko
chi-kore okai,"

itak-ash aike
kanakan kunip
oripak kane
shia woraye,
inkar-ash awa,
katken okkayo
kamui shiri ne
harkiso ne
e-horari.
Shirki chiki,
kut-o-shintoko
puta kashike
chi-orep kane,
sonko emko
e-iwan sonko
kunne hene
tokap hene
chi-e-charanke.
Inkar-ash ko
Ikatken okkayo
nep echiu ruwe
oar isamno
ikokanu wa
okai aine,
tokap rerko
kunne rerko
chi-ukopishki
iwan rerko
ne ita
chi-ye okere ko nani
rikun shui ka
chi-oposore,
kanto orun
oman wa isam.
Ne sonko
ikkewe anak,
aini moshir
ekem-ush wa
ainu pito utar

with a message!
If there were such a one,
I would send him
to the heavens
with five
and a half messages!"

As I was saying this,
someone
came inside
with a respectful manner.
I looked and saw [that it was]
Dipper Boy.
Godlike in appearance,
he sat down
on the left side of the fireplace.
When he did that,
I beat time
on the top of the lid
of the wine-tub with a hoop around it
while I intoned,
both night
and day,
the five
and a half messages.
When I looked, I saw
that Dipper Boy
was listening
intently,
with no signs
of weariness at all.
Day after day,
and night after night,
altogether
for six days and nights
[I continued]. Then,
as soon as I had finished reciting,
he flew out right away
through the smokehole
and went flying off
into the heavens.
Now, the import
of the message was this.
There was famine
in the land of the humans,
and the humans
were on the verge of starving to death at any moment.
When I looked to see what was the reason that this had happened, I found that it was because the God of the Game and the God of the Fish in the heavens had taken counsel together and decided not to send any deer and not to send any fish.
No matter what the gods said to them, they would not pay the slightest attention.
Thus, when the humans would go into the mountains to hunt, there would be no deer, and when they would go to the rivers to fish, there would be no fish.
Seeing this, I became angry, and this was why I sent a message to the God of the Game and the God of the Fish in the heavens.
After that, day after day went by.
Then finally a pattering was heard in the skies, and someone came inside.
I looked and saw Dipper Boy, now looking even more beautiful than before.
The features of a warrior stood out majestically on his countenance. He intoned the message in reply. This was the reason why the God of the Game and the God of the Fish in the heavens had withdrawn the supply of deer and withdrawn the supply of fish until this day. When the humans hunt deer, they beat the deer on their heads with pieces of wood. When they skin them, they throw away the heads of the deer and leave them just as they are right there on the woodlands. And when they catch fish, they beat the fish on their heads with pieces of rotten wood. The deer come home naked and in tears to the God of the Game. The fish come home to the God of the Fish holding in their mouths pieces of rotten wood. The God of the Game and the God of the Fish, indignant at this, took counsel together and decided to withdraw the supply of deer and to withdraw the supply of fish. However, the God of the Game and the God of the Fish said that they would provide plenty of deer and provide plenty of fish.
if the humans would treat the deer well
and would treat the fish well after this.
He recited in detail what the God of the Game
and the God of the Fish had said.
After I heard this, I praised Dipper Boy.
And when I looked I saw that it was true.
The humans had been treating the deer
and the fish badly.
After that, I taught the humans in their sleep,
in their dreams that they must not
do such things after this.
And the humans also suddenly became aware of this.
Ever since then, they decorate the clubs for beating [the fish] on the heads beautifully
and use these to kill the fish.
When they hunt deer, they decorate the heads of the deer beautifully
and give them inau.
As a result, the fish come home with rejoicing to the God of the Fish, holding in their mouths
otta paye, beautiful inau.
yuk utar
nepetneno
ashir sapa kar kane
Yuk-kor-kamui
otta hoshippa.
Ne wa anpe
Yuk-kor-kamui
Chep-kor-kamui
e-nupetne kusu,
poronno chep atte,
poronno yuk atte.
Ainu pito utar
tane anakne
nep erannak
nep e rushui
somo kino okai,
chi-nukat chiki
chi-eramushinne.
Chi-okai anak
tane onne-ash
tane rettek-ash
ki wa kushu,
kanto orun
paye-ash kuni
chi-ramu a korka,
chi-e-punkine
ainu moshir
kem-ush wa
ainu pito utar
kem-ekot kushki ko
chi-e-kottanu
somo kino
paye-ash ka
eaikap kushu,
tane pakno
okayash a korka,
tane anakne
nep a-erannakpe ka
isam kushu
shino rametok
upen rametok
un-okake ta
ainu moshir
chi-e-pukinere,
tane kanto orun
paye-ash shiri tapan.
ari Kotan-kor-kamui kamui ekashi
isoitak orowa kanto orun oman, ari.

Thus narrated the Owl God, the divine
grandfather, before we went to the
heavens, they say.4

1) The bows would snap with a buzzing sound when the
warriors would twang the strings. The Owl God compares his
own voice, in his younger days, with this snapping sound.

2) In fishing for salmon and sea-trout, regardless of the
method by which the fish were caught (whether by haul seines,
fish traps, or spearing), it was absolutely necessary to beat the
fish over the heads with special types of clubs (i-sapa-kik-ni,
"wood for beating them over the head") made of willow
branches about 1.5 inch in diameter cut to a length of about 1
foot 5 inches. Bark is removed from one end to make a square­
shaped grip, and the bark is left on the remaining part of the
stick. At about the middle, curled wood shavings were whittled
on the four sides. The clubs probably evolved from some sort of
primitive fishing implement, but with the gradual evolution of
religious ideas these clubs assumed a cultic, rather than an
economic significance. The custom of beating salmon and sea­
trout over their heads appears to be a rather common practice
among many peoples of the North, and Kubodera says that it is
practiced today in salmon fishing along the Mogami River in
Japan's Yamagata prefecture. (Kubodera Itsuhiko, Ainu
jojishi Shinyo, seiden no kenkyuc, Tokyo, Iwanami Shoten,
1977, pp. 338 - 339)

3) Inau are ritual artifacts, whittled sticks carved from
willow branches decorated with curled shavings. See David
Guss, "The power is great: God songs and epics of the Ainu,"

4) The final "signing-off" formula is appended in prose (not
sung) by the reciter. It concludes the song and identifies the
speaker in the song. Everything up to this concluding formula
has been narrated in the first person singular by the Owl God
himself.
Ulli Beier

The Position of the Artist in a Changing Society

In the previous lecture we examined the position of the artist in four different traditional societies. We found that his status varied in each; that his function in society was different and that the way people evaluated his work also differed in all four societies.

However, there was something they all had in common. They were all artists who lived in a more or less closed society. All their work was directed towards that society; and in each community the artist shared the same basic concepts with the community. He knew exactly what his people expected of him, and if he was skillful, he found no difficulty in being completely in tune with his society. He found it easy to express their aspirations in his work, and the community in turn did not find it hard to read the artist’s symbolism. The style of an art form changed only slowly over the centuries. The people knew what to expect of their artists and they were not suddenly shocked by new and difficult forms or images.

The artist in such a community works within a rigidly confined aesthetic framework. His individuality and his personality must be expressed within the clearly defined framework of that society.

A Yoruba carver could not suddenly carve a face in which the eyes were abstracted into concentric circles. An Orokolo artist could not suddenly make an Hohao board which showed such anatomical features as eyelids, eyelashes, or cheekbones. A Trobriand artist could not suddenly begin to produce photographic likenesses. Such innovations could not suddenly begin to produce photographic likenesses. Such innovations could not take place as long as the conceptual basis of the art remained the same.

Colonialism changed all this drastically. It superimposed new cultural values on the old ones. Even when the people did not accept these new values or refused to share in the Coloniser’s basic concepts, the situation had altered drastically, because for the first time the people in New Guinea or Africa were able to compare their own set of values and artistic conventions with those of other people. For the first time they were made to realise that a totally different interpretation of the world was possible, and because of the technological and military superiority of the foreigners it must have appeared to them that the new concept and values were more efficient.

Thus in Colonial times all these societies were torn wide open. They were exposed to a bewildering lot of new ideas, not only Christianity, but several brands of Christianity — often hostile to each other, not just Western education, but different types of it.

For the artist, life became extremely difficult. The ritual and magical functions of his work suddenly became questionable and often they became obsolete.

Whereas hitherto his visual experience had been limited to the works of fellow artists in his own community, or perhaps to the work of artists in one or two neighbouring communities, he was now exposed to a bewildering lot of impressions: plaster madonnas in Catholic Churches, illustrations in children’s school books, advertising, the work of Papua New Guinean artists from remote areas seen at agricultural festivals or in artefact shops.

Even more confusing was the fact that he was suddenly working for entirely new clients. His own community needed him less and less. The objects which carvers had produced for generations to fulfill the society’s religious needs: initiation masks, ancestral boards, carved posts for ceremonial houses had suddenly become obsolete. The people who did want these objects were now outsiders, Europeans, who did not really understand the true function of these objects, who mostly did not care about that function, and who at the very best were interested in them, but were never practitioners of the religious or magical rites that were associated with these works of art.

Just try to think of the absurdity of the situation: the very people who had consciously or unconsciously destroyed the very basis for the art form, who had helped to destroy the very culture that had produced it now went back to the carver and asked him to be “authentic.” The carver was suddenly asked to pretend that the concepts that had inspired his father were still his own that all the changes that had taken place in his village
did not really exist for him while he was carving.

Let us look at a specific situation. Sir Albert Maori Kiki tells us in his autobiography that the era wo, the ceremonial houses, of his village were burnt down in 1939. For a number of reasons the people decided not to rebuild them: they felt that the Christian converts had already undermined the whole structure of their beliefs by publicly exposing initiation secrets to women; the community was already divided into Christians and non-Christians, thus breaking up the cohesion.

Moreover the absence of many young men, who were trying to earn their tax money in Port Moresby, made it virtually impossible to carry out the great initiation cycle known as Hevehe. In other words: the people had lost faith in the values of their culture. They considered themselves defeated. It was pointless to build ceremonial houses when the men were unable to carry out its proper function. It seemed totally pointless to carve Hohao boards, when people had come to believe that their ancestral spirits were powerless to help them through these difficult new times. Quite logically, therefore, they stopped making such objects that had no function in their lives. In fact they did not produce any traditional art works for a generation.

Then suddenly in the mid sixties a Catholic father resident in Orokolo asked some of the older men to carve him some Hohao. They had never done anything like that in their lives and they could not see any proper reason for it; but since money was offered for the job, they agreed.

The motives of the Catholic priest were vague and varied: a desire to find an income for the people, an attempt to demonstrate an interest in the culture, and the sheer pleasure he got out of receiving some nice carvings. The Hohao boards he acquired from these new carvers were, of course, not ancestral spirits to him. They were merely decorative objects to hang on a wall.

To the Orokolo artists this was confusing. It must have been incomprehensible to them: after being told to abandon the ways of their fathers as “evil,” they were now told that the art works of the past were things they could revive as long as the objects had no real meaning for them and as long as they did not use them in any ritual context!

Under these strange circumstances the artists produced some rather fine carvings at first, but they soon began to abandon some of the rigid rules that had dominated their work in the past. After all it did not matter to the European whether a certain design or symbol belonging to the Kaiva Mauka clan suddenly appeared on an Hohao board of the Maori clan. They began to mix up their designs and patterns freely; they became more and more ornate, less austere than in the past and they introduced a greater variety of colour.

This was a perfectly natural process and it could have led to a new art form, more appropriate to the times. The artist was suddenly given somewhat more freedom to make individual decisions about the use of the traditional material. He could invent entirely new forms and work in a much more flexible context.

As soon as their activity assumed commercial proportions a stop was put to this natural development. The traders who began to visit Orokolo now insisted on art that looked “authentic.” Their clients were not interested in works of art; they simply wanted a “genuine” artifact from Papua New Guinea.

And so the artists individualism—only just begun—was immediately suppressed again. They were turned into manufacturers of marketable objects. They turned out carvings in whose value they did not believe. The culture of their fathers, (for it is definitely no longer their own culture) was turned into a consumer object.

It is simply not possible that under such circumstances the standard of the art remains the same. When people no longer believe in what they are doing, then clearly the work must deteriorate.

The Orokolo situation is fairly typical for many parts of Papua New Guinea. There is one remarkable exception, however, and that is the situation among the Gogodala of the Western District. Here the unrelenting Unevangelized Fields Mission got the people to destroy their entire cultural property. In 1972 Mr. Anthony Crawford could only find a single old carving (a diwaka drum) in the whole area.

Crawford persuaded the Gogodala to reactivate their carving. It became evident very soon that the mission had left a vacuum in place of the culture they had destroyed. One of the older men told him: “We are like posts.” Crawford argued that they could have a sense of history and a cultural identity and yet remain Christians, that reactivating their carving need not mean a complete return to the old ways.

The Gogodala built a traditional longhouse, a magnificent 36 metre structure and converted it into a cultural centre. Within a few years they were able to reproduce their entire artistic repertoire of the past: the gawa tao or totemic emblems, the ikewa dance masks, the large ligalle masks and the intricately
carved canoes.

The long house today serves as a magnificent museum of Gogodala art and also as a shop. Some traditional ceremonies have also been reactivated.

There can be no doubt that this is the most remarkable cultural revival we have witnessed in Papua New Guinea. From a depressed, disoriented people, the Gogodala have been turned into dignified men with a sense of identity. It is impossible to tell, however, at this stage, what will become of the experiment. If the Gogodala prove strong enough to create their own hybrid culture, from a fusion of Christian beliefs they have already accepted, and from some of the revived cultural practices of the past, then a new art form could emerge vital and valid, because it is giving expression to a living culture. If on the other hand, the Gogodala cultural revival remains merely an historical reenactment of a culture the people have abandoned, then the art will soon be thoroughly commercialized. Already the carvers in Balimo are seeking outlets in the Port Moresby artefact shops. Already the dealers are having some influence on what is being carved. Already the revival is becoming a trade. In the long run cultural revival and tourist trade are incompatible.

It has been argued quite wrongly by many people, and at times even by our government, that the tourist trade helps to keep traditional art forms alive. Tourist trade may provide an income to the carver, but at the same time it also turns him from an artist into a manufacturer.

In cultural terms this is disastrous, not only because it produces a lot of bad art, but also because it impedes the growth of a genuine contemporary art.

The artists of, say, Tambanam village should today concern themselves with the current issues of that village. Their art should reflect the changes of society, should comment on Christianity, or kiaps or independence or elections. But it is virtually impossible for these artists to free themselves from their tradition. The pressure is too great and money is too readily available for lifeless repetitions of objects of the past.

It is therefore no accident, I think, that most of Papua New Guinea’s contemporary artists come from areas that have no strong artistic tradition and therefore no tourist pressure on their artistic production. "There can come a point when tradition can also become a burden."

Most of Papua New Guinea’s successful contemporary artists are Highlanders: Kauage, Akis, Jakupa, Ruki Fame, William Onglo, Barnabas India. Kambau comes from the Madang area, but from a village that lost its artistic tradition long ago. Significantly, he does not see this as a disadvantage. He sees it as freedom: freedom to use what he finds useful in any Papuan New Guinea tradition. Freedom from any rigid convention. Freedom to experiment.

With the exception of Akis all these artists live and work in Port Moresby. But even though Akis spends most of his time in his home in the Simbai Valley, he is artistically productive only during his visits to Port Moresby.

The centre of the country’s artistic activity has in fact shifted from the rural areas to Port Moresby. This is where the country’s contemporary art is being born. This is not only so because the major Institution training artists is located in the capital, but because the city rather than the village allows people to feel and act as individuals. It is so because the excitement as well as the misery of the city provides the stimulus for new artistic creation. And it is so, because the city provides a new kind of client for the artist.

The first New Guinean to become a professional artist in the context of Port Moresby was Mathias Kauage. Being the first he had to experience the difficulties, the doubts and the loneliness of the modern artist even more acutely than others.

He was the first to work completely outside a traditional context. He lived far from his Chimbu village; the values that still guided his people at home, did not apply in the city. His work was not based on any traditional forms; he had no set of rules, no convention handed down from father to son to guide him. He had to feed off his own imagination all the time. He had to make artistic decisions that none of his forebears ever needed to make. He was not sure whom he was working for, nor who his clients were. There was no ready market for such work in 1969. His clients at the time were mostly Europeans, but they were not tourists. Tourists look for authentic artefacts; the people who bought Kauage’s work were art lovers and intellectuals who were not interested in acquiring a souvenir. They were interested in what he, Kauage as an individual, had to say.

There was no way in which Kauage could anticipate their taste or their expectations. He did not know their
background or their own set of values. Yet, inspite of being illiterate, he entered an international world. His work, to them, became a symbol of a new Papua New Guinea. He represented the urban society, and their adaptability to new situations.

Kauage represents the world of the city in his pictures: he shows us the cars and helicopters and aeroplanes. He depicts the cowboys he sees in the cinema. But all that is seen through his own eyes, with a detached sense of humour. He is not part of it all, but he has learned to live with it.

There was a time when the loneliness of his position as an individual artist, living outside his village, having little to say to his own people, being misunderstood by them, depressed him deeply. In those days he produced a series of very gloomy drawings that expressed his frustration with the world. They were impotent looking figures with large heads and heavy bodies, but no limbs, the hands and feet directly sprouting from the rump! They will remain a testimony to his personal agony and also to his triumph.

Kauage changed the themes of his art numerous times; he changed his style, his technique, and his media. This in itself defines him clearly as a contemporary artist. In traditional art there was very little change. A man acquired a repertoire of carving and stuck with that all his life. He worked with the same materials and the same tools. Kauage on the other hand started with drawings, went on to wood cuts, then to copper beating, to print making, and finally to painting. He depicted a very wide range of subjects: phantasy animals, romantic lovers, statuesque mothers, footballers, cowboys, helicopters, the independence celebrations, and many more.

In some sense Kauage has ceased to be a Chimbu. Although he still fully identifies with his immediate people, it is true to say, I think, that as an artist he is a Papua New Guinean and not a Chimbu. This is one important function fulfilled by the artists of this generation: it is they who jointly create the national identity.

No cultural policy, no government pronouncements, no wearing of national dress on Friday can create this identity. All they can do is create a favourable climate for artists to work in.

A national identity cannot easily be defined in words; nor need it be. But it must be created artistically, if it is going to mean more than political rhetoric. Thus in one sense the loneliness of the modern artist is the result of his peculiar position in society. The society in which he was born has lost its complete hold over him. Many of its values have crumbled or have become obsolete. Its austere rules and limited concepts have become too narrow for him. The new society into which he moves is something much less defined. It is a society in a state of flux, in which no two individuals hold exactly the same values. It is a society which the artist himself, consciously or unconsciously, helps to form. If he is successful he will create the images with which a new generation can identify and which identify them to outsiders.

Bibliographical Note

Godala Cultural Revival; Balimo, Western District, Papua

1) The newly constructed longhouse that serves as the cultural centre
2) Gogodala clan designs: produced for sale
3) Canoe front
4) Carver at work in cultural centre
5) Steps leading to cultural centre
Hohao Boards, Orokolo

Hohao (ancestral boards) carved outside the cultural context for sale to Father Compte

6) Hohao with a naturalistic figure, drawn by a school boy
7) Hohao, heavily overloaded with design; the carver is no longer concerned with using the correct clan designs because his client does not understand them; the sacred designs have become decoration.
8) Hohao board by Avavo Kava
9) Hohao board by Hauri
10) Hohao board by Hauri
Akis: A Contemporary Artist

An artist from the Simbai valley. There is no tradition of painting or sculpture in his village. Self-decoration and shield designs are the only art forms. Akis started drawing animals while on a visit to Port Moresby. He worked with Georgina Beier and became the first villager to hold an individual art show in Papua New Guinea.

11) Wallabies; one of Akis' earliest drawings (1969)
12) Lizard
13) Spirits
14) Snakes, lizard, cassowary
15) Two warriors with stone axes, lizard, cassowary, wallaby
16) Two men with fighting shield
Ruki Fame: Iron Sculpture

Ruki Fame came to Port Moresby from the Eastern Highlands and became a spot welder. Later he worked with Georgina Beier to become an artist, working in iron. He then spent several years in the National Art School and is now an independent artist.

17) Iron sculpture
18) Iron sculpture
Kauage: PNG's First Professional Artist

Kauage was encouraged to become an artist after seeing Akis' first exhibition. He came to work with Georgina Beier. Like Akis, he had no formal education at all. He has exhibited widely in Australia, also in the US.

19) Ball Game (copper beating)
20) Women and birds (copper)
21) Phantasy creature (copper)

22) Rider thrown off cow (aluminium)
23) Drawing
24) Drawing
25) Drawing
26) Drawing (woman dressed for dance)
27) Drawing
28) Drawing
29) Drawing (man in aeroplane)
Among the Pueblos, direction is one way or another, so the center is conceived of a separate direction in itself—a concept which is quite familiar to me beyond a ritual sense.

For one who knows it:
That one will be braver than I am.

1

Crystal of the edge
—the edge in being—
step no farther.
Being counts:
A stillness
(still)
in count.

2

And with such bells as these.
a sound as no wind makes
against the shell—an ear
to thunderous tide—
break off—
no wind
no sound—
no tide is here
at point immoveable
(yet moves the rest of it)
the all of being.

3

As if the roots tapped blood
—the branches wept it—
these ground veins knotted
into winter
—flaring sun—
that stillness on the fields.

4

for John Taggart

The center—if the center is
‘one’s own’, a place
for placing—peg for owning—
bullseye—aware of it,
the arrow on, and
let go.
To destroy the sight
on and one and own.
These to feather it.

5

Attached to the center—
this—an ash
suspended in the rising heat.
Nerveless, it dances
in another life.
Given, from below,
the burning falls.
6
a prism — lure of fire
in facet —
let the breaking light
cohere in heat again.
And may it head itself:
That what moves most,
moves least.

7
A mite within the wheel—
move it gently,
that it does not die
away from center,
though it does not move
within it:
Death by fire or flood.

8
And I might pierce the leaf
to draw its blood—
raise sap in winter—
sweat it out—
a ghost of living,
yet a life in stillness.
The seasons clock at center.
In its silence,
pass it by.

9
Whatever clouds arise
must rise in sequence,
twice
at least, or further,
bend away.
The form is the center
(not without its off
angle)

10
Purity of landscape—
I said that?
Rising into the morning,
neither right nor left—
nor towards / away from sunlight.
Rising in and out—
a beam of focus.

11
Colors in the blend—
the greens and reds of living
—what the life might be—
length for heat, and chill
—the blues — the paling
vortex.
Center and set out.
I spread out in the eye, still center.
To know the man, I must know the others, and their others. I cannot.
Purpose falls — purpose / full.

As slowly as they move around themselves, heat and flame reduce
(smoke and ash)
the log remains— smaller— bit and bit.
Its density spread— the glow at focus.
My face — this room.

Compare these sizes— have done
and be damned— there are none.
No ones.
The hold on or over, no hold
barred
and opened.
Break me no breaks.

for Simon Ortiz

The place of the stone —your own stone— is the center.
At the rest of it— root snaking around the stone, holding the stone as if in a fist, drawing water around it. You do not stand above or below it. The spirit of the stone is the spirit of the man. Directions move from there.

If your hand reaches it, leave the artifact, and leave its place. Back into the light once more. Forget it.
The center is of breath— of blood and sinew. That direction is your own.

Find me— find and hide. I am, and at once I am met. I dissolve. Spirit is for other eyes.
Make of it the center as an interest: Lose that interest. It wills what it wills. And you.

Pressure at the bone —the sides of the bone grasped— —a tool—a shaping— flake of stone or glass. It touches fire— tempers it, and in itself. Ah, this morning clamoring for day —light burst— one and all places.

Forthcoming in Alcheringa

Three tales from the Sierra Norte de Puebla, translated from the Nahuatl by Tim Knab
A new translation of the opening of the Popul Vuh, by Dennis Tedlock.
Akan hunters' songs, translated by Simeon Asiama
An essay on the politics of ethnopoetics, by Stanley Diamond.

New translations of Clackamas Chinook stories by Dell Hymes, with facing-page texts in a new Native American font.
The 1524 dialogues between Aztec and Spanish priests, translated by Jorge Klor de Alva.
Aztec poetry on pregnancy, childbirth, and the deification of women who died in childbirth, translated by Thelma Sullivan.
The story of At-kewisanik, Bear-woman, by Nadine K. O'Brien.

December 2, 1976—January 1, 1978
Dell Hymes

The Grounding of Performance and Text in a Narrative View of Life

I write here of a concern with uses of language that enable one to convey aspects of what one learns and knows in ethnography, aspects of language use that are literary, verbal art, rather than common scholarly prose. This seems to me radical and essential. More and more I am convinced that many problems in our society cannot even be recognized without recognizing first that our received uses of language prevent us from recognizing certain forms of knowledge. In some privileged circles or circles of intimates, anecdote, joke, wit—convincing expression—serve, but in public circles validation of knowledge requires apparatus of a sort that prevents direct expression, and excludes most people.

Here I think is a fundamental point. For a democratic society and a democratic anthropology, uses of language need to be continuous as between anthropologists and citizens. There is a highly abstract and technical pole, to be sure, but there is an essential area in which narrative statement, and the import of key phrases and expressive reflection, is vital. We don’t know how to admit that. We need reflection, critical assessment of why it is in our own lives we do believe things that come to us in these ways—it’s not merely subjective. And in order to convey some of what we know we have to cultivate ways of expressing it that are ‘literary’.

The belief that one can’t be personally present in what one states is obviously involved here. The trend toward acceptance of a reflexive, critical perspective should help, but again, this is not a matter of infinite regress or mere subjectivity. The warrant for it all is that it is obviously true that in daily life, in the most important decisions of our lives, we rely and often rely successfully, on knowledge in just such a form—the memorable thing that someone said, the feeling tone and texture of an occasion. So we get into areas that go back to Hegel on aesthetic knowledge, on the way in which a configuration, itself seen for the first time, causes one suddenly to ‘know’ something that in a sense one had known, but now recognized. Goffman’s writings are full of this when at their best and this, I think, accounts for his success.

I don’t have a fully worked out view of all this, but think it on the right track and akin to Williams’ notion of the news in poems that people die every day for lack of.

So: a reinvented anthropology, not haunted by positivistic conscience, able to accept the personal and reflexive dimension of knowledge and still accept what is known as knowledge indeed, able to accept the aesthetic dimension that is inseparable from some aspects of what people know and what ethnographers come to know through people—treating the aesthetic functioning of language as an anthropological problem, as a foundation for ethnography, in its full range, from the crystallization of verbal artistry in community texts to the use of verbal artistry in the conveying of ethnographic knowledge—a forum for that would be a great thing.

All this ties in with some thoughts of last week about the narrative function of language. Virginia Hymes and I were reflecting on the special quality of use of language in life among Indian friends at Warm Springs. Something one comes to have a sense of through being around them for awhile. In one way it is a sense of a weighted quality to incident in personal lives. As when one friend Saturday told us that her son had been out to look at a root cellar her family had built many years ago. He came back to say, “You know it’s still good. I think we could use it.” All this in the context of a visit off the road to where an old man had lived years ago, the house now fallen in, and the barn, nothing disturbed but only gradually reassimilated to the land. Hazel had lived nearby when young, the old man had come over to their place when lonesome. One bike lay prone against a slight rise, a magnificent red bronze, green growing around and through the lines of the structure, the lowest and nearest point, a pedal, already partly within the soil. Hazel was looking for an old-style wooden trough (analogous to a canoe) that the
old man had had out for watering horses, it was gone, she realized it must be the very one that the tribe had installed in the resort at the other end of the reservation with flowers planted in it. If she'd know the land had been sold to the tribe, she would have come to get it herself. We rummaged all around, nothing to be heard but insects, the white peak of Mt. Hood just visible from certain points behind the high hills across the highway from which we'd come. All these old places are vacant now and most everything old in them taken, years ago by men who built power lines and such across (the Indians then didn't take an interest, Hazel said they all had the same things themselves). Now these old places, the separated homestead allotted to families to make Christian farmers of them in the founding of the reservation, are another world and time to the Indians themselves, clustered mostly around the end of the reservation where the agency, the administration, the mill, the restaurant, the housing projects are, places that one can go out to find and pick up, like berry patches. We brought back an intact old kerosene can for Hazel, she was sure her daughter would want to go out and get the two others there. A weather-polished twin-pronged grey piece of wood, having nothing to do with the farm, was found by Virginia and now shows between two trees just outside our window. Two matching bronze sections of a broken harness, metal, a few links of chain on each, I carried about in each hand as we walked all round the rises on which the buildings half-stood, up to the fences, down to the run-off creek, and finally put them into the back of the car.

Well, I got carried away. And forgot to put in the sunlight, along with the stillness.

Back to functions of language. Virginia pointed out that in going around with a friend one often saw a bit of experience becoming an event to be told, being told and being retold until it took shape as a narrative, one that might become a narrative told by others. My god, I suddenly realized, I'd known of this before—Hiram Smith once did it on a day with me, the narrative afterwards presenting us as stern no-nonsense guys, you might say: "Oh that young guy in there, he didn't know nothin about fishing equipment. Dell and I just turned around and walked right out" (when we had browsed some twenty minutes)—but I hadn't put it together with all its implications.

Consider anthropology and folklore. The current movement is to go beyond collection and analysis of texts to observation and analysis of performance. Essential and good, but only the second figure of the

trinity to be realized. The third is what Virginia's friend Hazel often did, what Hiram did, what traditional cultures do world-wide, I suspect. This third is continuous with the others, it is the process in which performance and text live, the inner substance to which performance is the cambium, as it were, and crystallized text the bark. It is the grounding performance and text in a narrative view of life.

That is, life is seen as a potential source of narrative. Incidents, even apparently slight incidents, may have an interest that is worth retelling. This is to be distinguished from the idle gossip or even torrential flow of people who have nothing but themselves to talk about—their illnesses, their marriages, their children, etc. Not that the difference is in the topics. The difference is in the silences. There is a certain focussing, a certain weighting.

If such a view and practice is the grounding of an essential texture, of ways of life, then it needs to be experienced and conveyed if others are to understand and appreciate the way of life. Indians themselves do not think of it as their 'culture'. They use 'culture' as we do popularly, for 'high culture', song, dance, fabricated material objects, things that can go in a museum and on a stage. Rules of speaking and performance such as Susan Philips discloses for Warm Springs people go further, into etiquette and norms of interaction. This narrative view is a further part yet.

Ethnography is the only way in which one can find out and know this aspect of the way of life. Imagine asking someone in an interview or by a questionnaire: "Do you ever make up little stories about things you see or do?" "Oh, I guess so." "Could you tell me one?" "Well, let me see, once..." Even if successful in getting little texts, the formal approach would never discover the texture of the text, the way in which it is embedded in the rhythm of continuing life and observations and reflection of life. One has to go around and be around to come to see how the world, there, is a world closely observed. This comes out in linguistic work, asking for words, one doesn't just get glosses all the time, but often an additional twist, flourish, a little placement in the experience of the person or the environment.

This quality in lives, disclosed successfully only in ethnography, is not merely missed, but forcibly excluded in public schooling. Knowledge there is presented as something that others have, even as something impersonal. The child is told that his or her own experiences do not have weight (except as
diversion). Courtney Cazden recently reflected on the fact that a couple who had been taking her regular daytime class at Harvard sat always in the back in it, but when coming to her continuing education equivalent in the evening (as she advised students to do if they missed the daytime class), sat in front. They told her that the evening class was more friendly and interesting, that people could talk about their own experiences. And she reflected on a study one student had done of a Harvard undergraduate who learned, in effect, to substitute information from books and articles and others for information from his own experience as he progressed through the four years.

Not that there is not an essential purpose to going beyond individual experience in colleges. But Cazden realized that teachers unconsciously, perhaps consistently, attended more to the student who cited a reference, a bibliographic item, a technical point from a journal, and the like, and disattended those who began from an account of something in their own experience. So it is not a matter of limiting the outcome or ending point. It is a matter of systematically discouraging one kind of starting point.

Does that mean that academics are always like that? Of course not. Think about graduate work. When a student is considered a candidate or initiate for the profession, he or she is the recipient of the gossip and lore of the field, of the wisdom and orientation passed down in narrative form, of the personal experiences of the professor that were meaningful to him or her, that shaped his or her understanding and career. What many of us know about many parts of the world comes from conversations with colleagues, not from reading their works. And we don’t even discount the effect that striving for verbal interest and effect may have on the story. Indeed, we instead relish it, if it is a good story that makes a point with which we agree, and introduce it into our lectures.

The implication is that the narrative function of language is not a property of folk cultures, or of any cultural level or cultural area alone. It is a universal function of language, potentially present everywhere. It comes into play as a legitimate, a valid use of language in the service of knowledge, among co-members of a group, especially intimates. It has a wide sphere of play in universities, government, institutions of all kinds and levels.

If this function does not come into play in schooling at lower levels, and is even systematically excluded, the implication is that the students are not co-members of a group with those who teach them. Perhaps the decline perceived in education in the country is connected with this. Certainly it is more and more the case that teachers even in urban areas are from other sections of the city, even from outside the city. Possibly schools have indeed worked better in the past when staff and students shared more of the same world of experience, when the teacher was local. There are limitations there, limitations perhaps of horizon and opportunity. But since only a few will benefit from the theoretical horizon, the cost may be too great. And it would seem likely that the presence of common experience, shared in narrative form, may have played a part. Consider graduate studies again. It seems likely that success on the part of a graduate student, in the eyes of his faculty, is in important art of a matter of socialization into the profession. And that socialization into the profession is a matter of acquiring the lore and outlook of the profession, an informal education. A student who mastered facts and theories and methods and had no stories and no interest in them would trouble a faculty. To a fair degree, the initiated want to be found entertaining, sources of lore that is of interest, and want the initiates at appropriate steps to be entertaining in turn (as when returned from field work). They humanly want the link between their own experience and their contributions or position to be seen and known—to be more than names in a bibliography. The heights of fame come when a larger circle is interested and knows these things. Partly because those who feed on the prestige of a center or individual do so by telling accounts in which details show familiarity. Most often in academic circles, details or little interactions between persons of name and note.

All this goes against the grain of a major thrust of society for generations. To transcend the parochial, the local, the rural, in the interest of the opportunities and accomplishments of a general public life, science, scholarship, art. The journey from the home to the city, etc. Though there too one finds the successful able to indulge their sentiment for their starting point and the events along the way, others wanting or being forced to listen.

So the narrative function seems universal and universally desired. Potentially available to any and every. But in fact used as a privilege, as a resource that is restricted, as a scarce good, so that the right to unite position and personal experience in public form is a badge of status and rank. My account is to be listened to because I am X: yours is of no interest because you
are only Y. All this quite independently of narrative ability. Y may be an excellent raconteur and X a bore.

The higher strata tend to look down on witnessing in fundamentalist cults and religions as embarrassing (recall 18th century ‘enthusiasm’). Perhaps such witnessing is to be understood in part as a way of maintaining and claiming a right to narrative function, in connection with one’s own life.

So it seems to me that many things come together. A concern with the state and health of the narrative function of verbal art, of language, requires ethnography; completes the trinity necessary for folklore and anthropology to come to grips fully with verbal art; sheds light and contributes to understanding with regard to cultural groups; bears on the conflicts and failures of education; provides a vantage point in terms of language on the fundamental issue of society, the relation between what Stanley Diamond has called the ‘retrospective’ and ‘prospective’ views, the relation variously labeled folk-urban, Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft, traditional-modern, etc, locates this relation in a universal functional potentiality of language, dependent for its emergence and cultivation on qualities of social relationships — therefore not fundamentally confined to an evolutionary relationship, though intimately involved with same. Concern with this functioning of language bears on the limitations and frustrations of anthropology as a profession — both in coming to grips with modern society (who else but anthropologists have a tradition in this country, among social scientists, of dealing with verbal materials and language), and in conveying what they do know.

Rhododendron, Oregon
24 August, 1976

Poems of the Sarawak Dyaks: An Addition

The concluding section of “Lakuh,” a song of the Sarawak Dayaks, translated by Carol Rubenstein, appearing in Alcheringa, vol. 3, no. 2, 1977, was inadvertently dropped. We regret the error. The missing section follows:

Then I think of my children and again I feel kindness — they look up at me and see my face, red as the rambutan fruit, like a fruit tree at the longhouse end, marked by its owner. For I was born of my high-born mother to meet important guests properly, to meet properly all the upriver people who come to the great irau feasts.

My compartment in the longhouse is the size of four rooms but it is empty, no one in the longhouse to care for it. Now I have two mothers, both old, since my wife is dead. There is no one to serve the guests with bamboo containers of water.

The end of this song is my name, name often spoken by the people. If anyone needs help, my name is the name they call.

This is the end of my song.
Recording Notes

Side 1 of the soundsheet in this issue is an oratorical sampler, with excerpts from performances in three different languages by a total of six different speakers. You should first listen to the voices purely for their music, purely for what they convey in the absence of any translation. As an experiment, you may wish to guess at the general themes of the speeches or at the types of occasions on which they were delivered, solely on the basis of a blind first hearing. In that case, read no further until you have played the disc!

The first speaker is Andrew Peynetsa, in the act of concluding a Zuni hearthside narrative that had lasted nearly an hour. Much of what he says here is a summary of the important events, and he intends his audience to remember well what they have been told. This was no ordinary tale, but the story of The Beginning. As if teetering between the roles of lecturer and storyteller, he starts nearly every line as if addressing a larger audience on a more formal occasion, then drops, before concluding each of these same lines, into a more relaxed, intimate delivery.

The second speaker, heard over the radio of a moving car near Gallup, New Mexico, is a Baptist preacher, a converted Navajo. He seems to have adopted his fire-and-brimstone manner of delivery from missionaries; there is no traditional Navajo speaking style that quite corresponds to the one he uses here. The third speaker, delivering formal greetings to his family's guests at a Squaw Dance near Whitewater, New Mexico, exhibits a Navajo speaking style designed to carry some distance outdoors. He stabilizes the normal pitches of Navajo (a tone language), almost producing a chant. The fourth speaker continues the greetings (on the same occasion) in a vastly less formal manner, though he does stop short of a private conversational style. Both speakers use an amplifier, but one orates just as he would without any electronic help, while the other cozies up to the microphone as if he were a radio announcer. The audience, scattered in and around pickup trucks and cars parked in a wide circle, answers the orator with applause and the honking of horns but leaves the announcer in silence.

The fifth speaker is indeed a radio announcer, heard over Radio Momostenango in the Guatemalan Highlands. He is speaking Quiche Maya, but his numerals and some other words are borrowed from Spanish. He is in the midst of announcing local funerals (and commemorations of past deaths). The somber effect is produced not only by his serious tone but by his timing, which subtly picks up the cadence of the funeral march in the background. The sixth speaker is making an announcement over the same radio station, but his style, like that of the first of the two Squaw Dance speakers, is meant to carry far without benefit of amplification. He is one of the official town criers, acting on behalf of the Alcalde of Momostenango. He and his colleagues, earlier on this same day, had made this announcement from all the hilltops in the town, each one accompanied (as here) by a drummer.

Side 2 of the soundsheet gives a sampling of the testimonies transcribed and discussed by Jeff Titon and Ken George elsewhere in this issue. The speakers are (in order) Reverend John Sherfey, with “A Vision of Heaven”; Rachel Franklin, with “I Wanted to be Sure”; and Edith Cubbage, with her own “Vision of Heaven.” Reverend Sherfey’s testimony comes during a sermon; as he moves from the pulpit into the sanctuary and back, he moves away from and back to the microphones, which is part of the reason for the rise and fall in the volume of his voice. The break in Edith Cubbage’s testimony does not come from any lack of words. What happened was that the main recorder ran out of tape, so that the last half of her testimony had to be spliced in from the tape made by an auxiliary recorder.