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# TRADITIONS OF GUATEMALA



**SAN CARLOS DE GUATEMALA UNIVERSITY  
CENTER FOR FOLKLORE STUDIES**

**TRADITIONS OF GUATEMALA**

**Guatemala, Central America. University Press.**

## FOLK TALES FROM SANTA CATARINA IXTAHUACÁN

Ana María de Urrutia

### Record No. 1

1. **Name of the informant:** Lorenzo Cambriz
2. **Age:** 40 (he thinks)
3. **Occupation:** farmer and cook.
4. **Education level:** 2nd grade of primary school.
5. **When did he learn the story?:** when he was a child.
6. **Where and from whom did he learn it?:** in *Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán*; his father told him.
7. **Area where the folkloric phenomenon occurs:** *Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán*.
8. **Date of research:** July 15th, 1971.

**Editor's note:** the texts were recorded using a tape recorder. The informants' verbal expressions have been preserved.

## SEPARATION OF SANTA CATARINA IXTAHUACÁN AND NAHUALA

“My father told me this, about the separation of *Ixtahuacán* and *Nahualá*; because that used to be just a village of *Nahualá*, and people only went there to plant potatoes or wheat.

The governor, Manuel Tzuc, thought about founding a town there, so he went to Guatemala City to try to establish a municipality and separate it from *Nahualá*. In Guatemala, they started scolding him, mocking him, and they treated him badly because Miguel Sarquij also went to Guatemala to complain: ‘Why should he take it away? Why create another town?’

That’s what Miguel Sarquij was saying to Governor Tzuc, who was the leader of the town, but Governor Tzuc, the one who was there at the City Hall, managed to fix things, for sure; and that’s where the town of *Nahualá* would remain.

That’s why they split.

“Later, Manuel Tzuc, the governor, wanted to take the patron saint from the church here and bring it to *Nahualá*; but the people here didn’t agree—they said it was better not to take her. Miguel Sarquij mistreated Governor Tzuc.

This is what my father told me:

There was a woman selling coffee at her home in *Chirijoch*, when Manuel Tzuc came over, he was already certain about separating and creating a new town there; then, they mistreated him. And the woman, the widow’s wife, who was there, served him a box, a crate of coffee as if she were going to give him a lot; but she was angry that the town was going to split, so she brought a basin to throw in his face. The people from there tried to defend themselves: ‘He’s not going to take the patron saint from here!’ They pointed a shotgun at him, or like arrows for

shooting, and that's how it happened. They fought over the separation of *Ixtahuacán* and *Nahualá*.

They say many things like that, but I don't remember any more."

### **Record No. 2**

1. **Name of the informant:** Juan Tepaz Tuy
2. **Age:** 53
3. **Occupation:** farmer, former *cofradía* (leader of a traditional religious brotherhood responsible for organizing Catholic festivities) mayor
4. **Education level:** learned to read and write with a priest
5. **When did he learn the story?:** 30 years ago
6. **Where and from whom did he learn it?:** in *Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán*; his father told him
7. **Area where the folkloric phenomenon occurs:** *Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán*
8. **Date of research:** July 20th, 1971

### **THE RABBIT AND THE COYOTE**

"Let's tell a story, about what the rabbit did with the coyote: my father told me that the rabbit was holding up a rock, and he was holding that rock with his hand for many days, for many days. After a while, the coyote came along. Then the rabbit said:

'Hurry up! Come help me because this big stone is about to fall.'

As he looked up, he saw the clouds moving through the air, and it seemed like the rock was about to fall on the rabbit.

— Well yes, please, since you are bigger, maybe you can hold it; this rock might fall on us. I'm going to look for some wooden posts to hold it up so it won't fall, and then we can get out. Since you can help, Mr. Coyote, said the rabbit.

— All right, that's fine.

The coyote, well, gave all his strength to hold this rock, because it could... you know, it's true, look, it's about to fall; like the clouds are walking in the sky and the coyote was holding the rock. The rabbit went to look for a stick, but that's not true, he didn't go to look for it, he went the other way, and the coyote is over there; he got tired.

— Ah, suddenly it will fall on me when they let go.

But little by little, his hand slipped out. No, this rock can't fall. The rabbit was just messing with me, just tricking me.

Then, the coyote got angry, because it was all a trick, so he wanted to bother the rabbit, wanted to eat him. In that place, there was a bit of water, and the rabbit was looking into the well. The moon was up in the sky, and the well... it looked like a mirror. The rabbit was looking in and the moon was reflected in the water, it looked like cheese.

— 'Can you eat this water? Can you drink it? Since you're big, only after the water runs out, then you can eat the cheese. Oh, the cheese is so tasty! It's right there, but I can't drink this water because I'm too small. So when the water is gone, then you should eat the cheese.'

So the coyote was drinking the water — *terac, terac, terac, terac, terac* — but the water never ran out. The rabbit ran away. It was a lie, just the moon reflected in the well. It was a trick. The

coyote had thought it was cheese at the bottom of the well, but it was just the moon reflecting, and the rabbit ran off again.

Later, he got upset: ‘Why do they always trick me? That’s not right,’ he said. ‘They’re so sneaky.’ And then, the rabbit put his hat over a bunch of wasps on the ground, and it looked like pots of tamales boiling on the fire, that’s what it looked like, boiling hard over the fire. The coyote, he had his own hat, and he put it on top of the wasps.

Listen, this one here, it has a story inside, it’s very good, but it’s not ready yet. It’s still cooking, it’s a little raw. You have to wait. Maybe in half an hour it’ll be done. Then, you can take off this hat and eat it,’ said the rabbit.

The rabbit left. When... the coyote wanted to eat right away — ohhh, he was hungry, and the coyote eats well. The rabbit had already left, and when the coyote took off the hat, a bunch of wasps came out, they stung him, and they stung him all over his body. The wasps stung him, and the coyote got stung all over. So the coyote ran awaaaaay quickly, bumping into... the trees below. He ran off, hitting his head, and then later he calmed down again.

But then he ran into the rabbit.

— Ah, you tricky one. But what are you going to do to me? You’re no good, you’re bad, said the coyote to the rabbit.

— ‘Don’t get upset, no,’ said the rabbit, ‘because there’s something else. We’re at the threshing ground now, where we’re going to thresh the wheat, and the whole threshing floor is covered with straw. But come on, do you want to dance? Let’s dance. Maybe you’re good at dancing. That’s why we’re going to dance, but you have to dress up like a *moro* (a masked traditional dancer). Let’s put on your costume.’

— ‘All right,’ said the coyote.



‘From the red pine tree, sap comes out, so everything gets sticky like glue. We’ll paint your whole body, and then we’ll bring some of the straw tips (the kind used for Christmas decorations), and we have to stick them all over your body, your head, your whole body will be covered with straw tips.’

— There it is! Now your *moro* costume is ready.

— When are we going to start?

— When the drum starts playing, you have to dance. Right here. When the drum begins, you’ll start dancing.

So the coyote thought it was true. All around the threshing floor there was wheat straw. The coyote went to set fire to the wheat straw all around the threshing floor, he had to burn all the straw around it, and he thought maybe it was true, that the drum was playing, and it was making noise, and the coyote started dancing. Then the flames from the fire came, the coyote fell into the fire, and his whole body was... his whole body was in the flames. He started rolling, rolling, his face turning, his head, his body hitting against the rocks. He rolled down the ravine, and finally made it to the river, and there, the fire on his body was finally put out.”

### Record No. 3

1. **Name of the informant:** Lorenzo Cambriz
2. **Age:** 40 (he thinks)
3. **Occupation:** Farmer and cook.
4. **Education:** 2nd grade of primary school.
5. **When did he learn the story?:** When he was a child.

6. **Where and from whom did he learn it?:** In *Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán*; his father told it to him.
7. **Area where the folkloric phenomenon occurs:** *Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán*
8. **Date of the research:** July 15th, 1971.

### ABOUT THE NAHUAL

—This is what the people around here say: that there are some *nahuales* (shape-shifters or sorcerers); they appear when, for example, a spirit is going to be encountered by those who are about to be frightened. They say that when someone is walking around, they might encounter one, but you can't see it, you don't know what it is that's waiting for you.

—Sometimes they say they see Death; there are some who say: 'I saw Death, she was passing by over there, last night she was dressed in black and white.'

'I came across her, but then she vanished, I didn't see her anymore as I kept walking; and I didn't see where she went, I thought it was a person, but I couldn't find her.' That's what the people here say.

### Record No. 4

1. **Name of the informant:** Juan Tepaz Tuy
2. **Age:** 53
3. **Occupation:** Farmer, was once the *alcalde de la cofradía* (religious brotherhood leader).
4. **Education:** He learned to read and write with a parent.

5. **When did he learn the story?:** 30 years ago.
6. **Where and from whom did he learn it?:** In *Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán*; his father told it to him.
7. **Area where the folkloric phenomenon occurs:** *Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán*.
8. **Date of the investigation:** July 20th, 1971.

### THE KING OF THE ANIMALS

"We're going to tell some stories about the king of the animals. All the animals gathered to hold a session... an election for president. All the animals came together, deer, coyote, opossum, and all the animals that live in the forest. And so they thought, 'We're going to hold an election to choose who will be president.' And among all the animals, they gathered, but there was one missing, not among them:

'And who is it that's missing? We're trying to hold a session, but we can't do it because the lawyer Rabbit isn't here.' So, who's responsible? The rabbit. 'Then we're going to call the lawyer. Who will we send to call him?' So they sent the dog to call the lawyer.

And the dog went running, he arrived at the rabbit's house.

—The assembly is calling you, and we're going to hold a session, said the dog.

—Ah, but I can't go because I'm sick, I'm ill, I can't go. Go tell them I can't go.

And the dog went back to tell the others that he couldn't come.

—He's very sick now, he can't come.

—But let's call him again, maybe he'll come this time.

And the dog ran again to call the lawyer, and he arrived.

—But I can't go. If someone wants to carry me, then I'll go, said the rabbit.

—All right then, said the dog.

And they carried the rabbit, and the rabbit arrived, and all the others stood up to say good morning, they stood up and greeted the lawyer. But the rabbit was lying, he wasn't sick, he wasn't ill, he was perfectly fine... he was just tricky.

—What are we going to do in the session?

—We're all going to hold elections and decide who's going to be president. The tiger, the lion, who will become president? Who will be the king of the animals?

—Ah, it's better if the lion becomes president, because that tiger has no patience and is very fierce. If the tiger becomes president, he'll eat all of us. Yes, the lion is better. The tiger can't be president, said the rabbit.

So, yes, they made a ballot where the lion would become president. But the tiger overheard the rabbit saying the lion would be president. He got upset, he got angry. And when the session ended, everyone left.

After that, the tiger stayed angry.

—We'll see when I find that rabbit. I'm going to eat him.

So, the tiger started stalking the rabbit.

—Where can I find him?

And he found the rabbit and started running after him, trying to catch him, wanting to eat him. But the rabbit ran into a hole, and the hole didn't just have one entrance, it had one way in and a separate way out, two exits. And the tiger started digging, removing the dirt, trying to catch the rabbit. But the rabbit had escaped through the other side and was already laughing.

—Too late, tiger! I'm over here!

Ah, the tiger saw that he had come out from another exit.

—We'll see. Let's go eat together with my wife. You'll see.

And then they found the rabbit again, this time together with the tigress, the female, and they found the rabbit, and he ran off, thump-thump-thump, he was running fast, and the rabbit was also running fast ahead of them. He found a hole and went inside, and just like before, the hole had not one, but two exits. Then, since the tigress was the tiger's wife, she was even angrier, more furious, because her husband had not been made president. She started digging the earth, making a huge hole... The tigress kept going, while the male tiger was slower, digging more slowly. But the tigress, because she was angrier, kept digging faster and faster. Then the tiger, being large, went deeper into the hole and couldn't turn around. And the rabbit came back, creeping quietly, watching carefully. The tiger's backside, his rear end, was sticking out of the hole, and the rabbit grabbed a handful of dirt with a stick and spat on it, and shoved it into the tigress's rectum with the stick. Ah! But the tiger couldn't get out, he couldn't turn around, he was stuck. So the rabbit just did it to mock him and ran off again to hide. Then he peeked out and shouted:

—Hey old man! I'm right here! said the rabbit.

The tiger looked around, yes, the old rabbit was still there.

—We'll see, we'll catch that sneaky rabbit and eat him.

Then the tiger was watching, stalking again. The rabbit was looking the other way, but a bird that was walking around down in the forest saw the tiger just when the rabbit was near.

—Careful, rabbit! The tiger is there, you're going to run into him!

—Ah, what should I do? I can't defend myself, what do I do?

Then, suddenly, he found a *tecomate* (a gourd), to fill with honey. Some leaves from the trees were dry, there were lots of them, and he started pouring the honey on the leaves, scattering it around. The rabbit came and rolled around in it, rolled around all over. Then he came out covered in leaves and trash, but the dove that was nearby said:

—But you can't walk the way you usually do—if you do, the tiger will recognize you by your walk. You'd better find another way to walk.

—All right then, so now we'll just...

—Looks like a duck walking, you can't even tell who it is anymore.

And when he passed near the tiger, the tiger got scared.

—What? What is that... what kind of thing is that?

Yes, he got frightened and ran away—the tiger went to hide.

After a while, the rabbit shook off all the leaves and trash... and sat down.

—I'm right here! I'm the rabbit!

—Ah, damn it... there's no rabbit, who knows, I've never seen that kind of animal before, said the tiger.

Then the tiger left again, but again he said: Let's see, let's go, where can I find that rabbit again?

And the tiger ran into him once more.

—Now there's no choice, we're going to eat him, said the tiger.

So the rabbit ran off, thump-thump, running again, and found a hole. The tiger saw where the rabbit had entered. He started digging the earth, and just a little bit in, there it was, the rabbit's house. As he kept digging, he found the rabbit inside his house.

—Well, now you've had your last words, it's time to rest, so now we're going to eat, said the tiger.

—But please, you have to wait just a little bit, all my stuff is in my house. Let me bring it out first, because I've got my mat, my jacket, my dishes, my hat, everything's in there. I'll take it all out, and once I finish, then fine, you can eat me.

—Alright then, go ahead, get your mat.

So the tiger grabbed the mat, and the rabbit threw it to him from far away, but it was getting dark in that place.

—There's my jacket, said the rabbit, and handed it to the tiger.

—Alright, let's pull it hard! And they pulled it from far away, but the rabbit was still inside, everything in his place, his dishes, all his things in their spot, and he kept handing them out, until everything was taken out.

—Gooooodbye! Now there's nothing left, you've won and you can eat me now. But only my shoe is left, just my shoe. After you throw my shoe over there, then you can eat me.

But it's not his shoe, it's his ear that he shows. The tigress grabs it, and the tiger grabs the 'shoe' and throws it hard, they both throw it, but then they see, the rabbit isn't there. The rabbit has flown off in another direction. He's far away now. The tiger looks into the hole:

—There's nothing left in there... Well, I guess that's everything. Maybe we should just drop this fight, all this frustration. Better to leave it behind, let's be friends instead, said the tiger.

So, yes, they stayed happy. The tiger and the rabbit became friends."

### **Record No. 5**

1. **Name of the informant:** Tomás Tzep
2. **Age:** 39
3. **Occupation:** Farmer, president of the cooperative.
4. **Education:** 2nd grade of primary school.
5. **When did he learn the story?:** One year ago.
6. **Where and from whom did he learn it?:** While working in the cornfield in Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán. From José Tzep.
7. **Area where the folkloric phenomenon occurs:** Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán.
8. **Date of the investigation:** July 20th, 1971.



### **The Son of a Widower**

"There was a young man, the son of a widower. The young man had a cornfield, he was cleaning it, working there, and then when it was time to return home, he had to gather firewood. After that, when it was time to go back to his house, his mother was preparing dinner. When the young man arrived and placed his firewood in the house's corridor, he asked his mother what she had prepared for dinner.

—This and this I have prepared.

—Alright, is there coffee?

—That's fine.

So he started eating and drinking coffee, and then the young man said to his mother:

—Look, mom, I think tomorrow I will go on a trip, and I don't know exactly how long it will take, how many days I'll be gone, I don't know. But I will leave tomorrow, but don't worry, you have to stay and take care of the house, and you will stay.

—Alright, how many days will you be gone, roughly?

"Well, he said:

—I don't know exactly how many days I'll be gone, but I'll always return. I will check how the cornfield is, how our things are, if you get sick or not, but God always knows, I'll always come back.

—Alright.

"So when the morning came, he had breakfast, and after that, when he left, he left. He took a wide path, and along the way, he met a companion, and they talked."

—What are you doing? What are you doing here?

—Well, I'm working, I'm cleaning the cornfield and so on...

—Ah, how many acres did you have in your cornfield?

—Well, I'm just cleaning 20 acres, but that's all I have.

—Alright. And how many quintals do you think that cornfield will yield, roughly? Just calculating, you know. The young man said to his companion. Then the young man explained that it was a little more or less, and that he would harvest, but only God knows if it will yield, maybe a few quintals per acre.

—That's fine.

—Ah, and what are you doing? Are you just passing through?

—Well, yes, I'm passing through, looking for a living. I wanted to travel further, but I'm just passing by you and then I'll go again.

—So, ah, what are you doing? Where are you going?

—Well, to other towns, in other places, I'm going to pass through there.

—Why? And what is your mother doing at home? Maybe she's sad, maybe she's angry because you stayed for a while, maybe you'll be gone for many days.

—Well, I'm not sure if I'll come back soon or not, but I'm going to travel.

So the young man left, traveling day and night, day and night, he says. Then the young man met another young man along the way, passing through a mountain path, he was walking at night when he met another young man.

—What are you doing?

—Well, I'm just passing by for two days.

The young man was a thief, he had a machete in his hand, and he didn't have anything else. Since he was walking without fear, he and the young man he met on the path.

—If you want, let's play. That's what the young man said. Let's chat a bit or let's... what are you thinking? Well, I'm sure we'll play.

—Alright.

Then they started playing, fighting on the path, and he defended himself well, he says, just with his hand, he didn't have anything to hit the young man with. So yes, the young man he met on the path got scared, he was a thief, and he got scared, he says, and stayed there lying on the road. The young man just left him there, then he went on again, traveling at night.

When the morning came, he reached a town, passing through life, he says, he had his money in his pocket, when he met another young man.

—There's a bar on the corner, he says.

So they went in, and they ordered a drink and drank with the young man.

—You're just wasting your money like that, he says.

Then, after drinking a little more, he left the young man and went on again, passing through the town. Who knows where the young man went.

Then suddenly he started thinking: What am I doing? Because none of what I'm doing is earning me a cent, I'm just wasting it, it's better if I go back because my mom is suffering at home, I'd better go back.

Then he returned, but after about 6 or 7 days of thinking that he should return; when he came back, he arrived at his house with his mom, but he had taken so long, then his mom said to her son: Look, my son, what are you doing? What's happening? Look at your cornfield, it's growing well and already flowering.

—Well, that's why you're here, to take care of how the cornfield is doing.

And his mom said, why are you doing this?

—For me, it's not good like this, she said.

But the young man didn't believe her.

—Well, these things can't be told, what I'm doing, because this is always how my life is.

—But I feel bad for you because you're partying over there in other places, not earning anything, and what am I going to do with your cornfield? I can't work, I'm just going to take care of the house, that's why I want you to stay here all the time, that's what your mom said.

—It has nothing to do with me because I'm always going to be out there, that's what he said.

Then the next day, when morning came again, after having his coffee and a little something else, he left again, not listening to his mom.

—Why are you going again? Maybe there are thieves, maybe there are skulls out there, maybe you'll meet others who know more prayers, they'll kill you on another path.

—Ah, I won't find anything, I'm not afraid.

"Then he didn't believe what his mom said, and he left, leaving a little money to clean the cornfield, asking someone to help, and that's how he left.

"A week passed, and he still hadn't come back, then 15 days passed, and he hadn't come back, then 20 days passed, and he still hadn't returned. The mom was thinking: What's happening with my son? I wonder if he's alive or dead, I don't know, she was thinking, but he was out there without any worry.

"In the town, there's a graveyard, they said, that's where all the dead are buried, and the people from that town told this young man.

—Where are you from?

—Well, I'm from another place, from here and here, and my name is from my town, and I'm called such, that's what he told the people there. Then the people told this young man.

—Where are you going?

—Well, I'll just stay here for two or three days, he says.

—Why? What work are you going to do here if you're going to stay?

—Well, I don't know, I'm just going to sleep here in the corridor of this graveyard.

—But if you're going to sleep here, when morning comes, you'll be dead, you'll be dead because all the passersby who stay here when morning comes are already dead.

—Ah, those are just stories you all are telling, I don't believe it. Well, let's see if I'm dead, it's fine. If I'm not dead, we'll see in the morning, but is there a bell here?

—Yes, there is.

—Ah, well, I'll ring it when the hour comes at 8 when the bells ring, and if it wakes up the dead, he says.

—Ah, well— that's what the people say to him.

Then he's listening, he's hearing. The people are already thinking: this young man is really going to die because everyone who has passed here always dies, ah, this young man will die even though he knew some prayers, but he'll always die because many who've been buried here, that's what the people are saying, but the young man doesn't believe it.

—Ah, that's nonsense, that's what they're saying.

Then he stayed, took out his mat and laid it with his back and his pillow, took out a stone this size and placed it there, and went to sleep, but he didn't really sleep, no, no, no, he didn't sleep. He was just lying there, but he was hearing, nothing was walking around there, nothing. He didn't hear anything, but he was alone there in the corridor, and all the others who had passed by were dead, that's why people no longer sleep there, but he was there alone. Then when the bell rang at the church, he went to ring the bell at the graveyard.

Then the people heard that he was still alive. When the bell rang at the graveyard, many people came to him, arrived to talk. They were looking at him, lying there, but he wasn't asleep yet; he was just lying there, then he spoke with the people.

—What's happening here?

—Well, nothing, I'm just lying here listening to things, but there's nothing.

—Ah, why do you think you're alive? Because everyone who has passed here is dead. Most of the time, they're dead when morning comes, but you're not, why is that?

—Well, I don't know. I'm just here, I'm going to stay for two or three days, that's all, he said.

—Ah, I think you must know some prayers because all the dead people who have been buried here don't disturb those who have slept here.

—Ah, those are just stories, nonsense, that doesn't do anything.

—Well, let's say one thing, are you going to stay here?

—Yes, I'll stay here.

—But you'll be dead in the morning.

—Ah, well, if I'm dead, it's fine, but if I'm not, well, we'll see.

—Ah, no, it's better you go out of here in the corridor, it's better if you stay inside the graveyard.

—Well, that's fine, for me it's okay, if you'd do me the favor, I'll go inside.

Then the people told this: that there was a dead man in the graveyard who was buried in a tomb, then he lay there, but as he thought he was with a dead man, he went to buy a candle about this size, like a pound, and had matches. When he lit the candle, he stood there, and then he lay down. When he was given permission, he lay inside the graveyard, alone, and the dead man who was there was the owner of the farm. He was the one who managed all the workers, the one who was buried there in the graveyard. He was the one in charge, had money, had wealth, all the things he had, and he was lying there, just like that, when a voice was heard, and just like that, when a leg fell off, a leg fell off. He looked at it, a bunch of bones fell, then that leg spoke to the young man, and that leg belonged to the owner. The owner spoke to the young man.

—Don't be afraid, I'm the boss of this town, this municipality. Ah, where did you come from?

—Ah, I live around here, this is my name, I got scared.

Then the boss spoke to him.

—What are you doing?

—Well, this and this and this is what I'm doing. I'm just going to stay here for one, two, maybe three days, and then I'll go somewhere else.

—Ah, why is it that you are here? Because all the men, women, and boys who sleep here have always been dead by morning — that's what the boss said. Ah, why could that be? I'm not alive, so if you're afraid, why are you talking to me?

—Well, it's according to my fate, what God has given me. Then he asked the boss: And what work did you used to do?

—Well, I'm the boss here. I reached the time of my death, that's why I came here, that's why they buried me in the calvary.

—Ah, I see... So you're the boss?

—Yes, I'm the boss. And my poor workers were left there and still haven't been paid. This last month, they still haven't been paid, they didn't receive any money.

—Why? Why weren't they paid?

—Well, because of my fate, I ended up dead, that's why I came here. But now I'll tell you something — it's better if you stay in my place — that's what he said.

The boy was just listening.

—If you want, you can stay in my place, because I had my money in the box over there. If you stay in my place, I'll give you



everything that's in my house. I'll give you all the keys, all the rooms that are there — I'll hand them over. Because I'll tell you this thing, all of it will go to my children.

He was just listening.

—But still, if you want to, because you've already suffered enough, you're already hearing my voice, they're going to give you the key there, you'll receive the money, and through you, my debt will be settled.

—Well, for me, I don't want money, I don't want a home, I don't want a family, nothing, nothing. I'm just going to stay here for two, maybe three days — that's what the boy said.

—Why? Why don't you want to? Because you've already won, because you already slept here once, and I'm talking to you. That's why I wanted to... I think maybe it's your fate.

Ah, since he didn't want to take the money, well, he didn't want to.

Then the boss started forcing him, insisting that surely he would stay here, because it was his fate now, because he had already come here to talk to him. Because not a single traveler could bear to speak with him.

—Ah, well, but I don't want money, I don't want things, no. I'm just going to stay here, all I want is to talk a bit more, but only that, but I don't want anything else.

—But for me, I'm sure that you're going to stay here.

Then, when the boss finished his words, the leg returned and placed itself there, where the grave was. Then the boy just stayed there, awake, and when morning came, he was still alive. When the clock struck six in the morning, he went up to ring the bell, and then all the people heard that the bell rang at the Calvary. They heard the sound of the bell and came to him, men, women,

and children came to the Calvary, where all the dead were buried. When they arrived and opened the door — the boy was alive! — they said: He's alive! They were amazed.

And as soon as the people entered to be with him, then he began to speak with the boys:

—Why is it that you're alive? That's what we're wondering, because we heard the bell, were you the one ringing it? That's why we came again.

The boy wasn't afraid, he had no fear. What the boss had told him, he told the people himself, that this and this and this is what the patrón had said.

—Surely it was the patrón who is buried here. He told me I was going to receive the money and that I would pay all the men who had earned their wages from him; I will pay them myself.

He left the Calvario, took his sleeping mat, his other bag, and went to the house where the patrón used to live. The boys and the servants went with him to bring the box, and others showed him the things that belonged to the patrón.

—I believe it's true, that's what the patrón said, because that's what people used to say when he was still alive. But now that you've spoken with him, it would be better if you stayed with us. You should stay on as the patrón, because if that's what he said, that's what we want too. That's why we're going to show you all the things he left behind, we're going to hand them over to you.

But they didn't make much fuss, just looked at the boxes. Then he picked up the box, took out the money, and yes, there were bills and some coins inside. He took them out and distributed them to all the workers who hadn't been paid. After that, once they had the money in their hands, he kept a small portion and the rest remained there; then he left again, he went on his way.

He passed through the village, and suddenly he thought again:

—I'd better go back and see how my mother is, whether she's still alive or already dead, I don't know. And also my harvest — I want to see how it's doing, because it's been a while now, two or three months.

And his mother was deeply sad. While he was already thinking of returning, he finally came back.

"When he came back — day and night, day and night — he walked until he arrived at his home. He went inside and looked to see if his mother was still alive, ready to greet her. They say his mother seemed a bit angry, she was upset because he had been gone so long:

—Why have you been doing this and that? Why have you been doing these things? You left me here alone. Your cornfield was already ready to harvest, but it's hard for me because this isn't my work — that's what his mother said.

—Well, there's no need to say anything about that, don't worry, I'll pay for that myself.

So, he just stayed at home. When morning came again, he went out to collect firewood, and he went twice that day. His mother said:

—Look, son, you're going to go to our land, our plot over there. What do you think about that? Are you going to dig again? Or what are you going to do? Or will you just plant the seed?

—But I'd better think about it, because I'm only going to stay for about eight days, then I'll leave again — that's what he said.

—Why are you thinking those things? That's not good for me, because I'll be left behind again, I'll be sad again. Well, it's true I had corn to eat and other things, and you'll leave a little money

for my needs, but that's not enough for me because it makes me sad that you're going to leave again.

—Ah, that has nothing to do with me, because I'm going and I'll go, I only kept something in the chest for the future.

—Alright then.

"And the mother was left so saaaaad, she stayed seated there in the house, thinking deeply, and the boy didn't pay attention. He went out to check on his land. 'What am I going to do next time to prepare the field?' — the boy thought.

He found two, three boys to help prepare the land to plant again. Then he went to talk to another boy; the boy agreed to go work on his land, and he found another boy too — there were three in total — who agreed to help prepare his land to sow again the next year.

Then when he returned home, he asked his mother:

—Is my food ready? Because I'm hungry.

—Yes, it's ready, sit down over there.

—Alright.

So he sat down and ate, and after he finished eating:

—Look, Mom, what are you thinking about right now?

—Well, I'm thinking about what you told me the day before yesterday, and yesterday, that you're going to leave again. That's what I'm thinking about, because I'll be left behind once more, abandoned, and I already know you're going to be gone a long time. If it were just one, two, three days, maybe, but since it's for months, then I just... That's why I feel so sad.

—Ah, don't worry, don't worry, because there are other neighbors around; you can go talk with them, and maybe someone will come visit, so don't be sad, because I'll always come back again.

Then, the day came for him to leave again. Another day passed, and he left, he went off again, and his mother stayed behind. Soooo, the mother stayed crying there at home, she kept crying because that son was the only one living with her.

"The boy left, traveled again, took another road and left. Soooo, as life went on, day and night, day and night, there were some animals he would run into along the road at night. But he didn't have anything to kill those animals with, yet he passed through without fear. Those animals would always pass by, and so life kept going, going.

Then suddenly, he started thinking: I'd better go to the cemetery.

He arrived at another village. Then he headed toward the cemetery; and when it's nighttime, there's a big, wide road, and he encountered some dead people who were riding on beasts.

—Where are you all going? —asked the boy.

—Well, we're going to the cemetery, because we went over there to check on something — said the dead.

—Why is that?

—Because we were sent by the governor.

—Well, I'd like to ask a favor, that you take me with you, wherever you're going. I want to go with you; please take me with you.

—Well, we can't take you, because we're dead and you're still living on earth.

—Aaaaah, I wish you'd do me the favor of taking me. I want to go see where the governor is, where the president is.

—Well, if you want to go, but let's see if you don't get scared, let's see if you don't die from fright.

So, since the dead were going, there were about three or five of them walking around at night, and since he wasn't afraid, he kept talking with them. They entered the Calvary, the cemetery. When he went in, he saw that all the candles were lit. When he entered, there was the mayor, at the municipal building, that's where he arrived, with the mayor. They asked him:

—Why are you coming in here? Your time hasn't come yet to be here. Everyone who is here, their time has already come. But I don't know what the governor will decide; better let him handle it — said the mayor.

Then the boy passed through there, and they took him to the cells. He was presented before the governor, and the governor said:

—Why did you come? Why did this boy arrive here?

—Well, this boy asked us that he wanted to do us the favor of coming along and seeing how things are here. That's what he said — the dead told the governor.

—Ah, well, I can't handle those things. Better that he be taken to the president and let's see what he decides to do with him.

"So he went again, now it was the third stage. The boy arrived before the president:

—Why did you come? Why did you come here? Why did you enter here if your time hasn't come yet? For us, our time already came a long time ago, but you, not yet, you still had your fate to live on earth.

—Ah, well, I felt like coming here to see how things are — said the boy.

—Alright, but I'm going to tell you something: one of these days, it will be your fate to come here, but not now. Since you're searching for this kind of life, in eight days you will come here — said the president.

—But now, because of the words you've spoken, you're committed. You have to go back, right now, go back, because it's not your time to enter yet.

The boy was thinking as he returned alone. It was already night when he came back. So he walked on until dawn, and during the day he continued walking, he walked and walked. When he arrived back home, he was thinking carefully about what the president had said: *'Let's see if it's true that I will be back in eight days, or maybe not — but God is the one who decides over me...'* — that's what he said, that's what he was thinking as he walked along the path.

When he got to his mother, he entered the house; then he greeted his mother — he was alive, and she was alive too. She greeted him back. The boy sat down. His mother then prepared his food, but she was thinking carefully too, thinking that maybe he would stay just two or three days, and the boy was also thinking deeply.

"The next day, when he went to gather firewood again, he arrived at the woods and sat down, he saaaat down, thinking deeply, there in the forest, and he still hadn't cut any wood. For half an hour the boy was thinking about what the president had said, that he would come back there, that he would be dead, wondering if it would be true. What the president had said, that's what the boy kept thinking about. That's all. Then, when he was about to leave, he stood up and went to gather his firewood, cutting it with his machete, and when it was ready, he tied it with

his rope and lifted it onto his back. He headed home, but he was still thinking about those words.

When he got home, he said to his mother:

—Look, mom, I'm going to tell you something. Please take care of the house and our land; you've always done it, and I'm going to leave again — said the boy to his mother.

And his mother was left feeling very sad.

—Why are you saying these things? Why are you speaking like this? —she said. Then she got scared and was left deeply saddened.

"The boy also felt a bit sad, and his mother stayed sitting there on the bed, thinking about the words her son had spoken."

"Then his son left, walking around the yard, thinking about what he was going to do the next day. The boy, after four or five days, went with another boy, a neighbor of his:

—Well, look, could you do me a favor? Maybe one day my mom will come back; but maybe one day she will stay dead; so, maybe you could do me a favor and go see her, and please do me a favor and bury my mom if she dies one day; but if not, then I will always remember that you'll do me that favor.

He met another boy and explained to him what he had said, repeating it again.

When he returned home, he was very sad, and his mother was also sad, crying there at home.

On the seventh day, everything the president had said was confirmed. He told his mom:



—Well, look, mom, now there's no more time that I can stay here. I'm leaving, but I'm not going to another place; I'm leaving this world.

—Why?

—Well, I don't know, that's what the president told me.

—Who is the president who spoke to you?

—Well, this is what he did and this is what he said, that's why now it's time... Tomorrow I'm going to... Right now I'm going out to find my coffin or burial place, for tomorrow they're going to place me there — said the boy to his mother.

And the mother stayed crying there.

—Why are you saying these things? Let's see if what you're saying is true, maybe it's a lie, or maybe you went with another sorcerer, she was wondering.

—But that's what the president told me, tomorrow I have to leave this world, I'm going to the cemetery.

When they went to sleep, the mother and the other boy, they didn't sleep, the boy stayed awake all night, crying. And when morning came, he woke up and went to get the coffin where he was going to place himself, the coffin where he was going to be buried in the cemetery. The boy went to get his coffin, and when he was carrying it on his back, he arrived with his mother, and the mother stayed crying too, crying; she didn't want to eat, she stayed there sadly.

Then the boy went to buy some sugarcane, bread, and other things for the customs when he stays dead. He went to buy them since he had money in his pocket. When he returned with the sugarcane, coffee, and bread, everything he arranged, his mother was watching carefully, just watching.

—Well, look, mom, now I'm going to leave everything, what's in the house you're going to keep, you're going to be the one to take care of everything and the house too, now the time has come.

After that, the boy got up to take a bath. When he finished bathing, the coffin was already ready where he was going to be placed. After the bath, he placed his pillow and everything he had in the coffin. Then he lay down, leaving everything in order and giving his mother the money.

—The time has come, there's no more time to stay, it's here.

His mother was sitting when the boy came, lay down in the coffin, and his hands and feet became stiff, it was certain that he had died. Then the mother got up, went to check on her son to see if it was true that he was dead. She began to cry, and then she got up and went to inform the neighbors:

—It's true, my son told me this and that, but I didn't believe it, maybe it was a lie. But now it's true, he's really dead. What am I going to do? Please go see your brother, see if he's dead now, or maybe he got up, or what's going on.

The neighbors came to see, and he was still dead, no longer warm, and the soul was no longer moving.

—But he left this message, let's have a party because we have sugarcane, coffee, and bread. That's going to be our custom, because that's what he said, and he left us a little money— said the mother.

And the neighbors gathered during the night, it was time for the wake. The neighbors arrived, and the mother told everyone what had happened with the boy. She explained everything that had happened to him.

She had already prepared the custom for the burial, and at dawn, she prepared coffee to take to the cemetery. The next

afternoon, they took him to bury him, and the mother, crying, said:

—It's true what my son said, maybe he found bad company, they had poison, and he took it. When they came back, they told everything that had happened."

#### **Record No. 6**

1. **Name of the informant:** Lorenzo Cambriz
2. **Age:** 40 (he believes)
3. **Occupation:** farmer and cook.
4. **Education:** 2nd grade.
5. **When did he learn the story?:** when he was a child.
6. **Where and from whom did he learn it?:** in Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán; his father told him.
7. **Area where the folkloric phenomenon occurs:** Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán.
8. **Date of the research:** July 15th, 1971.

## THE DEATH OF TECÚN UMÁN

"The founding of the town here, when the conquerors arrived, they didn't flee, because, like the people before, in anticipation of the town being founded here.

As the indigenous people say, they were afraid when the Spaniards came, for example, the Spaniards came to teach the word of God to believe in; but they did not believe, they were afraid to flee and continue in the wild. Well, they were about to leave when they heard and hid in the mountains, like the Lacandones and also the Huitziziles.

And Tecún, when they fought here, that's why he stayed dead here, when they fought also, there in Quetzaltenango, where they say Tecún Umán died. The conquerors killed him, from Xequijel it is said, there they fought as well, and from there, when they saw him with a shield\*, because they cut off Tecún's head, but it didn't fall, because he was always fighting with his sword, but since the shield was on a tree, above, the shield slipped off. But the Spanish conquerors didn't see it, and the shield was seen above, and that's why they grabbed him, and that's when Tecún Umán fell when those deaths occurred.

The people here say, for example, the elders or great-grandparents or older ones who had, they told their parents, among them, they also told their children, and our parents told us again, this is how this custom grew here. But there is much more."

\*The quetzal, nahual of Tecún Umán.