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CENTRO DE ESTUDIOS FOLKLORICOS

TRADITIONS of GUATEMALA

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ABOUT TOOTH DECAY (CAVITIES) AND THE POPULAR TRADITIONS

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1. The people refer to health professionals, things that differ greatly from what they were taught at university teach them, such degree that they are difficult to convince to these people for they forget their strange tales, but in vain for the people. The thing is that university students do not know nothing of their problems and they have to make them understand how are they and what are consist? For general norm the professionals tolerate discrepancies between the popular knowledge and the their when their position is not undermined, how it can happen with the diverse cases of folkloric narrative, but it does not compromise when this discrepancy refer to problems of health so, it arises the eventuality of the people give credit to their traditional stories about diseases, can be reluctant to the professional curative offer." *We have... and we the university students, we have to cure." We have to eradicate the folkloric beliefs about diseases as the same disease.*"

Hence, that when sometimes we encourage to write some of these beliefs in health magazines we suggest that among beliefs" and our knowledges" are stablish the contrast between the error" and the true", as meaning that they believe to know, but it is clear that they do not know. We write knowingly of these are almost some without importance and

only because they certificate us certain erudition degree o because they function as a hot parenthesis to made more attractive our intellectual adventure. By the contrast, right that we write a folklore magazine, charge unusual interest and become the reason to be an article. We will take advantage this opportunity to deal things that begin to take into account in the university faculty which wants to cure but, it is not always as know it.

2. I had reserves to take the popular knowledges about health as folklore, but, finally if there is not doubt respect to tales and legends why have it with respect of knowledges in health that sound like tales? Because something deep insides tells me that entrust in these tales, the people do not always so wrong as my university suppose.

I am going to clear one thing: I seem to remember that the folklore alludes among other things to the popular... (it is difficult for me to specify, but, I do not wish to enter into controversy with me right now), so if the popular knowledges about health are really popular, thus, also are folklore. Once settle my theoretical problem, that it was so easy, I have to admit thus, such as the people that right greater to the country wear plastic jars these jars are destroying one folkloric fact – the clay jars, but, also the **modus vivendi** which is implicit-, we who cure people, also do our specie of jar with plastic ideas. In a way, it is no longer simply a picturesque game, because we lose, endangered our market of ideas jars of modern and industrial color we have to decree, science in hand, the destruction of ideational systems of clay color, finally, they do not have luster. There are two rugged alternatives to respect: one that among these thoughts of township there are colors well painted, thus, bad, so, I do not know if to destroy or replace to the wrong we bring the good. This is one thing; the another consists in the people, to the act to paint, thus, as made a color or choose materials, in other words movement and action, this has to begin for we have to write them to have the criteria has to classify. To classify has to interpret it world, give order, provide of physical and mental places, which every person find location

I wonder if for destroy the terminal habits that I consider they paint badly for after I feel well to replace them with the that they had told me in house and the school that are excellent, Will not I be destroying habits deeper than simply painting two or three jars?

I am leaving as that my two doubts be worth, staying that before of change the currents ideas, I will risk and instead of proceed to the university (this is denying outright which is not seem or teaching me) I will try to proceed to the inverse: I going to suppose previously that the people said can be correct. After, much later, I will complete my ability to depurate the things, even if with them I take a dangerous party: who cure to need that the people have faith us, but if for my part I go for have faith and believe in the popular, so, my power -our power- about people disappear and the success fades away. Thus, they think, but already begin to leave to have importance. Knowing there is rupture between one manner and another to think to world, the natural clay and the plastic, it is also known that the second deliberately seeks to destroy the first so pretext of that the plastic overcome to clay, but, really because his business implicate to suppose that where two-win half, neither win well. However, one thing is the fight for the money and the another the antagonism for the customs, although they are together and withing of this customs there are diseases that, in addition, they were real things and materials, also represent the people believe to know about of them, right now, the people do not believe in something simply because if and as result that there are dominated and dominant, to best there are beliefs about diseases that had been introduce in the head of township to obtain fruit and to achieve an interest. It could be.

3. I am going to talk about tooth decay. Some of us say tooth decay another said cavities and worms, and thus, start the first difference between we think of one form and the people who thinks of other, the folkloric", because many times the differences in the deep ideas about of one same thing, express with names also different. The folkloric part, the of the university students consider that manage the true, of course, he/she sees in the tooth decay one resulting effect of game of certain conditions in one only order or category of reality.

By contrast, the folkloric part, according us ignore the fundamentally of their problem, believe in conditions that belong to more of one order or real category.

To give a quick example, I refer to Patzún, in where a big part the people said that the tooth decay must be to an ingestion of hot food and cold food because the tooth crap and split. One small group of indigenous people tell, in addition, the worm (in Castilian) but this relation changes substantially when they refer to the disease in Cakchiquel. In the local dialect of Patzún tooth decay is called *chikop*, but *chikop* meaning little animal worm, in other words is the natives of Patzún for say tooth decay they say worm and they know the rude succession of extern hot and cold agents crap the tooth and the split nest the worm⁷. Between the Keckchies to say tooth decay they say *xul e*, this is worm of the tooth, which is an animal very small that can not see, of red or green color that grind the teeth.

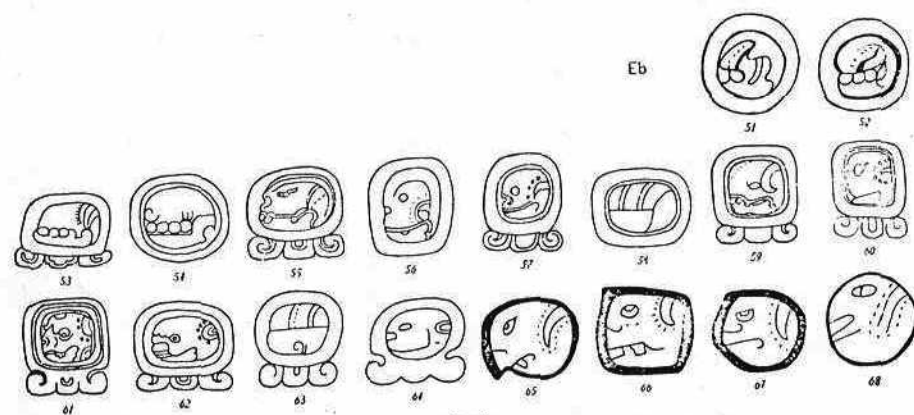
In current narration like these, begin to see that the people are saying with other words that appears in ancient tales. For example, the **Popol Vuh**.

In the first time, when there is not sun and moon, stars of aurora only a pale light, although there are not men, they are in the sky and the earth in which are born and move the volcanoes and mountains and there are terrible earthquakes; in this time already was the father of earthquakes and the volcanoes, their father **Vucub-Caquix** (seven Macaws). All to say how ancient was is it which was the origin of the earthy phenomes and it was the scent same of pride, the presumption; before there was men, this find that he is not a man. There are gods but, this neither was a god. This believe god, because a great power and his big pride made to believe him that he was the govern all there are not: sun, moon, stars and he conduce to the futures men as he wishes. **Vucub-Caquix** was the potentiality of something that did not yet exist. The death of half-men of wood by means of flood, had opened it this potentiality of god as sustain in one species of divine failure, because it was certainly powerful thanks to his eyes, teeth, nose, feathers and wealth. They appear thus the teeth as symbol of power, beauty and prestige since of primordial time of world in formation, gods who create and creations. He was a Lord that manifest his power with shining brightness of silver in his eyes and of gems teeth with the fact to be the father of mountains and earthquakes. As there are not stars, his cobbled teeth do the times of stars. As there are not sun only exist certain

clarity and to came out of his throne, he emits clarity, he believed that the radiance of his eyes illuminated until far for the entire world, as the future solar light, but really, he was not the sun and his visual radiance is not extended for the entire world, as if was light of moon.

Hunahpú and Ixbalanqué -truly gods- judge needs to end with such snobby power to prevent that one potentiality supplants the future reality willing by the gods, that one radiance of moon usurp to the true solar aurora is not seen. His destruction depends of the destruction of his power source, his teeth those would be attacked with a disease which is the worm. Only they take advantage when he was eating of his only food which is nance, tree with yellow fruits as the sun which bark is against the tooth decay. As a stroke of sun, that is the *cerbatanazo* that **Hunahpú-Ixbalanqué** gave to whom shining as moon when he eats fruits of sun color, and this weakened glare begin to disappear when the eyes of **Vucub-Caquix** begin to deteriorate with the dislocation of the teeth with which he keeps balance. His teeth hurt a lot and move; however, they can boast of having torn off the arm of one attacker. The young gods looking something very ancient represent for one couple of elders to accompanies them to recover the arm. So, they decide to pretend to be grandchildren of the elders which will say to **Vucub-Caquix** that only know to remove the worm of the teeth, cure the eyes and cure bones, which is equal, represent as a specialized doctor in mechanic affections precisely to **Vucub-Caquix** need to recover his moderated shining. The young elder in form of two couples, a young and yellow couple as the sun and other elder and white as the moon, arrived before **Vucub-Caquix** and try to deceive to deception and pride same suggesting him remove the teeth with worms and replace for others, proposition that he does not seem well: All my decoration are my teeth and my eyes". Only that I am Lord". At his request to tighten the teeth with his hands, the curators achieve finally convince him of he would stay well if replaces the teeth by other of

ground bone, if well, they deceive him, thus, they think really put teeth of white corn. They completely deceive and defeat to not tighten as he requested and to replace as they had promise him, because he lose so, his shining of pearls and he stayed only with the corn. They follow burst the power, now they destroy his eyes and deprive of his wealth, all of this for part of the doctors.



Although, it talks about he dies, really it is talking to burst the eyes they cure him and to these mutilators are called as doctors. He suffers of sins of conceit and deceit, destroy him with the disease of worm of teeth and the eyes but, finally they recreate him when they cure them to remove the eyes and the teeth by themselves. There was not death but, transfiguration. Really the deities not deceive anymore; they disguise, deceive to deceit same, oppose the negative to the negative give result as positive. The deities reduce one disease with another, the worm of the teeth as punishment of primordial sin, and at the same time they cure with the extirpation; all mechanism led to positive result of moral recovery and **Vucub-Caquix** does not nothing when they deprive of his wealth and power ... what had been his pride here in the earth". ... but he is not fell nothing. Only he stays to see..."⁶

So, then since before born the first men already the deity was established for them the disease and the mutilation as punishment of the transgression to one ethic code not formulated by the men or consulted with them. The classification of crime exists before than humanity crime and the sentence exist before than criminals. The man results as one passive object before the divine will, but, in other hand, the humanity sins will not responsibility of the deity but, if the man, because this must be known how not transgress the ethic norms which design is not participate and know. The transgression, the humanity sin will try to be is not is, desire what one does have not, dare the own free will before the pre-existing design of the deity, advance to this design without respect and alter the master plan imposed and ruled for all things before they born, since the same begin. In summary, wanting to change destiny and not being content with quiet conformity. But it said that the gods who determinate in such seize the social relations, have to offer one positive solution for can follow being served, that is as, in addition, of use as punishment, the deity in his kind paternalism order the disease to help to the sinner to redeem, to transfigure, to help him to recognize the straight path without interfering with the pre-existent code. The disease appears, that is as punishment but, also as redemption. The disease is one instrument of good and for the good.

Until here the ancient narration. Now, however, it raises two questions: the first is that in addition of ancient narration also is dead or if by contrast, live the native of now. The second is that, although as tale result interest, the true is the people do not do tales simply because if and they are not remove of void. Can be, so, that the tales are saying something that goes beyond of the tale, something of the life of the people with their joys, disruptions and allusions to one power. We begin for the first, this is determinate if the native of now repeat the millenary voice of the ancestral systems.

Among the **Achí** group remember to legendary **Sipac** (seven noses" it remembers us to seven macaws and they seem to be related with his sun **Zipacná**, the earthquake) with his charge of seven *tecomates* offer foreign honey cheaper that the creole and it is bad to promote to the foreign and not to the native. Other of his deceptions it was change the honey for turpentine. One deception more: he pretends to be Jesus Christ. In other words, he

he betrayed to natives encouraging to foreign (and he seems himself to be), selling that is not and pretend to be the deity this was not. All this position is it remember to another symbolic seven **Vucub-Caquix?** That is as this was destroy and transfigure changing something which he does not desire to be by **Hunahpú and Ixbalanqué**, therefore, **Sipac** earn the longing of people for destroy him of native people of course, through of a series of deceptions against deceptions represented by him as when he attacks with corn water slip and fall; finally, the corn livelihood of native now in form of mix grains with little stones is offered by **Sipac** as food and ruin the teeth that start to pain. With this stay condemned, deceive, destroy and ruined maybe dead or transfigured – that is the same for us- in this way that the deceive which lives cannot repeat; however, already can avenge decreeing that, hereafter every people would suffer of the teeth (the avenge of **Vucub-Caquix** also was mutilation). Something says that this deceiver and imposter that dominate to the natives coming of foreign to sell there is not and pretend to be for superhuman, is the foreign, the ladino. The best ally and instrument of native stay symbolized for the corn in all of it forms. If this is the case, now we see the disease of teeth as the punitive weapon of the elder native gods recovering against the outsiders which are thieves, usurpers, deceivers and imposters. If this the case, the picturesque tale begins to take other way.

We hear to another region, the Mayan⁵ Mopán. The toothache starts because the sun wishes to the moon (relation with duality of **Hunahpú-Ixbalanque and Vucub-Caquix?**) then this is of deceive humiliating him with a trap of corn water in which slip -such to story **achí-**, the sun takes revenge and in turn the deceive her seducing and urge to escape with him. The angry father of the moon wants to destroy them with the help of mirror and the thunder but he only gets kill to his daughter dismember her. The sun achieves to recreate her although unpleasantly transfigured and she returns to normal by competition the deer's mating, the sun starts to give bad life fight her, until she deceives escaping with the devil with help of vulture, bird of prey related with the ladino. Known the sun that the moon was doing her thing with her new and eventual owner -foreign, deceiver, and predatory, she achieves to win with a strong toothache.

This tale indicates that the deceive is now represented by extern elements to group instead of intern elements and this since the conquest. The deceiver is foreign and thief. The native uses the deceive against deceive -as in the **Popol Vuh-** and use traps to do fall the imposter and to sick his denture, symbol of power over man. The mention of the fall is insistent and in them, that is as in the affection of the denture, appears the corn as instrument of indigenous punishment of the same way that the ancient sacred book appears as the instrument of the gods. But, if in his pre-Hispanic ideology suggest that the disease was to the time one act of divine kindness to transfigure and reform - control of dominant groups about dominated groups in the inner of one same global society-, now, after of the conquest, the disease only is punitive, no reformer; there are not act of kindness and only emerge the revenge against the dominant group that suggest as extern to indigenous group.

4. The quoted tales are the verbal colorful of a good part of the population often are represented as a folkloric expression. The ancient narration persists in the modern indigenous and the relation of this current ideas with the pre-Hispanic myth is very close. If now we return to initial topic, we have to remember that the university students that are goes to the field in functions of health, rarely they have time, interest or social formation to learn of every story, and far least to examine and study them. To leave of the university with an ideological group that result, between other things, and there is not reason to create more problems in the administration of the true that already have and wear unquestionable. In this case the relation professional-township used to be of one antithesis between it considers our glazed system of ideas against a rough system of rude clay of the people. It is not difficult imagine so, the little surprise that we got sometimes, as when foreign investigations very recent have showed that alternate hot food with cold food generate small cracks in the tooth enamel⁷. Is it always appropriate to go and teach?

It is very probable that is not only elements of knowledge will different, but, the system of knowledge as totality. In the university manage one dualist system in which two categories opposed not coexists simultaneously in one same phenome and each only is the precisely

Can not to be it antithesis. For example, we may be sick or by contrast, healthy; there is disease or there is not, I have tooth decay or I do not have tooth decay. We can suspect that in the popular thought the things are thinking of different mood within determinate circumstances, dialectically, maybe of such manner that two conditions opposed can presents simultaneously. The case of the cold fever" can be of these and therefore, the expression very used of suffer one spot of" determine disease, as when say cavity spot" which seem to be means one state in which not yet there is tooth decay but, neither is exempt of them. For our dualist formation this is incomprehensible and to respect it should be mentioned the modern reviews about chance in medicine used to criticize to dualism as an exhausted conception by mechanism, by tightness and because every cause accompanies of numerous exceptions that would refute this cause but, to whom not can explain, they make refuse simply by omission.

As we had affirmed that the myths do not occur social historical void, I have decided to conclude with the question why of above myths and legends. Put the story of **Popol Vuh**, there related the facts: the deity is avenger is avenger because sick person who sin, but is kindness because the disease as hurt also, help to sinner to mend his way. The disease is the instrument for the conformism, for not wish what one does not have. No less that if we wonder to whom encourage such ideology: to the class that I have or to dispossess? It is sure that the production and the maintenance of this idea had to have contribute to keep the dominant group. Apparently, the Spanish, the new religion, the Christian went to implement one interest of same genre through similar instruments of power. Nowadays Guatemalan indigenous farmers are formed in one order of luck" and destiny". The farmer subject to one predestination established for God and expressed in term of luck" that is the season preordered during all life and destiny" which is the fatal and final season of all route. This fatality is inexorable because had been stipulated by God, but God is not the responsible of destiny of every man, for bad that this is. The fortune that every have to find one good

or bad lucky, only depend of his human particular responsibility and his intelligence in bypass all the traps avoid the falls and in keep strict adhesion to moral code that prescript, between other things, believe in God showing submission to the supernatural powers, work hard and respect the rights and foreign property, never desire them. The punishment for envy and rebel before against the possessions and fortune of others (without specify if these are due to plundering) is the disease and of death, perpetuating the fatalist notion of that the disease is the inevitable result of immoral⁸ behavior. Therefore, God put the fatal and inexorable obligation, but it is the individual who has to elucidate how will he fulfill it. The riddle lasts a life time and the disease stay as feature of divine kindness. To whom benefit this ideology in the pre-Hispanic season since the conquest until nowadays? It is no precisely to deprived and suppressed farmer to not desire those was remove him.

It conjugates that two sources of one same mechanism of domination: the pre-Hispanic that served to one class to consolidate its control of power within of group, and the Christian that served and serve to appropriate and keep the control of group. To this respect there is few such emphatic as the referent evidences to the religious threat introduced by the Spanish, who appears in different prophecies of **El libro de los libros de Chilam Balam**² in where the sins is mentioned obstinately:

The words of Hunab-Ku will sad... when extent for the entire earth the word of God of skies... that only the sin will talk, only the sin will be its teaching".

... of sin will be his face, of sin his understanding, of sin its word, of sin its teaching..."

When settle in the mat this power, of only sin will be its word, of only sin will be its teaching".

5. Along all of above I have wanted to shows information of own experience and foreign about the ambiguity of the popular knowledges; on one side, his value as expression if it wants picturesque or as attractive verbalizations in his form. On the other hand his deep content

to feel one aspect of the operation we hear to same plundered. Certainly, it is not a new this interpretation of the disease as popular culture that reflex symbolically the conflicting relations that mentioned township have found subject³.

At this point and for deduction of the information, the folklore of the teeth disease it shows me in this case as the knowledge system and specify behaviors of social groups in subordinate relation, that includes elements imposed by a dominant group in reason of their interests of power and which excuse and mechanism are expressed symbolically by the folkloric narration.

Finally, I have allude preferably to the ideational systems of the native, only it has been my big opportunity of experiences with them and no because only to this group correspond the vision of one distorted world.

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