

# From the mythology of the Tepozteco

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*TEPOZTLAN is a sacred site, birthplace of indestructible and untouchable gods.*

Once again on the night of September 7, as they had for the past four hundred years, the Tepoztecos, carrying flaming torches, climbed the huge cliffs toward a pyramid; the procession advancing like a luminous serpent.

On the following day, they represented the following story in Náhuatl, in their central plaza:

The kings of the surrounding dominions; Tlayacapan, Yecapixtla, Oaxtepec, Cuaunahuac, Cahuixtla, Ticumán, and Tepoztlán assembled, deeply worried.

A tribe from Aztlán, called the Aztecs, had settled on the shores of Lake Texcoco. After seven years of secret preparation, they had become a threat. With the battle cry of "Mexico!" they had set out to conquer their neighboring tribes.

They were ambitious and organized, and claimed the gods had ordered them to build a vast and powerful empire.

The kings decided to unite to counteract this threat. The king of Tepoztlán, to confirm the alliance, offered to give his youngest daughter in marriage to the prince of the Cahuixtlas who lived in the next valley.

One day, while she was bathing in a cool stream that came down from the rocks, she saw a white feather falling

from the sky, and it made her pregnant. Postponing the wedding, the father locked up his daughter; when the baby was born, he placed it in a rush basket, and put it in the river.

Down the mountain, the river made a bend surrounded by bald cypresses, and this shady place was a sanctuary where the old men and priests pray. When it arrived at the bend, the basket caught in the roots of those ancient trees. The old men heard crying from inside the basket, and when they uncovered it, great was their astonishment, for in it they found a baby. His skin and hair were so white that the sun's rays dared not shine on any part of his body. He had red eyes like a rabbit, and fingers and toes joined by membranes like a lizard.

There was no doubt, this baby was a child of the gods; they would take care of him, he had been sent from heaven.

The child grew, and his wisdom was astonishing. In a year of drought, there was nothing to eat or drink. He told them to carry him, since he could barely walk, to a secret place, to save his people. Up the mountain they found a spring and enough animals to feed all of them.

Later he became the god-king of Tepoztlán. In the end, they were conquered by the Aztecs and forced to pay tribute and supply men for the

imperial army, like many other subdued tribes.

When the King was old, the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan, fell.

The first simple cathedral was built on the site of the great pyramid. An enormous bell arrived from Spain after the bell tower was erected. The tower rose higher as building progressed, creating a resounding problem. Several natives went for the god-king, so he could solve it.

They carried him to the Zócalo on a stretcher. The people gathered expectantly to see the recent arrival. Suddenly, a huge dust cloud arose, obscuring everything. When it settled, the bell was up in the tower. Friar Juan de Zumárraga came out to thank him for the miracle.

The king asked him who they worshipped in that strange building with a roof. The bishop took him into the church and told him the story of Christ. The king listened attentively, then said to him: "So the Virgin Mary is my mother, and I am the son of God, like Christ".

"Of course, the Virgin is your mother, and you are Christ's brother", answered the priest. "My son, I am going to give you a present: several friars will follow you and when you get to your town, you shall know."

In the center of Tepoztlán, the gift box was opened, and seven white



*The Tepozteco.*

pigeons flew out. The friars said: "Our bishop wants us to build convents where the pigeons perch".

King Tepozteco was baptized on September 8, day of the "Sweet Name of Mary", his mother. He celebrated with a great feast, and in the afternoon he slept. He was awakened by voices and shouts from outside.

The kings had come from their dominions to reproach him, each wearing his distinctive cape of deer, rabbit, jaguar, or sheepskin, or distinctive feathers; they were followed by their archers. They upbraided him, for he had turned to new gods brought by the foreigners!

The old man went out to speak to them, calmly and wisely: "I am

amazed that you are disrespectful to me. You know that besides being a king like you, I am divine. God is, at the same time, sun and shadow; he is the power of lightning and thunder, love and hate, he does good and evil, he is birth and death, the very life of men and animals, he grants harmony to the heavenly bodies. Only in different times and places, he takes on other names. They call him Christ, he is my brother. Likewise, the Virgin Mary is my mother. The Christian Hueytlatoani will build temples. Let the friars, God's servants, come; they are good."

So, in the 16th century, they built seven convents, where the pigeons came to roost.

The place is surrounded by strange, giant crags. One of them is female. There, a pyramid was built for Tepozteco when he died. The one opposite is male. It is full of stone phalluses. This is the marvelous birthplace of the gods. Quetzalcóatl came first, born many years before, in a spring. He was a winged god, a plumed serpent who flew, visiting many different towns. It was also the birthplace of the god Tepozteco, who lived and died there.

It is a magnetic area, full of forces. The people are proud and have strange powers. Unexplainable things happen. It is a sacred place, indestructible and untouchable ❧