

## World View and perceptions

The physical world surrounding the Pinolteco is the residence of powerful beings, benign and malign. There various myths which explain the origin of the Sun, the moon, of the local population and of some animals, typical of the area.

It is difficult to describe the origin myths and the magical places both very influential in the behavior of Pinoltecos without touching upon the complete belief system.

Origin myths: There is no myths about the creation of the world and of the first man. Several informants coincided in saying that the world was created by God. Nevertheless they are conscious of an era preceding this we live in. The deluge separates both. In the preceding era men had no joints and they could only work stone. This they did just by singing and whistling and the stone would pile up without any direct effort. The men could only rest by throwing themselves on their "beds" but sitting or bending over was impossible. Those men came to an end. when the sun looked on, the stones boiled because they were alive and thus all men died. About the deluge there are several different versions but with small variants. Here is a synthesis of them. The angel let the men know that rains would cover up the towns. Only one couple, man and woman believed him and helped him build a house to seek refuge and also to put animals so they would not die. Another man decided to seek refuge by himself and built a wooden box. When the rains came the box floated during 40 days. After 43 days the angel sent the Zopilote (buzzard) to find out if there was anybody alive but this stayed tempted by the abundance of carrion. After the buzzard the angel sent the hawk who returned saying that the buzzard was so heavy that he could not fly back to heaven. The angel punished the buzzard by change in the head where he had had before the rear end and viceversa. That is the reason why buzzards walk very heavy nowadays.

Another punishment was that this animal would from then on eat rotten foods.

The couple that collaborated with the angel received permission to become man and wife in spite of being brother and sister. On the other hand, the man who had kept aloof was transformed into a monkey. The proof that men have been monkeys before is their appearance and similar behavior.

The myth of the origin of the sun has no chronological correlation with that of the ~~sun~~<sup>world</sup>. Nobody knows for sure which predated which. In this myth appears the sibling rivalry which is common to other stories, such as the origin of the lightning and of that of the Pinoltecos themselves. There were 3 brothers. The youngest discovered a tree in whose top there was a beehive. He invited his older brothers to go with him to gather honey. The two older ones climbed up and started eating the honey but would only throw little balls of chewed up wax to the youngest waiting underneath. After a time of getting only wax pellets in spite of his begging for some honey, the youngest brother began to throw the pellets against the tree, which fell killing the two older brothers.

The young boy returned to the house and told his mother. In those days there was a great fair in town and one of the tests for the public was to cling up an enormous rueda de la fortuna. People would try unsuccessfully till the boy told his mother he would jump and she should hold on to him. The mother had a rabbit in her arms and when they succeeded in jumping the mother became the moon. And the little rabbit can still be seen. The boy became the sun. People were mad and threw stones at them. One of them hurt the woman's eye and that is the reason why the Moon does not give out too bright a light.

Origin myths are really lacking in Pinola. This about the sun

is the only one which explain the beginnings of something. Others referring to animals only explain the origin of one trait, such as the one of the buzzard, see above.

About the earth, God was going to make the sun ~~xxxx~~ rise in the south and set in the north but since the world is very long in that direction and the day too, then he changed it making the Sun rise in the East and set in the West. ( Pinola is built in a north-south direction-All the milpas are to the west of the village).

Most informants state that earth is round, and ~~that~~ floats on a large body of water which surrounds it completely. Only one said that the earth was flat and square and made special mention of the four corners. Interestingly enough even those who spoke about the roundness of the earth mentioned the four corners which suggest a fusion of pre-colombian with catholic knowledge. The sun lights the earth and when it sets it illuminates the part of the earth underneath ours where little men have to cover their heads with earthen hats to protect themselves from the sun rays, since this in his course goes much closer to the earth than when he is on our side.

The origin of the Pinoltecos is on the hill which overlooks the village on the East side. There tis a cave called Muk Na' from which two brothers left flying in different directions. These beothes were the ancestors of today Pinola and Chiapa de Corzo a town about 100 miles away. Before starting his flight the Chiapa man cheated his brother by inviting him to exchange lucks. This was bad but the Pinola thought he was getting a better luck. Besides he ate too heavily and starting flying very high whioe the Chiapa man did not eat and startin flying very low but in a steady course. The pinolteco could not resist the flight and had to land soon afterwards right here in the valley while the Chiapa went as far as the city of Chiapa



Muk Na' figures in prominent place in P nola mythology because the ancestral spirits abide there as well as the spirits of the important living men.

The holy Maize, staple in the pinolteca diet was discovered by a man upon seeing some ants carrying it. The man begged the ants to let him know where was the maize stored byx they refused. Enraged, the man caught one ants and squeezed her in the waist line till almost kill her, thus the sha pe of ants body now. The ants asked forgiveness and promised to show him, leading him to a big stone under neath which was the maize. As the man could not enter, not even one

hand into the narrow opening of the stone, he asked for help to the woodpecker bird who opened it with his beak.

RED MAIZE

Origin myth more elaborated

Its origin is subsequent to that of regular maize. There was a poor man, lonely and poor and dressed in rags. He was walking in the woods when somebody asked for help. He looked around for the voice and soon discovered that it belonged to a monstuous snake that had been almost cut in two by a machete. The snake spoke to him begging him to carry it to its house. Although the man was terrified at the sight of the encourmous animal, he wound it around a branch and thus took it to where the snake directed him. The door of the house was opnede by two bullfrogs. The owner of the house was the Thunderboit father of the snake. Once inside the poor man was offered wealth and one of the Thunderbolt daughters <sup>in marriage</sup> as reward for his kindness. The bullfrogs turned into beautiful maidens and the snake into a handsome young man. The only girl who accepted the man as a husband was the youngest and both left the Thunderbolt house. The new wife was very able to cook with the minimum ~~of~~ amount of maize, perhpas two or three ears of corn would suffice to prepare a huge caccerole.

One day, she had a whim for "tamales" and asked permission from her husband to go to the milpa and pick some ears of corn. He said that it would be all right if she just picked two or three. This she did but upon returning to her house and putting the corn in one corner of the house, this began to grow and grow till there was a huge pile of it which covered all the floor. When the husband arrived to the house and saw the amount of corn he was enraged thinking that the wife had disobeyed him. He beat her till she started bleeding from the nose. Having nothing else to wipe the blood with, the wife picked one of the ears of corn from the floor which remained red ever after and that is how red corn started. The wife died of sorrow for the beating.

Of the origin of animals there is not a single myth but as said above their characteristic physical traits have found explanation in the local stories. It is interesting that a common theme runs in all these stories and it is that the outstanding trait is the result of punishment, usually brought upon the animal because of too much pride or a desire to outsmart other animals or such.

The rabbit was very naughty and ate the corn in the fields. The thunderbolt made a doll of wax and left it in the milpa. The rabbit came and talked to the doll but she would not answer. Mad at the silence intended to kick her but upon raising his leg, this stuck to the wax doll. The rabbit raised a second leg to attempt again and his second leg stuck to the wax, till his four legs were deeply imbedded in the wax. Then the owner of the milpa (magical owner) came and as punishment cut the rabbit's nose. The long ears of the rabbit originated because he wanted to outsmart all animals and they pulled them till they hurt and grew.

Another origin myth refers to the Mute Thunderbolt (Lightning). Here we find again the two brothers. The youngest refused systematicall y

the food cooked by the oldest. This last, intrigued by this followed his little brother and saw him enter a cave where there were many Thunderbolts. All of them were partaking of a magical banquet with large amounts of minute tortillas served in dishes equally small but that never seemed to end. The Thunderbolts were surprised to see the older brother looking on at them but they invited him to step in and to eat with them. They were going to test him. To this end they gave him a piece of rope which he was supposed to cut but the sheer strength of his pull. When he was trying the rope exploded in four parts which flew in different directions and the man fell into the sea where he died. The ~~rope~~ became the lightning. (or the man?)

In the environment closer to the Finolteco, the mountains the corn fields, the house he inhabits, the water holes, all are the abode of supernatural beings whose very strength is dangerous for the common individual and only the powerful human beings can go close to. In some cases these beings must be propitiated, in others the only solution is to keep away from the specific loci

If we start by considering the advanced (or frontiers) points of the magical cosmos and progress toward the closest, that in which he finds protection and rest, his own home, we will understand how the environment is populated by beings which participate of the dual powers of meiltatiles and curers. That is they protect and punish.

The most advanced points of the supernatural map of Pinola are the "towers" of vigilance, one close to the town of Amatenango and the other close to S. Bartolo (The towers names are Amaihuitz and Mewakash, in fact they are hills). From them the guardian

watch so no disease will enter Pinola from these towns. The meiltatiles and lower guardians in the supernatural hierarchy but in general, the common man will avoid these places during his trips, as much as he will avoid the other caves well known as residence of magical beings.

Within the village, there are 4 vigilance points which coincide approximately with the four cardinal points; 1 in the north end of town where the road lead to the town of S. Cristobal; a second to the south where the old road to Comitan begins, a third to the east, toward Soyatitan and a fourth toward S. Bartolo ( remember to clear this mess about cardinal points especially with the last two ).

In the four supernatural vigilance places lives the Thunderbolt and the Meteor, the two most powerful agents of control.

The caves are particularly dangerous on Thursdays and Fridays when their door are open and he who ventures close to them can become sick with magical fright, usually lethal in these occasions.

The corn fields have an owner, Thunderbolt. The propiciatory rites practised in the milpas, have lost vigor(?) as the greatest part of the ritual in Pinola. Nowadays the Indians only light candles after the harvest, while they make the heaps of ears for transportation to their homes.

Some men go close to these sacred places in order to ask for benefits from the supernatural ~~exerits~~ dwellers. In order to obtain wealth ( animals and money ) the solicitants enter a deal with the owner of the place by which this last gives him whatever the other request and a specific span of time to live. After death the man will repay the benefits obtained by serving the owner of the place.

There are cases of rich living men in Pinola about whom gossip is widespread that they obtained their riches by these pacts.

The holy earth, source of foods and also linked to the individual does not have too many rites to propitiate it unless we include the ones in the house. Yet, immediately after the death of a person, they lower him to the ground and leave him a few moments, face downward, in contact with the earthen floor. The object of this being to ask forgiveness for years of hurting the earth with the machetes and of dirtying with the human spoils.

In the case of magical fright, even if not practiced by all the curers, it is customary to go to the place where the spirit "fell" and return to the house with a handful of earth in order to help the spirit to return.

Every person passing by a water hole next to which there are always crosses, throws a flower or a few leaves for the cross, since this will introduce him to heaven after death.

In the supernatural map of Pinola there are streets, paths which the meiltatiles walk at night in their nocturnal vigil. It is dangerous to build a house in one of those paths. These supernatural streets do not coincide with the actual streets of the village, there for nobody can know ahead of time. The symptoms of a house in forbidden ground is the death of the young children inhabiting it and the agony of continuous nightmares of the adults. Only the curer can discover, in the pulse of the sick, whether their house is located in such a tabu place. The solution is only one; abandon the place and hope that the new house will no again be in another sacred street.

The house has a prominent place in the lives of Pinola Indians. The link between it and its inhabitants is intimate and lasts throughout the life of the human beings. When we consider the gardens surrounding each house, it is man (see above) who with his powerful spirit influences the crops in them. In the case of the house the influence is opposite. The house is alive and has to be propitiated so it will no harm



The proof that the house is alive is that it grows old and also that it has worms. The house has the same dual powers that other supernatural entities possess, it protects and punishes. The house has its nagual, a woman and it is the nagual that feel envy if it is not fed. A rite, when building is completed, feeds the house (clear about this feeding as intended for the nagual and for the earth). The inhabitants of the house are not present during the ceremony but delegate the task to the prestigious old men or maybe a curer who knows the ways of talking to the house. The old man talks to the four posts in the corners of the house and measures the exact centre of the house where he digs a small hole to deposit the meal. There he will put, candles, liquor, tobacco, flowers and a black rooster alive or a steer head. The hole is covered and only then the members of the family enter into the house and all partake of a meal.

The ritual words used are:

"Bendito palo, bendita casa, los Crias a tus hijos. Todo el tiempo los tenes en tu sombra a tus hijos. Todo el tiempo tienen que estar en tu sombra. Ahi que lo mire quien llega, abajo de tu sombra. No des permiso que lleguen a pararse en la sombra de ti. ~~que lleguen a pararse en la sombra de ti.~~  
~~que lleguen a pararse en la sombra de ti.~~  
porque vos los miras todo el tiempo. Crialo a tus hijos. Por eso te vine a dejar to bocado. Por eso me mandaron llamar, me mandaron traer. No es una gran cosa que te vine a dejar. Perdone Dios Vos los miras a tus hijos."

This rite is imperative for anyone who builds a house. In the cases where it is not followed, the inhabitants of the house know that the house is mad because it makes noises at night. The children will be the first victim of the house anger and die.



But the house is not always such an eviious and dangerous entity. Well fed and contented the house is the protection of man against the entrance of outside dangers, specially of the witches. The Pinolteco is spiritually attached to his house as the ceremonies carried out in the case of moving to a new dwelling show. In these cases the curer follows the trails from the old to the new house throwing flowers and calling the spirit, specially that of young children so they will encourage it to leave the old place. Otherwise the child could die. No news about this rite being practised for adults.

The moon eclipse takes place because the large ants, called Bahte' in Tzeltal are biting the moon. Unluckily no informants could say why the attack by the ants to the moon. People, upon seen the eclipse make noises with whatever they get hold of. They sound horns, shoot rifles, beat cans or drums, etc and even scream. The technique appears similar to that used in curing of magical fright. As several *informants* put it. "we, the sons of the moon call it so she comes back and does not die".

For the last few years there is an invasion of very hard grass which is harming the crops and making it impossible to clear the fields. The Pinoltecos explain this as a result of one of them who thought he was very smart and went to Amatenango to trade corn for wheat. They gave him a few seeds telling that it was good wheat but when planted in Pinola it grew into this grass. The people from Amatenango had outsmarted the Pinolteco. The attitude of the local cultivators is totally fatalistic. There is nothing to be done because the pinolteco is to blame.



# Ideological Cosmos

## Residence of magical forces -

- 1) Frontiers of the community - <sup>flowers</sup>
- 2) Caves, water holes - <sup>thunderbolt</sup>  
<sub>Meteor -</sub>
- 3) Magic streets
- 4) The milpa - <sup>origin of corn</sup>  
<sub>& red maize -</sub>
- 5) The house - <sup>initiation</sup>  
<sub>death</sub>