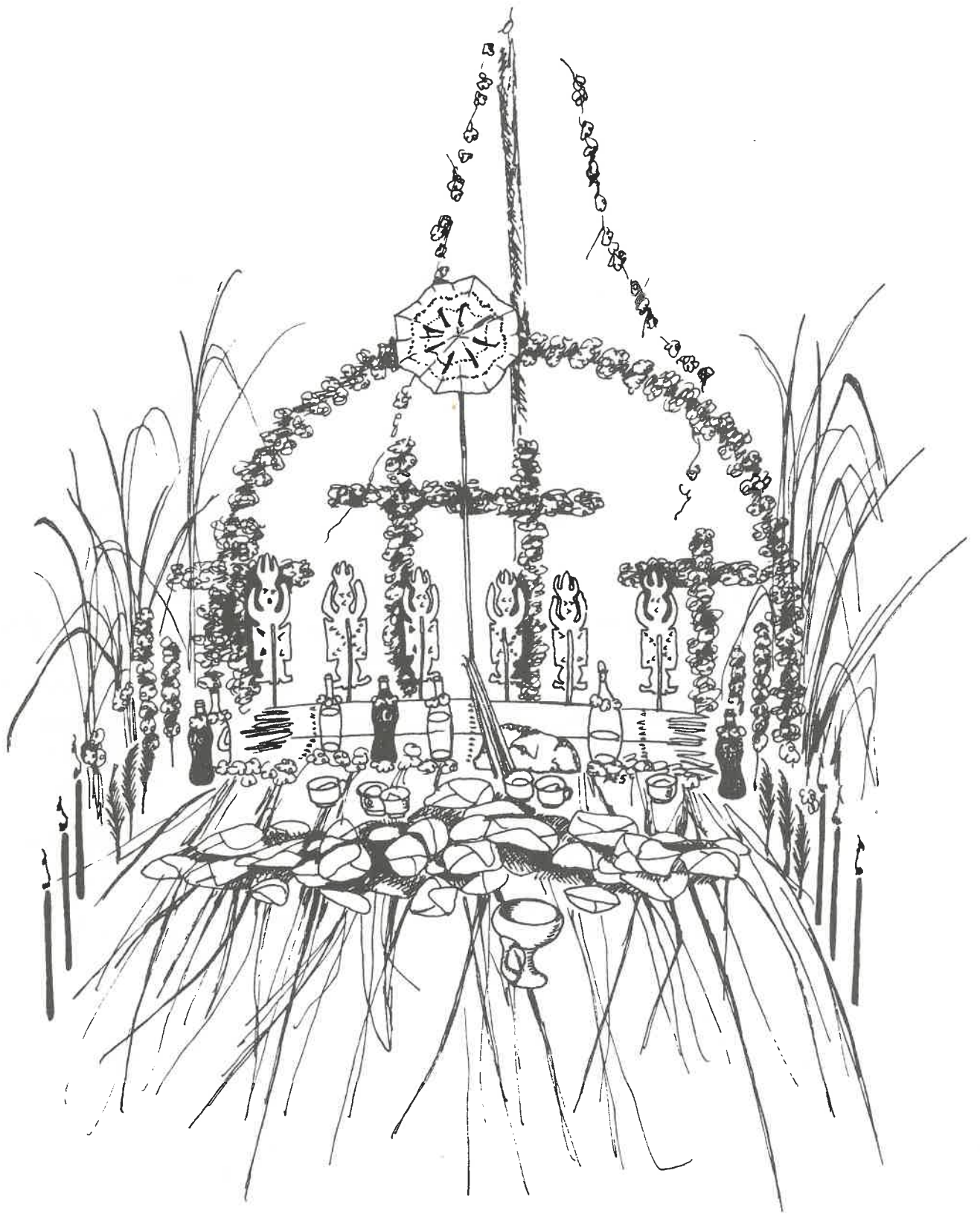


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The Image of Disease
Medical Practices of Nahua Indians
of the Huasteca

by
Alan R. Sandstrom

Department of Anthropology
University of Missouri-Columbia
1978



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MEDICAL PRACTICES OF NAHUA INDIANS OF THE HUASTECA

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The manner in which people identify and respond to disease is conditioned by the social groups in which they live. As an increasing number of anthropologists investigate medical practices in other cultures there is a growing conviction that "...disease and its treatment are only in the abstract purely biological processes...such facts as whether a person gets sick at all, what kinds of disease he acquires and what kind of treatment he receives depend largely on social factors", (Ackernect 1947 quoted in Lieban 1973:1033). In particular, the methods by which people diagnose, treat, and prevent disease reflect social and cultural conditions, as well as assumptions about the nature of pathogenic forces. Following is an analysis of the means by which Nahua Indians of the southern Huasteca region in east central Mexico cope with disease. The Nahua are able not only to identify pathogens but to portray them through the medium of cut paper figurines. The analysis presented here links Nahua curing and disease prevention techniques with their underlying assumptions about the causes of disease. Furthermore, it is shown that Nahua beliefs about disease etiology derive from the way they think about nature, their means of production, and their society.*

The Nahua have developed a complex set of procedures for treatment and prevention of disease which reflect a comprehensive and systematic theory of why people get sick. Nahua medical practices are part of an overall process which includes activities not solely related to bodily illness. The unity of activity of curing specialists even when engaged in seemingly unrelated tasks rests on Nahua ideas of the causes of human "dis-ease" (Landy 1977:161) including illness. A curing specialist might just as readily be called on to insure the fertility of some family member or even of the corn crop as to rid someone of a physical disorder. Before examining their concepts of the causes and treatment of disease it will be necessary to place the Nahua in their geographical and cultural setting.

*I would like to thank Pamela Effrein Sandstrom for the drawings and illustrations appearing in this work.

The southern Huasteca is located in foothills of the great Sierra Madre Oriental range that traverses the east coast of central Mexico. Indian villages are usually found in the choppy hills that characterize the region, the flatter areas being reserved for non-Indian cattle ranches. Rainfall is heavy in the area, usually between 2,000 and 2,500 mm per year, (Gomez-Pompa 1973:81) and gives rise to dense tropical forest. There is a rainy and dry season approximately corresponding to summer and winter respectively of the northern temperate zone. The area is extremely remote and is accessible only by unimproved trails and poor quality dirt roads. There are virtually no bridges over the myriad of streams and rivers, and large sections of the southern Huasteca become isolated in the rainy season.

The major Indian groups inhabiting this region are Otomi, Tepehua, Huastec, and Nahuatl. The 1970 census records over 110,000 Nahuatl living in the northern zone of the state of Veracruz, an area which constitutes a major portion of the southern Huasteca. Nahuatl villages are scattered throughout the region, built in the forest and surrounded by fields of growing crops. The villages and land surrounding them are *ejidos* or land cooperatives set up by the Mexican government after the revolution of 1910. Land is owned by household heads but may not be sold or in any way alienated from the original *ejido* grant, (Simpson 1937, Whetten 1955). Most of the Nahuatl lead highly traditional life-styles far from the influences of Mexican national culture.

The information contained in this study was gathered over a fifteen month period from the Nahuatl village of Puyecaco. Located in the *municipio* (county) of Ixhautlan de Madero in northern Veracruz (see map), Puyecaco has a population of 582 people. All villagers speak Nahuatl as their native language and probably 150 people speak Spanish as well. The name Puyecaco means place of salt water in Nahuatl and refers to a now dry salt spring located nearby. Nahuatl was spoken by the Aztecs and it appears that the people of Puyecaco are descendants of an Aztec or, perhaps even earlier Toltec invading force that entered the region prior to European contact, (Meade 1962:2:118, Provost 1975:27-29, Sandstrom 1975:25-27). There is no doubt that Puyecaco has a long history since the village is located amid numerous pre-Columbian stone ruins now overgrown by forest. Since very little is known about the rural populations

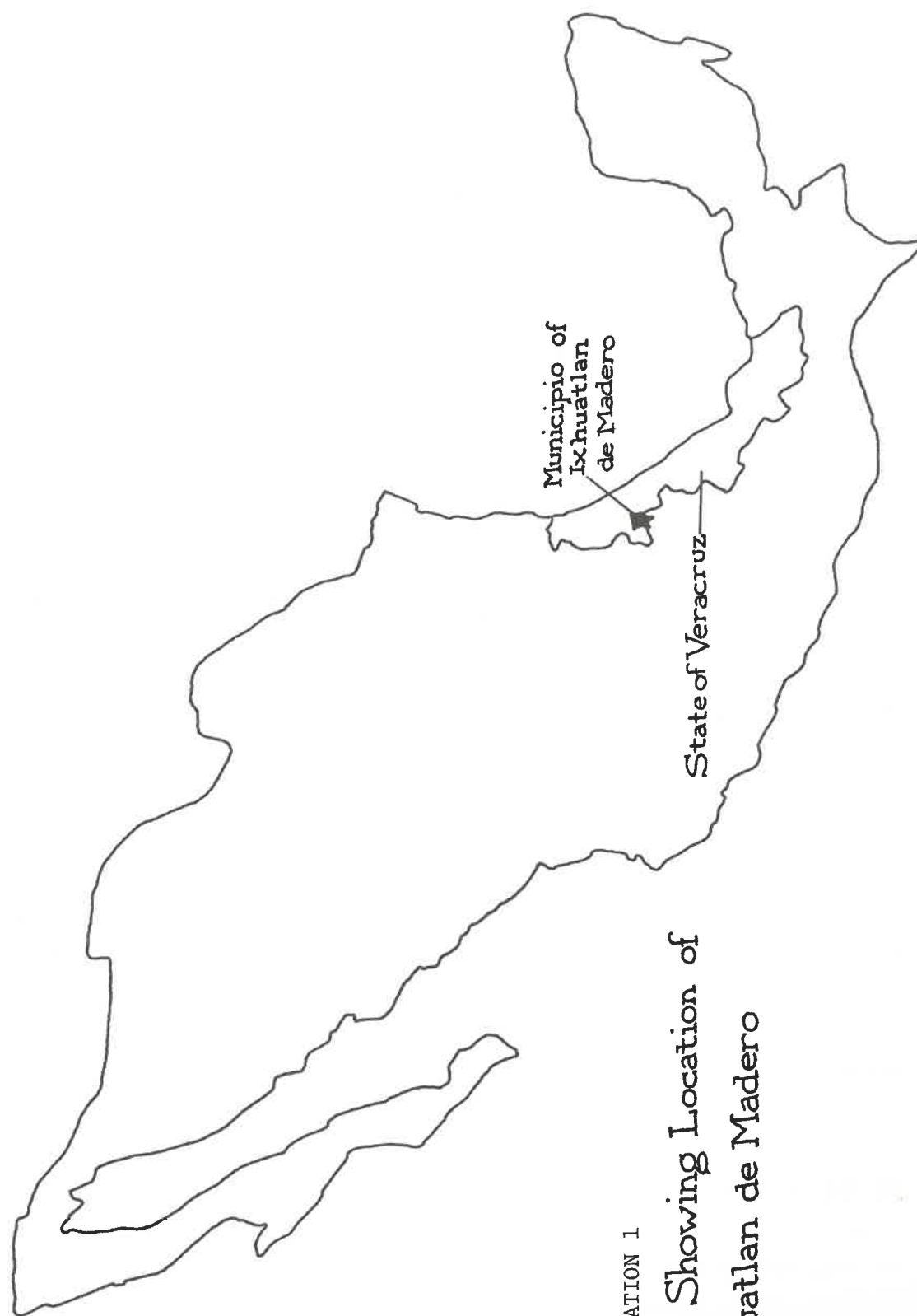


ILLUSTRATION 1

Map Showing Location of
Ixhuatlán de Madero

under Aztec rule (Soustelle 1975 [original 1955]: xxiv) it is not possible to determine relationships between contemporary Nahuatl medical practices and those of provincial subjects of the Aztec Empire.

Villagers practice slash and burn horticulture based on the machete and dibble stick. The forest is cut, dried, burned, and the cleared land planted and weeded using only human labor. Fields must be left to fallow after two or three years of planting due to the leaching effect of heavy rainfall, and the generally poor quality of soil. Major crops grown in Puyecaco include maize, beans, squash, chiles, *camotes* (a potato-like tuber), and sugar cane. The forest and streams are exploited for wild products which are used extensively to supplement the diet. Surplus produce is grown to be sold at regional markets in order to pay *ejido* taxes and to purchase the two manufactured items upon which the villagers have come to depend: steel machetes and cloth.

Puyecaco is typical of hundreds of villages that dot the southern Huasteca. There is no planned layout nor a central square around which houses cluster. Rather, the village is made up of a series of clearings in the forest each of which contains from one to eight houses. Clearings are connected to each other by a complex network of trails and may be anywhere from a few hundred yards to over a mile apart. The house clusters of Puyecaco village are scattered over about a three square mile area. Each dwelling is occupied by members of a nuclear family. A clearing is shared by families related to each other through male household heads (patrilineal extended family). The hard labor involved in slash and burn production is also shared by males of an extended family. Puyecaco village, in short, is a loosely tied aggregate of extended families whose male members cooperate by exchanging labor.

Nahuatl cosmology divides the universe into four major realms. First there is the earth's surface which constitutes the locus of everyday activities. In Nahuatl this realm is called *tlali'*, a term which carries the same connotation as the English word earth. The second region is analogous to our Western concept of the heavens. Called *ilwihkaktli'* in Nahuatl, this celestial realm is home to the stars and is the place where several local deities either originate or presently reside. The third region lies underneath the earth's

surface and is called *miktlan* which translates from Nahuatl as place of the dead. This underworld realm is where the souls of those who die of natural causes continue to live. It is connected to the surface through a series of doors which correspond to numerous pre-Columbian ruins that dot the village. The fourth region is a water realm called *apan* (water place) where all souls go of people who die by violent means such as murder, drowning, or being struck by lightning.

Both harmful and beneficial spirits inhabit each of these regions (see Table 1). The celestial realm is home to the creator high-god Toteotsi' (our most sacred deity) who is associated with the sun but has little or no interest in human affairs. Also of this realm is Tlixiwantsi', a benevolent hearth deity who lives in the three rocks around each fireplace and guards over household members. In the underworld Tlakatekolotl (owl man) reigns over souls of the dead although he is by no means evil incarnate like the Christian devil. The water realm is overseen by Apanchane' (lady of the water) who looks out for villagers, provides fish for the diet, and sends rain. On earth, in sacred caves, live seed masters (*xinastli*') who control the productivity of their "children," i.e., the important crops grown in Puyecaco village. Tonantsi' (our sacred mother), the mother deity who controls fertility also lives on earth, (see Sandstrom n.d.). The earth itself (Tlaltetata' - Father earth) is a kind of spirit, who, along with his wife (Tlaltenana' - Mother earth) protects the village from harm and influences crop productivity.

Nahua religion is fundamentally aboriginal but elements of Spanish Catholicism have been incorporated into traditional beliefs and rituals. For example, some saints have been added to the Nahua spirit pantheon and most ritual occasions have been synchronized with Catholic holy days. The core of Nahua beliefs and rituals, however, reflect concerns and orientations unrelated to those of traditional Christianity. Nahua rituals are elaborate occasions, frequently lasting several days and nights and involve the construction of complex altars, playing sacred music, chanting, sacrificing turkeys and chickens, making offerings to relevant spirit entities, dancing, etc., (see Sandstrom 1975). The reason for holding rituals is to engage spirit entities from the four realms in a kind of transaction whereby they will

Table 1Major Spirits

<u>Realm</u>	<u>Spirit Entity</u>
<i>ilwihkaktli'</i> - sky	<i>ehekatl</i> - wind - disease causing agent <i>Tlaxiwantsi'</i> - fire - house guardian <i>Toteotsi'</i> - our sacred deity - creator high god
<i>tlali'</i> - earth	<i>ehekatl</i> - wind - disease causing agent <i>Ekihte'</i> - work <i>Ekihte' Siwatl</i> - wife of work } productivity <i>mu' axkatl</i> - house guardians - protection from disease <i>onipistok aki' ki' ixtok</i> - witnesses - protection from disease <i>santitos</i> - syncretized Catholic saints - guardians <i>señores</i> - lords - ancestor spirits - protection from disease <i>tlali'</i> - earth - earth or hill spirits - protection from disease <i>Tlaltetata'</i> - father earth } crop productivity <i>Tlaltenana'</i> - mother earth } <i>Tonantsi'</i> our sacred mother - fertility <i>xinaxtli'</i> - seed - seedmasters - crop productivity
<i>apan</i> - water	<i>Apanchane'</i> - lady of the water - village guardian, productivity <i>ehekatl</i> - wind - disease causing agent <i>noyolo'</i> - heat - souls of those who died violently - disease causing agent
<i>miktlan</i> - underworld	<i>ehekatl</i> - wind - disease causing agent <i>Mikilistli'</i> - death - causes death <i>noyolo'</i> - heat - souls of the dead - guardian <i>Tlakatekolotl</i> - owl man - lord of the underworld

actively cooperate, in a coordinated way, with villagers' goals. Two goals most often sought through rituals are first, an increase in crop productivity and second, freedom from disease.

The Nahua believe that all benefits to humanity flow from the four regions. Spirit entities live in the regions and are responsible for the workings of nature that bring rain, sun, and fertility into conjunction in the fields. Many Nahua deities are closely linked to natural phenomena and rituals are means of enlisting their aid for the welfare of humanity. From the earth, celestial, and water realms comes the fertility, sunlight, and rain that result in productive fields. The underworld contains souls of Nahua ancestors who because they are members of the extended family continue to guide and protect their kinsmen on earth. Kinship obligations extend to souls of the dead and the Nahua have developed ritual methods for meeting those responsibilities, (see Sandstrom 1975:247-253). Success in the fields and thus life itself is attributed by the Nahua not to their own labor and skill as implemented through the workings of the extended family but to the coordinated efforts of spirit beings. Even labor involved in the horticultural cycle is attributed to *Ekihte'*, the spirit of work, rather than to human motivation and activity.

The Nahua define disease as general ill-being which includes mental as well as physical states, (Adams and Rubel 1967:333). The most common cause of disease according to villagers is infection by one or more of a class of spirit beings called *ehekatl*. The term *ehekatl* means wind or gust in Nahuatl. Some people believe these spirits ride the wind while others believe they are the wind. The *ehekatl* are spirits according to villagers because they have bodies like air, however, they retain human appetites and enjoy eating corn, smoking tobacco, and drinking the cane alcohol consumed by the Nahua. *Ehekatl* travel from one realm to another always searching or lurking about, ready to enter the body of any villager they meet. Once in a person's body they cause sickness, unhappiness, and, eventually death. All people are susceptible to attack by *ehekatl* but children are thought to be weaker than adults and thus more open to infection. If wind gusts through the village parents can be seen grabbing their children and taking them indoors while muttering "*ehekatl*."

There is little doubt that Nahua ideas about the *ehekatl* are part of a widespread Middle American folk concept called *malos aires* (harmful air). The *malos aires*, like *ehekatl*, are associated with wind and are believed to cause disease. Usually, however, the concept of *malos aires* is ill-defined in believers' minds, (Adams and Rubel 1967:338). *Malos aires* are abstract disease causing agents lacking names, origins and any degree of specificity. For the Nahua, by contrast, *ehekatl* are identified individually and statements can be made about each one's nature. In general, *ehekatl* are viewed as dangerous rather than evil. Also, specific *ehekatl* are not linked with specific diseases. The spirits have a degenerating influence on the body which may manifest a variety of symptoms. Curing treatments are addressed to all of the assembled *ehekatl* rather than to one or two individual spirits.

Most *ehekatl* enter the bodies of their victims while the latter are going about their daily routine. An unsuspecting person may encounter the disease causing spirit while walking down a trail, bathing, or even sleeping. The chances of being infected, however, are increased dramatically under certain conditions. Failure to make an occasional offering to Apanchane', the water spirit, will cause her to send out water-dwelling *ehekatl* to attack the negligent individual. If a person fails to make appropriate offerings to the ancestors, particularly on Xantolo' (Day of the Dead) in early November, swarms of *ehekatl* will be sent from the underworld out of vengeance. In addition, sometimes the angry soul itself will come to the earth's surface to attack ungrateful kinsmen. Gossip also weakens a person and releases a type of *ehekatl* into the air.

The Nahua also share with many Middle America Indian groups the idea that conditions of hot and cold can lead to disease. Although this concept is not well developed in Puyecaco village certain activities and foods are believed to induce states of hotness and coldness in a person's body. If the body is in a state of cold it is dangerous to eat food classified as hot or to engage in hot activities. If the body is in a state of hot the reverse is true. For example, a man who has worked in the fields all day (hot activity) will wait until nightfall after the body has cooled to bathe in the stream (cold activity). The reason given for this behavior is that mixing hot and

cold will weaken the body and leave it open to infection by *ehekatl*, (Adams and Rubel 1967:339).

Sorcery is another cause of sickness and death in Puyecaco. Sorcerers, who may be either male or female, send *ehekatl* to attack innocent villagers. Of particular interest to sorcerers are small children who, because of their relative weakness, are easier to infect with disease. Sorcerers also cut a paper figurine of Mikilistli', the spirit of death (see figure 8 in Appendix), and through ritual techniques send it to enemies or unsuspecting neighbors. Mikilistli' enters the body of a victim and within hours proves fatal. People and especially children who die of no apparent cause are often said to be victims of sorcery. Sorcerers can also cause everyday objects such as feathers, coins, and thorns to be intruded into people's bodies, thus causing disease. A common method for attacking people, however, is based on the sorcerer's ability to change into a night stalking animal. Called a *nagual*, or transformed sorcerer, this animal spirit attacks people who are out on the trails at night. The objective of a *nagual* is usually to cause death rather than disease.

Treatment of disease in Puyecaco is basically a set of techniques for removing *ehekatl* from the patient's body and physical surroundings. While there is an extensive knowledge of herbal cures and a small reliance on Western medicine, these are used in conjunction with ritual techniques. More will be said about herbal and Western medicine in a later section. Curing is performed by a specialist who is paid for the service. Curing specialists may be male or female and are called *tlamati' ketl* in Nahuatl, meaning person of knowledge. Alternately they are called *pahchi' ketl* or *tepahtiana'*, terms which mean curer. The curing ritual is known as *tleuchpantle'* (cleansing), which signifies that the body is cleansed of disease causing spirits. Cleansings are by far the most common ritual performed in Puyecaco. Such rituals vary in complexity, duration, and price according to the severity of the disease to be treated and the patient's ability to pay. The subject of a cleansing need not necessarily be sick; it is considered a good idea to undergo the ritual a few times a year as a preventative. In addition, a cleansing may be performed for the entire household or even the village as a whole.

The central element in cleansing rituals is the cutting of special figurines out of paper. These figurines, called *tlatektli*', are generally symbolic representations of the *ehekatl* that inhabit the four regions. Only a curing specialist has sufficient knowledge and skill to cut the complex figurines properly and his or her reputation as a curer depends on this ability. The material used for figurines is inexpensive paper called *papel de china* which is purchased at the market or a village *cantina*. Cutting is done with a pair of scissors. Each paper figurine is a particular color and shape depending on which spirit entity it is meant to portray. Curers are also able to cut a variety of figurines that are unrelated to disease *per se* such as seed and bush spirits.

The practice of cutting paper images of spirit entities has been documented among Otomi, Tepehua, and Totonac Indians in addition to the Nahuatl. It seems likely that paper cutting has a long history in Mexico, extending to the time before European contact. Lenz mentions that court cases involving charges of idolatry for possession of paper figurines date back to the 17th century, (Lenz 1973:114ff). Sahagun relates that Aztec travelling merchants cut figurines out of paper in ceremonies designed to bring them success in their expeditions, (Sahagun 1950: Book 9, chapter 3, p. 9). In addition, it is well established that paper was not only manufactured in pre-Christian Middle America but that it had great ritual significance as well, (von Hagen 1943, Lenz 1973). Studies of paper cutting among modern peoples have focused on the Otomi Indians some of whom are now producing figurines for the tourist trade, (Boiles 1969, Christensen 1971, Dow 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, Kaupp 1975, Lannik, Palm, and Takton 1969, Lenz 1973). Early work by Gessain (1938) and more recent studies by Williams Garcia (1963:185ff) have illuminated some of the Tepehua ideas expressed in paper. Judging from the work of Ichon (1969) the Totonacs do not make extensive use of paper cuttings in their rituals. Nahuatl practices are mentioned in passing by Lenz (1973:136ff) who visited the southern Huasteca in the 1940's, and are the subject of a doctoral dissertation, (Sandstrom 1975).

Figures one through 19 in the Appendix are illustrations of *ehekatl* figurines collected in Puyecaco village. The figurines were cut by two curers

each of whom has a different mode of representation. A relatively high degree of variation is tolerated both in the portrayal of *ehekatl* and in the conduct of a curing ceremony. However, it will be shown that a common symbolic base underlies what amounts to differences in style between curers. The illustrations are grouped by origin of the spirit portrayed. Examination of figures one through 19 reveals that *ehekatl* are anthropomorphic and that all except the image of death (figure 8) have their hands raised beside their heads. The hands down position differentiates death from other spirits and suggests that it is the final result of *ehekatl* infection. All are full-face and appear to be wearing shoes or boots. This last fact may relate to Christensen's observation based on her study of Otomi paper cuttings (Christensen 1971:21) that harmful or negative spirits are often depicted wearing shoes in order to connect them with non-Indian mestizos. Salutary spirits, on the other hand, are often portrayed barefooted, which is identified as an Indian trait.

One of the curers uses multiple identical images to portray the spirits (figures 1, 6, 7, 11, 13, 14, 15). Four or eight images are cut from a single sheet and are left connected by various parts of their bodies and clothing. Figures 11 and 14 have crowns on their heads which identify them. Central V-shaped cuts represent hearts and other cuts in the body indicate clothing. The second curer cuts individual anthropomorphic figurines. Several specimens are cut with crowns, hats or horns on their heads (figures 2, 3, 5, 9, 12, 16, 18, 19) which serve to identify the spirit. Some *ehekatl* are portrayed wearing clothes or poncho-like *jorongos* (figures 3, 4, 5, 18, 19) while others wear suits of aquatic mollusk shells (figure 2), spines (figures 10, 12), waves (figure 16), or hair (figure 17). When the curer was asked why many cuttings exhibit spikey clothes and headgear he replied that these are what cause pain when *ehekatl* enter the body.

Color symbolism is important in identifying the origin of a particular *ehekatl*. There are seven different colors of paper used to make the cuttings. Two or more colors can be associated with each realm of origin. A yellow or red figurine indicates that the *ehekatl* portrayed comes from the sun realm, (celestial *ilwihkaktli'*). Green or blue signifies a watery origin (*apan*), black, or purple/pink paper symbolizes the earth (*tlali'*), and white figurines

are identified with *miktlan*, the underworld. Table 2 summarizes the color symbolism of paper figurines cut in Puyecaco village. Examination of Table 2 illustrates that despite differences in cutting style, meanings associated with particular colors are the same for both curers.

In addition to color identification, each *ehekatl* has a name which usually indicates the realm from which it originates. Sometimes, however, the name refers to a place where one is most likely to encounter that particular spirit. For example, figure 11 represents the *ehekatl atl* (water) which comes from the sun. The name implies that it is likely to infect women and children when they go to the stream to bathe and wash clothes. Figure 19 is anomalous in that it fits neither color categories nor naming patterns reflected in the other cuttings. The color red implies a celestial origin but the name *miktlan tropa' ehekatl* (wind of the underworld horde) indicates that it comes from the underworld. The curer who cut this specimen was unable to elaborate on these seeming contradictions, merely stating that this *ehekatl* comes from anywhere in the world. Perhaps this spirit originates from the celestial realm but for some unstated reason now operates from the underworld. One possibility is that this cutting reflects the ancient Aztec belief that the sun travels through the underworld at night, (Soustelle 1975 [original 1955]:106). This *ehekatl* may be released from the sun during its nightly sojourn with souls of the dead.

Ehekatl are generalized disease causing agents who can strike their victims randomly. Nevertheless several of these spirits are more likely to strike a specific type of person, or at a particular time of day. Figures one and 18 are often encountered at midday. Figure 11 is prone to attack children and mothers when they go to the stream to wash clothes and bathe. Figure one is most likely to attack children, four is a particular danger to nursing babies, and 14 preys on women in general. Several *ehekatl* are activated or more likely to attack when people contradict behavioral norms. Figures two and nine are called forth when people lose their temper. "Bad talk" of any kind carries the danger of activating four and ten. Finally, gossip, and particularly women's gossip, releases the *ehekatl* in figure five. *Ehekatl* may not attack the actual person who acts improperly but instead are released

Table 2

Color Symbolism of Paper Cuttings

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Curer</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Color</u>	<u>Realm</u>
1	F	<i>tlali' ehekatl</i> (earth wind)	black	earth (<i>tlali'</i>)
2	D	<i>tlali' ehekatl</i> (earth wind), <i>tekakwal ehekatl</i> (wind from the ruins)	black	
3	D	<i>tlali' ehekatl</i> (earth wind)	black	
4	D	<i>tekamal ehekatl</i> (?), <i>Tlachichi' ehekatl</i> (nursing wind)	purple	
5	D	<i>taka' istla' ehekatl</i> (?), <i>tlekate ehekatl</i> (?)	pink	
6	F	<i>miktlan tlasole' ehekatl</i> (refuse from the underworld wind)	white	under- world (<i>miktlan</i>)
7	F	<i>miktlan tlasole' ehekatl</i> (refuse from the underworld wind)	white	
8	D	<i>Mikilistli'</i> (death)	white	
9	D	<i>tonal ehekatl</i> (sun wind)	yellow	sky (<i>ilwih-kaktli'</i>)
10	D	<i>tonal ehekatl</i> (sun wind)	yellow	
11	F	<i>atl</i> (water)	yellow	
12	D	<i>tonal ehekatl</i> (sun wind)	red	
13	F	<i>tlasole' ehekatl</i> (refuse wind)	red	
14	F	<i>apan ehekatl siwatl</i> (woman in the water wind)	green	water (<i>apan</i>)
15	F	<i>atl</i> (water)	green	
16	D	<i>aiskutla ehekatl</i> (?)	green	
17	D	<i>apantlasole' ehekatl</i> (wind from refuse in the water)	green	
18	D	<i>apantlasole' ehekatl</i> (wind from refuse in the water)	blue	
19	D	<i>miktlan tropa' ehekatl</i> (wind of the underworld horde)	red	sky?

in the village. Thus, behavior that contradicts Nahua norms is a danger to everyone.

Disease for the Nahua is more than just bodily illness. *Ehekatl* are held responsible for any general disorder that has negative consequences. Sterility, poor harvest, or emotional maladjustment can be attributed to *ehekatl*. Illness of the body, however, is a common way that *ehekatl* intrude themselves into Nahua life. *Ehekatl* are agents of pollution that defile whatever they contact. In fact, four of the *ehekatl* (figures 6, 7, 17, 18) contain within their name the word *tlasole'* which means trash or refuse. It is no accident that curing rituals designed to rid the body, field, or house of *ehekatl* are called cleansings (*tleuchpantle'*). Dissonance in the flow of life, misfortune, and ill health must be explained and treated and it is a fundamental premise of Nahua thought that pollution by *ehekatl* is the cause of these conditions.

The salient characteristic of each *ehekatl* is its origin. This is indicated both by the particular spirit's name and by color symbolism. When *ehekatl* are grouped--which is the way they are always employed in major parts of curing rituals--each of the four realms is represented by at least one spirit. *Ehekatl* can be interpreted as an inversion of normal benefits that flow from each realm. They represent anomalies or dissonance in life which are explained as negations of the normal operation of the universe. As Douglas puts it regarding pollution in general, "The underlying feeling is that a system of values which is habitually expressed in a given arrangement of things has been violated," (Douglas 1968:338). The values, which villagers see as flowing from the four realms, derive from Nahua horticultural production and the extended family through which it is achieved.

Douglas asserts in her discussion that pollution concepts serve to impose order on experience, (Douglas 1968:339). Such concepts are a means of categorizing or classifying reality. In the case of the Nahua, agents of pollution do help to define beneficial aspects of nature by their contrasting characteristics. The role of sacred, benefit-producing spirits is brought into relief by the inverted role of *ehekatl*. Douglas adds that "The dangers and punishment attached to pollution act simply as a means of enforcing

conformity," (Douglas 1968:341). This can clearly be seen in the *ehekatl* that are released or activated by such negative and disruptive behavior as losing one's temper, gossiping, or "talking bad." But *ehekatl* are more than a means of classifying reality or insuring conformity. The essential point is that *ehekatl* are a product of the way the Nahua think about their means of production, their society, and the nature of reality.

The basis of Nahua life is horticulture. They perform the work and possess the knowledge that provides them with food and a surplus in order to buy machetes, cloth, and other items. Yet when they think about their horticulture they attribute success to a series of spirit entities who inhabit the four realms. They stress the generosity of various spirits who are believed to cause the harvest when actually it is they who are responsible. In thinking about the basis of their society they misconstrue it. This type of misinterpretation is a feature of all human groups and should not be understood as a special criticism or condemnation of the Nahua. On the other hand, polluting *ehekatl* spirits who invert benefits flowing from salutary spirits are often activated and inflicted by direct human will. Gossip, bad talk, or getting angry brings on *ehekatl*. Sorcerers living in the village cause innocent people to be infected by *ehekatl* for little or no reason. Although *ehekatl* can be encountered in a random way most are called forth by human action.

Ehekatl also reflect the way Nahuas think about their social organization. Since the crux of Nahua society is the extended family it is logical that this group would be seen by the Nahua as a source of safety and positive affect. However, based on Nahua ideas about disease etiology the family becomes a source of pollution and death. It is the nature of sorcerers that they may be members of one's own family although usually somewhat distantly related. Secretly they could be sending *ehekatl* to infect family members, disrupt productive activities, and cause disease and unhappiness. Deceased kinsmen whose souls live in *miktlan* can be extremely dangerous to the living members of a family. Failure to make occasional offerings of food to the soul or neglect during Day of the Dead ceremonies leads offended spirits to seek revenge by sending *ehekatl*. Souls of recently deceased kinsmen are particularly dangerous and demand ritual propitiation. Finally, gossip, bad

talk, and anger, actions that cause the release of *ehekatl*, are more dangerous from a close kinsman than a stranger. In sum, the Nahua misconstrue the family in much the same way they misconstrue their own role in horticulture. They view the four realms of nature to be sources of benefits and relate human activity, even as it is manifested in the extended family to inversions or reversals of those benefits.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to propose explanations for why in all societies some ideological elements contradict in their content empirical observations made by outsiders. Anthropological literature is full of cases where the explanation of a particular custom offered by behavioral scientists differs radically from explanations given by people who follow the custom. The fundamental issue exposed by the analysis presented here is that Nahua disease etiology derives from their view of the relationship between human beings and the natural world. In the Nahua view, humans are in the natural world but are not strictly part of nature. Human behavior can pollute and stand against the workings and processes of nature. This behavior rebounds back onto the population in the form of interruptions in nature which are expressed in disease. Disease treatment and prevention in Puyecaco village focuses on the agents of pollution--on the *ehekatl*--rather than on the behavior that may have activated them. The reason for this is that *ehekatl* are seen as more controllable than other people's behavior.

The role of curers in Nahua medicine is to restore the flow of benefits by removing polluting *ehekatl* from the patient's body, house, or fields. This is accomplished by means of a cleansing ritual. The procedures in a cleansing vary to some extent from curer to curer but all have one common goal, the extirpation of infecting *ehekatl* and the return to a state of normalcy. A villager who wishes to become a curer enters into a kind of apprenticeship with an established practitioner. An apprentice follows the curer to each ritual occasion and acts as a helper by running errands, taking charge of simpler parts of the rite, etc. In return, the curer gradually imparts necessary knowledge and skills to the neophyte. When the master believes his student has sufficient knowledge to carry on independently an all-night ritual is held to inform the ancestor spirits of the new practitioner.

To be acknowledged as a curer a new practitioner must have a large group of people who have confidence in his/her powers and who are willing to hire the individual on a consistent basis. In order to gain such a following the initiate must prove that he is capable of curing. If the new practitioner is unable to establish a clientele it will be said that he did not have curing in his fate (*tonati'*). There are only five curers in Puyecaco village, which indicates the difficulty of establishing a new practice. Curers charge anywhere from 30 to 300 pesos (\$1.35 to \$13.50 U.S.) for a cleansing depending on their reputation and the complexity of the ritual requested. Knowledge of ritual procedures can be used to harm people as well as cure them. In fact, one of the terms for curer (*tlamati' ketl*, person of knowledge) is the same as that used for sorcerer. For this reason curers occupy an ambiguous status in Puyecaco; they are potentially life savers but have the capacity to be extremely dangerous.

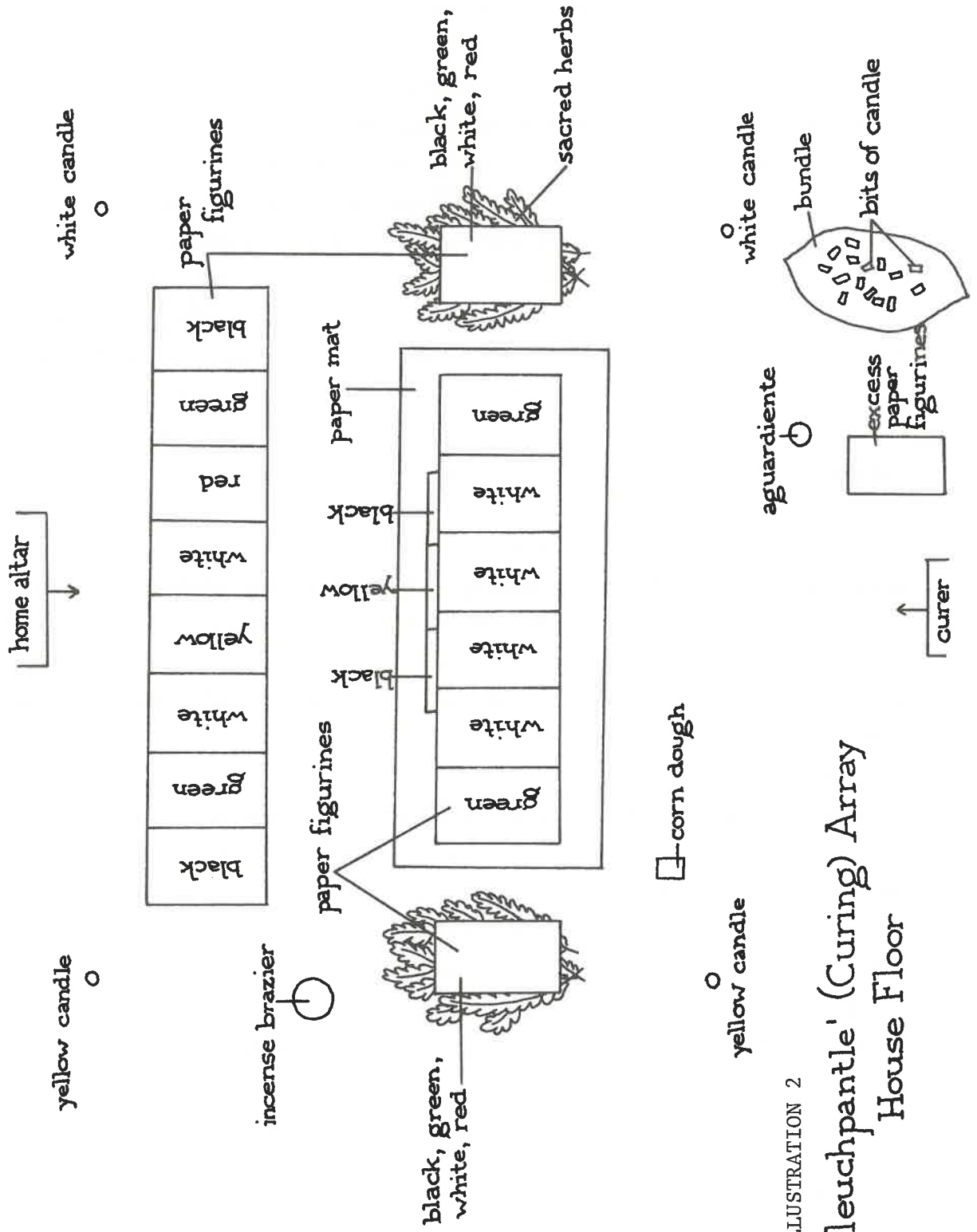
Following is a description and analysis of a curing ritual held by the most renowned specialist in Puyecaco village. The patients are a man and his 13-month-old baby who is suffering from a mild fever. The parents are worried because they lost a baby the previous year under mysterious circumstances. The child was well and suddenly died, thus raising suspicions that a sorcerer was responsible for the tragedy. A cleansing takes place in the patients' house and is initiated by a series of preparations. The curer arrives and after lighting a candle begins to cut paper figurines out of sheets of paper he brings with him. The man of the house is instructed to gather sprigs of seven sacred herbs from the woods and then to fill a clay incense brazier with hot coals. After cutting a set of figurines the curer lights two more beeswax candles and places them on the small home altar which is found in each dwelling. This act symbolically includes the *mu'axkatl* or house guardian spirits in the curing procedure.

Next the curer cuts elaborate geometrical designs in a rectangular sheet of paper and places all of the newly finished paper figurines on it. The sheet is called a *tlaxkali' yuyumitl* (tortilla napkin) or more commonly a *tepestli'* (bed). From this point on the specialist drinks intermittently from a coke bottle filled with cane alcohol (*aguardiente*). Consumption of alcohol and

subsequent intoxication are important conditions of any ritual held in the village not only for ritual specialists but participants as well. Next he cuts a yellow beeswax candle and a white tallow candle into one-inch pieces, placing them along with the herb sprigs on the pile of cut figurines. After placing a small ball of cooked corn meal (*tichtli*') on the herbs he holds the whole bundle over the incense brazier which is smoking heavily from the addition of bark fragments from the *kopali*' tree. As the father of the baby places tobacco and an egg in a small leaf container the curer chants rhythmically in Nahuatl over the bundle being sacralized in incense.

In his chant the curer names all of the *ehekatl* and states that he is prepared to make offerings to them. He repeats the location of the house and village and calls out names of the father, sick baby and other members of the family. The father is then rubbed with the newly incensed bundle in order to arouse any *ehekatl* that may have infected his body. He is rubbed on the hands, arms, legs, back, shoulder, and forehead following which he is incensed over his whole body. The curer then unfolds the bundle, selects some of the contents and lays out a complex array on the earthen house floor (see illustration). The array is located within a space outlined by four of the one-inch pieces of candle cut earlier. White tallow candle pieces represent the earth and underworld, and the yellow pieces signify the celestial realm. Each of the four piles of cut papers contain representatives of *ehekatl* from all four regions.

Ehekatl are removed from the patients' bodies and surroundings in the phase of the curing ritual that follows. The specialist sprinkles tobacco and crumpled pieces of corn meal over all of the paper figurines. He breaks a small hole in one end of the egg and shakes out some of it on each paper cutting. Finally, the curer sprinkles cane alcohol on each *ehekatl* figurine. Next he chants to the *mu'axkatl* house guardian spirits and incenses the entire floor display. Then he gathers up the paper cuttings and herbs and turns them over. Grabbing the soaked paper and herbs he holds them over the heads of the father and daughter and violently tears them to shreds. At each tear he blows a puff of air over the paper and leaves, spreading the aromatic odors given off by the sacred herbs. All scraps are carefully collected and placed in a



fiber carrying bag after which the patients are incensed in clouds of aromatic smoke.

The remainder of the curing procedure consists of a series of abbreviated cleansings, similar to the one described above, held at selected locations. The house firetable is the first such location. Beside a lighted yellow candle piece the curer lays out four paper figurines. He selects out one each of yellow, black, red, and white thus insuring representative *ehekatl* from each realm. After sprinkling the figurines with cane alcohol, tobacco, corn meal, and raw egg he turns the papers over and tears them up while, through rhythmic chants, he exhorts the spirits to accept the offerings. At each tear he blows a sharp puff of air over the paper. This last act is meant to disorient the *ehekatl*, who are feeding on the offerings spread out on their cut-out likenesses. Once blown away they become confused and return to their realm of origin. All scraps are carefully collected and placed in the bag.

The candle is left burning on the firetable as the curer moves to the house entrance. Between flickering white and yellow candle pieces he lays out paper figurines in a predetermined pattern (see illustration). Then while chanting he sprinkles the figurines with alcohol, egg, corn meal, and tobacco. The paper cutouts are then turned over, crumpled up and torn to shreds. Apparently *ehekatl* from the earth (*tlali'*) are not prone to lurk about house entrances since no black, purple or pink figurines are represented in this display. Once again all scraps are carefully collected and placed in the bag.

The same procedure is followed on a jungle trail leading away from the house. *Ehekatl* from all realms are represented by paper cutouts laid down, with the exception of the earth. Earth *ehekatl* are not likely to lurk about trails. The next location for a cleansing is a site near the house where two trails cross. Offerings are made to *ehekatl* from all four realms at this location. The sixth site is on the shore of a nearby stream where the father and daughter frequently bathe. Again earth *ehekatl* are left out of the cleansing procedure. The seventh and last site visited before returning to the house is the largest of two ancient ruined pyramids in the village. The ubiquitous stone ruins in Puyecaco are viewed by the Nahua as doors to the underworld and thus places of danger. All types of *ehekatl* lurk about these

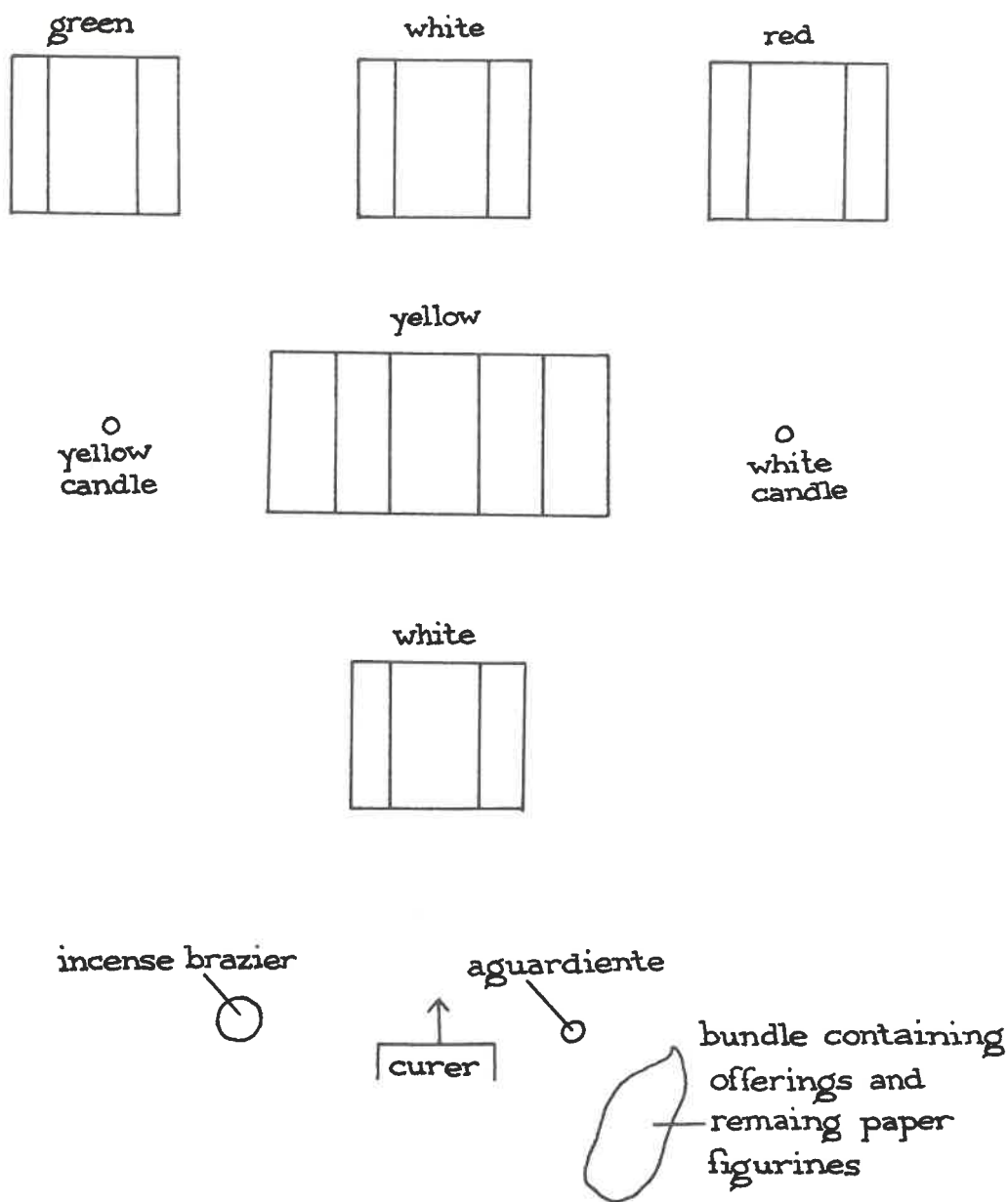


ILLUSTRATION 3

Tleuchpantle' (Curing)
 Paper Figurine Display
 House Entrance

ruins which villagers avoid at any cost. The curer follows identical procedures outlined for the other sites. *Ehekatl* from all four realms are represented by paper cutouts. All scraps collected at previous cleansing sites are emptied out at the base of the stone ruin. These scraps have power to attract *ehekatl* to an individual if he should come into accidental contact with them. Therefore, great care is taken to place them out of people's way.

The father accompanies the curer to these various sites and helps in carrying out the cleansing procedures. His daughter is left at the house under care of a relative. The final phases in a curing take place back at the house. Preparatory to ending the cleansing the curing specialist incenses his patients and chants aloud asking any remaining *ehekatl* to take the offerings and depart. Then he rubs the father with two large beeswax candles on the hands, arms, back, neck, forehead, feet, and legs and instructs him to burn them later on the house altar. Candles are a kind of offering to house guardian spirits so that they will protect the family from *ehekatl*. The termination of the ritual is marked when the curer pours some cane alcohol into the hot incense brazier. The cleansing described here is about average in its two hour length and degree of elaboration. Cleansings can last a full day or more and involve the playing of sacred music, the sacrifice of chickens and turkeys, and a trip to a sacred hill where an offering is made to ancestor spirits. More will be said later about this last practice.

The strategy employed by ritual specialists to cure disease is revealed in cleansing procedures. Their object is to remove polluting *ehekatl* from the patient's body and immediate surroundings. This is accomplished by making offerings to disease causing spirits who are coaxed from their hiding places, exhorted to leave, and through the technique of tearing up their respective paper cuttings, discouraged from returning to previous sanctuaries. The cleansing is a kind of transaction whereby humans interact with *ehekatl* symbolically. Curers exchange offerings and expect the spirits to reciprocate by leaving. The technique is based on assumptions that *ehekatl* share human appetites and will feel obligated by the prestations.

Incense is used as a cleansing and sacralizing agent. The bundle of cutouts and offerings is held in the smoke to make it ritually active. Incense

is employed to activate house guardians and the *ehekatl* portrayed in the floor display. It is also used as part of the process for ridding patients of *ehekatl* spirits. Twice during the cleansing the patients are enveloped in incense smoke as a means of flushing out tenacious *ehekatl*. Burning of candles is a special class of offering and is used to signify that there is ritually significant activity going on. A candle is always burned as paper figurines are being cut, that is, before a ritual has actually started. Candles are frequently burned after a cure has taken place to recall a cure of several days or weeks past, especially if the patient becomes sick again. They are a means of setting off a ritually significant area as demonstrated by their use in the figurine displays. White and yellow candles enclose a display area which is seen as a microcosm of the universe, i.e. between celestial and earthly realms.

The number seven plays an important role in Nahua ideology. For example, the constellation Pliades, called *chikome' sitlali'* or seven-star, has a significant place in Nahua mythology, and the alter adornment symbolizing masculinity is called *chikome' xochitl* (seven-flower). But nowhere is the number seven more prominent than in reference to *ehekatl* and curing rituals. There are seven colors used to portray *ehekatl*: green, blue, yellow, red, white, black, and purple/pink. The equation of purple and pink is likely an artifact of the colors of paper available locally. Cleansings involve the use of seven sacred herbs, each one corresponding to a color category. Seven offerings are made to the *ehekatl*: cane alcohol, tobacco, cornmeal, candles, herbs, egg, and paper cutouts. Finally there are seven locations visited during a cleansing: house floor, firetable, house entrance, trail, crosstrail, water, and ruin. The number seven appears in several other Nahua rituals as well but no curer was able to offer an explanation for this.

The places visited during a cleansing have significance beyond their number, however. With the exception of the ruin each location is daily frequented by the patient. In fact, taken in sequence, they symbolically reproduce an average day in the life of a patient. Nahuas sleep on the house floor and it is there that the largest array is constructed. They eat food prepared at the firetable. Next they go out through the house entrance and

proceed via trails over cross trails to their fields, or in the case of a woman, to the water to do laundry. After a day's work both men and women frequently bathe when returning home. Thus the sequence of site offerings adds a temporal as well as spatial dimension to cleansings. Curing focuses on the daily round of activities and insures that patients are able to perform the labor that is a crucial part of the flow of benefits from the four realms.

But the symbolic importance attached to daily work activities is even more clearly expressed in other portions of the ritual cleansing. In the ritual described above the curer specifically rubs the bundle of cutouts and offerings over those parts of the father's body that are relevant to work in the fields: hands, arms, legs, back, shoulders, and forehead. Weight is carried among the Nahua using a tumpline across the forehead. In addition, the large candles are rubbed over the patient's hands, back, neck, head, feet, and legs, once again to symbolically focus on bodily areas related to work activity. Work, which itself is a gift of spirits (*Ekihte'*) is the means by which other benefits are kept flowing from salutary spirits. One means by which *ehekatl* block the flow of these is by inhibiting work.

According to informants, a cleansing always works and the patient invariably feels better after one. If illness continues, the patient will undergo a longer and more elaborate cleansing. If the disease should prove fatal villagers insist that cures have worked but that death was in the patient's fate (*tonati'*). Chronically ill patients may walk to the market town and, if they have money, engage the services of a local medical doctor. Western medicine is only relied upon as a last resort, after traditional means have been tried repeatedly. The villagers understand Western medicine to consist of one type of cure, the giving of injections. Any advice the doctor may give, such as to get rest or drink liquids is ignored by villagers, and they are not satisfied until an injection is given. They will also submit to vaccinations against various diseases, which are administered by medical teams that visit remote villages like Puyecaco once or twice a year. The Nahuas view medical doctors as curers who practice a different type of cleansing that is basically less effective than the techniques of their own

specialists.

The emphasis in this paper on symbolic and ideological aspects of Nahua medical practices should not obscure the fact that the people of Puyecaco village have a pragmatic orientation to life. Their curing procedures have the desired effect most of the time and almost all patients attribute their recovery to cleansings. In addition to the ritual cleansings described here, there is an extensive herbal pharmacopia that villagers employ in the treatment of illness. All villagers know a great deal about herbs although some individuals, usually old women, are considered to be experts. Herbs are eaten, made into teas, mixed with cane alcohol and drunk, or rubbed on wounds or lesions. Herbal cures are used in conjunction with ritual cleansings and are considered to aid the latter rather than compete with them. In cases of snakebite, herbal cures are used but only after a curer has performed a cleansing. The Nahua have bone setters (*texisito' ketl*), again usually old women, who set broken limbs through massage. Finally, midwives (*teteketl*) are called to aid in giving birth, but only after a ritual cleansing has cleared the area of *ehekatl*.

The Nahua also practice preventative medicine. Occasionally a villager will undergo a curing ritual even though he or she may feel in top health. Cleansings have some staying power and can actually protect people for a time after they are held. Another form of preventative medicine is to burn candles on the house altar and to ask the *mu'aaxkatl* house guardian spirits to protect family members from *ehekatl*. On most house altars there are a series of inexpensive illustrations of Bible scenes and saints which are printed by the Catholic Church and sold at Indian markets. The Nahua interpret the alien figures portrayed in these illustrations, some of whom are bald with long white beards or have halos and dress in Renaissance clothes, to be *mu'aaxkatl*. These are positive spirits who guard household members from disease or misfortune.

There are also specific ritual procedures, carried out by specialists, the purpose of which is to prevent disease. The simplest procedure is to hire a curer to make offerings to a series of special spirits who will then protect the sponsor of the ritual. These spirits are from the earth and are

left, along with offerings, on top of the tallest stone ruin in the village. The spirits will guard against any *ehekatl* that might lurk about the ruin or even emerge from the underworld. Figure 20 illustrates one curer's portrayal of these earth spirits which are cut side by side in a row of eight. They are rendered with crowns and V-cuts representing clothes. Figure 21 is the mat upon which the earth spirits and offerings are placed. V-cuts symbolize the earth.

A more elaborate preventative medicine ritual is performed on a sacred hill inside of which live the ancestor spirits of all the Nahua. The ancestors were originally placed on top of the hill by the creator god Toteotsi' but, after procreating, went to live inside the hill in order to protect future generations. The hill is located about one mile from Puyecaco village and at its peak are the remains of a prehistoric stone altar. Ancestor spirits are held in such reverence that no Nahua, whether curer or layman, would approach them directly. Villagers employ a series of intermediary spirits called witnesses (*onipixtok aki' ki' ixtok*) to take offerings to the ancestor spirits in the hill. Figure 22 illustrates witnesses cut by a curer in Puyecaco village. They are portrayed side by side and the central V-cuts represent their hearts while the other cuts signify clothing. These cutouts are placed on a decorated paper mat (figure 23) along with offerings in the hope that they will enlist the protection of ancestor spirits on behalf of the sponsor.

The most elaborate preventative medicine cleansing is held once a year to protect the political authorities of Puyecaco village. The ritual lasts 24 hours and involves the sacrifice of several turkeys and chickens and a complex set of techniques for protecting the political authorities from the polluting effects of *ehekatl*. Offerings are made to the *mu'axkatl* and include marigold and palm decorations, bottles of soft drink, beer, and cane alcohol, plates of food including meat from the sacrificed birds, coffee, chocolate, bread, and candles (see illustration 4 in Appendix). The offerings are made at one representative house and through chanting the curer extends them to the *mu'axkatl* of each man's house. Offerings are made to the earth spirits by placing marigold and palm decorations, food, coffee, bread, cane alcohol,

lighted cigarettes, and a candle next to a hole scooped in a house floor (see illustration 5). The largest offering, however, is reserved for the hilltop where a complex altar is constructed on the ground (see illustration 6). Paper is cut to portray witnesses (see figure 24) which are placed upright behind the altar by fitting them into split sticks that are then stuck in the ground. The witnesses in this ritual are portrayed wearing crowns and poncho-like clothes decorated with various cuts. Six witnesses are placed upright behind the altar and six are laid on a paper mat (see figure 25) underneath the offerings.

The altar set up for the preventative cleansing of political authorities is similar in design to altars constructed for other village rituals. An arch covered with marigolds represents the sky and is elaborated with a circular cutout of the sun. Four crosses, which have lost their Christian association in Puyecaco village, but are still considered sacred items by themselves, are covered with marigolds and placed under the arch. These represent the four regions from whence come the benefits of life (as well as the polluting *ehekatl* spirits). Along the sides, candles are burned and feathers from the sacrificed birds are stuck in the ground. On the altar itself an incense brazier pours out aromatic smoke. Packets of food wrapped in banana leaves are placed on marigold and palm decorations. Bottles of soft drink, beer, and cane alcohol each sacralized with a marigold necklace form part of the offering. Cups of coffee and chocolate with pieces of bread placed in each one, and unburned candles leaned against the back of the altar constitute the remainder of the offerings.

The degree of elaboration possible in either curing rituals or preventative medicine rituals is limited only by the financial resources of the sponsors and the knowledge of the ritual specialist. In the former, infectious *ehekatl* are removed from the patient and his surroundings while in the latter protective spirits are utilized to divert disease causing agents from polluting sponsors of the ritual. The Nahua interact with spirits through their rituals and by means of offerings attempt to control them. Preventative medicine for the Nahua does not involve a change in life style or habits for individuals but instead partakes of the larger ritual strategy of gaining the support of

protective spirit entities. This follows logically from Nahua beliefs, discussed earlier, that disease is not ultimately a problem with the body but rather an inversion of benefits flowing from salutary spirits.

Disease is a problem that afflicts all human groups and the way in which people define and deal with it is conditioned by their social, cultural, and natural environment. The Nahua conception of disease etiology and treatment derives from the way they think about their society and its place in nature. Their beliefs about disease overlie a base of empirically derived, pragmatic knowledge about childbirth, bone setting, and herbal cures. But the ideological aspects of Nahua medical practices should not be set against this base and viewed as inferior to it. "Disease and its treatment" to quote Ackernect, "are only in the abstract purely biological processes...." Nahua beliefs about disease derive from their life situation and as shown cannot be understood apart from it. Examination of the means by which people define and cope with disease will allow us to improve our understanding of its place in human groups as a social phenomenon with biological consequences.

Appendix

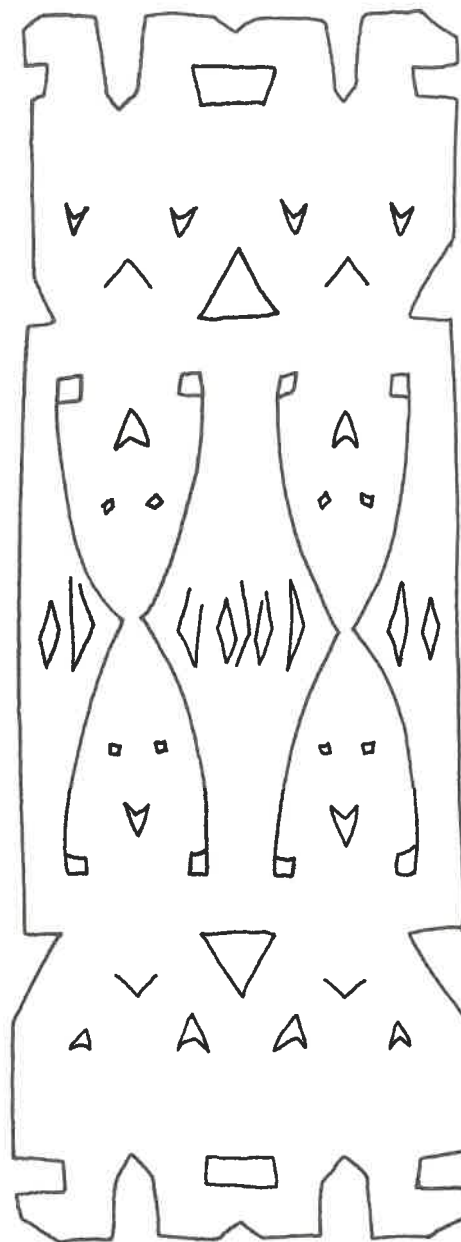


Figure 1

Spirit Entity: *ehekatl*

Name: *tlali' ehekatl* (earth wind)

Sex: ?

Color: black

Origin: earth realm

Size: 24 x 8.5 cm

Characteristics: four images connected by fingertips, forearms, clothes and toes, central V-cuts represent hearts, other V-cuts signify clothing, comes out in middle of day and makes children sick

Role: disease causing agent

Ritual Use: *tleuchpantle'* (cleansing)

Curer: F.



Figure 2

Spirit Entity: *ehekatl*

Name: *tlali' ehekatl* (earth wind) or *tekakwal ehekatl* (wind from the ruins)

Sex: male

Color: black

Origin: rock (*tepesitl*), an earthly servant of Tlakatekolotl, master of the underworld

Size: 17 x 6.5 cm

Characteristics: horns and crown on head, protrusions from body are shells from the water, comes from the rock when one loses his temper

Role: disease causing agent

Ritual Use: *tleuchpantle'* (cleansing)

Curer: D.



Figure 3

Spirit Entity: *ehekatl*

Name: *tlali' ehekatl* (earth wind)

Sex: male

Color: black

Origin: earth realm

Size: 17 x 6 cm

Characteristics: protrusions from body are clothes, bull's horns and hat on head, temperament like a bull

Role: disease causing agent

Ritual Use: *tleuchpantle'* (cleansing)

Curer: D.

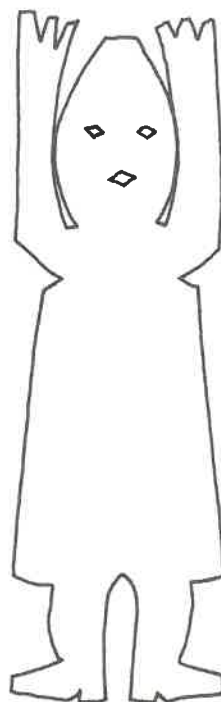


Figure 4

Spirit Entity: *ehekatl*

Name: *tekamal ehekatl*(?) or *tlachichi' ehekatl*(nursing wind)

Sex: female

Color: purple

Origin: earth realm

Size: 17 x 5 cm

Characteristics: wearing clothes, released by "bad talk", attacks nursing babies

Role: disease causing agent

Ritual Use: *tleuchpantle'* (cleansing)

Curer: D.



Figure 5

Spirit Entity: *ehekatl*

Name: *teka' ixtla' ehekatl(?)* or *tlekate' ehekatl(?)*

Sex: female

Color: pink

Origin: can come from anywhere on earth but probably lives in rock(*tepexitl*)

Size: 17.5 x 5 cm

Characteristics: wears crown on head, a dress on the body, is released into the air when women gossip

Role: disease causing agent

Ritual Use: *tleuchpantle'*(cleansing)

Curer: D.

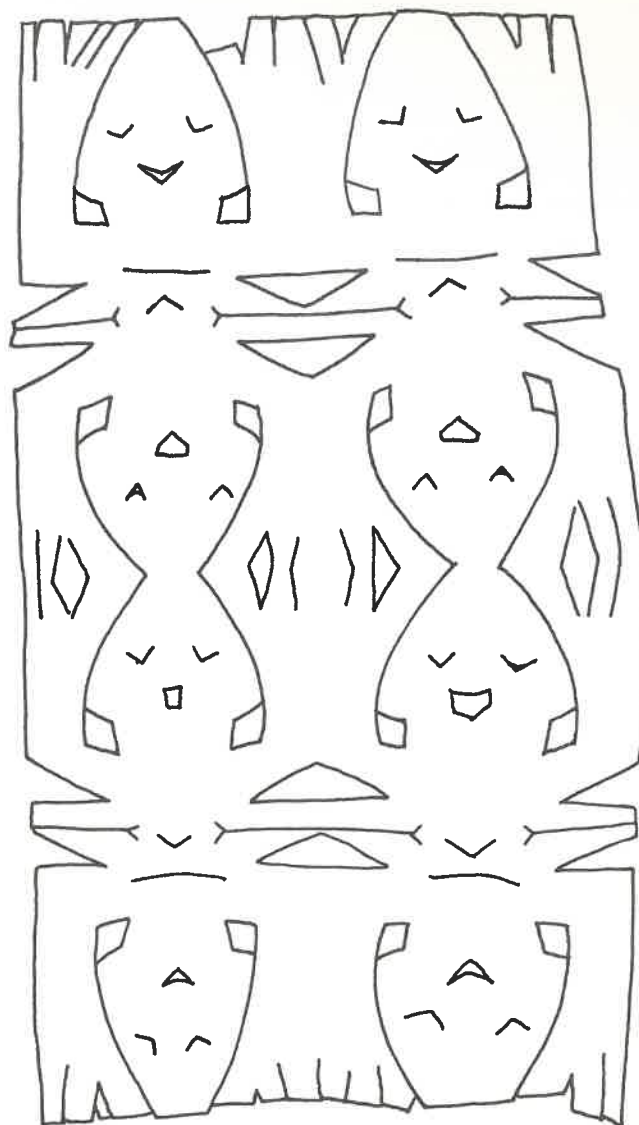


Figure 6

Spirit Entity: *ehekatl*

Name: *miktlan tlasole' ehekatl* (refuse-from-the-underworld wind)

Sex: male

Color: white

Origin: rides wind (underworld realm)

Size: 18 x 10 cm

Characteristics: eight images connected by the fingertips, forearms and body/feet(?)

Role: disease causing agent

Ritual Use: *tleuchpantle'* (cleansing)

Curer: F.

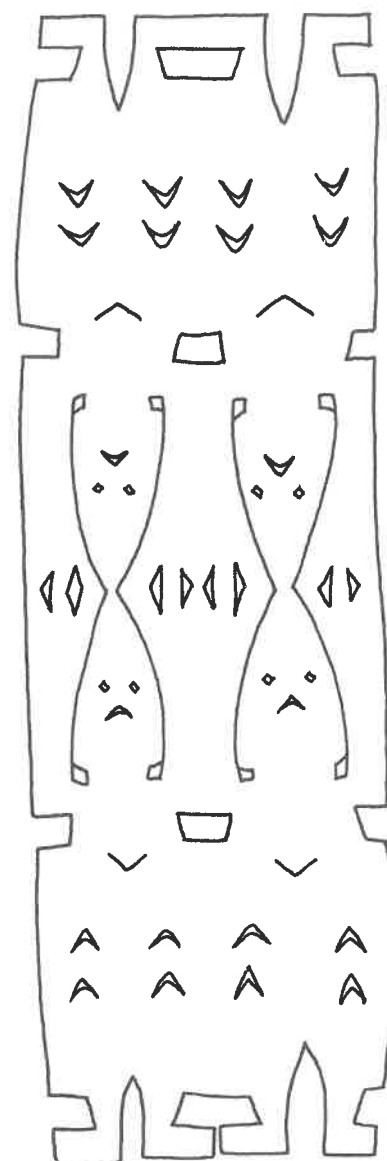


Figure 7

Spirit Entity: *ehekatl*

Name: *miktlan tlasole' ehekatl* (refuse-from-the-underworld wind)

Sex: female

Color: white

Origin: rides on the wind from a hill or the sea (underworld realm)

Size: 34 x 10.5 cm

Characteristics: four images connected by fingertips, forearms and clothes, central V-cuts represent hearts, other V-cuts signify clothing

Role: disease causing agent

Ritual Use: *tleuchpantle'* (cleansing), these figurines are used to cleanse the patient and are left on a sacred hill or at a crossroads

Curer: F.

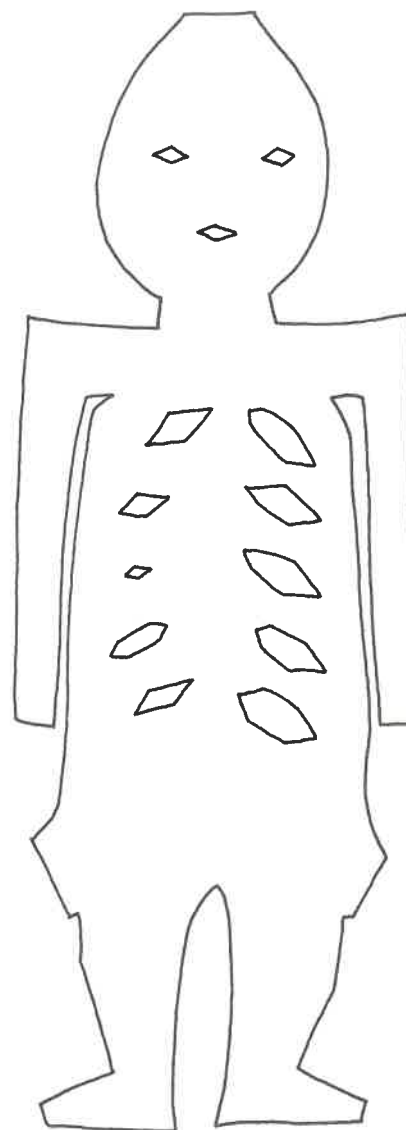


Figure 8

Spirit Entity: *ehekatl*

Name: Mikilistli'(death)

Sex: male

Color: white

Origin: graveyard(underworld realm)

Size: 16 x 6 cm

Characteristics: a skeleton, holes cut out of body represent ribs, only figurine with arms pointed down

Role: causes death

Ritual Use: sorcery, *tleuchpantle'*(cleansing) when patient is feared to be dying

Curer: D.



Figure 9

Spirit Entity: *ehekatl*

Name: *tonal ehekatl* (sun wind)

Sex: male

Color: yellow

Origin: sun (celestial realm)

Size: 17.5 x 5 cm

Characteristics: wears crown on head, protusions from body are clothes,
released into the air when one loses his temper

Role: disease causing agent

Ritual Use: *tleuchpantle* (cleansing)

Curer: D.



Figure 10

Spirit Entity: *ehekatl*

Name: *tonal ehekatl* (sun wind)

Sex: male

Color: yellow

Origin: associated with the sun but lives in rocks (celestial realm)

Size: 16 x 6.5 cm

Characteristics: wears spiny clothes, released into the air when one says something bad

Role: disease causing agent

Ritual Use: *tleuchpantle'* (cleansing)

Curer: D.

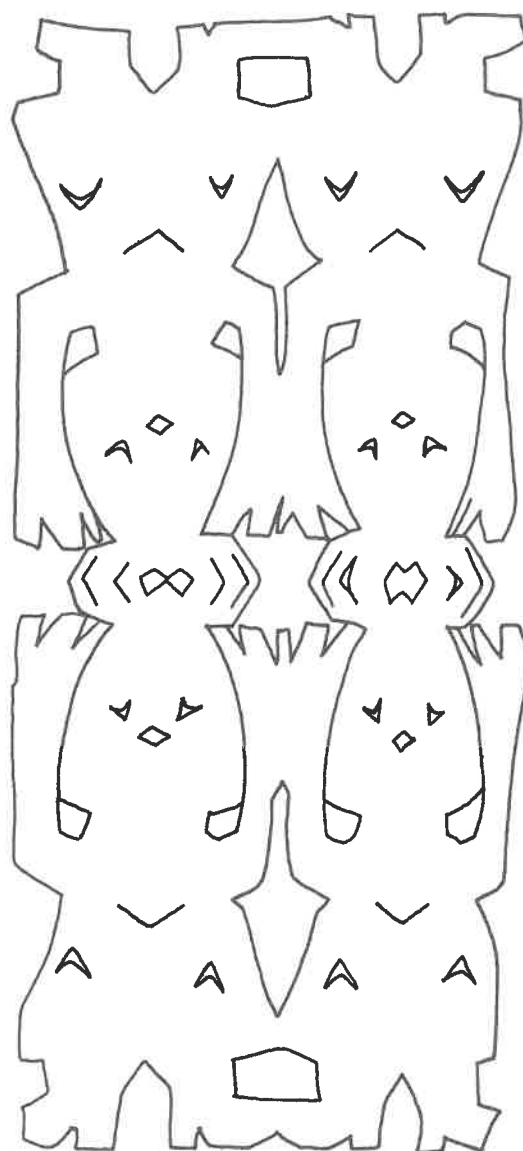


Figure 11

Spirit Entity: *ehekat1*

Name: *atl*(water)

Sex: male

Color: yellow

Origin: sun(celestial realm)

Size: 19 x 9 cm

Characteristics: four images connected by crowns, forearms and feet, central V-cuts represent hearts, other V-cuts signify clothing, attacks children and mothers when they go to the stream to wash clothes(hence name)

Role: disease causing agent

Ritual Use: *tleuchpantle'*(cleansing)

Curer: F.



Figure 12

Spirit Entity: *ehekatl*

Name: *tonal ehekatl* (sun wind)

Sex: male

Color: red

Origin: sun (celestial realm)

Size: 17 x 5 cm

Characteristics: wears crown on head, spiny protrusions from body

Role: disease causing agent

Ritual Use: *tleuchpantle* (cleansing)

Curer: D.

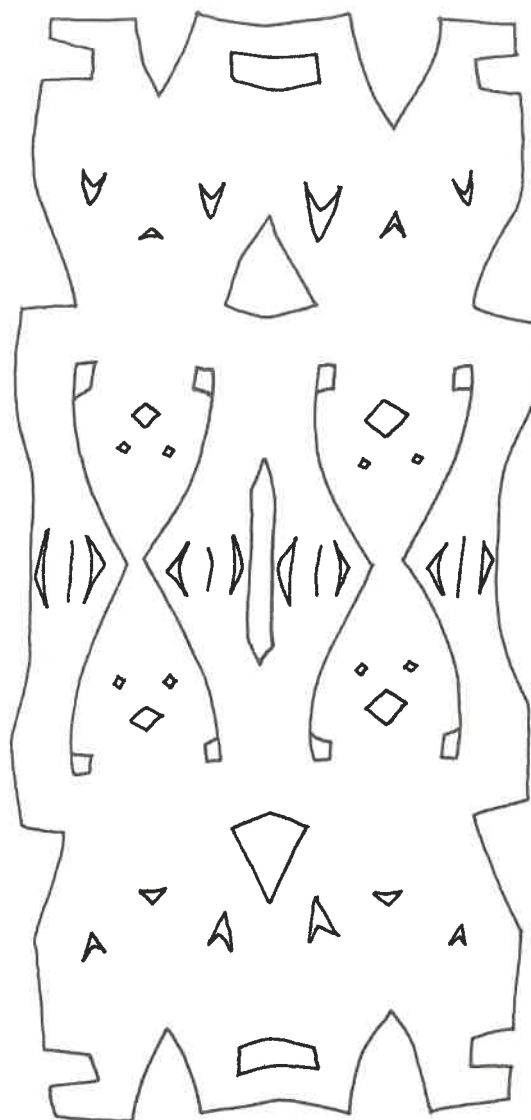


Figure 13

Spirit Entity: *ehekatl*

Name: *tlasole' ehekatl* (refuse wind)

Sex: female

Color: red

Origin: found on earth and in wind (celestial realm)

Size: 18 x 8.5 cm

Characteristics: four images connected by heads, fingertips, clothes and feet, central V-cuts represent hearts, other V-cuts signify clothes

Role: disease causing agent

Ritual Use: *tleuchpantle'* (cleansing)

Curer: F.

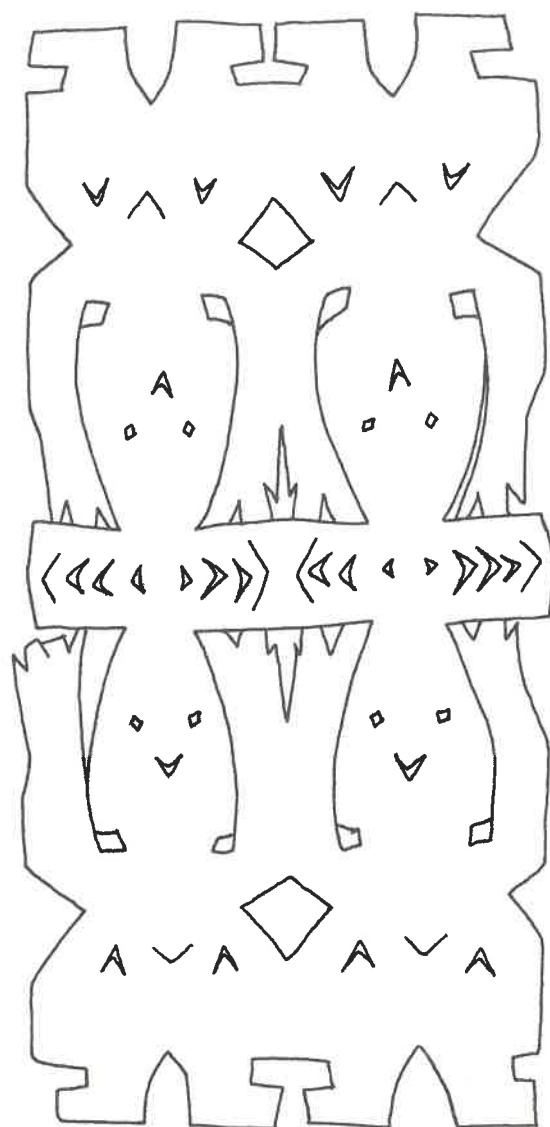


Figure 14

Spirit Entity: *ehekatl*

Name: *apan ehekatl siwatl* (woman-in-the-water wind)

Sex: female

Color: green

Origin: water realm

Size: 24 x 11 cm

Characteristics: four images connected by crowns, forearms and clothes, central V-cuts represent hearts, other V-cuts signify clothing, attacks women

Role: disease causing agent

Ritual Use: *tleuchpantle'* (cleansing)

Curer: F.

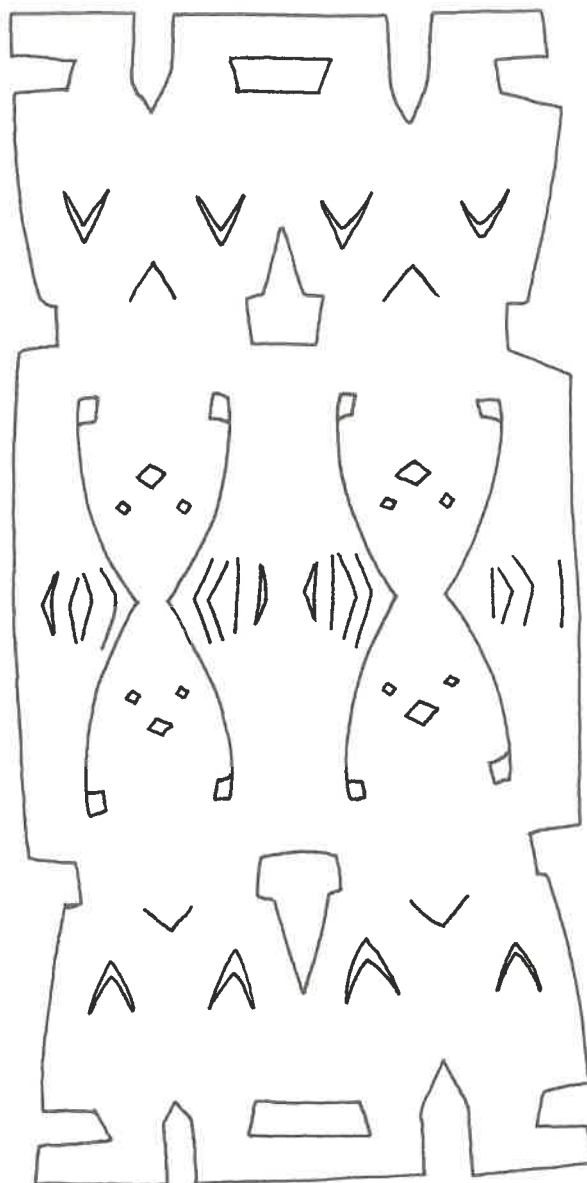


Figure 15

Spirit Entity: *ehekatl*

Name: *atl*(water)

Sex: male

Color: green

Origin: water realm

Size: 23.5 x 11.5 cm

Characteristics: four images connected by the heads, fingertips, forearms, clothes and shoes, central V-cuts represent hearts, other V-cuts signify clothing

Role: disease causing agent

Ritual Use: *tleuchpantle'*(cleansing)

Curer: F.



Figure 16

Spirit Entity: *ehekatl*

Name: *axkutla' ehekatl(?)*

Sex: male

Color: green

Origin: surface of the water(water realm)

Size: 16.5 x 6.5 cm

Characteristics: wears horns and crown on head, protrusions from body
represent waves

Role: disease causing agent

Ritual Use: *tleuchpantle'*(cleansing)

Curer: D.



Figure 17

Spirit Entity: *ehekatl*

Name: *apantlasole' ehekatl* (wind from refuse in the water)

Sex: male

Color: green

Origin: water realm

Size: 16 x 6.5 cm

Characteristics: body covered with hair

Role: disease causing agent

Ritual Use: *tleuchpantle'* (cleansing)

Curer: D.



Figure 18

Spirit Entity: *ehekatl*

Name: *apantlasole' ehekatl* (wind from refuse in the water)

Sex: male

Color: blue

Origin: water realm

Size: 17.5 x 5 cm

Characteristics: wears horns and crown on head, clothes on body, often encountered at midday, water realm servant of Tlakatekolotl, master of the underworld

Role: disease causing agent

Ritual Use: *tleuchpantle'* (cleansing)

Curer: D.



Figure 19

Spirit Entity: *ehekatl*

Name: *apantlasole' ehekatl* (wind of the underworld horde)

Sex: male

Color: red

Origin: anywhere in the world

Size: 16.5 x 5 cm

Characteristics: wears hat and clothes

Role: disease causing agent

Ritual Use: *tleuchpantle'* (cleansing)

Curer: D.

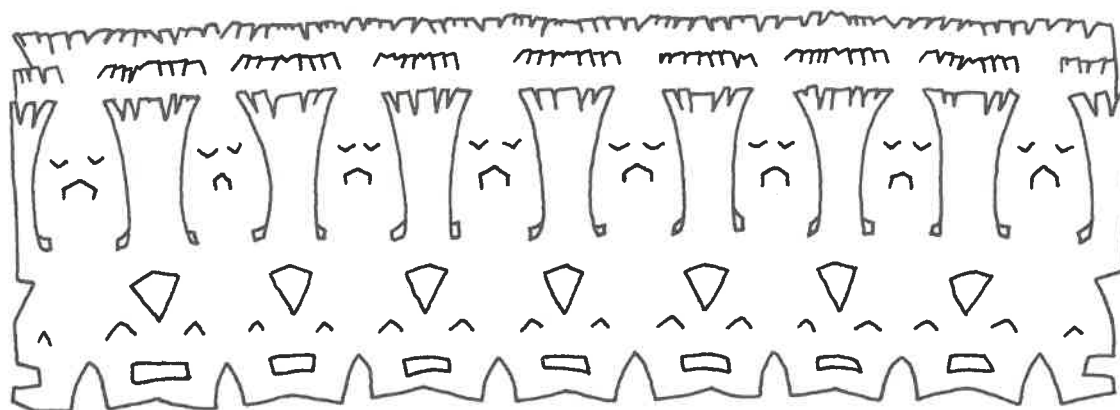


Figure 20

Spirit Entity: guardian spirit

Name: *tlali'* (earth)

Sex: male(?)

Color: white

Origin: earth or ruin

Size: 34 x 11.5 cm

Characteristics: eight images connected by crown, forearms, clothes and toes, wearing two-tiered crown, V-cuts signify clothes

Role: to effect cures and guard over patients

Ritual Use: disease preventative cleansing

Curer: F.



Figure 21

Sacred Cutout: mat for holding paper figurines(guardian spirits, Fig. 20)

Name: *tlaxkali' yuyumitl*(tortilla napkin) or *tlali'*(earth)

Color: white

Size: 34 x 23.5 cm

Characteristics: mat represents earth, covered with V-cuts, two short ends fringed

Role: receives sacred figurines and offerings

Ritual Use: disease preventative curing

Curer: F.

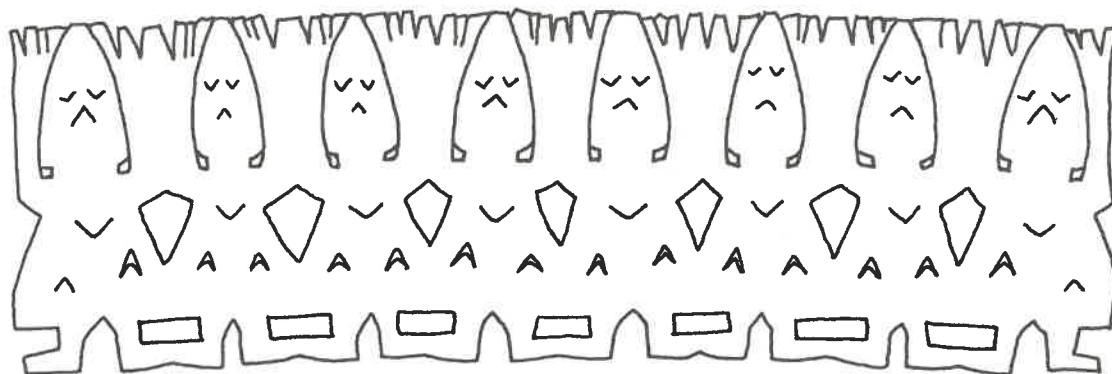


Figure 22

Spirit Entity: witness

Name: *onipixtok aki' ki'ixtok*(witness)

Sex: female

Color: white

Origin: sacred hill(probably earth realm)

Size: 34 x 10.5 cm

Characteristics: eight images connected by forearms, toes and clothes,
central V-cuts represent hearts, other V-cuts signify
clothing

Role: carry offerings to ancestor spirits inside of hill

Ritual Use: disease preventative cleansing

Curer: F.

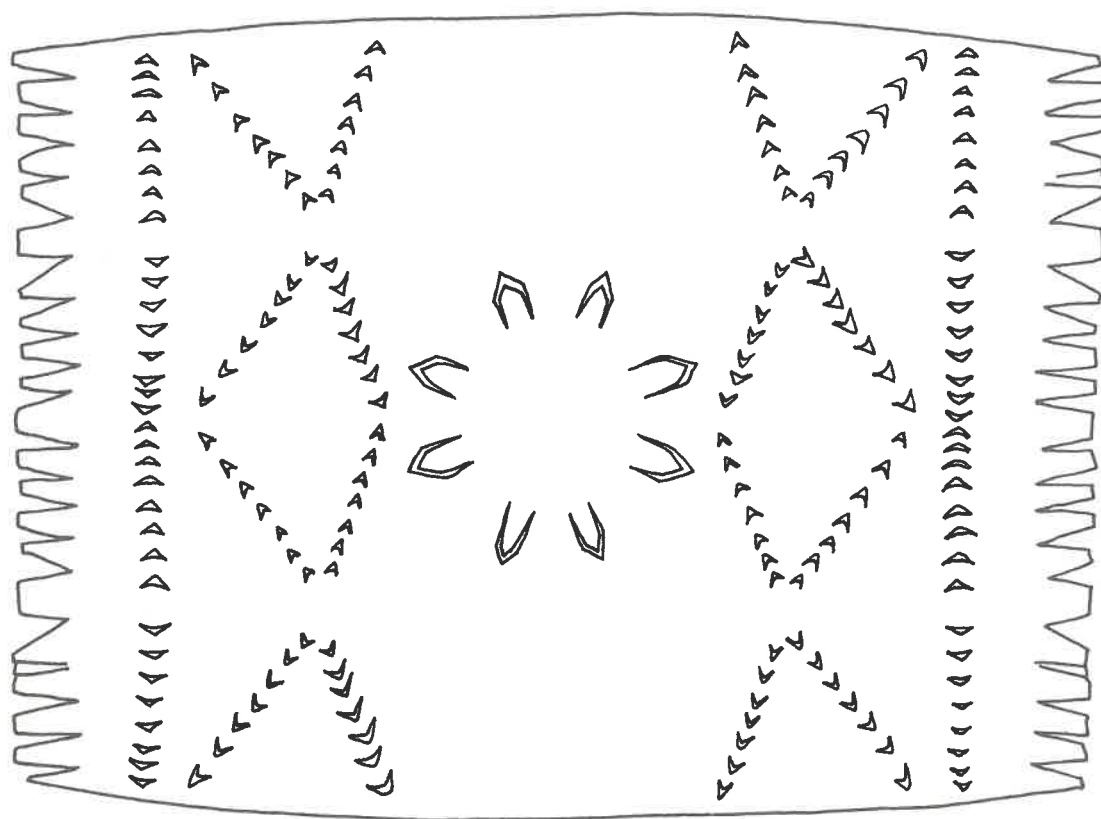


Figure 23

Sacred Cutout: mat for holding paper figurines(witnesses, Fig. 22)

Name: *tlaxkali' yuyumitl*(tortilla napkin)

Color: white

Size: 34 x 25 cm, sometimes cut larger

Characteristics: two short ends fringed, geometric designs cut into paper

Role: receives sacred figurines and offerings

Ritual Use: disease preventative cleansing

Curer: F.

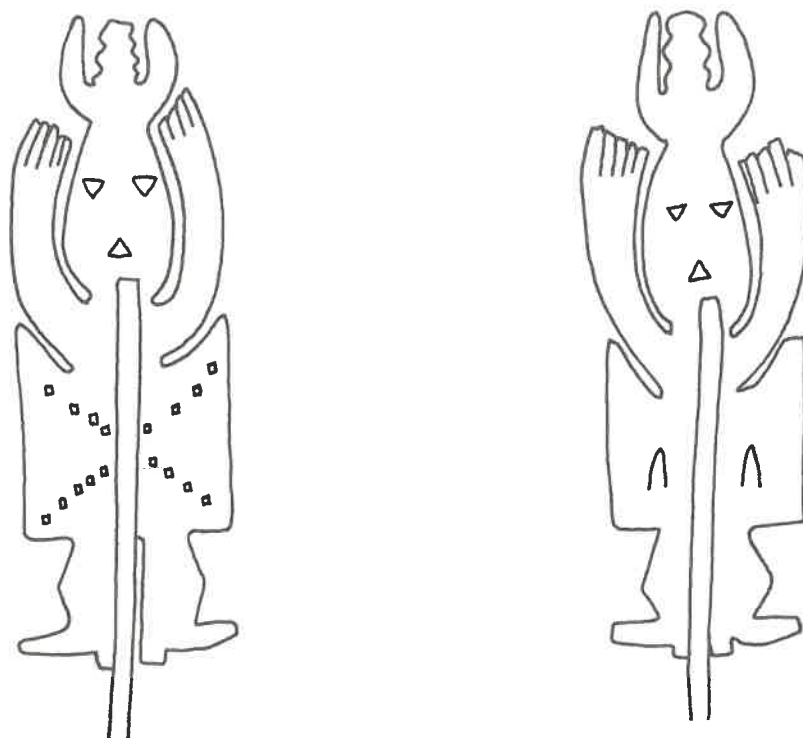


Figure 24

Spirit Entities: witnesses

Name: *onipixtok aki' ki'ixtok*(witness)

Sex: ?

Color: white

Origin: sacred hill(probably earth realm)

Size: approximately 14 x 7 cm

Characteristics: wearing crowns, cuts in bodies signify clothing

Role: carry offerings to ancestor spirits

Ritual Use: disease preventative cleansing

Curer: M.

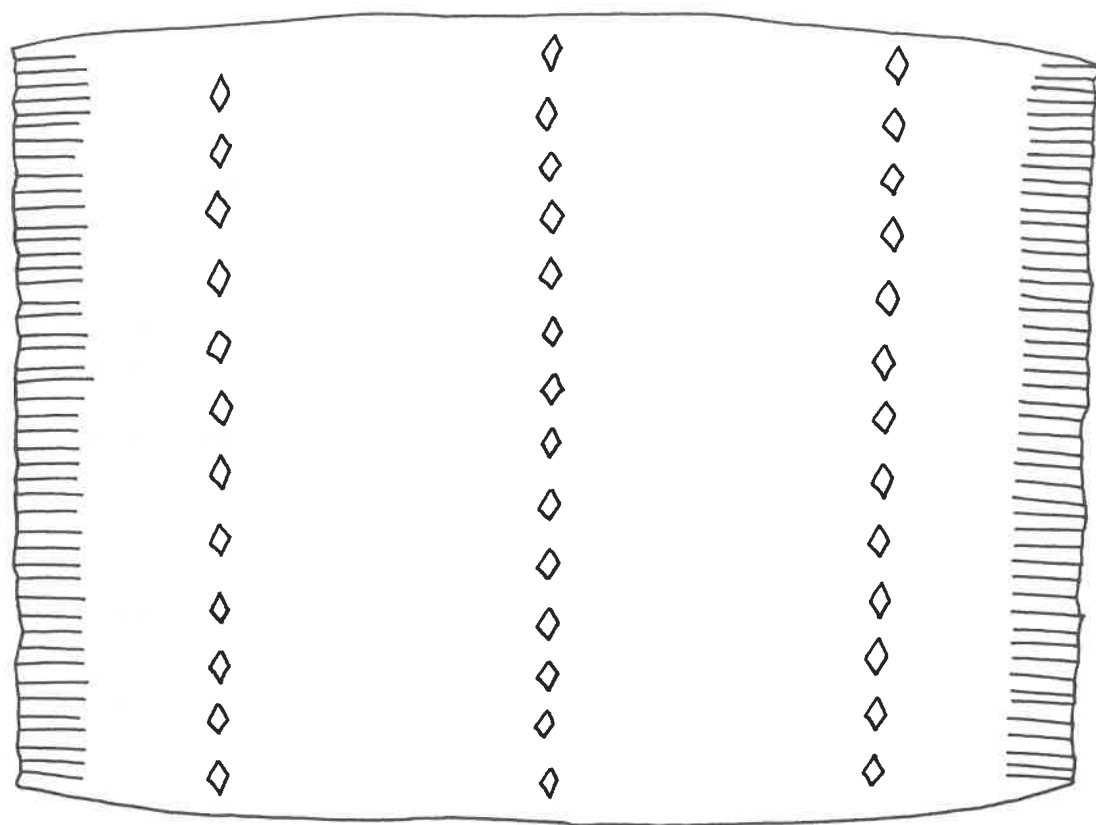


Figure 25

Sacred Cutout: mat for holding paper figurines(witnesses, Fig. 24)

Name: *tlaxkali' yuyumitl*(tortilla napkin)

Color: white

Size: approximately 38 x 28 cm

Characteristics: two short fringed ends, three rows of diamond-shaped cuts

Role: receives sacred figurines and offerings

Ritual Use: disease preventative cleansing

Curer: M.

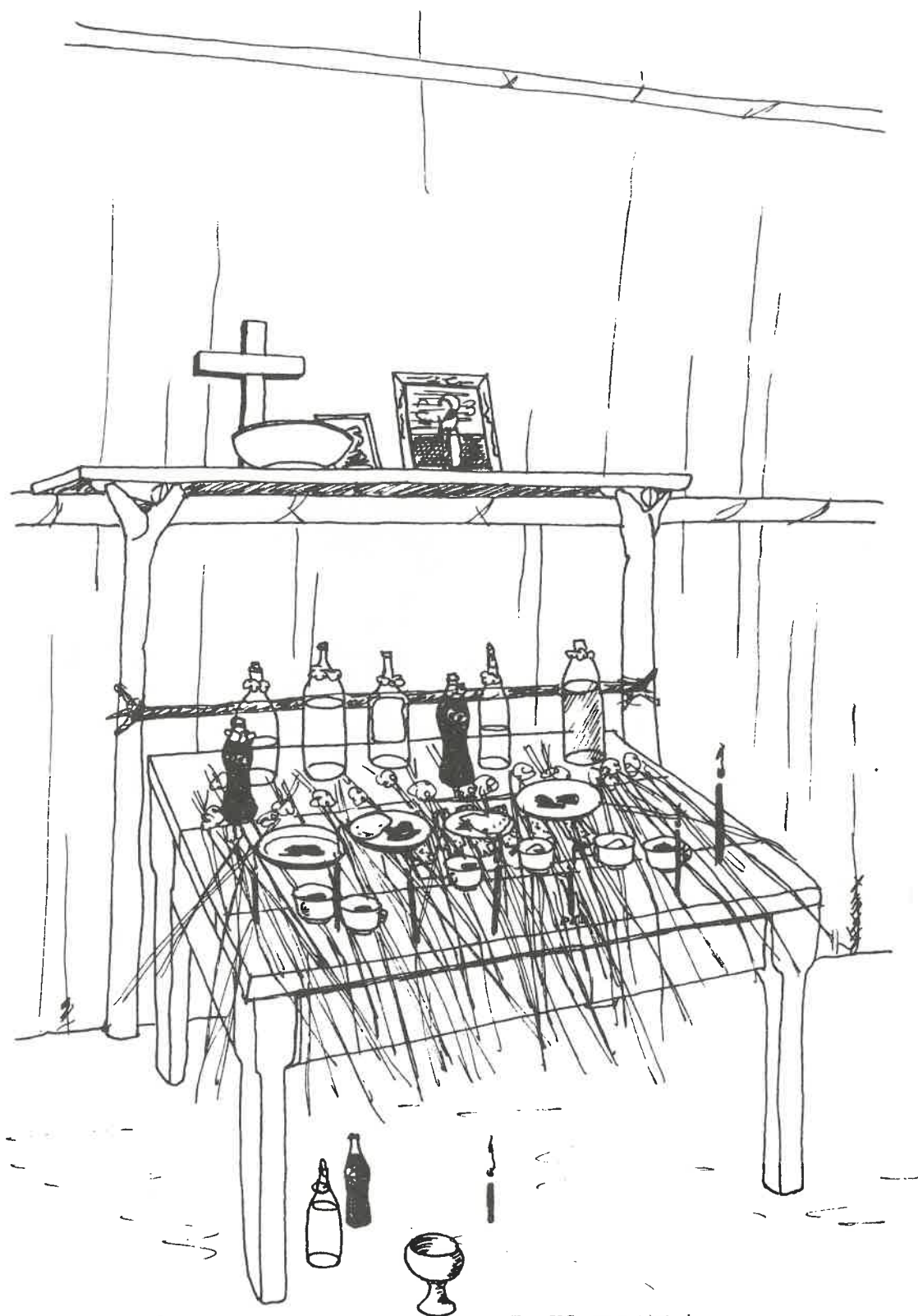


ILLUSTRATION 4

Table Altar TLEUCHPANTLE'
(Cleansing of Political Authorities)



ILLUSTRATION 5

Earth Altar TLEUCHPANTLE'
(Cleansing of Political Authorities)



ILLUSTRATION 6

Hill Altar 'TLEUCHPANTLE'
(Cleansing of Political Authorities)

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