

THE DEVILS AND THE YOUNG BOYS

A TZOTZIL MYTH

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Of the few myths that I have been able to collect from the Tzotziles of Huixtán and San Andrés, the majority are concerned with stories of devils or evil spirits. This myth was related to me by Miguel Martínez, a resident of the *paraje* of Yolon Basom, in the *municipio* of Huixtán. It is interesting to note that in these stories the human characters outwit the evil spirits in some miraculous way. In real life, however, the evil spirits are believed to be much more powerful than humans, and are feared greatly.

Some of the common beliefs among the huixtecos come out in this story. Evil spirits are believed not only to bother people as they go about their daily work, but to eat them. The soul inhabiting the body is essential to life. If the soul is separated from the body, it must be called back in order for life to continue. When a Huixtec woman goes with her small child to visit in another home, as she rises to leave, she calls the soul of her child to follow, otherwise she believes it remains there and her child will die as a result.

The story may be summarized as follows: People say there were many evil spirits long ago. The story is told that one day when some boys were herding their cows or sheep, an evil spirit threw dirt at them. They were afraid as it was not evident where it came from. One thought he saw wind, another fire. They decided to grab the evil spirit and throw fire and a whirlwind at him. The evil spirit's body was burned as a result

and he ended up in the sea. So even young boys can get the better of evil spirits and so let the evil spirits beware.

Another story heard is that the evil spirits stole a woman when she was washing her corn early in the morning. The spirits put her in a deep pit where she gave birth every night. Her children were little evil spirits. When people came to pull her out of the pit in response to her cry for help, her offspring tried to prevent her leaving, but were unsuccessful. Unfortunately her soul stayed in the pit and so she did not live long afterwards.

The story-teller does not seem to have as much faith in the evil spirits as his ancestors did.

TEXT

1. ti bo^onee [?]ep no^oš ti pukux li[?] ti balumile, sčì ti krisčanoetike. 2. [?]oy [?]unen keremetik čpaštolaxik. 3. ital ti pukuxe, tal sibtas ti [?]unen keremetike. 4. lax stembeik c'ubulum, xeč iši[?] ti [?]unen keremetike. 5. lax yal ti [?]unen

INTERLINEAR TRANSLATION

1. in past many simply the devil here in world, said the people. 2. there-were young boys they-were-herding. 3. came the devil, coming he frightened the young boys. 4. did they-throw-at him dirt, thus they-feared the young boys. 5. did they-

FREE TRANSLATION

"Long ago there were a lot of devils here on the earth," the people said. There were some young boys herding (oxen or sheep). The devil came, he came and scared the young boys. He threw dirt at them so the young boys were

keremetike k'usi šavil xo^oti sči la ti ^ounen keremetik ti čalike. 6. xo^oni ^oik' škil sči. 7. ti xume k'ok' škil, sči. 8. xcaktik ti pukux če^e kak'betik batel sutum^oik' xtentik ti nab sči ti ^ounen keremetik ti čalike. 9. xeč ibat ti pukuxe. 10. lax stenik ^oočel ti nab.

11. y ti pukuxe lax yal mu me šavilbaxinik ti ^ounen keremetike. 12. p'ixik me lume. 13. lax yak'bun sutum^oik' sči^ouk k'ok'. 14. k'elo avil ik'ak' ti xvinkilele sči la ti pukuxe. 15. xeč yu^oun lax yal ti pukuxe mu me šavilbaxinik ^ounen keremetik sči ti pukuxe ti čalike. 16. ^ooy la noštok lax yalik ti ^oep ti pukux li^e. 17. lax yelk'an batel xun ^oanc. 18. cap la spanin ti sob^oik'luman. 19. lax

say the young boys: what you-see you, said it-is-reported the young boys that they-talked-about. 6. I wind I-see, he-said. 7. the one, fire I-see, he-said. 8. let's grab the devil so, let's-give-him going returning-wind, let's-throw-him in deep-water, said the young boys that they-talked-about. 9. thus went the devil. 10. did they-throw-him entering in deep-water.

11. and the devil did he-say: not (emphatic) you-will-tease the young boys. 12. wise (emphatic) those. 13. did they-give-me returning-wind and fire. 14. look you-see, it-burned the my-body, said it-is-reported the devil. 15. therefore did he-say the devil: not (emphatic) you-will tease young boys, said the devil that they-talked-about. 16. there-were it-is-reported also did they-say that many the devil here. 17. did they-steal going one woman. 18. she-was-washing it-is-reported her cooked-corn at early-morn.

afraid. The young boys said: "What do you see?" the young boys said they say. "I see wind," he said. The other (said): "I see fire," he said. "Let's grab the devil then, let's throw a whirlwind at him, let's throw him into the sea," the young boys said they say. Thus the devil went. They threw him into the sea.

The devil said: "Don't tease the little boys. They are wise. They threw a whirlwind and fire at me. See, my body is burned," they say the devil said. It was for that reason the devil said: "Don't tease little boys," they say the devil said. There were others also they say that said that there were many devils here. They stole a woman. They say she was washing her cooked corn

stik' ti šab. 20. te inain yalyel. 21. te k'alal ilok' batel ti soblik'luman ti pukuxe ba sa² sve²el. 22. yu²un ca² tal krisčanoetik sti².

23. xeč ti ²ance te ikom. 24. xuxun ²ak'ubal č²an yol la ti čanc ti čalike. 25. k'alal ti xeč lax yalike k'alal lok'em ša batel ti pukuxe i²avan ti ²ance. 26. lax yavta krisčanoetik. 27. ²oy xobelaxel nopol belal xobel xeč ba slok'esik ti ²ance. 28. lax yič'be šoka, lax stembeik yalel xe² ilok' tal ti ²ance. 29. ti yol ti ²anc la ti ²unen pukux ti čalike ²o²lol č'en ša čtal snit yal tal ti sme²e sči ti krisčanoetike. 30. k'alal ilok' tal ti ²ance mu ²epuk k'ak'al

19. did they-put-her-into in very-deep-pit. 20. there she-lived seemingly. 21. there when he-came-out going at early-morn the devil, going he-looked for his-food. 22. because he-looks-for coming people he-eats.

23. thus the woman there she-stayed. 24. each night was-born her-offspring it-is-reported the woman that they-tell-about. 25. when the thus they-said, when having-come-out already going the devil, shouted the woman. 26. she shouted-at people. 27. there-were travellers-to-Las-Casas near road Las-Casas thus going they-took-out the woman. 28. did they-take woven-leather-thong, did they-throw-it-to-her down, thus came-out the woman. 29. the her offspring the woman it-is-reported the young devils that they-tell-about, half pit already coming they-pulled down coming the their-mother, said the people. 30. when she-came-out coming

early in the morning. They put her into a deep hole. There she lived, seemingly. She was there when the devil went out early in the morning to look for food. It was because he was looking for people to eat.

So the woman stayed there. They say that every night a child was born to the woman. When it was as they said, when the devil had gone out, the woman yelled. She called to people. There were some going to Las Casas near the road to Las Casas, so they went and took out the woman. They brought a long twined leather thong, they threw it down to her, thus the woman got out. The woman's children, what they say were the little devils, "they came half way up the deep hole to drag down their mother," the people say. "When the woman got out,

ilul ti balumilal li? la ičam ti ʔance yuʔun ikom sč'ulel ti šab sči. 31. xeč lax yaʔyik.

32. ʔep ti pukux liʔ ti voʔone. 33. tana ti tyose lax sten batel k'alal ti yibil vinaxel ti pukuxe. 34. tana muʔyuk ša pukux liʔi. 35. mu xečuk ti voʔone. 36. ʔep pukux ʔep čixč'ay batel ʔep čistiʔukutik ti pukuxe sči ti krisčanoetike.

37. xaʔ xeč lax kaʔi.

the woman, not many days she-arrived on earth, here it-is-reported died the woman because stayed her-soul in very-deep-pit, they-said. 31. thus did they-hear.

32. many the devils here in past. 33. now the god did he-threw going right-up-to the its-roots sky the devil. 34. now there-are-not-any now devils here. 35. not thus in past. 36. many devils, much we were lost going, many eats-us the devil, said the people.

37. it thus did I-hear.

she was not here many days on earth (when) the woman died here they say because her soul stayed in the deep hole," they said. Thus they heard.

There were many devils here long ago. Now God has sent away to the end of the earth (the roots of heaven) the devil. Now there are not any devils here. It was not so a long time ago. There were a lot of devils, a lot of us were lost, the devils ate a lot of us," the people said.

It is thus I heard it.