LA LLORONA

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Purpose and Method

The present study seeks to reconstruct the prototype of a widespread Mexican legend: La Llorona—the Weeping Woman, a nocturnal apparition who is heard crying for her lost children.

In order to attempt this reconstruction the authors were guided by the system known as the historical-geographical method, which can be called "mythochronology," long used in Europe. We have relied heavily on the principles contained in a work of Archer Taylor, *The Black Ox* (FF Communications No. 70, Helsinki, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1927).

The historical-geographical system consists of the gathering of a large number of variants of one folk tale with the purpose of tracing, as far as possible, the original form of the story.

The authors are grateful to some fifty investigators—students and anthropologists—who gathered texts of La Llorona which have been invaluable for this study. Most of these documents remain unpublished. We also wish to express our gratitude to Robert Chadwick, Bente Simons, David Sánchez and Cecil Welte—participants in a folklore seminar conducted by Fernando Horcasitas at Mexico City College in 1961. It was then that this project was conceived and its initial phase undertaken.

After having collected the 120 versions of La Llorona, we analyzed them according to the procedure of the mythochronological school.

The first step was the rejection of a number of elements which 1) were not essential to the story, 2) appeared only in a rare number of versions, 3) had a restricted distribution and/or 4) occurred only in extremely fragmentary, corrupt or confused texts.

The authors, then, began their work by this process of elimination, discarding traits of which the following are examples:

1. *A specific locality.* "She appears at the Puente de Guadalupe," "She appears near the Zahuapan river", "She is seen flying toward Tetzcoco," "She drowned herself in the bay of Veracruz." Since La Llorona has been known all over Mexico for centuries these contradictory geographical details may be dismissed without question. Had at least

a small part of the informants insisted on the fact that the action of the story took place—let us say in the floating gardens of Xochimilco—the locality would be worth considering in our study.

2. *Specific identification of the protagonists.* La Llorona was "... a Tehuana," "... is known as La Infeilz María," "... was a young woman named Luisa," "... was the leader of a band of cut-throats in Mexico City," "... was a widow," "Her lover was a count," "Her lover was Don Nuño de Montesclaros." All of these and other traits can be rejected in the reconstruction of the prototype, principally because they occur only once in over one hundred texts.

3. *Non-essential or incongruous traits.* La Llorona was "... a proud Spanish woman who married an Indian," "... drank the blood of her children," "... rattles chains when she appears," "... is a blonde," "... is dressed in black," "... was hanged by a mob in the streets," "All of this happened thousands of years ago."

The above motifs and many others were rejected because of their infrequent appearance in this relatively large collection of texts, a lack of wide geographical distribution, and their general unimportance in the function and plot of the story.

We were left then with an amazingly simple and consistent skeleton of the story, composed of basic motifs which appeared in the immense majority of the versions.

Elements were retained for our recconstruction if they met the following criteria:

1. Appearance in many versions of the story.
2. Wide geographical distribution.
3. Importance to the continuity of the story.
4. Appearance in well transcribed, complete, and reliable texts, rather than in fragmentary or confused versions.
5. Demonstrable antiquity, such as in our 16th century texts.

All elements meeting these requirements were incorporated into what we consider to be an ancient version of La Llorona.

However, before outlining the prototype which was arrived at, it is desirable to review the material which was at our disposal.

As indicated, 120 texts were gathered and analyzed in the course of this study. A descriptive list of the entire collection follows. A few sample texts which seemed typical of the versions we encountered are reproduced here in their entirety.

Ancient Texts

1. Fray Juan de Torquemada, *Monarquía Indiana,* [ca. 1610], Vol. II México: Editorial Chávez Hayhoe, (1943), 61.

Cihuacoatl... was the first woman in the world.... She always gave birth to twins—a boy and a girl. They say that this goddess used to appear many times with a little cradle on her back; this cradle was called *cozolli.* She looked as if she were carrying her child on her back. She would appear dressed in white. And when she appeared thus, those who saw her considered it an ill omen. At night they would hear her crying and weeping, and those who heard her shared her anguish.

2. Anonymous, "Histoyre du Mechique," [ca. 1550] *Journal de la Société des Américanistes,* Vol. II (1905), 8-41.

Others say that the earth was created in the following way: two gods, Calcoatl and Tezcatlipuca brought the Goddess of the Earth, Atlalteutli, down from Heaven. All of her joints were full of eyes and mouths with which she bit like a wild beast. Before they descended, water already existed, although they do not know who created it. The goddess walked upon this water. Seeing this, two gods said one to another, "The earth must be made." And speaking thus, both of them turned into two large serpents. One of them seized the goddess by the right hand and the left foot; the other, by the left hand and the right foot. They squeezed her and broke her in two, and they took one half to Heaven, which made the other gods extremely angry. When this was done, in order to recompense the said Goddess of the Earth for the damage that the two gods had caused her, all the gods descended to console her and commanded that from her should come all the products necessary for the life of man. In order to accomplish this they made trees and flowers and herbs out of her hair, weeds and small flowers out of her skin, wells and springs and little caves out of her eyes, rivers and large caves out of her mouth, mountain-valleys out of her nose and mountains of her back. And this goddess sometimes wept at night, wanting to eat the hearts of men. She would not be silent until they had been given to her, nor would she bear fruit until she had been sprinkled with the blood of men.

3. Francisco Hernández, *Antigüedades de la Nueva España* [ca. 1580] México: Editorial Pedro Robredo, 1945), 139.

Cioacoatl, Cioteteuh, and other goddesses . . . while living among mortals, died in giving birth to their first child, and that is why they became goddesses. They used to say that these goddesses would come down to earth on certain days and inflict countless plagues and misfortunes upon the mortals that they happened to meet. And therefore they [the mortals] tried to placate and soften them with many gifts and with shrines erected at the crossroads.

4. Torquemada, *op. cit.*, 53.

There was a goddess . . . who would sometimes appear as a young and beautiful woman and would walk about the *tianguez* or market places, falling in love with young men. She would provoke them to have relations with her and, afterward, she would kill them.

5. Fray Diego Durán, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España y Islas de Tierra Firme* [1570], (México: Editora Nacional, 1951), 171-7.

The principal goddess was called Cihuacoatl, goddess of the Xochimilca and, although she was the particular deity of the Xochimilca, she was venerated in Mexico and in Tetzcoco. The goddess Cihuacoatl was made of stone. She had a large mouth and angry teeth. She had hair, heavy and long, upon her head and was dressed like a [an ordinary] woman, all in white—skirt, blouse and mantle. This was the usual way in which they dressed her image in her tall and sumptuous temple, especially in that of Xochimilco, since she was the patroness there.

In order to kill more men and to eat human flesh the diabolical priests of this temple used a cunning artifice. If they saw that eight days had passed and no one had been sacrificed, they took a baby's cradle and put in it a sacrificial flint knife, called "The Child of Cihuacoatl." Having put it there, they wrapped it up in cloth. They would give the cradle to a woman so that she might take it on her back to the market place. They would instruct her to go to the most important merchant woman. She would carry the cradle to the marketplace, and having seen the principal shopkeeper, would give her the cradle with the "child" in it, asking her to look after it until she came back.

The shopkeeper would take care of the "child" and the woman would go away and not return for the cradle. Eventually the merchant would realize that the woman was taking a long time, that she had to close her shop soon, and that the mother had not come after her

child. She was surprised that, not having nursed all day, the baby had not cried or made any noise. She would then open the cradle and find in it the sacrificial knife, "child" of Cihuacoatl.

The people, on seeing this, cried out that the goddess had come and had appeared in the market place. They would say that she had brought along her child to show her hunger and to reproach the lords for their neglect in feeding her. The priests, feigning great tears and sorrow, would announce that they missed the knife, that they would have to go and fetch it in order to bring it back to the temple with great reverence.

6. Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex* [ca. 1570], translated by A. J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble (Santa Fe: The School of American Research and the University of Utah), Book I, "The Gods," 1950, 3.

The savage Snake-woman (Ciuacoatl), ill-omened and dreadful, brought men misery. For it was said: "She giveth men the hoe and the tump-line. Thus she forceth men [to work]."

And when she appeared before men, she was covered with chalk, like a court lady, with obsidian earplugs. She was in white, having garbed herself in white, in pure white. Her tightly wound hairdress rose like two horns above her head.

By night she walked weeping and wailing, a dread phantom foreboding war.

7. Juan Gutiérrez de Liévana, "Descripción de Guastepeque, 1580," *Huaxtepec y sus reliquias arqueológicas,* ed. Enrique Juan Palacios (México, 1930).

"And they had only one idol in the main square of the village. They called it Izpuchitequicastle, which means 'young woman.' They heard her crying every night. And then she would return to her temple. And they didn't know why she cried so much, except that they saw she was like the wind, with a big mouth, spitting fire through it, her eyes very big. Sometimes they would see her washing clothes at the pools . . ."

8. Sahagún, *op. cit.*, Book 12, "The Conquest of Mexico," 1955, 2-3.

"[Shortly before the Conquest] a woman was often heard [as] she went weeping and crying out. Loudly did she call out at night. She walked about saying: 'O my beloved sons, now we are about to

go!' Sometimes she said: "O my beloved sons, whither shall I take you?' "

9. Diego Muñoz Camargo, *Historia de Tlaxcala,* II [ca. 1580], (México, 1947), 179-83.

Ten years before the Spaniards came to this land, . . . many times and many nights was heard the voice of a woman who cried out in a loud voice, drowning herself with her tears, and with great sobs and sighs, wailing, "Alas, my children, we are about to be destroyed." Other times she would say, "Alas, my children, where can I take you to hide you . . . "

Modern Texts

1. Campeche, *Mesoamerican Notes* 2 (Mexico: Mexico City College, 1950). The informant was a saleswoman.

(Note: texts originally published in *Mesoamerican Notes* 1 or 2 will hereafter be indicated by MN 1 or MN 2. Both numbers appeared in 1950.) 2. Chiapas, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a maid.

3. Chihuahua, city of Chihuahua, MN 1. The informant was a maid. Recorded by L. Bretz.

Cortés had a son by Malinche. He had to leave for Spain, and wanted to take his son with him. Malinche became ill at the thought of giving him up, and for a while was insane. Nevertheless, she kept her son. When the son was seven years old, Cortés could not wait any longer; he wanted to take his son to Spain with him because of the Spanish blood, but not Malinche, who was only his mistress and besides was an Indian. In despair, Malinche killed her son with a knife. She buried him, with herself beside him. When her spirit left her body, it cried, "¡Aaayyy!" Since then her spirit wanders all over calling the attention of the people to her anguished cry. The people call her La Llorona.

4. Durango, 1947, unpublished text. 5. Federal District, 1954, unpublished text. The informant was a student. 6. Federal District, 1954, unpublished text. The informant was a beauty operator. 7. Federal District, 1954, unpublished text. The informant was a maid. 8. Federal District, 1953, unpublished text. The informant was a housewife. 9. Federal District, 1953, unpublished text. The informant was a maid. 10. Federal District, 1954, unpublished text. The informant was a maid. 11. Federal District, 1954, unpublished text. 12. Federal District, 1954, unpublished text. 13. Federal District, 1954, unpublished text. 14. Federal District, 1954, unpublished text.

15. Federal District, 1954, unpublished text. 16. Federal District, 1950, unpublished text. 17. Federal District, 1950, unpublished text. 18. Federal District, MN 1. The informant was a maid. 19. Federal District, MN 1. The informant was a native of Mexico City. 20. Federal District, MN 1. The informant was a student. 21. Federal District, MN 1. The informant was a student. 22. Federal District, MN 1. The informant was a house-wife. 23. Federal District, MN 1. 24. Federal District, MN 1. The informant was a waiter. 25. Federal District, MN 2. The informant was a doctor. 26. Federal District, MN 2. The informant was a salesman. 27. Federal District, MN 2. 28. Federal District, MN 2. The informant was a maid. 29. Federal District, MN 2. The informant was a native of Mexico City. 30. Federal District, MN 2. The informant was a maid. 31. Federal District, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a maid. 32. Federal District, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a native of Mexico City. 33. Federal District, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a secretary. 34. Federal District, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a waitress.

35. Federal District, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a native of Mexico City, literate, about twenty-one years of age, employed as a waitress. Recorded by D. Butterworth.

La Llorona is a woman with long flowing hair and a white gown who had three children. She did not want the children, and threw them into the river in the countryside, where they drowned. She was very despondent, and now searches for them at night. When it is very dark, you can hear her in the country along the river banks crying, "Ay, mis hijos!" This is a true story.

36. Federal District, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a washer-woman. 37 Federal District, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a secretary.

38. Federal District, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a secretary, born in Mexico City, literate, about twenty-one years old, who heard the story from her parents. Recorded by D. Butterworth. (Another investigator transcribed the story from the same informant some time after this version was gathered. See Number 46 for a comparison of the two versions.)

La Llorona was a woman of the streets. She had several children from her illicit trade, and threw them in the river. As punishment from God, she must walk the streets at night crying for her children.

39. Federal District, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a native of Mexico City. 40. Federal District, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a native of Mexico City. 41. Federal District, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a native of Guatemala. 42. Federal District, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a cashier. 43. Federal District, 1961, un-

published text. The informant was a maid. 44. Federal District, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a cook.

45. Federal District, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a cook, native of Veracruz, illiterate, about thirty years old. She claims that it is a true story. Recorded by R. Chadwick.

La Llorona is the story of a beautiful woman who lived around 1801 here in Mexico. This woman, who later became known as La Llorona, was a humble seamstress who lived a quiet life, until suddenly one day she met a prince with whom she fell violently in love. After one year a boy was born to the couple; and after another year and a half, another son was born. In the meantime, the prince had left her, and it was only when he found out that that sweet woman was in poor health that he returned. The day soon arrived, however, when he could no longer go to see her because his parents had forced him to contract marriage with a princess. The prince wanted to help his mistress, however so he sent one of his servants to her with some gold coins. The seamstress, furious at this affront, asked the servant where the prince could be found. The servant answered that the prince had gone to war. After the servant of the prince had left, the seamstress threw the coins away, and looking at her two small sons, said to them furiously: "You are the ones who are guilty of my disgrace." Then, looking over the top of the head of her eldest son, her eyes fell on a dagger that her lover had forgotten and left in her house. She took the dagger and ran after the servant who had just left. To her surprise, when she looked through the window of the house of the count (sic.) prince, she saw her adored being married to a princess. Then she returned to her house, cursing the one whom she had loved more than anything else in the world. Suddenly she thought and said to herself: "I will end this torment," so she grabbed the dagger and destroyed her hate, that is to say, her children. She threw them into a hole that was within her house. After she had killed her children she discovered that sre was covered with blood, and on seeing this, she ran to the window, and at exactly 12 o'clock, she killed herself. The lamp lighter who had seen her suicide ran to give the news to the prince, and the prince, who still adored the seamstress, immediately hurried to her house. When the prince entered, the woman stood up, and cried, "Ay, mis hijos!" This is the story, and it is said that this woman walks along the rivers at night, crying "Ay, mis hijos!" and that each cry she utters is part of her punishment from God.

46. Federal District, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was the same as in Number 38. Recorded by R. Chadwick.

La Llorona is a woman, who, because she devoted herself to prostitution and no man would marry her, killed her children so that no one would find out her profession. As a punishment from God, she walks along rivers and streets at night crying "Ay, mis hijos!" She tries to lure men who like many women. She has beautiful hair which hangs loose down to her waist, and she always wears a white shroud.

47. Federal District, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a student.

48. Federal District, village of Cuajimalpa, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a forty-year-old laborer, born in the state of Mexico. Recorded by D. Butterworth.

I've heard La Llorona in Cuajimalpa, where I live. She walks along the streets at midnight whenever there is a full noon. She wails terribly, crying, "Ayyyyy." It is very frightening. You can hear her a long distance away as she walks along the road toward Tacuba. I used to live in Tacuba, and I saw her once there. She had long hair, and as she came along the road, she went to the river bank, where I saw her. She was crying very veerily, and walked slowly along the riverside. I was very frightened. I don't know why she cries, but it is a terrible thing to hear.

49. Federal District, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a ticket salesman for an airline agency. 50. Guanajuato, 1950, unpublished text. The informant was a native of the state of Guanajuato. 51. Guanajuato, MN 1. The informant was a native of the state of Guanajuato. 52. Guanajuato, MN 2. The informant was a student. 53. Guanajuato, MN 1. The informant was a native of the state of Mexico. 54. Guanajuato, Ranchería de Dolores Hidalgo, MN 2. The informant was an elderly Indian servant who had learned the story from her mother. Recorded by H. Montgomery.

Once there was very beautiful woman who was not too strict in matters of morals. As a result of her escapades she had many illegitimate children all of whom she killed by drowning. For these crimes she was punished by God, having to spend eternity looking for her infants. At any stream during the rainy season, one is apt to hear the cry of La Llorona, "Ay, mis hijos! Dónde los hallaré?—Oh, my children! Where shall I find them?" The ghost of the woman is dressed in a white bridal dress. Very often men see her on lonely roads in the night, but because of her past experiences, La Llorona hates men. Know-

ing that few men can resist a beautiful woman, she waits for them in out-of-the-way places. If a man sees her, he inevitably follows her. She leads him to the bank of the nearest stream. Once there, she suddenly shrieks, "Ay, mis hijos! Dónde los hallaré?" Sometimes a man is so terrified by these screams that he faints and drowns in the stream.

55. Guerrero, village of Tlacotepec, 1943, unpublished text. 56. Guerrero, village of Chilacachapa, 1946, unpublished text. 57. Hidalgo, MN 2. The informant was a native of the state of Hidalgo. 58. Hidalgo MN 2. The informant was a native of the state of Hidalgo. 59. Hidalgo, 1954, unpublished text. The informant was a maid. 60. Hidalgo, MN 1. The informant was a native of the state of Hidalgo. 61. Jalisco, village of Tuxpan, 1950, unpublished text. The informant was a Nahuatl-speaking Indian. Text gathered by M. Barrios in the original Nahuatl. 62. Jalisco, MN 1. The informant was an ex-cowboy. 63. Jalisco, MN 2. The informant was a native of the state of Jalisco. 64. Jalisco, MN 2. The informant was a typist. 65. Jalisco, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a native of British Honduras.

66. State of Mexico, village of Tlalnepantla, MN 2. The informant was a student of medicine. Recorded by R. Melbye.

During the Spanish regime there lived in the valley of Mexico a poor Indian woman. She was very beautiful, and many suitors came begging for her hand. She accepted the proposal of a Spanish nobleman to live with him outside of holy wedlock. They then had many children. But the parents pursuaded him to marry a woman of his own social level. He left her, and in a fit of insanity she slew her children. Today, the Crying Woman walks the streets of Mexico, dressed in a snow-white garment and a white rebozo. She tries to make men, and any of them who responds to her advances in found dead in the streets. She fleets about in the light of the moon wailing, "Ay, mis hijos!"

67. Mexico, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a maid. 68. Mexico, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a maid.

69. Mexico, MN 2. The informant was a maid, about sixty years of age, native of the village of Zumpango, who claims to have seen La Llorona. Recorded by R. Love.

La Llorona lives in the mountains near such towns as Cuajimalpa and Cuernavaca. She has long hair, loose and down to the middle of her back. She is dressed in white, and her feet never touch the ground.

One never sees her face, and if you follow her you will find yourself on the ground or in a cactus. Her cry is heard only from far away. She drowned her children in the river, and goes walking about because God won't receive her in heaven. One sees her only in the months of September, October, and November.

70. Mexico, MN 1. The informant was a thirty-five year old Indian woman of La Purificación, near Tetzcoco. Recorded by A. Garges.

She passes along the river near our house at night. Not every night, sometimes she is in one place, sometimes in another. When she passes the water she cries "A-a-a-a-a mis hijos." She passes slowly by the river like a ghost dressed in white with long and beautiful hair. She cries because she had thrown her children in the water. When my father told me the story he did not say why she threw her children in the water, but when she died the Lord would not receive her in heaven until her children led her to Him. I have seen her myself, all of us saw her, she was very frightening.

71. Mexico, MN 1. The informant was a maid. 72. Mexico, MN 1. The informant was a native of Guanajuato. 73. Mexico, MN 1. The informant was a native of Guanajuato. 74. Mexico, MN 1. The informant was a native of the state of Mexico. 75. Mexico, 1956, unpublished text. The informant was a maid. 76. Michoacan, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was an electrician. 77. Michoacan, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a laborer. 78. Michoacan, MN 2. The informant was a native of Michoacan. 79. Morelos, MN 2. The informant was a native of Morelos. 80. Morelos, MN 1. The informant was a native of Coahuila.

81. Morelos, village of Tepoztlan, 1943. Recorded and translated from the Nahuatl by R. H. Barlow. The original Nahuatl text is in the Barlow Archive at Mexico City College.

Many years ago there was a woman. As soon as her children were born, she would throw them into the water. Later she repented and died. Now she goes about at night crying, "Ay, mis hijos! Alas, my children!" All the men are frightened. One can never see her; one can only hear her.

82. Morelos, 1944, unpublished text. The informant was a woman from Hueyapan. Recorded and translated from the Nahuatl by R. H. Barlow. The original Nahuatl text is in the Barlow Archive at Mexico City College.

La Llorona walks about at the river's edge. Her feet do not touch the water—they seem to fly. She frightens women who live in sin.

She chases bad men. The weeping woman goes to the river to wash. She calls to those who live in sin. At first she looks very beautiful; then she turns ugly.

83. Morelos, 1943, unpublished text. Recorded by R. H. Barlow in Tepalcingo, Morelos. The original Nahuatl text is in the Barlow Archive at Mexico City College. 84. Oaxaca, village of Ocotlan, 1958, unpublished text. 85. Oaxaca, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a native of the state of Oaxaca. 86. Oaxaca, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a waiter. 87. Oaxaca, city of Oaxaca, 1961. The informant was a native of the state of Oaxaca, a literate young man of twenty-three. Recorded by D. Butterworth.

La Llorona was the daughter of a Spaniard and a Mexican Indian. She fell in love a Spaniard and married him. They had two children. The Spaniard had another woman, and told his wife, "You are no good. You have inferior Indian blood." In despair she killed her children to see if they really did have different blood. Then she threw them in the river. Now she goes about crying "Ay, mis hijos!"

88. Oaxaca, village of Mitla, 1936. The informant was a native of the state of Oaxaca. Recorded and published by Elsie Clews Parsons, *Mitla: Town of Souls* (Chicago: 1936).

89. Puebla, village of Zacapoaxtla, 1942, unpublished text. The informant was a Nahuatl-speaking Indian. Recorded by an investigator of the Summer Institute of Linguistics.

They say there are sirens called *swateyomeh*. They say they wash at the river. They are completely white, and their hair comes to their ankles or their heels, and their hair is down. And they say they chat a lot, and make each other laugh a lot, and they say they have holes in their hands, and their hands are excessively cold, and they also say, when they see a man, they follow him. They want to get him. They want a baby, and the man feels that his head is big, and all his hair stands on end. And they also see the siren travel on the face of the wind. And she also cries like a woman. The siren cries at the river. She seeks her baby. First she was a real woman. That is the way she turned into a siren. That is how her heart was bitter and she threw her baby into the water.

90. Puebla, village of Otlatla, 1944, unpublished text. Recorded and translated from the Nahuatl by R. H. Barlow. The original Nahuatl text is in the Barlow Archive at Mexico City College.

La Llorona walks on the river without touching the water with her feet. She is dressed in white, although her face cannot be seen. When the cocks begin to crow, she disappears. She is crying for her children, whom she threw into the water. She had wanted to be a virgin. However, she had children, but she didn't show them to anyone. She drowned them. She is looking for them, but she can't find them.

91. Puebla, city of Puebla, 1955, unpublished text. The informant was an old woman. Recorded by J. Hobgood.

La Malinche was a beautiful Indian girl who fell in love with a Spanish conqueror. Because of her love, she went over to the side of the Spaniards and rejected her family. God punished her and enchanted her. She is in her castle on top of the mountain in Tlaxcala. She can be seen only once a year, when she comes down to bathe in the waterfall. This takes place on June 24.

92. Puebla, village of Porfirio Díaz, 1943, unpublished text. Recorded and translated from the Nahuatl by R. H. Barlow. The original Nahuatl text is in the Barlow Archive at Mexico City College.

La Llorona walks about at night looking for a brother of ours. Both of them are weeping. She is worried about her money. Her face is dirty and she is dressed in white. She goes through the ravines without touching the ground. Her heart is aching. She makes mischief and she cries.

93. Puebla, village of Santiago Tepeixco, 1943, unpublished text. The original Nahuatl text is in the Barlow Archive at Mexico City College. 94. Puebla, MN 2. The informant was a native of the state of Puebla. 95. Puebla, MN 2. The informant was a maid.

96. Puebla, village of San Martin Texmelucan, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a maid, now living in Mexico City. She believes firmly in the story. Recorded by C. Welte.

La Llorona was an unmarried woman who lived in a town in Puebla near San Martin Texmelucan. She had a number of children. She threw each of them in the river because she did not with to care for them. She wept and cried, "Ay, mis hijos!" as she did so. After this had happened a number of times the townspeople hanged her and showed her corpse in all the neighboring towns as an example of the punishment for killing one's children. Shortly after this her ghost started to roam the ravines and to come into town at midnight.

She would appear on the streets all in white, with white hair and a white veil. Her face was a shadow. She would say nothing, but with her white hands she would beckon to people to follow her. If they followed her she would glide out toward the ravine. While they kept their eyes fixed on her she would float out over the gully and the person following would fall into it and be killed.

97. Queretaro, 1961, unpublished text. 98. Queretaro, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a carpenter. 99. Sonora, MN 2. The informant was a stenographer.

100. Tamaulipas, city of Nuevo Laredo, MN 2. The informant was a rancher. Recorded by L. Slobotzky.

One day before my wedding, I went to visit my girl friend, who lived near a desolate plain. It was very late when I mounted my horse to return home. All of a sudden I heard my girl friend calling to me, and though I wanted to return, my horse began to neigh and foam at the mouth. Ahead of us I saw a very attractive woman. She was dressed in white and her hair fell to her vaist. But the curious part was that I couldn't see her face. She signaled to me that I should follow her. I followed her for a long time, and then I dismounted from my horse and, grabbing it by the reins, I continued on foot. Suddenly the woman disappeared and I heard a tremendous peal of laughter; then I fell into a stupor. The following morning I found myself at the brink of an abyss. Upon relating this story to my friends, they assured me that it had been La Llorona.

101. Tamaulipas, 1954, unpublished text. The informant was a pilot.

102. Tlaxcala, 1950, unpublished text. The informant was a maid.

103. Tlaxcala, MN 1. The informant was a maid, about twenty-five years of age, native of the state of Tlaxcala. She claims to have seen La Llorona personally. Recorded by O. Howells.

La Llorona lived long ago in the state of Tlaxcala. Neighboring towns claim credit for being her home but she lived along the banks of the river Zahuapan. She did not want or love her six children, so she drowned them in the river in spite of their cries of "Don't kill us!" When her husband asked her about the children, she confessed what she had done. The husband was very angry and demanded that she show him where the children were buried. When she refused, he drew his knife and stabbed her. Since then the woman is being punished by God for being a murderess. She is doomed always to

wander about seeking her children. Because she is supposed to be seen weeping and crying, "Ay, mis hijos!" she is known as "La Llorona,"—the Weeping Woman. About eight o'clock every evening she is seen along the Zahuapan River in Tlaxcala, weeping and calling. She screams very loudly on rainy nights. Her robe is long, white and old-fashioned, and as she moves along the river bank, she seems to float more than walk. She neither pays attention to the people she meets nor harms anyone. At times she leaves her own river and seeks the children along other rivers and streams of Mexico.

104. Tlaxcala, Hacienda of San Cristobal, MN 1. The informant was a maid. The story was told to her by her mother. Recorded by A. Garges.

She was a woman who had three children that God had given her. One day, in a moment of insanity, she threw them into the river. In a moment God ordered her punishment. She heard a voice saying, "Why have you killed your innocent children? You should have kept them as they were given to you. I say that you must search for them day and night until the end of the world." That is why at eight o'clock at night she goes out and cries, "Ay, mis hijos!" It is this cry that is heard in the woods, and which continues forever without rest.

105. Veracruz, city of Veracruz, 1950, unpublished text. The informant was a medical student about twenty-eight years old. The story was told to him by his grandmother. Recorded by W. Dobson.

It is said that a long time ago, in the alley called "El Cristo," behind the first church founded by the Spaniards, there lived a married couple with three children. As the father was a great lover, he was often far from home. His wife was often displeased, since he never gave her enough money for the support of the children. Finally, the wife, desperate over the attitude of her husband, found out that he was living with another woman. Seeing that she had lost forever the man she had once loved so much, she decided to end her life. One afternoon at six o'clock she dressed her children up. Putting on her usual rebozo and carrying her youngest child, who was only a few months old, she led the other two by the hand and went to the dock of the port of Veracruz. Since she had already made up her mind, she threw the baby into the sea. Immediately afterward, she threw the second one into the water. But the third, a boy about four years old, ran away from her and tried ot hide behind the walls. The mother ran after

him. Once she had caught him, she wound him up in her rebozo and jumped into the sea. All of them were drowned. A watchman who was nearby had tried to save the eldest child, but it was impossible. When the husband found out about the deed, he was stricken with remorse and committed suicide. People say that after twelve o'clock at night a terrible weeping is heard. It is the voice of a woman crying out, "Ay, mis hijos!"

106. Veracruz, 1950, unpublished text. The informant was a native of the state of Veracruz. 107. Veracruz, MN 1. The informant was a native of the state of Veracruz. 108. Yucatan, village of Piste, 1954. Unpublished text. The informant was a Maya-speaking Indian, about seventy years old.

109. Yucatan, 1961, unpublished text. The informant was a seventy-five year old well-educated woman. She was skeptical of the truth of the story. Recorded by D. Butterworth.

La Llorona is from Yucatan; only there they call her Xtabai. She is an enchantress who lures men to their destruction. She lives among the ceiba trees. When men approach her, they at first think she is beautiful; she lures them close to the water; as they get nearer they see that she has a fleshless skull for a face. By that time it is too late for them to escape, and they drown. She has long hair and is very beautiful. People in Yucatan are very much afraid of her, especially in the countryside. People in Oaxaca are also afraid of her. She sings or cries; she does both. People down there never go out at night alone without being afraid she will appear to them. My maid said that she was washing clothes by the river one day when La Llorona approached her. She saw her hideous face and ran away.

110. Yucatan, city of Merida, 1950, pupublished text. Recorded by R. H. Barlow.

In ancient times Xtabal was a maiden who was dishonored by a noble Maya. He stood her up on her wedding day. She hates men; that is why she appears. Xtabai appears to travellers on the crossing of a lonely road at night. She is dressed in her bride's dress. She invites them to follow her. She is always ahead of them. They walk until they go insane. On the next day, their corpses are found, embracing a tree.

111. Zacatecas, MN 1. The informant was a native of the state of Zacatecas.

Problems

The material at our disposal, cited in the above descriptive list, has a number of shortcomings which hindered us from using the mythochronological method to the utmost of its potencialities:

1. There is always a tendency for people to fill in parts of a story, especially when the details are not wholly familiar to them.

2. There may be an unconscious inclination on the part of the investigator to complete parts of a tale only vaguely related by the informant if he records the story some time after it was told.

3. The investigator somtimes inadvertently suggests things to the narrator by asking pointed questions about the narration. The informant may never have heard the suggested addition, but may give an affirmative answer to please the investigator.

4. The tales were always gathered under artificial conditions; not a single one was recorded in a natural setting, free from the presence of an "outsider."

The four risks just mentioned are to be encountered in any folklore study. Another set of problems, inherent in this particular type of investigation, follows:

5. A motion picture about La Llorona had been made shortly before many of our texts were gathered. Some people apparently related the story as they learned it from the picture, having previously known the legend only vaguely. They may have added elements from the movie to their own "original" versions.

6. The legend of La Llorona, unlike many other Mexican tales, has been printed a number of times and these versions may have influenced some of our literate informants.

7. Another difficulty, perhaps of a minor order, was that in many cases the tales were collected by American students of folklore who spoke Spanish as a second language. Some texts were gathered from informants who may also have spoken Spanish as a second language.

8. We feel that another shortcoming in our study is the lack of texts in a greater variety of native languages. Aside from Nahuatl, we have no Indian tongue represented.

9. As will be demonstrated in our conclusions, La Llorona is often a fusion of two separate tales. Where incompatible elements were involved, it is probable that some narrators suppressed one or the other theme in order to make the story "sounds right."

10. An important factor in analyzing the tale from a social or psychological point of view is the fact that the population of Mexico City (where about half of the versions were gathered) is highly mobile. People migrate from the entire country to the capital city. In the process of migration and urbanization the version originally known to the informant could have become significantly modified. Unfortunately, we often lacked information as to whether the individual had first heard the story in his village or in Mexico City. Thus we feel that even though twenty of the twenty-nine Mexican states are represented, the area is not as wide as is desirable. However, to widen the zone represented would entail a study of far greater scope than that of this investigation.

11. Finally, another deficiency was that of the age range of the informants. It extended from the late teens to old age—no versions told by children are presented in this study. As the story is often told in Mexico City by Indian nursemaids to their charges (mostly children under the age of ten), it would have been stimulating to hear versions told by the children themselves.

Conclusions

Having subjected the 120 versions to the geographical-historical process or to the method of mythochronology, we reconstructed the following prototypes:

Type 1. La Llorona was a beautiful Indian woman who had several illegitimate children. When her lover rejected her she went out of her mind and drowned her children in a river. After her death she was compelled to search for them every night. Nowadays she appears like a ghost near watery places or on the streets, screaming and crying, "Ay, mis hijos!" She is very attractive, is dressed in a long, white, flowing robe and has long hair hanging freely down to her waist.

Type 2. La Llorona is a beautiful woman, who appears at night. She has long hair and is dressed in white. Men are atthracted to her, follow her, and she leads them away to dangerous places. Often they are found dead the next day.

A third type, a fusion of the first two, was also established:

Type 3. La Llorona was an Indian woman who had several illegitimate children. When her lover rejected her she went out of her

mind and drowned her children in a river. After her death she was compelled to search for them every night. Nowadays she appears as a beautiful woman. She has long hair and is dressed in white. Men are attracted to her, follow her, and she leads them away to dangerous places. Often they are found dead.

These types are strikingly similar to the themes of the nine ancient texts reproduced above. Almost all of the motifs found in our reconstructed prototypes were already present in Sixteenth Century Mexico.

Though it is impossible at the present time to establish the antiquity of the story, it is evident that its theme is pre-Hispanic. Regarding the fused version of the two basic types (La Llorona crying for her children and La Llorona as a seducer of men), we cannot say whether the mixture had already taken place by the time of the Spanish Conquest. The present authors are inclined to thing that the fusion predates the Conquest.

The following questions must be asked—and answered—before any firm conclusion concerning the double origin and subsequent fusion of the stories may be reached: Is La Llorona the Earth Mother of primeval times? Did her attributes and functions begin to multiply through the ages, giving birth to several goddesses? Did she finally split up into a number of deities, the Agricultural Goddess, a Water Spirit, (bathing or washing clothing), Goddess of Licentiousness, the Seducer of Men, the Eater of Filth, the Goddess of Motherhood, the Divine Woman who returns from the Land of the Dead, seeking her children?

And then, following the desintegration of Aztec religion after the Conquest, were all these functions and roles attributed again to a single personage, the ghostly heroine of our story?

The fact that many attributes of an Aztec goddess should persist in the protagonist of a modern folktale is amazing. Why did so many pre-Christian myths and motifs die out with the Conquest while La Llorona has lived on almost intact to the present day, still enjoying universal popularity?

Interestingly enough, the story seems, if anything, to have become more widespread in the Americas after the European penetration, reaching the Southwest and Far West of the present day United States. This situatión is in contrast to the oblivion into which many pre-Columbian myths have fallen, all but forgotten by modern Mexicans. Examples of these legends are the Birth of Huitzilopochtli, the Disgrace

and Flight of Quetzalcoatl, the Creation of the Fifth Sun and the Adventures of Huemac at Tula. While some of these myths have lingered among the remote Mexican Indian tribes, none of them can compare with the longlasting and overwhelming popularity of the Weeping Woman.

One may be tempted to understand the legend in terms of Freudian symbolism. Such motifs as floating or gliding, the constant association with water, the knife—all found in intimate connection with the search by a woman for her children and the often parallel desire for revenge against men—have not been considered in this study.

From an historical point of view it would not be amiss to mention that supernatural beings like La Llorona were not alien to the minds of the Spaniards. Their own folk beliefs teemed with ghosts, nymphs and sirens who led men to their deaths.

The social upheaval brought about by the Spanish Conquest was undoubtedly another factor which kept La Llorona alive. There seems to have been a definite place for the Weeping Woman in the troubled centuries during which the European and the native populations struggled to adapt to one another in a painful cultural, social and racial accommodation. Elements of Spanish culture tried to find a place in the new society, replacing or modifying native elements at the same time that the indigenous ways of life were undergoing an identical process.

In regard to this adaptation, it is clear that every element that is borrowed by one culture is modified and reinterpreted by the borrowers. At the same time the borrower's own heritage is readjusted and modified, however slightly, in the process. Let us consider the Conqueror, later the Mestizo, and finally the modern Mexican, to be the borrower of an Indian element: the story of La Llorona. The pre-Hispanic tale not only has found a prominent place in the new society but has become modified and reinterpreted according to new needs and patterns. At the same time it has affected the borrower, changing in some way his manner of thought and behavior. This, essentially, seems to be the process by which La Llorona slowly evolved out of the remote Indian past into modern times, retaining and perhaps augmenting her ancient popularity.

The functions of the story in the Colonial period are fairly obvious. The tale fitted well into the early social patterns established between Indian and Spaniard. The breaking up of the ancient marriage pat-

terns, the abundance of Indian women available to the Conqueror, the numerous illegitimate chidlren, the rejection by both Indian and European of the Mestizo offspring—all of these phenomena on top of feelings of guilt on the part of the Conqueror and the native woman created a fertile setting for La Llorona.

Small wonder that in several of our texts she is portrayed as Malinche, Indian mistress of Cortés. The roles of conqueror and conquered are reflected in many of the present-day Mexican social and sexual mores and the persistence of these patterns is undoubtedly connected with the significant role of La Llorona in Mexican folklore. And so it is that she still walks about sometimes at night as the guilty woman weeping for her children, other times as the seductress, leading men to their death, avenging the wrongs inflicted upon her.