

THE MAN BORN OF A TREE: A MIXTEC ORIGIN MYTH

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This Mixtec text was dictated by Sr. Serapio Martínez Ramos, 55 years old, native and resident of Santa Cruz Mixtepec, Juxtlahuaca, Oaxaca. Sr. Martínez Ramos is monolingual. The text was recorded in March, 1976, in the home of the investigator. The story was verified by Sr. Basilio Gómez Bautista, a native of San Juan Mixtepec and resident of Santa Cruz Mixtepec. Sr. Gómez is 46 years old and monolingual. The text was gathered while the investigator was a member of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. An English version of the story appeared in the article "The Tree Birth Tradition in the Mixteca, Mexico" by Jill Leslie Furst. *Journal of Latin American Lore*, III: 2, 183-226, 1977.*

* The ethnohistorian can compare the present origin myth with the scene of the "Birth of the Mixtec People" on folio 37 of the Codex Vindobonensis, in which a man is seen emerging from a tree. The historical part of the Codex covers the years 700 to 1350 A.D. (F.H.)

Mixtec Text

1. Cahnu coo ini cuee ni, nandacuaha tuhun ta caa tiempo yata, cachi ndi yata ntsaha na tuhun. 2. Ntsica iin chaá ingaa yucu ntsica rà, cuahan yucu, cuahan rà. 3. Niqueta una quii cuahan rà yucu, ra tsini rà ii ingaa iin yutu nania tu yuhndu. 4. Ica ntsahan rà, nicaan rà nchica tu yuhndu; 5. ica ra stahan rà tu ca. 6. Cha niqueta uni, cumi yoó, ra ntsahan rà, tsini rà cuancaa titsi yutu ca. 7. Cha ica ra ntsahan, tsini rà ncaa titsi yutu ca; 8. cuahan titsi yutu, ra nicañni rà yoó. 9. Nu ntsinu yoó, ntsahan rà ica; 10. sara nicaan rà titsi yutu ca, tsini rà ingaa mii chaá luu, cuu chaá ingaa ica. 11. Ica ra ndaquihin rà chaá luu ca, naa rà cuanuhu rà. 12. Cha ndatsaa rà, ra nchacu ini chaà luu ca; 13. ntsicuu nani rà "catorse fuerza", nani rà. 14. Ica ra nu ntsaa rà ica, ra ntsicuu nani rà "chaá catorse fuerza". 15. Cha nu ntsahnu chaá nu nchacu

Literal Translation

1. Large become inside pluralizer you, going to give word when existed time old, say dead-ones old giving them word. 2. Walked one man within mountains walked he, going mountains, going he. 3. Left eight days going he mountains, and knowing he sacred within one tree called-it wood-it madroño. 4. There went he, made-hole he rib-cage wood-it madroño; 5. there and caused-numerator he wood-it there. 6. Pause-word left three, four months, and went he, knowing he going-swollen stomach tree there. 7. Pause-word there and went, knowing he swollen stomach tree there; 8. going stomach tree, and counted he months. 9. Face completed month, went he there; 10. and-then made-hole he stomach tree there knowing he within demonstrative-pointer man small is man within there. 11. There and taking-to-oneseif he man small there, carrying-in-arms he going-home he. 12. Pause-word arrive-again he, and alive inside man small there; 13. was call(ed) he "fourteen strengths" call he. 14. There and face arrived he there, and was call(ed) he "man fourteen strengths". 15. Pause-word

ini rà, íi nchuha nduu ini rà yutu ca; 16. yutu ca, ra íi nchuha nduu ini rà yutu ca. 17. Ica íi yutu ingaa ica, nchivi tsini rà ingaa íi yutu luu, vaha ingaa tu. 18. Cha cuahan rà, ndanehe rà tu tacua íi ndanehe rà tu. 19. Numi rà tu, ndanehe rà mancha yohó tu ndanehe rà. 20. Ica cuahan rà, ndanchicaa rà tu ingaa nuu ca. 21. Ndacuahnu tu, nduu tu ta nicaa tu; vasa ichi tu, vasa tivi tu. 22. Cha chaá ca cuu chaá nani "catorse fuerza". 23. Íi nchuha ini rà yutu ca, tsaha ñaá titsi yutu ca nicacu rà. 24. Cha cue cue nchacu ini rà, cue cue ntsahnu rà nuu nicuu ndacui nchuha rà. 25. Ñaa tsaan cuu tuhun yata ndacuaha uvi, uni tuhun nuu ni; ri ña ñoho nicuu ña uvi, uni cuentu ndacani cuentu yata. 26. Sara ntsahan rà mancha nuu cava Ngoso tacua cuu ndatsi rà cuee yuú cava ca tsi tuxii; 27. ri ta tiempo yata tsica nuu yuú tono cuee sàná na. 28. Sara ta ntsaa rá tsi cuee yuú mancha cruzi tu tichi, ra ntsinu nicanchii sara ntsihi rà saha nicanchii, ri coo caa yà

face grew-up man face alive inside he, sacred much became inside he tree there. 16. Tree there, and sacred much became inside he tree there. 17. There being tree within there, where knowing he within being tree small, bad within wood-it; 18. pause-word going he, get he wood-it so-that being get he wood-it. 19. Embrace he wood-it, getting he toward roots wood-it getting he. 20. There going he to-place-down he wood-it within face there. 21. Grew-up wood-it became wood-it as was wood-it; never dry wood-it, never rot wood-it. 22. Pause-word man there is man call "fourteen strengths". 23. Sacred much inside he tree there foot behalf-of stomach tree there horn he. 24. Pause-word slow, slow alive inside he, slow, slow grew-up he face was strong much he. 25. Behalf-of that is word old to-give two, three word face you; because it-thing here was it-thing two, three story to retell story old. 26. And-then went he toward face cave San Lucas so-that is-able chased he pluralizer stones cave there with whip; 27. because when time old walk face stone like pluralizer domesticated animals them. 28. And-then when arrived he with pluralizer stone towards cross wood-it avocado, and finished sun and-then died he make sun, because negation exist sacred-it when born man call "fourteen

ta nicacu chaá nani "catorse fuerza". 29. Ta ntsihi rà ica, ra saani tsa ntsihi cuee yuú; cha nindoo cuee yuú ca mancha vichi. 30. Titsi tu tichi ca ntsihi chaá iha, nania "chaá catorse fuerza". 31. Noho nicuu ndiha cuentu na yata, cachi cuee na tsanaha.

strength". 29. When died he there, and also completed-action died pluralizer stone; pause-word remained pluralizer stone there towards now. 30. Stomach wood-it avocado there died man sacred-one, call-him "man fourteen strength". 31. Here was end story them old, say pluralizer them completed-action ago.

Free Translation

1. With my humble pardon, I will give you some words about what happened very long ago, what the ancestors have said. 2. A man went to the mountains, he was going to the mountains. 3. He had been there for eight days when he saw the sacred tree there called tree madroño. 4. He went to it and made a hole in its side; 5. and he had intercourse with it. 6. After three or four months past he went and he saw that the tree was swollen. 7. And then he knew that the stomach of the tree was swollen; 8. the stomach of the tree was swollen, and he counted the months. 9. When the months were complete he went there; 10. and he made a hole in the tree's stomach and he saw a little man inside, it was a little man inside there. 11. And then he took that little man and he carried him home. 12. And when he arrived at his house the little man became alive; 13. and his name was "fourteen strengths". 14. And he was with him and his name was "the man of fourteen strengths". 15. And when he grew-up he was very strong; and he worshipped that tree very much. 16. That tree there was the one that he worshipped very much. 17. Where the tree was, it was not in an upright position; 18. and he went and he placed that tree in an upright position. 19. He embraced the tree and made it stand upright from it's

roots. 20. There it was put in place by him. 21. The tree grew as it was before; it would never dry-up, it would never die. 22. And this man his name is "fourteen strengths". 23. He worshipped the tree very much because he was born from its stomach. 24. And he grew slowly, slowly; and he became stronger and stronger. 25. These are some words from the ancestors that I am giving you, just a few words for a story or two. 26. And then he went to the cave in San Lucas so that he could chase the stones from the cave with a whip; 27. because in the old times, the stones were like domesticated animals of the people. 28. And then when he arrived at the "cross of the avocado tree" with the stones, the sun arose and it killed him because until then there wasn't a sun when the man called "fourteen strengths" was born. 29. When he died there, the stones also died; and they are still there until now. 30. Underneath the "cross of the avocado tree" the sacred-man died, the man called "man of fourteen strengths". 31. This is all to the story of long ago, the story the ancestors told.

Resumen

El investigador presenta un mito cosmogónico transcrito en Santa Cruz Mixtepec, Distrito de Juxtlahuaca, Oaxaca. Un hombre, después de haber tenido relaciones sexuales con un árbol, nota que el árbol se va abultando. Después nace del árbol sagrado un hombrecito llamado Catorce Fuerza. Este mito se relaciona con la escena del nacimiento del pueblo mixteco pintada en el folio 37 del *Códice Vindobonense*.