

HOW THE MOTHER OF COTTON WAS STOLEN

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This Ozumacín Chinantec myth relates a conflict between the practitioners of witchcraft of Ozumacín and those of Ojitlan over a mermaid named 'Mother of Cotton.' The Chinantec translated here as 'mother' also is used with the connotation of 'source,' and presumably this personage was responsible for there being cotton in the area. Tradition says there used to be cotton grown in the area, and this likely true. Oddly enough, the story teller imputes to this person powers of protection over the maize and beach crops and says nothing about cotton. The implicit insight that there once were more practitioners of witchcraft is correct.

The myth was dictated and recorded on magnetic tape in October, 1966. The informant was Perfecto Angulo Guatemala, a native of Ayotzintepec, Oaxaca.

TEXT

1. ha² čó¹ ho² ma¹kyá² he¹hwī² ma² hi¹ ča²hó².
2. sa³ma¹?a²e-i¹ ?nyí³ he¹hwī²ba¹. 3. ú³ ma¹?la² ko²

INTERLINEAR TRANSLATION

1. a Mother of Cotton was-lying town Ozumacín before. 2. not-was-she herself in town. 3. far-away was a lagoon wherein was-she.

FREE TRANSLATION

A long time ago a mermaid called the "Mother of Cotton" lived in a lagoon on the plains of Ozumacín. She saw to it that the corn yielded good

hmi.²ñü.² he.¹ ha.² ma¹?aē-i.¹. 4. ?e.² ha.² na² ma¹kwa³ fuerte
kwi.² kí?² za² he.¹ ma¹?aē-i.¹. 5. ?e.² ha.² na² ma¹za²kyá³ za²
hi²na¹ za² ča² he.¹hwī.² hyó?³. 6. ?i.² ma¹ku?² čó.¹ ho.² ?é.³.

7. ?e.² ha.² na² ma¹?la² kq.² hmi.² hü?². 8. he.¹ ha.²
ma¹?aē-i.¹ ma¹ha.¹ kq.² hmá² kyá?¹ zyé.³. 9. ?mī?³ fuerte hmá.².
10. ?e.² ha.² na² háe?³ za² ma²hi.¹, pero puro za² hi²na¹ba¹,
ma²hēn¹ kq.² če¹ ha³ ?é.³ čó.¹ ho.² hnaen³¹ ma²tē.² za².

11. hmá?² ga²náe-i.², ga²náe.² puro za² hi²na¹. 12. ga²náe-i.²
la²kyē² sa²?ya³¹ pero puro za² hi²na¹ba¹. 13. ča² hwē³ba¹
ga³hei¹ za² go.²?wī.^{n.1} kyá?¹ čó.¹ ho.². 14. ga³nae-i.³¹ he.¹ ha.²
ga³tē-i.². 15. ga³tē-i.². 16. hmá?² ha.² sa³ga³lí?² za² go.²?wí.¹.
17. ?e.² ha.² na² ma¹ ga³hnáe² na²hō.¹ ?ma² ?i.² na²tu³¹ ?ma².
18. ?e.² ha.² ?i.²¹ hñyu.² ka¹zye² za² he.¹ na²čē³¹ ?ma².

4. for that reason yielded much corn of people where existed-she.

5. for that reason went-to-get witches people there-are towns other.

6. these ate Mother of Cotton that.

7. then existed a lagoon big. 8. there was-in-it-she when-came a
rain with wind. 9. hard very rain. 10. then say people of Ozumacín,
but just witches, "let's-see once if it-isn't Mother of Cotton our carried
(by) people."

11. then went-they, went just witches. 12. went-they taking women
but just witches. 13. on the way found-they people of Ojitlán with
Mother of Cotton. 14. went-they where fought-they. 15. fought-they.
16. and did-not-win people of Ojitlán. 17. when it-dawned are-broken
trees and are-fallen tress. 17. is-hung scalps of people where are-split
trees.

crops, and in return for this, the practitioners of witchcraft in Ozumacín went
to surrounding towns to capture people for her to eat.

One day, when the Mother of Cotton was in her lagoon, there arose a
heavy storm with driving wind and rain, the witches in Ozumacín said to each
other, "let's see if this doesn't mean that someone is carrying off our Mother
of Cotton."

Then they went to see. All of them, both men and women who knew how
to do witchcraft, went. No one else was allowed to go. On the way they found
the practitioners of witchcraft from Ojitlán carrying away their Mother of
Cotton. Then there followed a great battle, which the Ojitlán witches lost.
When dawn came the battlefield was strewn with uprooted trees and broken
branches. Scalps hung from split trees.

19. hmá²² ha² na² háei²³ ga³të-i² čó¹ ho³. 20. na¹hæi³² kə² kə²læe²³. 21. na¹hæi³² he¹ ma¹ʔæe-i¹ ča¹ hmi² ɲü². 22. ʔe² ha² za²kyá-i² bí²² za² he¹hwí² hyó²³ ʔi² ku²².
 23. ha² na² ma¹ ga³hú² ga²čá²ga¹ mi²ga¹. 24. ka³mi²² la²ha²ga¹ ma¹ ga³zá-i². 25. ga³hú² za² hi²na²¹ ma²hi¹. 26. mo³sa³čá² ʔi² mo²lí²³ hɲyá²³. 27. hmá²² ha² na² ma²hë³² za² go²²wíⁿ¹. 28. ma²zá-i² ma²hú-i¹. 29. hmá²² ha² na² ha²ga¹ ye²náe² za² go²²wí². 30. ya²te³ ʔi² čó¹ ho² ʔé³. 31. ma¹lá-i¹ kə² ʔná-i¹ sa¹ɲyu², kə² ʔná-i¹ ma¹lá-i¹ sa¹ʔya³¹. 32. ʔnó¹ ta²²mí² ma¹lá-i¹ sa¹ɲyu². 33. ta² mī²zyei¹ ma¹lá-i¹ sa¹ʔya³¹. 34. ta² go²²wíⁿ¹ ta² ha³ba¹ ʔæe-i¹ ná². 35. ma¹ ya³²ēⁿ¹ he¹ ma¹ʔæe-i² ča¹ hmi²ɲü², hmá²¹ ga³la³kí²³ kə² te³² hmi²ɲü². 36. mo³sa³čá² hmi²ɲü² ha² ná² he¹ ha² kye² hmi² ga²hu¹ ná².

19. then, say-they, carried-they Mother of Cotton. 20. went-they-to leave (her) again. 21. went-they-to-leave her where had-been-she in lagoon. 22. then went-they-to-bring people towns other which eats-she.

23. then when had-died (Ozumacín witches) were-left-more, a-few-more. 24. a few thus finished-they-all. 25. died witches Ozumacín. 26. no-longer-are-there those who can-do witchcraft. 27. then were-watching people of Ojitlán. 28. Terminated-they-all, died-they-all. 29. then afterwards came people of Ojitlán. 30. carried-away-they Mother of Cotton that. 31. was-she one-half fish, one-half women. 32. piece bottom was fish. 33. towards head-her was woman. 34. in Ojitlán there is-she now. 35. when left-she where had-been-she in lagoon, then dried-up at-once lagoon. 36. no longer-exists lagoon that now there flows river Cajonos today.

The Ozumacín witches returned the mermaid to her original lagoon and afterwards went to various villages capturing people to feed to their Mother of Cotton.

As time passed, many of the practitioners of witchcraft in Ozumacín died off little by little, until finally only a few were left. Eventually these died, and there was no longer anyone left in Ozumacín who knew how to do witchcraft. Meanwhile, the witches of Ojitlán were observing all this. After all of the witches had died in Ozumacín, those from Ojitlán came and carried away the Mother of Cotton. She is still in Ojitlán to this day. When she left her lagoon, it dried up at once. The Cajonos River flows where her lagoon used to exist.