

8  
Dreams—their function in this community.

Only after analyzing the theory of the soul for the local Indians can be understood the importance of the dreams. They are not a form of expression of the subconscious. To a Tzeltal Indian it is a true form of action. It is the spirit which leaves the body during sleep and visit friends, has quarrels with enemies, fights to solve some conflict, and is wounded many times.

The proof of this spiritual activity is that upon awakening the man will suffer the aftereffects of the nightly activities and will remember in detail what went on.

During our stay we collected 41 dreams all of which are evidence of conflict. They were recorded while the informants were undergoing stress due to a threat of witchcraft or to an open quarrel which could lead to witchcraft even if not stated so yet by the witch.

The symbolism of the dreams is quite well known among the Tzeltals and in the case of a dream content difficult to interpret they will refer to curers or old men to find out the true meaning of the dream.

The most obvious symbol of danger in a dream is that of being attacked by an animal. Dreaming of an animal or of killing an animal is not bad omen. It means a victory over the evil forces. But encountering an animal and specially being brushed by it on a leg, or bitten, or pursued is enough to upset any Indian. That animal is, of course the nawal of a witch and by brushing, biting or "touching" the person it has harmed the soul or the flesh and bewitched the victim.

Dreams are a requisite to occupy certain positions such as that of a curer. The man who feels called to this practice has to dream first and receive instruction during his dream from a Saint or Virgin. One dream is not enough, usually 3 is the ideal number of dreams before a man starts curing. The following are dreams of curers:

- 1) Milo
- 2) Jacinto Montoya
- 3) Caralampio Solano .

Dreams as a requisite for curing figure largely in the ideal behavior of the people. Yet, we know of several cases of curers where the father of the curer was already a well known practitioner and taught his son the rudiments of the art. ( ex; Caralampio and Milo).

A dream may serve to announce a future disease to the dreamer or serve to resolve a conflict such as when the dreamer wins in a fight.

But more than that dreams are used by meiltatiles as a form of positive sanction. The entire content of them can be changed in the interpretation as the following case proves .

Pricio's dream in Comitán and subsequent interpretation.

Dream sequences are important to determine the future role of an individual in the hierarchy of supernatural power. They are the test to which a man is put. If the man is successful that means that he has really a powerful spirit, otherwise if he succumbs to temptations or fails in any enterprise this will eliminate him from the power structure.

Quote dreams.

Dreams when the house has not been fed and when the house is in the road of the meiltatiles.