Hueyapan – Life Under/With the Volcano
Ritual Landscape of a Nahua Community

RADOSLAV HLÚŠEK

Department of Ethnology and World Studies
Faculty of Arts, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava

In this paper the author deals with the problems of ritual landscape, agricultural cycle and rainmaking rituals that are associated with them and which are still carried out in Hueyapan, the Nahua village in the Highlands of Morelos situated on southern slopes of Popocatepetl volcano. He describes the orography of Hueyapan with special emphasis on Popocatepetl and the role the volcano plays in the life of this peasant community. He also deals with the space and its conceptualization in the notion of the people in Hueyapan and points out the importance of north as most of the hills and mountains of Hueyapan territory are situated on northern perimeter, from where, because of the mountains, the rains come. The paper also deals with the ritual specialists called rainmakers who are responsible for the rains and subsequent abundant harvest.

Key words: Hueyapan, Popocatepetl, agriculture cycle, ritual landscape, sacred precincts, rainmakers

General information

Hueyapan is a Nahua village situated in the northeastern corner of the state of Morelos on its borders with the state of Puebla and according to the Mexican federal system it belongs to the municipality of Tetela del Volcán. There are about 7000 inhabitants living in the community and especially the members of older generations still speak Náhuatl language1. The name of the village comes also from Náhuatl (as the majority of toponyms in Central Mexico where Náhuatl has been spoken predominantly; and even outside of Náhuatl speaking regions in Mesoamerica) and it means On a place of abundant water or Place of lots of water2. It reflects the environment in which Hueyapan is located and where, because of the presence of high mountains, it rains more than in any other parts of Central Mexico and springs and streams are common what is not usual in semidesert Mexican Altiplano.

The village lies in temperate zone with mild climate in so called Highlands of Morelos (Los Altos de Morelos) on the southern slopes of Popocatepetl volcano in average altitude of about 2300 m above sea level what means that the lowest parts of the village are situated in the altitude of about 2000 and the highest ones of about 2500 m above sea level. There are couple of

---

1 Even though the village is considered to be Indian because of the language and culture, the situation of Náhuatl language is getting worse and younger generations (I mean younger than 40 years of age) speak it very rarely and they do not even understand it very well. It is the result of bilingual education running in Mexico since the 1920s. Programs of language revitalization (like for example Náhuatl kindergarten) were introduced in the community but they do not bring expected results, most probably because people are ashamed to speak it (it is considered to be the sign of backwardness) and it is because even the people managing these programs do not speak Náhuatl well or if they do they use the language rarely and prefer to speak Spanish among themselves and in general as well.

2 Etymology of the word of Hueyapan consists of huey (big, large, also in meaning of abundance), all (water) and pan (on a place, on, in).
important hills surrounding the village but the most important mountain of this vertical world is the above mentioned volcano of Popocatepetl (5465 m³) situated about 10 km to the north of the village. Highlands of Morelos form a part of so called Trans-Mexican Volcanic Belt (Faja Volcánica Mexicana), the range of volcanic elevations which extends in west-east direction from Nayarit to Veracruz. It is about 1200 km long, from 20 to 150 km wide and it is situated on 19° of northern latitude (de la Cruz Reyna, 2009: 35-38). It means that this part of Mexico lies in a very seismic and volcanic area where earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are not exceptional. On the other hand as a result of volcanic activity this area has very fertile soil and it has been very densely populated since Pre-Hispanic times. Popocatepetl together with Iztaccihuatl (5230 m) situated to the north of it forms the so called Snowy Mountain Range (Sierra Nevada) and together with Pico de Orizaba (5610 m) that is located exactly to the east of Popocatepetl on the other side of the state of Puebla these three volcanos with perennial snow and glaciers on their tops represent the highest mountains in Mexico and whole Mesoamerica. It is natural that these astonishing landmarks turned into the sacred mountains worthy of worship for the inhabitants of Central Mexico and especially for those who live on their slopes (and Hueyapan is not any exception) with significant influence on the people, their subsistence and also on their religion and ritualism.

According to famous 16th century chronicle of Dominican friar Diego Durán (who lived in Hueyapan couple of years) The History of the Indies of New Spain⁴ Hueyapan was founded in 902 by the people from Xochimilco⁵ (Durán, 2006, Vol. 2: 21). The Aztecs

---

3 It is not easy to determine the altitude of Mexican mountains because various sources state various data and the difference among them is quiet distinct (even almost 100 m). The altitudes of 3 highest mountains of Mexico – Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl and Pico de Orizaba referred to in the text are taken from Broda, 2009a: 41.
4 The whole title in Spanish is Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e Islas de la Tierra firme (The History of the Indies of New Spain and of the Islands of Terra Firma).
5 The city-state situated in southern part of the Valley of Mexico on the southern bank of the Lake of Xochimilco. Today it forms a part of the capital Mexico City.
conquered the village at the beginning of 16th century and Spaniards came between 1522 and 1524 (Friedlander, 2006: 53). The Christianization of Hueyapan began with the Augustinians in 1534 but it was the Dominicans who left the most important influence on the field of missionary work and Catholicism. Dominicans came between 1561 and 1563 and stayed until 1784 when Hueyapan was secularized (Friedlander, 2006: 55).

The principal source of livelihood of the people in Hueyapan is agriculture and it is not any surprise in native (and not only native) Mesoamerica. It means that peasantry represents integral part of Hueyapan culture that is also reflected in their spiritual life and ritualism which is dealt with in the presented study. What makes the case of Hueyapan agriculture exceptional is the presence of very fertile soil which forms a large layer couple of meters (sometimes even 10 m) thick. It is given by volcanic activity of Popocatepetl which has covered the surrounding area by volcanic ash full of minerals since time immemorial. As an active volcano Popocatepetl (especially since 1994 when it woke up again and this situation has continued until present days) still exhales steam and sometimes it also produces smaller or larger eruptions. It means that living in the area under Popocatepetl has been risky but the risk of volcanic and seismic activity has been compensated and balanced out by fertile soil which has attracted Mesoamerican peasants since at least Preclassic period. It can be said without any exaggeration that living under Popocatepetl means also living with it. As such, Popocatepetl has been worthy of respect, reverence and worship and it was converted to the protector of the people which is respected but not feared.

Since the territory of Hueyapan is markedly vertical, the fields are situated mostly on the steep slopes of the hills and mountains around the village in the form of ubiquitous terraces. But even though there are lots of streams flowing down from the mountains and Popocatepetl volcano, it is not easy to lead the water to the fields and apart from rainy season the fields used to be dry because the streams flowed on the bottom of deep valleys and ravines. This problem was resolved in past decades by use of hosepipes that represent a very typical feature of Hueyapan in the present days and they can be seen everywhere. Thus the agricultural cycle which will be dealt with later is also influenced by this hosepipe system but as a millennial tradition this cycle is still mostly connected to the changing of wet and dry seasons and with the mountains which according to this tradition give water to the people and provoke the rains.

**Orography of Hueyapan**

Popocatepetl volcano is the most important mountain in Hueyapan territory. Its significance is so big that the people living in its surroundings gave it a special name and this name is known very well not only in Hueyapan but in all the villages under the volcano. Popocatepetl received the name of don Gregorio or don Goyo⁶ and as such it is considered to be alive and animate. The characteristic of being animate and alive is very typical for all mountains, not only for Popocatepetl, and it reflects the importance and meaning of them in traditional Mesoamerican popular religion. Following this line it would be better to talk about Popocatepetl as about him not it. And consequently it can be said the same about all mountains. But the position of Popocatepetl is exceptional and it is considered to be the Lord or King of all mountains who gives orders to all other hills and mountains. The massif of this volcano is divided into three substantial parts. The first one is called mountain (monte) and it is related to the forest which reaches the altitude of a little bit less than 4000 m above sea level. The second part called volcano (volcán) means the volcanic cone and the last and highest part is the crater (cráter). We should not forget that the word volcano (volcán) could also be written with capital at the beginning of the word because in general the name of The Volcano or He Volcano (El Volcán) stands for Popocatepetl as such and it is the synonym for don Gregorio/Goyo. On the southern slope (in the second part of the volcano) in the altitude of about 4000 m above sea level there is a cave called Divine Face of Popocatepetl (Divino rostro de Popocatepetl)⁷ which is the most important sacred and ritual place related to the rain and agricultural cycle. It is important not only for the people from Hueyapan but from all the communities on the southern slopes of the volcano (e.g. Tetela del

---

⁶ It is necessary to point out that Popocatepetl is not the only one who is known by another name referring to it as a person. For instance the neighbouring volcano Iztaçchuquitl perceived in Central Mexico as the wife or at least the woman partner of Popocatepetl is known as doria Rosita (sometimes Manuella or Teresa).

⁷ This sacred place is not the only sacred precinct on the slopes of Popocatepetl, but because it is situated on the southern slopes of the volcano, it means on Hueyapan side, it is important for the purposes of this case study. Apart from it there are couple of other sacred precincts, e.g. the so called Navel (El Ombligo, about 4200 m) or The Table (La Mesa, about 4800 m) on the eastern slopes of Popocatepetl in the state of Puebla (Juárez Becerril, 2009: 332-333).
Volcán. I will deal with it later, now I only mention that it is believed that Popocatépetl has got lots of water and it has substantial influence on the rain and rainy season and consequently on the ritualism related to the rainy season and agricultural cycle.

Popocatépetl, however, is not the only important mountain in the vertical world of Hueyapan community. Apart from it there are couple of other relevant hills and mountains which form a part of ritual space of Hueyapan. What is important, with only one exception, all of them are situated on the northern perimeter of Hueyapan territory. It is the result of the location of the village on the southern slopes of Popocatépetl and it is the reason why north is the most important cardinal point of that area. From the north the rains come and they come from there because the mountains and the volcano attracting the clouds are situated to the north of the village. For the villages situated on the other sides from these mountains (in the state of Puebla or Estado de México) different cardinal points are the bearers of this importance. There is one more relevant exception for the people of Hueyapan and other communities on the southern slopes of the volcano and it is the absence of another famous volcano – Iztaccíhuatl. These two volcanos appear almost always together as a couple in the myths and legends of the people of Mexican Altiplano. But this is not the case of Hueyapan. The reason is simple – Iztaccíhuatl is simply not visible because it is situated right to the north of Popocatépetl and if one wants to see it, he/she must climb up Popocatépetl or travel eastward or westward from the village. That is why Iztaccíhuatl is absent in Hueyapan myths, legends and it does not play any role in the rituals related to the agricultural cycle and to the rains in this community.

The above mentioned northern perimeter of Hueyapan territory consists of the following important hills from west to east: Chiguiquihuhtli/Chiconquihuhtli – Coatépetl – Quetzaltepetl – Popocatépetl – Monteclillo \(^8\). It is necessary to point out that Popocatépetl is situated to the north of Quetzaltepetl and if we prolong the imaginary line which connects these two mountains to the south, it will reach the main square of Hueyapan. Thus the ritual centre of the village (represented by the church of Saint Dominic) and two important mountains (including the most important) lie in one north-south line. There is only one hill situated in the southern perimeter of Hueyapan space which the inhabitants of the village mention in their stories. It is called Fat Hill (Cerro Gordo) and it is located on lowland of Morelos to the south-east of Hueyapan.

Fat Hill does not belong to the Hueyapan territory, on the other hand it represents a very distinct landmark on the southern perimeter. Since it is situated to the south of the village and in so called Hot Land (Tierra Caliente) it is not significant for the people of Hueyapan because their agricultural cycle and rainy season are associated with the north. This hill, however, plays a significant role in a legend which is commonly known in Hueyapan and was told to me many times. Briefly said this legend tells how Fat Hill and Popocatépetl as alive and animate persons were walking towards the middle of the world. Since Popocatépetl was lame and hobbling and could not walk fast, Fat Hill decided to have a rest and fell asleep for a while. But when he woke up Popocatépetl had already reached the centre of the world, it means the place where he stands until now. Fat Hill got angry and started to throw snakes and scorpions (typical animals of Hot Land) towards

\(^8\) And also from the east. It is because of the Gulf of Mexico, but even from there the rains mostly come through Popocatépetl.

\(^9\) Because of the volcano and other mountains which attract the clouds the rainy season usually lasts in Hueyapan and other villages of the area a month longer than in other parts of Central Mexico. There is semidesert climate in the same altitude but only about 20 km from Hueyapan.

\(^10\) Chiguiquihuhtli/Chiconquihuhtli means Seven Rains (chicone – seven, quihuitl – rain), Coatépetl which is also called Lookout (Mirador) means Hill of Serpent (coatl – serpent, tepetl – hill, mountain), Quetzaltepetl which is also called Hill of Bell (Cerro de la Campana) means Hill of Quetzal or Precious Hill (quetzalli – quetzal or something precious, tepetl – hill, mountain) and Popocatépetl means Smoking Mountain (popoca – to smoke, tepetl – hill, mountain). Monteclillo (Little Hill) does not bear a Náhuatl name. Another volcano mentioned above – Iztaccíhuatl means White Woman (iztac – white, cihuatl – woman).
Popocatepetl. They did not harm him because of the Cold Land (Tierra Fría) up there and the snakes and scorpions died of cold. Finally Popocatepetl threw a lightning to his opponent which broke Fat Hill into three parts. The legend does not only explain why Fat Hill consists of three parts but above all it points out that Popocatepetl is situated exactly in the centre of the world and because of this position he as the Lord or King reigns the world. And last but not least it also means that Hueyapan as such is also situated in the centre of the universe what corresponds with the typical Mesoamerican regional fragmentation and particularism according to which every community since pre-Hispanic times has considered itself to be the navel of the world. I finish this part of my case study very symbolically with another legend told to me in Hueyapan. This story is quite similar to the Aztec Legend of the Suns and especially to the part concerning the last era called Nahui Ollin – Earthquake Sun (or Movement). It says that the world will end in a great battle of the mountains, mainly volcanos.

**Space and religion**

After introduction of Catholicism to Central Mexico and all Mesoamerica by the Spaniards the well know process of religious syncretism occurred. This process, however, was not of one-way character but of mutual one. The syncretism of ancient Mesoamerican, and in our case Nahua religion and Catholicism should be understood as the process of „mesoamericanisation“ or even it is better to say „nahuatlisation“ of Catholicism and at the same time of Christianisation of native beliefs and sacred places and space (in our case the hills/mountains and shrines on their tops or slopes). One of the basic features of Mesoamerican religions is their territoriality (incorporated into native Catholicism) what means that they are closely connected to the natural but also cultural environment and space. Ancient rituals carried out on the places outside of the settlements were mostly associated with agriculture, agricultural cycle, space and landscape and as such they have been preserved in syncretic form until nowadays. It was these rituals that were crucial for the preservation of ancient beliefs during the Christianisation and as Johanna Broda points out,
ritualization in the process of Christianisation was a fundamental factor which enabled cultural reproduction of native ethnic groups in Mexico (Broda 2003, according to Báez-Jorge, 2009: 39).

As I mentioned above, since pre-Hispanic times the Nahuas of Central Mexico (but, of course, not only them) have carried out lots of their rituals outside of their ceremonial urban centres in landscape itself. The sacred precincts of natural character (hills, caves, lakes, springs, waterfalls, etc.) form the so called ritual landscape, it means the landscape transformed culturally and incorporated into cultural and social framework. The ritual landscape has connected political centres (represented first by great temples – pyramids, then by Catholic churches that replaced former temples) with rural and natural localities where shrines (later chapels or crosses) of lesser importance have been situated (Broda, 2001: 296). Those sacred precincts situated in the landscape have been associated with the cult of mountains and as such with the agricultural cycle and the rain. In other words the space of Mesoamerican Indians could be labeled as humanized. In such manner the centre and the periphery of every community has been connected in one unit by ritual bonds and even though the periphery has always been considered to be dangerous, unstable and feared, sacred precincts situated there enabled to incorporate the periphery into ritual landscape and cosmovision of the Indians11.

**Ritual landscape of Hueyapan**

All features of Mesoamerican native religions mentioned above can be found in the beliefs of the Nahuas of contemporary Hueyapan and the most important elements of Hueyapan ritual landscape are undoubtedly the hills and mountains, especially Popocatepetl volcano. All of these significant landmarks are considered to be alive and animate and because of that they are sacred and worthy of worship. Since they are situated in the northern perimeter of

11 To learn more about the problems of the centre and periphery see Sandstrom 1996.
Hueyapan territory, the cardinal point of north is the most important, but as it was already said, it is because of the position of the village towards the mountains, not because of the worship of cardinal points in general as it used to be in pre-Hispanic times. The mountains and hills are worshipped because people in Hueyapan believe that they contain water inside\(^\text{12}\). Since they are full of water it is necessary to make them release it towards the fields. This happens when the rituals of rainmaking are realized properly. These and other rituals have been carried out as the manifestation of the basic principle of Mesoamerican religions and it is the principle of reciprocity. Mesoamerican ancient deities were not worshipped because of pure love to them but because they were masters and lords of the natural powers (water, sun, etc.) which were necessary for living and survival of the people. Therefore the attitude of Mesoamerican native people to their gods was pragmatic and rituals were performed in order to make the gods help the people by releasing the powers they controlled in sufficient but not excessive measure. If Mesoamerican Indians wanted something from their gods, they were aware that first they had to give them something in return for their favour. Briefly said: „If I want something from you, I must give you something in order you give me what I need.“ It can happen only by means of rituals and these ongoing and preserved rituals enabled cultural reproduction of native people as it was mentioned above. The principle of reciprocity was incorporated into Catholicism in the process of syncretism and has preserved until nowadays. The rituals carried out today on the hills of Hueyapan territory are a clear demonstration of this principle, only the ancient gods were substituted by the Christian god, Virgin Mary and saints. But this substitution occurred only to a certain extent and pre-Hispanic spirits or even gods (like god of water Tlaloc) are still present in syncretic form in these rituals.

The ancient sacred precincts in the mountains (top of the hills, caves, springs, etc.) were incorporated into the Catholicism and „baptized“ by it. It was not

---

\(^{12}\) Not all of them but most of them. For instance the only hill in Hueyapan territory which is considered to be dry and without water is Coatepec. Instead of water this hill has serpents and hail which, on the contrary, are harmful to the fields and crops.
easy to build Catholic chapels on such remote places and that is the reason why they were at least „baptized“ by the erection of crosses. As the consequence of this habit the crosses can be found on the tops of almost all significant hills and mountains (not only) in Central Mexico and Hueyapan is not an exception. Couple of crosses are situated on the top of almost every hill but dozens of them can be found on the most important ones. These crosses form sacred precincts and it is believed that each cross symbolizes a spring of water. It is not a surprise that the crosses are directed to where the water should flow, it means to the fields or village. Sacred precincts are also called altars of petition (altares de petición) because rituals of rainmaking are performed there. It is not polite to enter such place without any offering to the saints, Virgin Mary, god, spirits, etc. who reside there but mainly the particular rituals of rainmaking require a rich offering in the form of flowers, food, drinks or clothes or shoes. The principle of reciprocity must be kept in all circumstances. There are three large altars of petition in Hueyapan territory. One is located on the top of Chigüiniquihuitl, another on Quetzaltepetl and the most important on the slope of Popocatepetl in its part called volcano, in the cave of Divine Face of Popocatepetl. Because Chigüiniquihuitl is situated on the border of Hueyapan and Alpanoacan (state of Puebla) and it is visited also by the people from Tetela del Volcán, its sacred precinct is important not only for Hueyapan but for all these three communities, especially for Alpanoacan. It can be demonstrated on the orientation of the crosses as most of them are directed towards Alpanoacan, the rest towards Hueyapan and Tetela del Volcán.

The rituals of rainmaking carried out at these places are closely associated with the agricultural cycle, it means with the seeding and harvest. This cycle can be understood both in space and time. By means of rain it connects the village, fields and the mountains (and the supernatural beings and powers, as well) in space, but this cycle is more important in the matter of time. The rainy season in Central Mexico usually begins at the beginning of June and ends in September. Thus the year is divided into two parts (rainy and dry season) and rituals associated with rainmaking reflect this division. Rainmaking rituals have been carried out before and after the rainy season and in the process of Christianisation these rituals were incorporated into Catholicism. For example when we take the Aztec the most important ones were carried out in the month of 4 huey tozotli (literally long fasting; at the turn of April and May) of 365-day calendar, it means more or less one month before the beginning of the rainy season (time to prepare the fields for seeding). The last one took place in the month of 13 tepellhuitl (literally celebration of the mountains; October) (Broda, 2009b: 60-61), it means after the harvest. These two breakpoints were incorporated into Catholicism in the form of the feast days of the Day of the Cross (May 3) and the Day of the Dead (November 1-2) and that is why these two feast days demarcate the agricultural cycle in Central Mexico, including Hueyapan. On the Day of the Cross the rituals associated with opening of the water (abrir agua) are carried out in above mentioned sacred precincts and on the Day of the Dead rituals of closing of the water (cerrar agua) are performed there. The Day of the Cross rituals consist of the petition and asking for water and good crop, the Day of the Dead rituals consist of acknowledgement for the water and good harvest and neither of them can be carried out without rich offerings in order to keep the principle of reciprocity.

**Popocatepetl in ritual landscape of Hueyapan**

Popocatepetl volcano is the most distinct and astonishing landmark in the territory of Hueyapan and, of course, not only of Hueyapan but of all villages and towns situated to the south of the volcano. As such the overall ritual landscape of the area is organized around this mountain and even though Popocatepetl lies on the border of it, it represents its actual centre according to the conceptions of native people living under. This volcano personified as don Gregorio/ Goyo is considered to be alive and animate (as all mountains and hills) and sometimes it, or better to say he, can be seen up there as an old man dressed in rags and walking in volcanic ash as it was told to me many times. According to the legend mentioned above Popocatepetl is situated in the centre of the world that is why it/he is considered to be the Lord or King of the world. From above it/he controls the weather and rain and protects the people who do not see it/him as a danger but, on the contrary, as their protector and benefactor. However, the omnipresent principle of reciprocity cannot be forgotten. In order Popocatepetl could protect the people and release the water in sufficient measure, the people of Hueyapan must give him offerings by means of rituals which take place in the above mentioned cave called Divine Face of Popocatepetl situated on southern slopes of

---

13 As well as for Tlalmimilulpan, Ocoxtaltepec (both in the state of Morelos) and Ecatzingo (state of Estado de México).
the volcano in the altitude of about 4000 m above sea level. It is the most important altar of petition of Hueyapan and other villages under the volcano. Rituals carried out there begin around the Day of the Cross (May 3; opening of the water) and end around the Day of the Dead (November 1-2\textsuperscript{14}; closing of the water) and these two points demarcate the agricultural cycle of Hueyapan in the course of year\textsuperscript{15}. To get there requires great physical effort because although nowadays the major part of the journey is realized in 4x4 off-road cars, there is still lots of walking left in extreme conditions and weather and it is necessary to carry all the offerings which are plenty and heavy. It usually takes all day from very early in the morning (at about four o’clock or earlier) to the late evening (sometimes almost midnight). It also represents a kind of procession and pilgrimage which connects the village (centre) with the cave (periphery), it means the place where people reside with the place where a supernatural being and their protector resides. The Divine Face of Popocatepetl is considered to be the residence of don Gregorio/Goyo and according to common conception there is the Throne of him in the cave. People believe that it is the Place of Abundance full of seeds hidden in the sand of the cave which they are used to call Tlaloc or Tlalocan what refers to the ancient believe in the Nahua god of rain and his paradise. As I also heard many times, Popocatepetl is connected to the sea, it means to the symbol of fertility par excellence, what again refers to pre-Hispanic cosmovision according to which the mountains (e.g. Ajusco on the southern border of Valley of Mexico) were connected to the sea (Broda, 2009a: 47). The crosses situated in the cave are directed to where the people want the water to flow, it means to the south – to the fields of Hueyapan.

\textsuperscript{14} This is a general duration of the Day of the Dead. In particular it depends on each locality and e.g. in Hueyapan this feast day lasts from October 27 to November 1.

\textsuperscript{15} Of, course, it depends on particular rainy season, especially in the case of rituals performed as the thanks for the rain and good harvest at the end of agricultural cycle. In 2014, when I participated in this ritual in Divine Face of Popocatepetl, it took place until the end of November, because in that year the rainy season lasted for such a long time.
Coming to the end of my description and analysis of ritual landscape of Hueyapan dominated by Popocatepetl it is appropriate to mention explicitly the people who are responsible for the rituals carried out in the Divine Face of Popocatepetl and other sacred precincts. In Hueyapan these ritual specialists are called tiemperos (those who work with the weather) or pedidores de lluvia (rainmakers) in Spanish and in Náhuatl quiotlazquez (those who take a shortcut of the rain) and their task is to secure rains and good crop by means of properly performed rituals. As they (and people around them) say, they work up there for the community and it is not an easy work. That is the reason why some of them sometimes refuse to become rainmak ers. But as time goes by, they mostly accept this request. The question is how one can become a rainmaker. According to themselves, the inhabitants of Hueyapan and to the literature it can mostly happen by the strike of lightning. If someone is struck by the lightning and survives, it is the sign that he/she was chosen by supernatural beings (don Gregorio/Goyo, spirits, saints, Virgin Mary or a god) and he/she should obey their call and become a rainmaker. The souls or spirits of those who do not survive the strike of the lightning go up to the volcano from where they also work with the weather for the welfare of the community. Another way how to become a rainmaker is by means of dreams. In such case the above mentioned supernatural beings come to the chosen one in his/her dreams and announce his/her mission to him/her. Dreams and dreaming in general are one of the most important features of being a rainmaker and not only in Hueyapan. The reason is that exactly in dreams the rainmakers are instructed by supernatural beings where and when exactly to go to perform the ritual, what to take as an offering, etc. It means they must learn how to remember the content of their dreams in order to be able to fulfill the demands of the master of particular altar of petition they want to or they have to visit. Using other words, the rainmakers live not only in our normal world but also in the world of dreams and visions in which they work for the welfare of their communities.

**Conclusion**

Because of Popocatepetl volcano which is considered to stand in the centre of the world the inhabitants of Hueyapan itself consider their village to be the navel of the world. Popocatepetl dominates the territory of this community and undoubtedly is the most important mountain situated there. The landscape, especially the hills (and also the streams and springs) are perceived as sacred and as such they form what, according to Broda, is called the ritual landscape. This landscape has been incorporated into beliefs and religion of Hueyapan since pre-Hispanic times and even during the process of Christianisation this feature of Mesoamerican religion (and the reciprocity, too) did not disappear. On the contrary, in the process of syncretism it was incorporated into Catholicism and rituals carried out in sacred precincts (altars of petition) have been preserved in syncretic form until nowadays. These rituals are closely connected to the agricultural cycle because hills and mountains are understood as the sources of water and rain. Overwhelming majority of the hills of Hueyapan territory are located in the northern perimeter of this territory and because of that almost all rains come from the north. It is the reason why the cardinal point of the north is considered to be the most important one, the source of water and the symbol of good harvest, on the contrary the south is perceived as dry and infertile. Belief associated with the mountains as the source of water and agricultural cycle is part of the millennial religious tradition which remained in existence even in spite of the introduction of Catholicism by the Spaniards in 16th century. It may seem paradoxical that nowadays this tradition is getting closer to its extinction step by step even though there is no ecclesiastical nor political pressure exerted on religion, spirituality and ritualism of native communities. It is caused by modern era which has endangered this tradition during the past two decades more than almost five hundred years of the presence of Catholicism in Mesoamerica. As the old people in Hueyapan told me many times, especially young people (but not only them) do not believe in mountains and rituals anymore or they are losing this belief, everything is changing now and even the rains started to come also from the dry and infertile south which is not perceived as a good sign.

16 Etymology of this word consists of quiuhtl (rain), otlaza (to take a shortcut) and queh/queh (substantive suffix in plural meaning the persons who do the verb, in this case who take a shortcut).

17 Because there is no place here to describe the process of rainmaking rituals which are carried out by rainmakers of Hueyapan and other communities and this case study does not deal with them particularly, I recommend the reader an excellent ethnography by Mexican anthropologist Julio Glockner called *Así en el cielo como en la tierra. Pedidos de lluvia del volcan* (Glockner 2000) which deals with these problems in Tetela del Volcán.

18 See References.
REFERENCES:


