

Tlahuelpuchi: Aztec Vampire Witch

By Mari Wells, www.mariwells.wordpress.com

Most of the Aztec culture was destroyed when Spain invaded Mexico. The religious conquest of the Roman Catholic Church assisted in ending the Aztec's beliefs. The goddess remained, but was slightly transformed to fit the popular imagination of witches. The Spanish people called them "brujas," meaning witch, but the Nahuatl speaking descendants of the Aztecs called them *Tlahuelpuchi* – the blood-sucking witch or Tlaciques.

What Is a Tlahuelpuchi?

Tlahuelpuchi, usually female, was believed to possess powers enabling them to shape-shift into several animals, mostly turkeys or buzzards, but also fleas, cats, dogs, and a corpse candle. Tlahuelpuchi would attack and suck the blood of infants, the most favored delicacy. On rare occasions, she would also feed upon children or adults.

These witches were able to live incognito in their villages; for this reason they become objects of fear, especially among couples with infants. Tlahuelpuchi form pacts amongst themselves to not trespass on another's territory, as it's hard for one to stay hidden in her community, keeping two hidden would be impossible. Also a vampire who enters a community and leaves after the kill isn't as cautious as one who remains in the community.

The Tlahuelpuchi was born a witch, which was a chance condition. She had no control over the situation, which lasted all her life, and was unable to pass it to her children. There wasn't a way to tell if she was a witch until she reached puberty. The power to shape-shift came with the first menstruation. At this time, the young witch also began to crave human blood.

Her family would soon know her condition and try to hide it out of fear. A witch could kill anyone who knew



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or could reveal her secret, although she wouldn't harm her relatives in other circumstances. If any family member killed her, they will carry the curse in their blood and pass it on to their daughter. Tlahuelpuchi's blood cravings would happen once a month; some would require blood up to four times a month.

The Tlahuelpuchi had hypnotic powers too; they could cause people to walk to high places and jump, causing them to commit suicide. Sometimes she attacked chil-