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CANTARES MEXICANOS

Songs of the Aztecs

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Translated from the Nahuatl,

with an Introduction and Commentary,

by JOHN BIERHORST

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Preface

It would be too much to claim that a text so elusive as the *Cantares mexicanos*, having resisted translation for four hundred years, had suddenly been captured in English. The most that can be said is that the outward appearance of a translation has been achieved and is now ready for the appraisal of historians, linguists, anthropologists, and students of literature. To assist in the process, the bilingual text is accompanied by a General Introduction describing the basic interpretive approach, and a detailed, somewhat more adventurous Commentary treating each of the ninety-one songs, or "cantares." For the convenience of linguists, an additional volume is being published simultaneously, entitled *A Nahuatl-English Dictionary and Concordance to the 'Cantares Mexicanos.'* This companion work includes an analytic transcription, which serves as the critical text, and a skeleton grammar.

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A Note on Orthography

Although Classical Nahuatl lacks a standard orthography, there has been a tendency in this century to prefer what may be called a *modernized Franciscan* method, eliminating most or all glottal stops and ignoring the lengthened vowel. (The glottal stops that are customarily retained are those that fall between like vowels, as in *ehecatl* or *ahahuiya*, with the stop represented by the letter *h*.) In order to adjust the spelling to modern Spanish, the old-style *ç* becomes *z*, *ua* or *oa* (pronounced *wa* as in the English word "watt") becomes *hua*, *ue* and *ui* become *hue* and *hui*, and *qua* (as in "quad") becomes *cua*. Single consonants have approximately the same values as in English except that *x* is pronounced *sh*, and *z* has the sound of the *s* in "simple." The combination *tl*, whether at the beginning or end of a syllable, is pronounced with a single sound approximately like the *tl* in the English word "atlas" (not like the *tle* in "battle"). Vowels, roughly speaking, have the usual continental sounds (*ah*, *eh*, *ee*, *oh*, *oo*)—but the old Franciscan *u* has been discarded in favor of an allophonic *o*, which may have either a sound close to *oh* or a sound approaching *oo*. This, in brief, is the method that has here been used whenever Nahuatl words are introduced casually or given without reference to a specific text.

The early Franciscans did record a number of glottal stops and even an occasional long vowel. But such hints were insufficient to permit an orthography in which these features are systematically recognized. The first to suggest that a system might be possible was the Jesuit grammarian Antonio Rincón, author of the *Arte mexicana*, published in 1595. Rincón proposed that all unmarked vowels be regarded as short, with certain diacritical marks to signal the presence of long vowels, "medium" vowels, and glottal stops. Although he laid down rules and gave various examples, his system was not elaborated until the *Arte de la lengua mexicana* of 1645, prepared by another Jesuit, Horacio Carochi. In attempting to apply Rincón's ideas to a broad range of textual material, Carochi found it necessary

to make certain changes and to introduce a symbol for the short vowel, leaving a residue of unmarked vowels that remain ambiguous. In this work, any system based on Rincón or Carochi will be referred to as *Jesuit* orthography.

The phonological work of Rincón and Carochi was halfheartedly kept alive through the eighteenth century by the Jesuit writers Francisco Javier Clavijero and Ignacio Paredes. All but defunct, it enjoyed a revival in 1975 in the Nahuatl-English grammar of J. Richard Andrews, who, harking back to Rincón, took the bold step of treating Jesuit orthography as an unambiguous system in which all vowels become either long or short and all glottal stops are presumably accounted for. To fill in the gaps, Andrews borrowed phonological data from modern Nahuatl dialects. His example, without the borrowing, was followed in a subsequent Nahuatl-French grammar written by Michel Launey and, with considerable borrowing, is followed again in Frances Karttunen's *Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl*.

In the present work, wherever Jesuit orthography is used, only those long vowels that are attested in sources written no later than the mid-1600's have been marked, and it is given as a general rule that unmarked vowels (though most are in fact believed to be short) carry no information with regard to length. Likewise, many debatable glottal stops have been omitted, especially in frequentatives and in loanwords from Spanish.

With the understanding that it is neither unambiguous nor infallible, Jesuit orthography is here used merely as a diagnostic tool; and in the particular adaptation described immediately above, it will be called *modernized Jesuit* to distinguish it from other, similar orthographies. For details regarding the ambiguity of Jesuit orthography, see sections 1.1, 1.5, 1.6–1.8, 2.1, and 9.2 of the Grammatical Notes in Bierhorst, *A Nahuatl-English Dictionary*.

When quoting old texts it is best to avoid making editorial changes, regardless of inconsistencies, obscurities, and even outright errors. Hence most quotations will be given in unmodified, or *paleographic*, orthography.

When taking live texts from the lips of native informants, it is possible to use a *phonemic* orthography, which more or less accurately conveys the sounds of the spoken language. Some Nahuatl students, especially those who have worked with modern Nahuatl, believe that the Jesuit system mentioned above can be reduced to phonemic orthography, which in turn can be applied to sixteenth-century texts. To a large extent this is no doubt true. Nevertheless, phonemic orthography will here be used only on the rarest occasions.

Evidently the *Cantares mexicanos* is a Jesuit copy of a Franciscan original, or originals, now lost. In the process of copying, the scribe appears to have partially converted the old Franciscan spellings to the newer method. The

result, though beautifully penned, is an orthographic mélange that requires careful study if textual nuances are not to be overlooked.

In the following pages, wherever Nahuatl appears, it will usually be clear which orthographic system is being used. If it is not clear, the system will be mentioned by name. Further particulars regarding Nahuatl pronunciation, orthography, and paleography will be found in the works by Andrews, Launey, Langacker, and Newman cited in the Bibliography. The entire subject, however, awaits careful monographic treatment.

PART ONE

General Introduction

Prologue

Since its rediscovery in the mid-nineteenth century, the codex *Cantares Mexicanos* has come to be recognized as the chief source of Aztec poetry and one of the monuments of American Indian literature. Ideas about what it might contain have been disseminated in several languages, even popularized, and during the past hundred years no less than three serious attempts have been made at decipherment. Although two of these efforts were to have resulted in complete editions, in each case the investigator died before the work could be finished. The edition in hand, therefore, is the first to offer a translation of the entire manuscript.

Over the years a tradition has gradually been established that views the *Cantares* as a poets' miscellany, studded with lyrics composed by famous kings. Such a tradition appears to have antecedents in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writings of two Aztec commentators, the anonymous *Cantares* glossator and the historian Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl. Since the present study breaks with this tradition, it may be useful to summarize its principal findings at the outset. These points will be elaborated in the thirteen chapters that follow, with the demonstration saved for the Translation and its Commentary, supported as far as possible by the Dictionary-Concordance (published separately). The findings in brief are these:

The ninety-one songs in the *Cantares*, without exception, belong to a single genre, which flourished during the third quarter of the sixteenth century. *Netotiliztli* (or dance associated with worldly entertainment) is the native name that appears to have been applied to the genre in its entirety. But for lack of certainty on this point, and for the sake of convenience, I have chosen to designate it by the term "ghost songs."

Basically, the Aztec ghost song may be described as a musical performance in which warrior-singers summon the ghosts of ancestors in order to swell their ranks and overwhelm their enemies. In the more elaborate

examples the full ritual seems to have assumed the proportions of a mock battle, where singing, dancing, and drumming were equated with martial deeds. In response to the music, ghost warriors from paradise, led by ancestor kings, supposedly came "scattering," "raining," "flying," or "whirling" to earth in the form of flowers or birds, reminiscent of the well-known *volador*, or "flier," dance, still being reported from various parts of Mexico and Guatemala. Indeed, comparison with this acrobatic ritual, in which the participants literally whirl to earth dressed as birds, to the accompaniment of music, suggests that the mysterious *volador* may be explained by reference to the *Cantares*, and that songs of the *Cantares* type may be intellectualized manifestations of a once-widespread ghost cult.

The *Cantares* itself, however, is limited to songs belonging to the city-state of Mexico, or to Mexico and its close ally, Azcapotzalco. In many of the songs, Mexico's traditional enemies, especially Tlaxcala, Huexotzinco, and Chalco, are humiliated, giving rise to such subgenres as Tlaxcaltecayotl (Tlaxcalan pieces), Huexotzincayotl (Huexotzincan pieces), and Chalcayotl (Chalcan pieces). Songs of this type often commemorate real battles.

Although it is possible that a few of the songs in the *Cantares* manuscript were composed before the Conquest, by far the greater number belong to the post-Conquest period. These deal mainly with the Conquest itself or its aftermath, preserving all the old imagery now adapted to the crisis at hand. Waves of incoming Mexican revenants, it is hoped, will establish a paradise on earth in which Mexicans, while embracing Christianity, will enjoy superiority over Spanish colonists or at least rise to equal status. The principal scapegoats turn out to be the Tlaxcalans, the Huexotzincans, and the Chalcans, who joined with Cortés in the siege of Mexico and in fact made victory possible for the Spaniards. We are thus confronted with the evidence for a Mexican revitalization movement not otherwise documented in sixteenth-century writings.

The content of this movement was hidden from missionaries and even from younger, acculturated Aztecs—just as it has been hidden from modern investigators—by virtue of its having been coded in a diction accessible only to Indian conservatives. This special language is neither hermetic nor spontaneous, but rigidly technical, calculated to unfold a series of coercive imprecations in some cases, and to work an argument through to its solution in others. When the Aztec poet sings, "From heaven, ah, come good flowers, good songs," he is not indulging in mere whimsy. Ghost warriors are being summoned by means of music, and as the singer intones their praises, they themselves, metonymically speaking, become the songs, or "flowers," emanating from the sky—which, if I have read native theory correctly, is the source of music. Simply put, the meaning is "Ghost warriors are descending from heaven."

Unfortunately, for us, the *Cantares* is doubly obscured: first, by the remoteness of Classical Nahuatl, which still eludes mastery even for the best specialists; and second, by the poetic diction mentioned above. Like other esoteric idioms, however, the language of the *Cantares* is susceptible of decipherment, assuming that enough texts are available. Initially tentative, based on a sampling, the decipherment becomes presentable if it can be applied to further texts and yield a coherent reading. This, in sum, is the method that has been applied; and the texts provided by the *Cantares* have been found more than ample.

Because there is so much here that is novel, even if some of it might have been predicted, I have chosen to arrange the thirteen chapters of this General Introduction in the form of an argument, rather than try to organize the findings into a straightforward history of the Cantares movement. The sequence begins, therefore, with an examination of the manuscript (Chapter One), followed by an attempt to show how it should be read (Chapters Two–Five). By Chapter Six, the material is ready to be placed in historical context and treated as evidence of a sociological phenomenon (Chapter Seven). The crucial question of dating the songs (Chapter Twelve) is saved until yet further aspects of the argument have been adduced. Finally, Chapter Thirteen surveys the four hundred years of Aztec poetry study, stripping away, one hopes, whatever myths and scholarly encrustations might remain to prevent the *Cantares* from yielding a meaningful translation. It must be made clear, however, that the result is no more than a theory that I believe to be consistent with the data. Future work in Nahuatl linguistics, continued historical research, and more study of the *Cantares* itself will undoubtedly make for improvements.

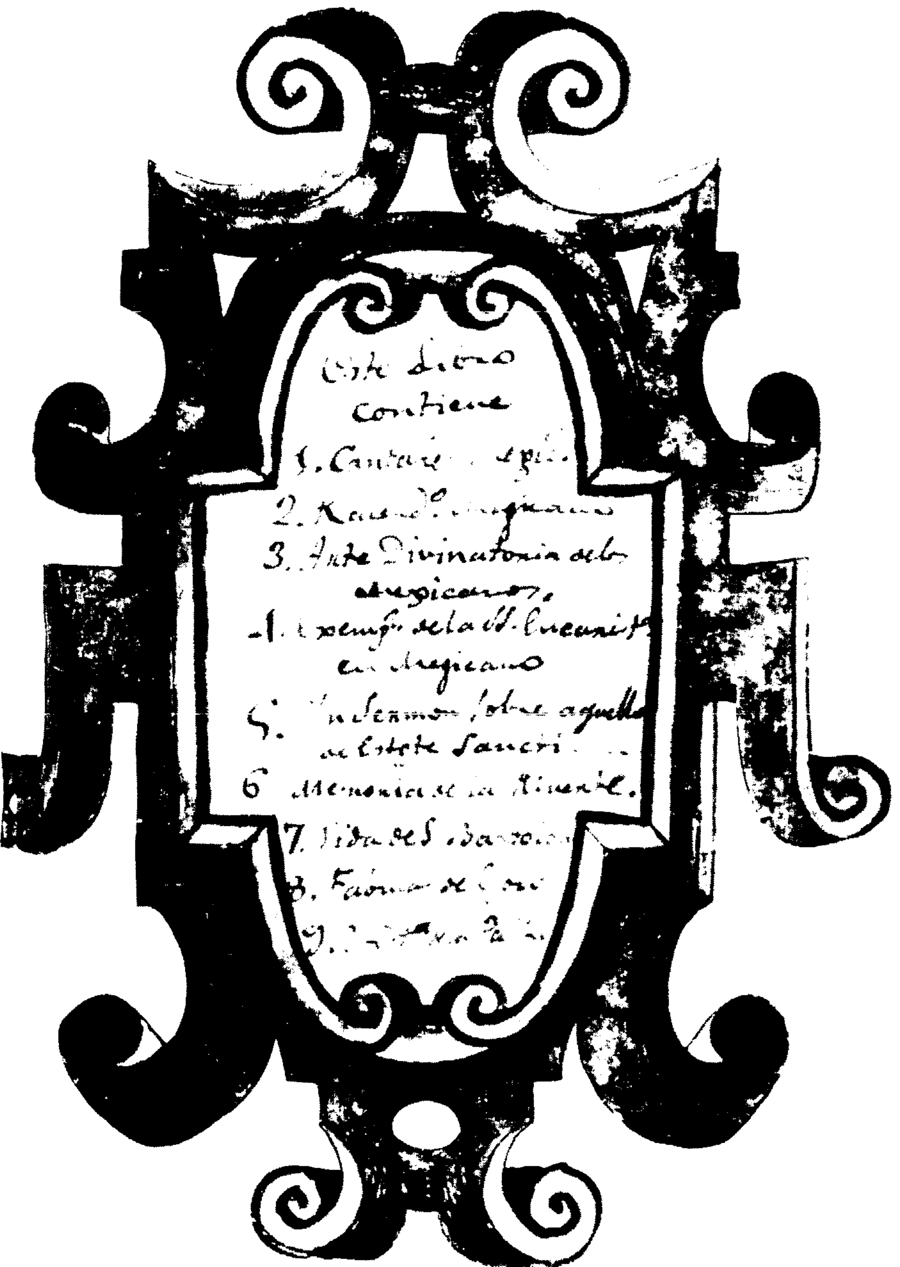

Fig. 1. Contents page, MS 1628 bis

CHAPTER I

The Manuscript

The *Cantares mexicanos* occurs as entry no. 1 in a bound volume of miscellaneous Nahuatl and Spanish manuscript items now preserved as MS 1628 bis at the Biblioteca Nacional in Mexico City. The book opens with a contents page carrying this inscription in a penman's cartouche:

Este Libro
Contiene
1. Cantares Mexič.
2. Kalend.º Mejicano
3. Arte Divinatoria de los
Mexicanos.
4. Exemp̄. de la SS. Eucarist.ª
en Mejicano
5. Vn Sermon sobre aquello
ac *Estote Sancti* . . . .
6. Memoria de la Muerte.
7. Vida de S. Bartolo-
8. Fabulas de Esopo
9. Hist.ª de la Pasion

Despite the Spanish titles, almost all the material in MS 1628 bis, including the *Cantares mexicanos*, is in "Mexican," or Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs.

Dating the Manuscript

Two of the above-listed items, the *Kalendario* and the *Arte divinatoria*, have been convincingly attributed to the Franciscan linguist-ethnographer Bernardino de Sahagún (1499?–1590), but there has been some confusion whether the MS 1628-bis texts are those prepared under the supervision

of Sahagún himself or merely contemporary copies, or perhaps even seventeenth-century copies.[1]

As a first step toward dating the manuscript, it should be noted that the entire book, with the exception of a few pages, is in a single hand, more fluent in the Spanish than in the Nahuatl, usually meticulous, sometimes hasty, but invariably Italian and distinguished by numerous peculiarities. Although several scribes may have been involved, the overall uniformity suggests a single project in a single setting. I will refer to this script as hand A (see Fig. 2). And since the Prologue to the *Arte divinatoria* (old folio 101, hand A) mentions "este [año] de 1585," the book as a whole must be dated no earlier.[2]

The *Cantares*, which occupies folios 1–85r, is in hand A up through 79v, with its remaining six folios in a bastard script that awkwardly imitates hand A (see Fig. 3). These additional folios begin with the heading D97 ANOS, presumably a truncated hybrid of MDXCVII and 1597.[3] The folios in question are clearly an insertion, not a continuation of the preceding material. As such, they would appear to postdate hand A, indicating that hand A is earlier, or at least no later, than 1597.

Aside from the contents page, the only other significant deviation from hand A occurs in the middle of the *Arte divinatoria*, where for two folios the hand-A scribe was spelled by an equally competent colleague, whose Italian script leans slightly toward the style known as *cortesana*.

That the project was carried out in a Jesuit milieu is implied by occasional *agudo* and *saltillo* markings, as prescribed by the Jesuit grammarian Antonio del Rincón, and by the presence of Jesuit parables in the discourse on the Eucharist.[4] If, as one investigator has suggested, the Sahagúntine *Kalendario* shows signs of tampering,[5] then it may be surmised that the *Kalendario* archetype, along with other materials no doubt, passed into Jesuit hands after Sahagún's death. Thus the early or mid-1590's would appear to be the most likely time for the labors of the hand-A scribe, or scribes, whose gracefully executed copies were finally assembled, perhaps, in 1597.

As mentioned above, the contents page is in yet a different script, as are the folio numbers in the upper right-hand corners. Whether these were added in 1597 or at some later date is a question that must here remain unanswered. It should also be noted that the slightly divergent script of the *Historia de la pasión* might conceivably have been penned at a different time; and it is curious that the *Historia* switches from the Rincónian saltillo marker to the grave accent usually associated with post-Rincónian orthography. Such problems do not necessarily discredit the dating scheme offered above, but they do suggest—at least—that the final portion of MS 1628 bis could be later than 1597.

The Lost Originals

On close inspection the *Cantares* appears to wear its Jesuit orthography rather loosely, with traces of earlier Franciscan methods still showing through. At various points the scribe makes the transition obvious by writing a word or a character in the new style, while preserving the old reading directly above it or off to one side. Clearly the *Cantares* is a copy of earlier material now lost.

Although the formative history of the collection cannot be reconstructed with certainty, the manuscript as it survives is rich in clues: evidently the songs were taken from the lips of native informants during the 1550's, 1560's, and 1570's (with one or two songs as late as the 1580's); some appear to have been collected singly, and others in batches; the collector was an acculturated Indian, probably in the service of Sahagún; over the years he may have recopied at least some of the texts, adding explanatory headings and occasional glosses; some of the work seems to have been done in Azcapotzalco, the rest in Mexico City; possibly the collector was the well-known Indian writer and political leader Antonio Valeriano; or, just as likely, several collectors were involved, including Valeriano.

The dating of the songs will be discussed in Chapter Twelve. As for the collection having been made piecemeal (and never really organized), this is apparent from the numerous stops and starts in the manuscript. The phrase *nican pehua* ("Here begins"), a usual formula for starting a manuscript, occurs on folios 7, 15, 16v, 26v, 31v, 37v, 39v, 41, 46, and 62v. A terminal "IHS" appears on folio 7; folios 52v and 82v each have a "Finis"; and folio 78v has a "Finis Laus Deo."

On folio 6 the collector includes this interesting comment of his own (in Spanish):

> Old songs of the Otomi Indians, which they used to sing at feasts and marriages, translated into the Mexican language, metaphorical images that they used to utter always capturing the substance and soul of song, as Your Reverence will understand and better than I with my meager talent, and such that they proceeded with considerable style and elegance, for Your Reverence to use and insert at the convenience of your leisure, being so good an expert as Your Reverence is.

Leaving till later the question whether these songs are Otomi, we may note the obsequious tone and the grammatical error (*ellas* for *ellos*), and infer that the writer is a bilingual Indian in the service of a white master. That the master might have been Sahagún is suggested by the imputation of expertise in the Nahuatl language and an interest in "metaphorical images."[6] If Sahagún is meant, and if he did not "use and insert" these songs in his *Historia general*, it could well be that he doubted their antiquity. The *Historia general* was not designed to include post-Conquest ethnography.

Fig. 2. Page from the "hand A" *Cantares* (fol. 26v)

Fig. 3. Page from the "bastard script" *Cantares* (fol. 80)

But in his *Psalmodia christiana* Sahagún did insert phrases from native songs, using specific vocabulary items found in the *Cantares mexicanos* and in no other surviving source. Further evidence that these "cantares" were prepared for Sahagún is supplied by the numbered scholia on folios 60, 60v, and 73, identical in style to Sahagún's *Memoriales con escolios.*[7]

On folio 46, with reference to an obviously post-Conquest song, the scribe writes (in Nahuatl): "Here begins a children song, or little-children song, that used to be sung there in Mexico at the feast of San Francisco. It was composed in our lifetime when we were living there at the church and as yet we were little children." One is reminded of the Franciscan practice of removing Indian children from their families and educating them in church schools. In a colorful *relación* appended to Book Ten, Chapter Twenty-Seven, of the *Historia general*, Sahagún describes the method in some detail, noting that the children were encouraged to spy on their parents. (If the parents were caught backsliding, they were captured, tied up, and carried to the monastery for a session of castigation and catechism.) Of these schools the largest was the one founded by Fray Pedro de Gante in the late 1520's at the monastery of San Francisco in Mexico City.[8]

Whether or not the "children song" was performed at San Francisco, it would be reasonable to assume that the scribe was educated there. Elsewhere, on folio 42v, he uses the phrase "here in Azcapotzalco," indicating that at this point, at least, he is not in Mexico City. If the writer was in fact an assistant to Sahagún, then it may be conjectured that he was none other than Antonio Valeriano, the most valued of Sahagún's Indian helpers and the only one known to have been a resident of Azcapotzalco.[9] The conjecture is strengthened by the entirely gratuitous nature of this insertion on folio 41: "At that time [1565] the gobernador of Azcapotzalco was Don Antonio Valeriano." For an Indian writer to refer to himself in the third person was by no means unusual.[10]

From various sources we know that in 1573 Valeriano moved to Mexico City (just eight kilometers southeast of his native Azcapotzalco), where he served as gobernador of Tenochtitlan until 1596, when he became "old, feeble, and deaf" and had to yield his duties, if not his title, to a *teniente* named Juan Martín; he finally died in 1605.[11] During the period 1550–85 Valeriano would thus have had ample opportunity to collect "cantares" in both Mexico and Azcapotzalco. The overall stylistic uniformity of the transcripts suggests that they could have been made by a single collector, presumably Valeriano. On the other hand, the mere abundance of the material, its numerous minor discrepancies, and especially, the presence of near-duplicates within the collection argue for a loosely coordinated team effort (of which Valeriano may well have been a part).

The additional six folios in bastard script, mentioned above, appear to derive from the same sources. The hand-A copyists may have overlooked

them in the mass of Franciscan materials available after Sahagún's death, leaving the pleasure of discovery to the scribe of 1597.

Errors of the *Cantares* Glossator

By now it should be apparent that the *Cantares* manuscript contains more than song texts. In fact it contains three types of material: song texts, reportage, and commentary. Undoubtedly the song texts and the reportage are ethnic or at least ethnographic. But what of the commentary inserted by the scribe (or scribes) responsible for the *Cantares* originals? Although I have postulated his identity, it will be safer to refer to this (perhaps composite) person as the *Cantares* glossator. There can be little question that he is an Indian, but this fact alone does not qualify him as an informant.

We may begin by noting one or two simple errors. For example, in the song concerning King Axayacatl's Matlatzincan campaign there is a reference to his conquest of Toluca and of Tlacotepec (folio 53v). Toluca is certainly within Matlatzincan territory. But where is Tlacotepec? In a marginal note the puzzled glossator writes, "Actually it is said to lie with the Chalcans." And indeed there is a Tlacotepec fifty kilometers south of the old Chalcan capital of Tlalmanalco, far from any military activity recorded for Axayacatl. Unbeknownst to the glossator there is also a Tlacotepec just ten kilometers south of Toluca, well within the Matlatzincan area.

Another apparent misunderstanding turns up in the commentary for the *huehue cuicatl* (old man song) on folio 73v. The song opens with the line *Techtlahuancanotzque in Michhuacan in Camacoyahuac*, "They've summoned us to be drunkards in Michhuacan, the gaping maw." But in his accompanying gloss the scribe notes that Camacoyahuac is the king of Michhuacan. "[That's the] name of the king there," he writes, as if interpreting the text to mean "Gaping Maw has summoned us to be drunkards in Michhuacan," or "They and Gaping Maw have summoned us to be drunkards in Michhuacan." To arrive at such a reading one would have to throw away the plural suffix *-que* or postulate a grammatical rule permitting an unnamed subject to share a third-person verb.

The further glosses on folios 53v and 73v, if not in error, are dubious and groping. The interested reader may consult them in their place. From these the glossator begins to emerge as a mere scholar, bemused by the lore of his own race. Fortunately, he treats the texts themselves with respect. One of the very few indications of tampering occurs at 67: 10, where the words *ye oPixpo* have been stricken, either by the glossator and again by the Jesuit copyist, or by the copyist at his own whim. Or perhaps by an even later hand. Another occurs at 5v: 26, where a heavy cancellation blots what appear to be the words *in Santa Maria*. Various explanations might be offered, and since the examples are isolated they need not detain us.

Song headings are not treated with the same reverence, however. The manner in which the glossator works a personal comment into the children-song heading has already been noted. To demonstrate further, let me present three exhibits drawn from the manuscript, using italics to indicate what may or may not be commentary. In so doing I take a conservative view, admitting as reportage only composers' names, song dates, and simple, native-style titles of the kind mentioned by Sahagún, Tezozomoc, and other chroniclers.

A. Chalcan female song. *A composition of the Chalcans, with which they came to entertain the ruler Axayacatl, for he had conquered them as though they had been mere women.* (Folio 72)

B. *Song of Nezahualcoyotl of Acolhuacan coming to visit the elder Montezuma of Mexico when he was sick.* (Folio 66v)

C. Female apparition song, *in which the holy word is set in order. It was sung at the feast of Espíritu Santo.* The singer Cristóbal de Rosario Xiuhtlamin put it together in August of the year 1550. (Folio 38v)

In exhibit A we have a rather well-developed descriptive summary, every iota of which is traceable to a (hasty) reading of the song itself. Years later the historian Chimalpain, having evidently stumbled on this description, used it as reportage, embroidering it with additional conjectures. (The matter is discussed at length in the commentary for song 84.) In general the glossator's technique is to read the song himself, then give us the highlights in a preliminary capsule.

With exhibit B we move from the unlikely to the preposterous. No chronicler, to the best of my knowledge, has left any record of bedside visiting among the warrior kings of Mexico.

In exhibit C, by contrast, we are given extra information that is at least partly harmless ("the holy word is set in order") and may include valid reportage ("sung at the feast of Espíritu Santo"). On the other hand, it is possible the glossator decided on his own, after a quick reading of the song, that Pentecost would be a good time to sing this piece. But why would someone in August be finishing up a song for Pentecost?

In short, everything outside the song texts themselves must be viewed with suspicion—much as in the case of the dubious annotations that accompany the *Madrid Codex* transcripts of the Sahaguntine "demons' songs."[12]

History of the Manuscript

Although the *Kalendario* and the *Arte divinatoria* (or copies of them) were evidently borrowed by Fray Martín de León for his *Camino de cielo*, published in 1611,[13] and Torquemada, Ixtlilxochitl, Chimalpain, Carochi, and Lasso de la Vega all appear to have used the *Cantares mexicanos* (or a copy)

during the period 1600–1650,[14] there is no explicit documentation of the existence of MS 1628 bis until the second half of the nineteenth century. During these later years it was housed at the library of the University of Mexico, was reported missing for a while, then reappeared at the Biblioteca Nacional, where it has remained since at least 1886.[15]

The *Cantares* facsimile published by Peñafiel in 1904 shows that the manuscript had been severely trimmed at some point during its prior history. Though still legible, the writing on folios 16v, 27v, and 80 falls away at the edges. A microfilm copy made in 1973 reveals that other changes occurred after 1904: the stamped legend BIBLIOTECA NACIONAL. MEXICO. now appears on several folios, and the entire manuscript book has been given a new consecutive foliation at the foot. Although the leaves appear to be more tightly bound than they were in Peñafiel's day, there seems to have been no further trimming, the page size remaining approximately 150 mm × 195 mm. The book's new catalogue number, 1628 bis, was assigned by Roberto Moreno in 1966.[16]

Although the manuscript itself remains the optimum source, the facsimile of 1904 improves the reading in those few spots that have deteriorated over the past three-quarters of a century.

CHAPTER 2

The Ghost-Song Ritual

Aztec songs of the *Cantares mexicanos* type are composed in a special vocabulary that relies heavily on such terms as bird, flower, song, comrade, heart, hand, and prince in relationship with verbs that express coming, coming to life, blossoming, greening, arriving, descending, scattering, whirling, weeping, seeking, awaiting, carrying, craving, departing, and dying—connected with two principal locales, earth and heaven, and interlarded with the names of kings and heroes.

Although most if not all of these vocabulary items are to be found in other Aztec sources, no other texts present the same concatenation of elements. The *Cantares mexicanos* and its congeners comprise a closed system, unintelligible to those who have not been initiated, even if they are fluent speakers of Nahuatl. Neither the standard dictionaries of Molina and Siméon nor the voluminous *Florentine Codex* can provide the lexical information needed to comprehend this highly figurative and complex idiom. True to the nature of esoteric idioms and jargons generally, it must be studied from within.

The sixteenth-century ethnographer Fray Diego Durán, alone among his contemporaries, claimed to have broken the barrier. His clumsy but interesting statement bears repeating, even if it has been quoted many times before:

> All their *cantares* are composed by means of certain metaphors so obscure that there is scarcely anyone who understands them unless they are studied and discussed very intently in order to understand their meaning. I myself, intently, have set about to listen very closely to what they sing and among the words and terms of the metaphor, and it seems nonsensical to me, and afterward, with discussion and conference, they're admirable sentences, whether in the sacred matter that they compose nowadays or in the worldly *cantares* that they compose.[1]

But if Durán did penetrate the "cantares," he left no proof of his success. His comments on Aztec songs, though not incorrect, are superficial and

naïve. Sahagún, whose awareness of native songs was at least as keen as Durán's, writes more pessimistically:

> They sing the old *cantares* that they used to perform in the time of their idolatry, not all, but many, and no one understands what they say, because their *cantares* are very obscure; and if they perform some *cantares* that they've composed since their conversion, treating the things of God and his saints, these are cloaked in many errors and heresies.[2]

And again:

> For the most part they sing of idolatrous things in a style so obscure that there is no one who really understands them—except themselves alone.[3]

The sentiment is echoed by Pomar, who writes, "para entenderlos es menester ser gran lengua," and by Las Casas, who speaks of "chanzonetas y cantares y saltos de placer que no se podría explicar."[4] Against this unpromising background the present study attempts to make headway nonetheless.

The ubiquitous figures of speech built on the words *xochitl* (flower) and *cuicatl* (song) will serve as a convenient point of entry. Since the two terms are constantly coupled and used interchangeably in a variety of stock phrases, we detect without difficulty that though they are dissimilar they are nevertheless synonyms. "I utter songs," reads the text. Elsewhere it reads, "I utter flowers." Or it says, "Let there be flowers, let there be songs." Thus the word flower has the meaning "song." But it may have other meanings as well.

When dissimilar terms are used together they sometimes reinforce each other, yielding a new, unexpected meaning. The process occurs in English (cloak and dagger means intrigue) but is much more common in Nahuatl. In the well-known guide to metaphors in Book Six, Chapter Forty-Three, of the *Florentine Codex*, we discover that heart and blood means cacao; chaff and straw means falsehood; stone and wood means misery; and so forth. In passing it should be noted that these definitions are not exclusive. Stone and wood can mean fame—and also idolatry.[5]

In recent years the *xochitl/cuicatl* of the *Cantares mexicanos* has been repeatedly defined as poem or poetry. But the definition appears to have been invented by the late Angel M. Garibay and, so far as I am aware, has no other authority. Although it is entirely proper from a modern point of view to speak of the *Cantares* as poetry and to regard the old singers as poets, the definition "*xochitl/cuicatl* = poetry" is a flaccid concept at best and at worst a misnomer.

As we look more closely at the text, we encounter *xochitl* and *cuicatl* in phrases such as these (identified by folio and line number):

> I am a song (31: 19)
> From heaven, ah, come good flowers, good songs (10: 6)
> Once again as a song? Aya! Let us create You (45: 25)

God has formed you, has given you birth as a flower. He paints you as a song (27: 24)
As a song you're born, O Montezuma: as a flower you come to bloom on earth (63: 7)
This flower of beauty, this lord Axayacatl (80: 31)
My songs are marching forth (28: 3)
These shrilling flowers (69: 2)

The reader who wishes to check the translation is invited to do so. Although the *Cantares* is rife with ambiguity, it will be found, I think, that these particular examples are quite unambiguous. That is, they do not permit more than one linguistic analysis (though other writers might choose to word them differently). From such material it should be clear that songs, or flowers, are persons. The idea is strange, perhaps, but it is certainly in keeping with Aztec thought. Among the disparate terms that may be used to denote persons, as listed in Fray Andrés de Olmos' *Arte para aprender la lengua mexicana*, are jade (*chalchiuitl*), plume (*quetçalli*), city (*alhtepetl*), silk-cotton tree (*puchutl*), cypress (*aueuetl*), flute (*tlapitzalli*), gold necklace (*teucuitlacuzcatl*), and many others equally distant from modern sensibility.[6]

In addition to noting that songs may be persons—more correctly, deceased persons, or spirits[7]—we learn from the above phraseology that songs are revenant kings, such as Montezuma and Axayacatl. They descend from the sky world, moreover, and are brought to life on earth through the joint efforts of the singer and his god. These, in brief, are the essential points. Having grasped them, the reader will find that they are reinforced in varying degrees throughout the manuscript.

Fleshed out with innumerable details, the phenomenon in the aggregate assumes the proportions of a ritual. We do not know what it was called, if indeed it had a name. But for the purposes of discussion it will here be styled the ghost-song ritual; and henceforth, instead of referring to songs of the *Cantares mexicanos* type, I will resort to the more convenient, if synthetic, ghost songs. The paragraphs that follow attempt to catalogue the main elements of the so-called ritual, reserving the fine points of vocabulary and rhetoric for later chapters. As will be apparent, no single ghost song contains every element.

The Song Trip

Since songs proceed from the other world, the singer sometimes speaks of traveling there. He says he will go gather these songs, or flowers, and bring them back to earth. The process is reminiscent of the shamanistic trance journey, and in fact the singer may say, "In my dream I went to the dead land" (song 86, stanza 18).

The first item in the manuscript (folio 1 and 1v) is almost exclusively

devoted to the description of a song trip. Unfortunately the diction of this piece appears to be Westernized.

Views of the Other World

Whether or not the singer claims to have made a song trip, he is regularly in touch with the other world, coercing, beseeching, or seducing the spirits that live there and waiting for signs of their approach. According to Sahagún, the Aztec hereafter was divided into three separate realms: an Eden-like paradise inhabited by those who had died of drowning or other water-related mishaps, a celestial paradise reserved for slain warriors and sacrificial victims, and an underground limbo that served as a catch-all for everyone else.[8] Ghost songs, generally speaking, do not violate this classification. But although the ancestor spirits are regarded as warriors who dwell in the heavens, their realm may be envisioned in a variety of ways; and just as modern vulgarisms permit the dead to be "pushing up daisies" while they are supposed to be in "heaven," Aztecs could speak of the deceased as gone to the sky and gone to the underworld all in the same breath.[9]

The celestial battlefield. The ghost-song view of paradise as a place of battle accords with Sahagún, who has it that the dead warriors armed themselves each morning, greeted the sun with whoops and skirmishing, and escorted it to the zenith.[10] In the *Cantares*, *ixtlahuatl* (field) and *yahualiuhcan* (circle) are among the code words that denote "battlefield." When the singer says, "I come from the circle on high" (song 86, stanza 24), he means that he is arriving from paradise.

The flowery paradise. In the Prologue to his *Arte divinatoria* Sahagún writes, "They used to say that in the sky where the sun dwells there are many flowers, many fruits, and many delights . . . and also they said that four years after death the souls of these defunct [warriors] turned into various kinds of rich-plumed and fine-colored birds, and they went along sucking all the flowers both in the sky and here on earth, as hummingbirds do."[11] And the *Cantares mexicanos* does not disagree (even if it fails to confirm that the transformation of warriors to birds takes four years). Sahagún's description of the flowery paradise is lavishly expanded in songs 1 and 2 of the *Cantares*, and ghost warriors descending to earth as birds are to be encountered throughout the manuscript (see especially canto F of song 90, the "Bird Song").

Where songs originate. A myth preserved in two sixteenth-century sources relates that music was formerly kept in the house of the sun.[12] Similarly, the *Cantares* speaks of "sky songs" (song 4, stanza 3) and of songs descending (song 64, stanza 4). The manner in which the singer causes these songs

to descend from the heavens involves a subtle but well-attested doctrine of reciprocity, discussed below in the section entitled "Bringing Down the Songs."

The eastern shore. In the eyes of Mexicans and other residents of the central highlands, the sun's house might be reached by passing through the countries that lay along the Gulf Coast. Off on a song trip, the singer might say, "I've arrived in Panotlan" (song 80, stanza 24). Cuextlan and Acallan were similarly regarded as stations en route to the house of the sun, variously called "dawn's house" (*tlahuizcalli*) or "the place of painted water" (*atl icuiliuhyan*).

The dead land. In Aztec lore the term *mictlan* (dead land) often denotes the underworld.[13] Missionaries used it to translate *infierno*. But it can also refer to the heavens, even the warriors' paradise specifically,[14] without the slightest connotation of gloom or evil. These various shades of meaning are all present in the *Cantares*.

A place of tears. If ghost warriors are feeling impatient to return to earth, they may be miserable in paradise. "Are they still in the dead land?" reads one of the songs. And the answer is yes, "in precious snares they're weeping at the sacred shore" (song 83, stanza 1). In the opening stanza of song 8, the singer recalls the dead princes "who lie enslaved in the place where all are shorn, who were lords, who were kings on earth."

"Tlalocan." The Eden-like terrestrial paradise, home of those who die by drowning, is properly called Tlalocan, place of the *tlaloque*, or water gods. Because it is usually spoken of as a place of flowers, fruits, and delights, it is easy to imagine that it might be confused with the flowery paradise of the sun; and in fact there is evidence in the *Cantares* that this is so, although the term *tlalocan* is never used and the *tlaloque* are never invoked. According to the *Florentine Codex*, the *tlaloque* are denizens of caves and mountains,[15] and in the *Cantares* we read that the flowery paradise lies in a "valley," literally "mountain-within" (song 1, stanza 4). Yet another, similar paradise is the delightful Tamoanchan, where the "tree of flowers" stands.[16] In the *Cantares* Tamoanchan seems to be regarded as the place of human creation (song 18, stanzas 50–51), also called *xochitlalpan*, or "flower land," one of the names for the flowery paradise of the sun (compare song 57, stanza 28, and song 1, stanza 6). Evidently the warriors' paradise of the *Cantares* partakes of at least some of the features of both Tlalocan and Tamoanchan.

The Cave. In the *Florentine Codex* the dead are said to reside "in the water, in the cave, in the dead land."[17] Evidently this refers to the underworld limbo, but in the *Cantares* it is possible that the "cave" (*oztotl*) or the "cavern house" (*oztocalli*) may sometimes refer to the hereafter in general

or even the warriors' paradise of flowers. In song 19, stanza 11, the singer asks invitingly, "Who'll go see, who'll go gazing in the cavern house of flowers?" But when the hereafter is spoken of as "the city of the dwellers-among-the-nine" (song 54-B, stanza 5) and the sun is called cave dweller (54-C, stanza 6), it is clear that the underworld is meant. In this case the sun is perhaps making its nocturnal journey from west to east beneath the earth's surface.[18]

Bringing Down the Songs

Songs are obtained from paradise by securing their release from divine power, by "recalling" them, by weeping for them, or by physically gathering them and carrying them off. Though disparate, these imaginary techniques are not mutually exclusive. The singer may be thinking in terms of two or more of them at any given moment. The important thing to bear in mind is that songs, or flowers, may be persons—as set forth in the opening paragraphs of this chapter. When the ghost singer says he is uttering, or bringing down, "songs" he usually means that he is producing ghost warriors.

Reciprocity. Song making is an act of cooperation between the mortal singer and his other-worldly source. The singer "begins," or "strikes up," the song, but the heavens must give the "answer," or the "echo." The singer "lifts up" songs, but the songs themselves descend from the sky. Thus song 70 opens with these words: "I strike it up. I beat the flower drum of Life Giver, and his paintings fall: these flowers." Likewise song 4 reads: "In this place of scattering flowers I lift them up before the Ever Present, the Ever Near. Delicious are the root-songs, as I, the parrot corn-tassel bird, lift them through a conch of gold, the sky songs passing through my lips." The notion of reciprocity, moreover, is not limited to ghost songs. The fact that it is described in the myth of the origin of song, as preserved in both Mendieta's *Historia* and the "Histoyre du Mechique,"[19] suggests that it was a general feature of Aztec music theory. According to the "Histoyre du Mechique," music was taken from the sun by Ehecatl, the god of wind:

> Seeing him approach, the sun said to his musicians, "No one must answer him, for whoever answers him must go with him." These musicians were dressed in four colors: white, red, yellow, and green. And now, having arrived, the wind god called to them with a song [*les appela en chantant*], and one of them immediately answered it and went off with him, carrying the music that they perform to this day in their dances in honor of their gods.

In Mendieta's version the song is answered by several of the sky musicians, who are then brought to earth along with the drum (*huehuetl*) and the two-toned *teponaztli*.

The role of the muse. Related to the theory of reciprocity is the performer's avowed conviction that he sings with a voice other than his own. "They're the very ones who fill our throats," says the singer, referring to the birds that dwell in the flowery paradise (song 1, stanza 2). But we have already observed—and it is confirmed by Sahagún—that these birds are ghost warriors. As we discover in virtually all the old chronicles, the warriors par excellence were the *tlatoani*, or kings.[20] Thus it is not surprising to find specific kings invoked as muses in the *Cantares*. The process is set forth in song 36, which deserves to be quoted at length:

> Strike it up? And sing before the face of our father, God Life Giver? How but uselessly could I? I am poor.
> Let a singer come, and he can pleasure you, O Life Giver. He's smelting songs, he's drilling them as turquoise beads. But I, I am poor.
> I wish I could pleasure you. Let me somehow grieve, I, a singer, sighing before your face, bereft, lifting flowers of bereavement, music of bereavement, for you, O Noble One, O Only Spirit, O Life Giver.
> Where are you? You're being entertained, O Life Giver. Everywhere, throughout the world you're served. Flowers of bereavement, music of bereavement, do I lift for you, O Noble One, O Only Spirit, O Life Giver.
> And now I sing! So let there be flowers! So let there be songs!
> I drill my songs as though they were jades. I smelt them as gold. I mount these songs of mine as though they were jades.
> O God! Though poor, I say that I pleasure you, I, Totoquihuaztli! Let the singer come. He can pleasure you. Let the singer come. He'll set free your songs.
> How excellent this noble one! He burnishes songs as though they were turquoise. As though they were plumes he twists them, he, Totoquihuaztli. Let the singer come. Let the singer come.

Here the muse is Totoquihuaztli, king of Tlacopan, a city-state closely allied with Mexico through the fifteenth century and up until the Spanish Conquest. It matters little whether Totoquihuaztli the elder (d. ca. 1470) or Totoquihuaztli the younger (d. 1519) is meant; the content of the song is ritualistic, not historical. Significantly, the singer refers to his muse both in the third person (stanza 8) and in the first person (stanza 7), acknowledging that he is both summoning Totoquihuaztli and speaking with his voice. Notice that Totoquihuaztli comes to earth, producing songs, or "flowers" (i.e., revenants). Thus, as in many ghost songs, we have the revenant who produces further revenants.

Among numerous other muses encountered in ghost songs are Nezahualcoyotl, king of Texcoco (another important ally of Mexico), and Montezuma (the name of two kings of Mexico). In song 72 Nezahualcoyotl is the muse that produces Montezuma. But though the muse is usually an important king, it may sometimes be a hero, like Tlacahuepan

(who in fact was a lesser king), or a god, like Macuilxochitl (song 65), or the supreme spirit himself, or even the sun. See song 54-B with its invocation, "Sing, red sun!" Although it appears that the traditional muse is always a deceased king or hero, or a god, it is possible that Christian saints may be substituted; and it is even possible that Fray Pedro de Gante, the Indians' own singing master, served as the muse in songs composed during his lifetime.

Crying for songs. Singing is equated with weeping. When singers "weep" or "grieve," as in the third stanza of the song quoted above, they are not necessarily expressing sorrow for a specific cause. In fact the phrase "I weep" has become an almost empty formula in many ghost songs. Similarly, the texts are filled with automatic interjections and quasi-lexical vocables, often untranslatable, that seem to mean "alas" or "woe." Possibly the phenomenon stems from feelings of loss,[21] or perhaps it involves a ritualized tenet of native music theory.[22] Whatever the cause, the persistent weeping produces "flowers," or ghost warriors. Says the singer to the ghost: "And how are you created, my pet? By being wept for, my precious pet" (song 57, stanza 11). Or again: "For what are we song-sighing?" (song 59, stanza 18). While still in paradise, the ghosts are said to be "tears" (song 37, stanza 2) or "they that wish to be tears" (song 68, stanzas 79–81). As they arrive on earth the singer may exclaim: "Flower tears are sprinkling down at the flower drum, at the singing place" (song 86, stanza 31). On the other hand, when the singer says, "I grieve, earth is no one's home" (song 46, stanza 16), he is expressing a particular sorrow.

Recalling songs. Songs, or flowers, are frequently "recalled." In other words, the ghost warriors are brought to earth by an act of remembrance. Hence the injunction: "Create him! Weep! Recall Lord Toteotzin!" (song 51, stanza 29). The second stanza of song 41, a typical example, reads as follows: "Before you died you established your fame, O prince, O Tlacahuepan. So people are busy, it seems. People are appealing to Life Giver; there will be a coming-forth, a coming-to-life on earth." To sing a dead warrior's praises is to do more than perpetuate his memory—it is literally to bring his spirit to earth.

Enticement. The ghosts are "pleasured" or "entertained" with music in order to coax them to earth. For example: "Hear the song I'm about to sing; I've come to pleasure Montezuma" (song 72, stanza 2). More substantial enticements, namely food and sex, are sometimes offered in a playful mood. Roasted cherry seeds (a delicacy) are promised in song 88. Tortillas are mentioned in song 84, stanza 24. In song 84, stanza 7, the singer (impersonating a woman) makes this explicit proposition: "Boy, dear boy! Little king! O Axayacatl! Here, let yourself be summoned, man! You don't have a horn on? Stick it in my chimney. Hurry! And put out the fire."

The Songs Arrive

Descending from the sky, the personified songs reach earth as incorporeal ghosts, or souls: "Your soul has drizzled down as a jewel dew, O Lord Tomás" (song 63, stanza 50). Or they may be envisioned as "warm and weighty" (song 18, stanza 47). "Singers, and weighty ones, are these, my flowers," boasts the singer as he presents them to his comrades (song 44, stanza 16). Often the ghosts are noisy—shrilling, roaring, or ringing with the sound of ankle bells. Sometimes an entire nation or city descends (as in song 29). An eyewitness account by Durán suggests that in at least a few cases the ghosts were portrayed by costumed pantomimists. Durán's testimony is quoted later, in Chapter Eight.

Huehuetitlan. Ghost songs are performed *huehuetitlan* (beside the drum). Inviting his comrades, the singer says, "Let them come and hear the flower dawn songs drizzling down incessantly beside the drum" (song 12, stanza 1). But the locale has many other names as well. With the arrival of ghost warriors, it assumes the character of a miniature paradise and may be called the flower house, the flower court, the cavern house, the *mixcoacalli* (house of cloud comrades?), or the home of God.

The rain of songs. Songs are "strewn" or "scattered" from paradise. Frequently they come drizzling or fall as mist, dew, or rain. Accordingly, the place "beside the drum" may be called the "place of rain" (*quiappan*), as in song 26, stanza 2.

The garden. Songs, or "flowers," come "blossoming" or "burgeoning." Sometimes they are "leafy." In a particularly explicit passage (from song 14) the Mexican singer, summoning Mexican warriors, observes:

> By making us aware of his creations, God Life Giver torments us, causes us to crave his garden of song flowers.
> Already in a springtime, in a springtime we are walking here, upon this field. A green-swan downpour is breaking over us in Water Plain.
> Lightning strikes from the four directions. Golden flowers are reviving. There, the Mexican princes are alive.

The word *xopan*, literally "green location," denotes the growing season and is usually translated "spring" or "summer." In ghost songs it refers to the greening of spirits newly arrived from paradise—or it may refer to paradise itself or to *huehuetitlan*. With some misgiving I have translated it variously as "spring" or "green places," according to the context. But the "greening" ghost warriors are not always flowers. They may be "milk corn" (*xilotl*) or "baby maize ears" (*cacamatl*). Horticultural imagery involving both flowers and food plants is especially prevalent in song 17. Sometimes the ghosts are "flower trees" (song 57, stanza 22). But in other

passages the flowering "trees" are fixtures of *huehuetitlan*, and the ghosts, arriving as birds, are said to perch among the branches (song 17, stanzas 34 and 48). According to Durán, such scenes were contrived with actual stage props and costumed mimes.[23]

Songs as babies. "Jades are scattered: flowers—your songs—are born," says the singer to his muse (song 33, stanza 6). Or, "as a song you're born, O Montezuma: as a flower you come to bloom on earth" (song 70, stanza 7). In various passages the songs are "new," or they "come to life." One is reminded of the promise made to the mythic Quetzalcoatl as he journeyed toward his death: "and when you return, you shall have again been made a child."[24] In the *Cantares*, ghost warriors are frequently addressed as children or infants. Thus we have "baby Montezuma," Moteuczomapil (song 19, stanza 6); "baby Axayacatl," Axayacaton (song 84, stanza 5); and "little Don Diego," don Tiegoton (song 59, stanza 17). Revenants in general are our "flesh" (our children) or God's "flesh." Certainly the most elaborate treatment of this theme is the "cradlesong" addressed to King Ahuitzotl (song 57). Song 61, called "children song, or little-children song," also deserves mention here.

Whirling songs. Arriving on earth as babies, the songs have actually been "born" in Tamoanchan, or paradise.[25] Sometimes they proceed from a kind of natal tree: "The flower tree stands blossoming at Origin, God's home, the place of tassel plumes. The troupial comes. The turquoise swan, the marvelous, the quetzal, arrives" (song 22, stanza 1). In addition they may be "spun," or "whirled,"[26] as in song 18, stanzas 50–51:

> The flower tree stands in Tamoanchan, God's home. There! we're created, we who've been summoned! Our Spirit, Ipaltinemi, whirls us as lord songs.
> What I'm smelting is as gold: I'm carving our good songs as jades. Four times and as turquoise! Tamo, God, Life Giver whirls us four times in Tamoanchan. Hey! Be pleasured! Hey! Green places are here, in this house of green places!

Note the identification of paradise (green places) with *huehuetitlan* (this house of green places). In numerous other passages the songs are said to come "spinning," or "whirling." With reference to his muse, the singer says, "It's Montezuma, whirling holy songs" (song 83, stanza 1). In song 65, stanza 4, the ghost himself is the "whirled one."

Songs as a distribution of Life Giver. The personified songs are actually a parceling out, or distribution, of the supreme spirit. As the singer states explicitly: "You are the one that is being created, O Only Spirit, O God" (song 70, stanza 4). Or again: "All your riches, your favors, are alive, O Life Giver, World Owner! You shake yourself, you scatter yourself here" (song 18, stanza 52).

Often the ghost warrior will be identified both as an ancestor and as a manifestation of Life Giver, all in the same stanza: "Flowers have arrived. He's here: it's God Life Giver. Ah, I weep, recalling Nezahualcoyotl" (song 46, stanza 7). And just as the singer is said to be "pleasuring" the ghosts, in many cases he explains that he is pleasuring, or "entertaining," Life Giver. See song 31, stanza 9, for an interesting example that includes reciprocity.

The legion of the dead. The dead are numerous. They are "the multitude" (*nepapan tlaca*; song 68, stanzas 20 and 40), or "the sundry birds" (*nepapan tototl*), or "all the flowers" (*nepapan xochitl*). The ubiquitous term *nepapan* is best rendered "divers," "sundry," "multitudinous," "all"—not "various," as many translators have it. In other words, the emphasis is on quantity, not variety.[27] In a Christianized ghost song, where the ghosts are identified as angels, the multitude is said to be *centzonxiquipilli*, "four hundred times eight thousand" (song 19, stanza 10).

Sodality and reunion. Mortals are eager for reunion with the approaching ghosts. The companionship of lost "friends" (*icniuhyotl*)—or "comrades" (*coayotl*)—appears to be extremely meaningful. As he summons the ghost warriors, the singer says, "Let there be a mutual embracing of eagles, of jaguars, O princes" (song 24, stanza 1). The muse Tecayehuatzin cries out with pleasure, "I have comrades here in Huexotzinco, I, King Tecayehuatzin. I'm assembling jades, emeralds, princes. I flower-spin these nobles, ah!" (song 17, stanza 8). Just as in the mundane councils of war described by Durán and Tezozomoc,[28] ghost singers are constantly addressing each other by kinship terms, such as brother, uncle, and nephew. The vocative nephew! or dear nephew!, used to summon ghost warriors, becomes a litany in certain songs.

Intoxication. The singer "desires" or even "craves" the approaching songs. They are "delicious," they "make hearts drunk with fragrance." "With these sundry flower songs we lose our senses," the singer says (song 3, stanza 2). Or he may say, "With narcotic fumes my heart is pleasured" (song 4, stanza 6). Often it is unclear whether the singer is referring mainly to the joy of reunion with dead forebears or to the narcotic power of the music as such. If the latter, then the effect on the singer and his comrades may be to make them more reckless, more daring in combat. The texts themselves offer no proof that the singers used artificial stimulants, nor do the reports prepared by Motolinía, Hernández, and others. However, in what seems to be an eyewitness account, dating from about 1560, the academician Francisco Cervantes de Salazar writes: "First they make themselves drunk, in order, so they say, to sing with more devotion. . . . They bow the head, bend the body, carry the right arm raised with some sort of insignia in the hand; in their style of dancing they seem like men who stagger drunkenly." Judging from the remainder of Cervantes' description ("in

these dances, besides praising the devil, they sing the great deeds of their ancestors, bewailing their deaths"), it would appear that ghost songs are indicated.[29] As for the actual stimulant, it is possible that *cuauhnanacatl* (tree mushroom) was used, since this is mentioned in connection with a pre-Conquest musical performance described in the lost Nahuatl chronicle translated by Tezozomoc.[30]

Unwanted songs. By and large the singer summons warriors of his own tribe. If he also summons enemies, it is for the purpose of having them defeated. But as with all magic, the process of ghost summoning can be dangerous. It may backfire. "Oh no, not those youngsters who want to make offerings! Oh please, not those!" cries the singer, caught off guard by the approach of enemy ghosts (song 85, stanza 6). Or again: "Unwanted child!" (song 60, stanza 33). Confident that he has control over the performance, the singer may taunt his enemies: "That warrior, King Vulture, won't be seen again, nor will his warlike songs be heard, for we alone create them" (song 83, stanza 20).

Marching to War

The ghosts descend from heaven fully armed. Typically they are "bellicose" (song 46, stanza 18) and will "never tire" (song 24, stanza 4). Newly arrived, the ghost warrior announces, "I come to guard the city" (song 48, stanza 1; compare song 86, stanza 37). Or: "I'm a Mexican, saying: let me be pleasured in marching forth to Tecuantepec" (song 46, stanza 17).

The divine reproach. Sometimes the ghosts are scornful of their mortal comrades, accusing them of cowardice and prodding them into war. The singer himself is not immune to their taunts. Feeling the reproach, he says, "My grandchild laughs at me, insults me"; but recognizing its divine origin he continues: "Let him appear! May he speak the scurrile words of Him. Let my grandchild pleasure Him!" (song 19, stanza 13). Acknowledging the contradiction between the joy of reunion and the sting of reproach, the singer may say, "Friends, we've come to see each other and to know each other's lovely words—and yet they're scurrile" (song 82, stanza 14). Similarly, the spirit "pricks us as he warbles" (song 53, stanza 5); or, as muse, he may reproach his fellow ghosts, even those that he is in the process of producing: "It's time! Be pleasured! And they shall appear! I wound their hearts. I'm lifting songs, I've arrived, I appear, I, the singer" (song 43, stanza 2). The expression to wound one's heart (*iyollo niccocoa*) has here been rendered etymologically. The semantic, and perhaps better, translation would be to offend or insult someone. Occasionally, the singer himself reproaches either his fellow mortals or the incoming ghosts. Song 12 in its entirety is devoted to the reproach theme.

Transformation. The connection between war and music is well attested in sixteenth-century writings. When men went to battle, they behaved as musicians. "While they fight, they sing and dance," reports the Conquistador anónimo.[31] Conversely, when men made music, they behaved as warriors. According to the same reporter, they carried special shields in their "fests and dances."[32] And when they sang the *canto chichimeca,* they all had shields and "swords" (*macanas*).[33] From such accounts, explicit as they are, we cannot be sure whether the warriors in battle actually thought of themselves as music makers or whether they were merely animating the troops with martial sound effects, as Motolinía suggested.[34] But in the *Cantares,* it is clear that a transformation, so to speak, takes place on the dance floor. In other words, the musical performance is regarded as an act of war.[35] And dancing becomes synonymous with combat (song 15, stanza 15). Summoning ghosts, the singer cries: "A shield-roaring blaze-smoke rises up. Ah, and rising up as bell dust it's equated with your flowers, Yaotl. In the distance shrills a multitude of eagles, jaguars" (song 69, stanza 26).

The name Yaotl (Enemy) denotes the supreme spirit. In this case we have an example of reciprocity, in which the singer's war deeds (actually music) will be received by Yaotl and returned in the form of flowers, or revenants—whom we already hear "shrilling" in the distance. Conversely, a warrior in actual combat is said to be engaged in music making, or "song-weeping": "'And where do I hear him?' Ah, the noble lord goes song-weeping at Ocotepec. They've seized him in the scuffle, at the gorge" (song 89, stanza 7).

Yet in numerous song texts the theory of transformation is challenged or cautiously rejected. Fearing death, the singer may attempt to produce ghost warriors by means of music that is *not* being transformed into war deeds. In a few cases one suspects the influence of Christian morality (as in song 7, stanzas 2 and 4). But generally speaking, these evasions appear to be unacculturated, as in the following example, where the singer is ashamed to admit that he is not a warrior, even while attempting to produce ghosts with pure music:

> It's in music, only music, that I do my grieving. Isn't that the way I sing my songs? Don't let your hearts be wounded! I'm a warrior, really!

But his comrades are only partly convinced:

> Is he taking a stand? Well, he's lifting good songs. Well, he's getting flowers. He has his rattle.

At last the singer confesses:

> I flower-grieve. But ah, my songs are nothing, I scatter squirrels. (Song 83, stanzas 22–24)

Needless to say, it is safer to be a singer than a warrior. But unless the singer is also a warrior his music is unproductive.

The battlefield. The dance floor itself becomes the field of combat, and often a specific battleground is designated. "Things are getting under way here in Tziuhcoac," announces the singer (song 86, stanza 25). Or the stage may be set by a word from the incoming revenants: "They've summoned us to be drunkards in Michhuacan" (song 85, stanza 1).

Drunkards. Whether or not a soldier's courage was ever bolstered by alcohol is a question that does not appear to be answered in the available ethnography. In the *Cantares,* however, a singer remembering pre-Conquest times says, "It was thus in the old days. . . . He'd give you chalk wine and make you enter the place of danger" (song 7). "Alas," says the singer, "Life Giver makes us drunk" (song 69, stanza 17). But it is possible that the texts refer to a figurative drunkenness, perhaps induced by the narcotic power of music. In certain ghost songs known as Cuextecayotl (Huaxtec pieces) singers refer to themselves constantly as drunkards, evidently because the inhabitants of Cuextlan had a reputation for drunkenness.[36] But in these pieces the singers appear to mean that they are drunk with war lust. Those wishing to explore the matter might turn first to song 77.

Identification with the enemy. The word for battlefield is *yaopan* (enemy place). War itself is *yaoyotl* (enemy business) and the supreme spirit, as noted above, may be addressed as Yaotl (Enemy). It would not seem out of keeping, therefore, if warriors occasionally identified themselves with their enemies. In fact this is the case. In song 12, for example, Mexicans presumably on the warpath to Tliliuhqui Tepetl (Black Mountain) become "our Black Mountain friends." The motive can only be guessed, but it is probable that the warrior is identifying with the ferocity, or savagery, of the foe. Among common epithets for the Mexican soldier, found not only in ghost songs but in many other sources, are Otomitl and Chichimecatl, both of which denote actual tribes that were less civilized than the Aztecs and proverbially savage in the eyes of Mexica, or Mexicans. In the *Cantares* the Mexican soldier is also called *pinotl* (stranger or savage). Likewise several of the songs in the manuscript are Otoncuicatl (Otomi songs) or Chichimecayotl (Chichimec business or Chichimec pieces). Befuddled by such titles, the glossator, on folio 6, supposes that the Otoncuicatl are "old songs of the Otomi Indians"—a hasty remark that has been the source of much confusion.

But the subtlest and perhaps most significant case in point is the identification of the Mexica with their on-again, off-again enemies the Huexotzinca. Outside the *Cantares* there do not appear to be any documented instances of Huexotzincophilia among Mexicans. But the inhabitants of

Cuauhtitlan, who at the time were in league with Mexico, are said to have indulged in it copiously, "calling each other Huexotzincans."[37] Similarly, when the ghost singer says, "I am a Huexotzincan," he need not mean that he is a Huexotzincan as such. In song 71 it is clear that Huexotzinco is a synonym for Mexico. On the other hand, the Huexotzincans of song 66, stanza 1, are indeed Huexotzincans. Consequently, the reader must scrutinize all references to Huexotzinco and Huexotzincans, allowing for the possibility that Mexico is meant—and not ruling out an occasional double entendre.

Rich and poor. The good warrior-singer is rich, the unskilled and the coward are poor. For illustrative passages see song 15, stanzas 6 and 12; song 36, stanza 1; song 42, stanza 3. The arrival of songs, or ghosts, makes one rich. In song 38, stanza 5, the singer speculates that if all the ghosts in paradise return to earth, then the supreme spirit himself will be poor.

The Payment

One of the avowed purposes of Aztec warfare was to provide human blood for the nourishment of the gods, especially the sun. During the morning hours the sun needed food for its journey to the zenith.[38] People worried that it might weaken.[39] In the *Cantares*, the singer calls out in fear: "Easily, in a moment might you slacken, O father" (song 31, stanza 14). Urging his comrades to produce ghosts, i.e., make war, the singer (in a Christianized passage) says: "Let us have these good ones. Who will toil for the shield mat, the javelin throne of God? Create them, recall them, you princes! Who'll scatter them on this city, this Tenochtitlan? Who'll push up the prop of heaven?" (Song 27, stanzas 6–7.)

Here again we have reciprocity. Just as the singer offers his music in exchange for the sun's music, so must the warrior offer victims in exchange for ghosts. In song 69, stanza 28, Montezuma is said to be "bartering with sun-chalk" (i.e., with chalk-whitened victims). In song 84, stanza 21, the ghosts "come to trade." "Alas," laments the singer in song 83, stanza 5, "we have no payment." In many if not most songs the doctrine of exchange is an essential underlying element. If ghosts are arriving, then a payment must be made. Conversely, if war is being waged, ghosts will automatically arrive (in exchange for the war deaths). Sometimes the ghosts themselves, marching immediately to war, serve as their own payment. At other times the singer and his fellow mortals volunteer their lives. In several songs the moment of exchange is signified by such expressions as "this earth is shaking" (*tlalli olini*; song 50, stanza 1), "the earth is rolling over" (*tlalli mocuepa*; song 15, stanza 29), or "the earth rolls over, the sky shakes" (*tlalli mocuepa ilhuicatl olini*; song 51, stanza 33).[40]

Heart sacrifice. If an Aztec warrior was captured alive, he was saved for the ceremonial death that modern writers have labeled heart sacrifice, in which the live victim was stretched over a convex stone so that his rib cage protruded tautly as a priest cut out the heart with an obsidian blade.[41] In the *Cantares* there are occasional references to the taking of captives, and the warrior in general is often called "banner" (*amatl*) or "chalk and feathers" (*tizatl ihuitl*), suggesting sacrifice. Although the concise, symbolic language of ghost songs does not permit a clear distinction between death on the battlefield and heart sacrifice at the temple, there are a few passages (song 41, stanza 5, or song 67, stanza 14) that seem to allude more to the latter than to the former. In song 16, stanzas 5–6, however, the terms war death (*yaomiquiztli*) and knife death (*itzimiquiztli*) are used interchangeably.

Gladiatorial sacrifice. In certain cases the captive might be tied by a short rope to a special stone called *temalacatl*, or "round-stone," and obliged to defend himself with an inferior weapon. In this uneven combat the captive stood little chance of survival. As soon as he was defeated he was thrown across the stone and subjected to heart sacrifice.[42] In the *Cantares* there are no actual descriptions of gladiatorial combat, but a *temalacatl* is mentioned in song 67, stanza 19.

Cannibalism. After the victim's heart had been extracted by the temple priests, the carcass was returned to the captor, who took it home to be prepared as an entertainment for his kinsmen, reserving a thigh for the king.[43] Ghost songs seldom allude to this practice, yet it is evidently the subject of the horrific song 19.

Transference. During the annual feast called *toxcatl*, described by both Sahagún and Durán,[44] a young man would be sacrificed who "represented" or "impersonated" the supreme god, Tezcatlipoca. In Durán's account the young man is actually called Tezcatlipoca, implying a transference of identity from god to victim. Similarly, in ghost songs there is evidence that a hallowed identity—not of a god, however, but of an ancestor—may be transferred to a victim. The case is not inarguable, but it appears that the ancestor Tlacahuepan, in several passages in the *Cantares*, is lending his identity to a slain warrior or a sacrificial victim. See especially song 69, stanzas 30–31. In song 80, canto E, the muse appears to be a surrogate for King Tezozomoc. In song 89, stanzas 2 and 5, the victim Juan Nelpiloni is a surrogate for Nezahualcoyotl.

The Return to Paradise

As "payment" is made, the descent from paradise described in earlier paragraphs takes place in reverse. Victims "depart," "pass away," or are "taken

to the Place Unknown" (song 16, stanza 1). Or a victim may go "drifting as a feather into Spirit Land" (song 69, stanza 32).

The dawn scene. The departing soul is thought to be greeted by the rising sun in a highly conventionalized scene that includes singing birds. The tableau is by no means limited to ghost songs. A newly deceased ruler, it is said, was customarily addressed in these words: "Awake! It has reddened, dawn has appeared. Red cocks[?], red swallows are singing. Red butterflies are flying."[45] Women who died in childbirth were addressed in the same manner.[46] And in ghost songs, victims are offered promises such as this: "Sky-dawn is rising up. The multitude, the birds, are shrilling. Precious swans are being created. Turquoise troupials are being created" (song 76, stanza 7). In a curious telescoping of the entire process, ghost warriors destined for combat are said to arrive on earth in order to "watch for the dawn" (song 17, stanza 12).

Purpose

The arrival of allied and enemy ghosts permits the reenactment of historical battles or, if necessary, the manipulation of remembered events so that the singer and his comrades will emerge victorious. Such is the scenario of many ghost songs; and if any of these were performed in pre-Conquest times, as some perhaps were, it can be safely guessed that at least one purpose was to heighten the prestige of Mexico. Presumably the performance served as an expression of Mexican solidarity or as a taunt to embassies from hostile nations.[47]

But the desirability of victory must be weighed against the desirability of death on the battlefield. Sometimes it almost appears as though the enemy enjoys the happier outcome.

Most songs, however, do not allude to any specific battle. In these schematized compositions the singer produces ghosts of his own tribe or allied tribes, seemingly for the purpose of creating a state of bliss on earth. In exchange, he and his fellow mortals may volunteer their own lives, thus achieving bliss in the other world. It may be said that Mexico "rises to the sky" (song 71, stanza 5). Meanwhile the spirits who have been left behind create a paradisial Mexico on earth: "They're loosening their songs: they're entertaining God, bringing down a multitude of flowers. And with these the city, Mexico, is spreading fragrance. Here!" (song 70, stanza 10).

The ideal, perhaps, is to set up a situation in which the dead and the living can be permanently united on earth: "'Let no one's heart flow out, O princes, O Chichimecs, let no one be below or up above' is what God says on earth right here—in this His home" (song 51, stanza 10). But the dream in this case, expressed by a Chalcan muse, is frustrated by the arrival of hostile Mexican ghosts. A Mexican muse, on the other hand, is

able to achieve the desired goal by utilizing the doctrine of transformation (as discussed above): "May no one walking forth be captured! That which rises shall be your sadness, O Montezuma, O Totoquihuaztli! Who provides slaves for Life Giver? Indeed, they come to support the sky, the earth. These uttered words of theirs, it seems, are stirring as a blaze" (song 35, stanzas 5–6). In other words, the payment is made in music as though it were "blaze," i.e., war deeds. Hence the happy conclusion: "[They are] giving Tenochtitlan City its place within the dawn. . . . How else is Tenochtitlan City to endure? What sings our God, even here?" (Stanzas 6–7).

Whether or not the many surviving songs of the paradise-on-earth type could have been composed before the Conquest is a question that will be considered in later chapters.

Christian Influence

In the numerous ghost songs that show Christian influence the ghosts themselves are likely to be called angels. Descending as revenants, they may be "rosary beads" (*cuentaxtli*) or, again, "angels." Jesucristo, not surprisingly, is the ideal revenant. But Christ is also identified with the supreme spirit, called God (Dios) or Espíritu Santo. The occasional identification of Santa María with Dios recalls the pre-Conquest appellation "our mother, our father, the sun and the earth lord."[48] Usually, however, the Virgin is regarded as "our intercessor" (*totepantlatocauh*).

The muse, often God himself, may be called bishop (*obispo*), or, in isolated cases, Saint Cecilia (the patron of music), Gabriel (the archangel), or Fray Pedro (the singing master at San Francisco de México).

The sky world becomes the place "where life is infinite, where things never end" (song 3, stanza 5), the "place unsmirched" (song 59, stanza 11), or simply "heaven" (*ilhuicatlitic*). In one passage the singer describes the heavenly scene in terms of the ninefold angelic hierarchy of Dionysius Areopagiticus, with seraphim, cherubim, and all the rest.[49]

Huehuetitlan, the place "beside the drum," becomes the "church" (*iglesia*), where in fact ghost songs were often performed in the sixteenth century. For an interesting Aztec re-creation of a Franciscan prayer, see song 61, stanzas 40–41.

Scattered throughout the *Cantares* manuscript, Christian allusions are especially heavy in folios 37v–48v. Three of the songs in this section are based on stories from the Bible: song 55, Jewel song (the Three Kings); song 56, Female apparition song (Pentecost, the Annunciation); and song 58, Bringing-out song (Creation, Expulsion, Flood, Incarnation, Resurrection). At least two songs, 59 and 61, were composed for Christian holidays (Easter and the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi); and in four songs we catch fleeting glimpses of saints' legends: Saint Philip (song 58, canto F);

Saint John the Divine (song 60, stanza 13); Saint Francis of Assisi (song 61, stanzas 17 and 26); and Saint Christopher (song 61, canto J).

What we evidently find in this section of the manuscript—to state the matter laboriously—are Aztec adaptations of Christian adaptations of Aztec ghost songs. The Christian adaptations were composed by Fray Pedro de Gante, the singing master mentioned above, and by his fellow Franciscan Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, who replaced the militaristic subject matter with Bible stories and saints' lives in the hope that these might supplant the idolatrous ghost ritual. Gante's efforts in this genre have not survived, but Sahagún's are available in his *Psalmodia christiana*, which will be discussed in Chapter Nine. In the Aztec re-reworkings preserved in the *Cantares* the ghost ritual returns in full force, and we have Saint Christopher (the Christ carrier) playing muse to Christ's revenant, and the three kings, as warlords, killed on the battlefields of Bethlehem. This, no doubt, is what Sahagún sensed when he complained of the many "errors and heresies" in the "cantarcs that they've composed since their conversion."

CHAPTER 3

Ghost-Song Vocabulary

The twin Nahuatl tendencies to speak in metaphor and to pile up synonyms are nowhere more luxuriantly displayed than in ghost songs. Such lavish expenditures of rhetoric presumably belong to the *tecpillatolli* (noble speech), as distinguished from the *macehuallatolli* (speech of vassals). Spirits and fellow mortals, though they may be *macehualtin* (vassals) before God, are otherwise invariably *teteuctin* (lords) and *pipiltin* (princes) in the *Cantares mexicanos*. Evidently such songs were not addressed to the *macehualtin* as such, and if commoners found the idiom inscrutable this could only have increased its value as elite lore. By happenstance it also prevented Nahuatl-speaking missionaries from catching the seditious innuendos found in a number of these compositions.

Some of the vocabulary has been treated in the preceding chapter. A large number of special nouns, however, are yet to be noted. The lists that follow, though hardly exhaustive, will serve as a general guide, which the reader may wish to refer to from time to time. (In each category an attempt has been made to order the terms so that the list proceeds from the most to the least familiar. All Nahuatl words can be located in the Dictionary-Concordance in the companion volume to this work; if necessary, the term is here reprinted in the orthography of the Dictionary, flagged by the abbreviation DICT.)

The Warrior

A few unexceptional terms that denote the warrior not only in ghost songs but in oratory and in reportage should be mentioned at the outset:

eagle, *cuauhtli*	brave, *oquichtli*
jaguar, *ocelotl*	warrior, *yaqui* (DICT: yahqui)
eagle jaguar, *cuauhtlocelotl*	valiant, *cuachic*

Attempts to sort such terms according to rank or grade would appear

futile, at least so far as ghost songs are concerned. The same is true of the following, which evidently connote daring, savagery, or protectiveness:

Otomi, Otomitl
Chichimec, Chichimecatl
savage, *pinotl*
firebrand, *tlecaxitl*
bulwark, *tenamitl*

Certain kinship terms, used in direct address, are no doubt more expressive of male camaraderie than of warfare specifically:

nephew, *machtli*
uncle, *tlatli* (DICT: tlahtli)
father, *tatli* (DICT: tahtli)
(elder) brother, *achcauhtli*
(younger) brother, *iccauhtli*

Fellowship terms may be used: comrade (or friend), *icniuhtli*; comrade (or companion), *coatl*.

A variety of metonyms, derived from the warrior's equipment, denote the warrior himself:

shield, *chimalli*
buckler, *tehuehuelli*
bell, *coyolli*
bell, *oyohualli*
arrow, *mitl*
javelin, *tlacochtli*
knife, *itztli*
cape, *quemitl*

The names of weaponlike plants may also denote the warrior:

rush, *tolin*
reed, *acatl*
spine, *tzihuactli*
mesquite, *mizquitl*
bulrush, *tolpatlactli*

Accordingly, the warrior as captor may be called rush hunter, *tolamaz*; reed picker, *acapepena* (DICT: ācapehpenatzin).

The warrior as potential captive or victim may be known by a variety of terms related to human sacrifice, sacrificial procedures (flaying, feathering, painting the victim with chalk or stripes), sacrificial emblems (banners), or sacrificial implements (receptacles for blood):[1]

captive, *malli*
loved one, *tlazotli* (DICT: tlazohtli)
hide, *ehuatl*
chalk and feathers, *tizatl ihuitl*
striper, *huahuantli*
banner, *panitl*
(paper) banner, *amatl*
eagle urn, *cuauhtzotzocolli*
cup, *huicolli*
jar, *tecomatl*
water (i.e., blood?), *atl*

The warrior as potential victim may be signified by parts of the human body (recalling the necklace of hands and hearts worn by the great statue of Coatlicue in the Museo de Antropología, Mexico City):

hand, *maitl*
heart, *yollotl*
head, *cuaitl*

Warriors are equated with jewels and other precious goods:

turquoise, *xihuitl*
jade, *chalchihuitl*
bracelet, *maquiztli*
bracelet gem, *maquiztetl*

redstone, *tlapalchalchihuitl*
gold, *teocuitlatl*
feather, *ihuitl* (DICT: ihhuitl)
(quetzal) plume, *quetzalli*

The ghost warrior, whether dwelling in heaven or descending as a revenant, is recognized by various epithets denoting "ancestor":

forefather, *colli*
ancestor(?), *huicololli*
mother, *nantli*
root, *nelhuayotl*
garland, *mecatl* (lit., rope or link)

Any of the terms in the foregoing lists may be applied to the warrior as revenant. But the revenant in particular is:

ghost, *nahualli*
apparition(?), *ixnextli*
picture, *amoxtli*
painting, *tlacuilolli* (DICT: tlahcuilōlli)
whirled one, *ilacatziuh*
creation, *yecolli*
created one, *tlayocolli*
shoot, *yacatl*
new-minted one, *tlapitzalli*
sadness, *tlaocolli*
tears, *choquiztli*
water (i.e., rain?), *atl*
joy, *tehuetzquiti*
heart pleaser, *teyolquima*
treasure(?), *aitzin*

Revenants are denoted as flowers and by flower names:

flower, *xochitl*
flower tree, *xochicuahuitl*
cornsilk flower, *xiloxochitl*
popcorn flower, *izquixochitl*
cacao flower, *cacahuaxochitl*

By animal names that suggest flying or darting:

butterfly, *papalotl*
bird, *tototl*
fish, *michin*

And by countless generic and specific bird names,

parrot, *toztli*
"swan," *quechol* (see p. 129)
troupial, *zacuan*
cotinga, *xiuhtototl*
trogon, *tzinitzcan*
hummingbird, *huitzilin*

Bird names and other faunal names usually denote the revenant. But they may also be applied to the slain warrior, newly arrived as a ghost in paradise. Less so the following terms, which seem to be reserved mainly for revenants:

drum, *huehuetl*
log drum, *teponaztli*
song, *cuicatl*
word, *tlatolli* (DICT: tlahtōlli)
rattle, *ayacachtli*
fan, *ecacehuaztli* (DICT: ehcacēhuaztli)
crook, *chicuacolli*
arbor, *petlacotl*

Most names in the above lists may be combined to form neologisms reminiscent of Old English and Norse kennings:

shield flower, *chimalxochitl*
shield wall, *chimaltenamitl*
bracelet swan, *maquizquechol*
gold picture, *teocuitlaamoxtli*
jade painting, *chalchiuhtlacuilolli*
knife cape, *itzquemitl*