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Aztec Sorcerers in Seventeenth Century Mexico

The Treatise on Superstitions
by Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón

Michael D. Coe and Gordon Whittaker

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1982
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Institute for
Mesoamerican Studies
State University of New York
at Albany

Publication No. 7





12/1/82

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For information address the publisher:

Institute for Mesoamerican Studies

State University of New York at Albany

Albany, New York 12222

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 82-81425

APPENDIX 2

Dialect in "The Treatise on Superstitions"

We have described, in the Introduction, the linguistic situation in Ruiz de Alarcón's investigative area at the time of the Spanish Conquest. Basically, all of Morelos spoke Nahuatl—Tlalhuica in the west and center, and Xochimilca in the east, if these were really distinct dialects—while the Coixca dialect of Nahuatl prevailed in the adjacent part of Guerrero down past the Mezcala River.

The most recent classification of Nahua or Nahuatl dialects is that of Una Canger (1978, 1980), as follows:

- A. Pochutec—a very divergent dialect of southern Oaxaca
- B. General Aztec
 - I. Central Dialects
 - a. La Huasteca
 - b. Northern Puebla, the Valley of Mexico (including Classical Nahuatl), Morelos, Tlaxcala, and Central Puebla
 - c. Central Guerrero, comprising an area which includes that part of Guerrero investigated by Ruiz de Alarcón.
 - II. Peripheral Dialects
 - a. Western, including Jalisco, Colima, Durango, Michoacan, and North Guerrero (villages to the west of Iguala).
 - b. Eastern, including other parts of Puebla, South Guerrero, Isthmus, and Pipil.

Thus, the old Coixca territory is now occupied by her Central Guerrero dialect. All of the villages from which the informants in the *Treatise* hailed must therefore have spoken one or the other of the Central Dialects.

All of the Central Dialects of Nahuatl are marked by *tl* versus *t* or *l*,¹ and it is this *tl* which we find throughout the *Treatise*. Ritual formulae and concerns in the spells provide a small body of related linguistic data helpful in determining dialect boundaries in the *Treatise* area.

In the *Treatise* color adjectives take two possible forms:

xoxohuic ~ *xoxouhqui* "blue-green"

coçahuic ~ *coçauhqui* "yellow"

yayahuic ~ *yayauhqui* "dark"

tlatlahuic ~ *tlatlahuqui* "red"

to which may be added:

totonic ~ *totonqui* "hot".

On the basis of this variation an isogloss may be drawn across the *Treatise* area, separating probable Coixca towns from Tlalhuica. The approximate borders of the two Coixca provinces of the Aztec Empire, Tepequacuilco and Tlalcozauhtitlan,

lie close to the isogloss, and it would seem that in the intervening century since the Spanish Conquest the Tlalhuica dialect had made inroads into an area of former Coixca speech. Between the old Coixca boundaries and the isogloss only a slight preference for color words of the *xoxohuic* type is shown, whereas Tlalhuica proper uses this variant almost to the exclusion of the other. All towns south of the isogloss, however, record only the *xoxouhqui* variant, which, interestingly enough, is the only one found in the *Treatise* area today.

A second Tlalhuica feature which has now given way completely to its Coixca equivalent is the use of the verbal suffix *-toc* to form the progressive singular. The alternative suffix *-ticâ*, found throughout Coixca, occurs in Tlalhuic only in epithets of the fire god, and may be a result of religious influence from another region, such as the Valley of Mexico. Although divine names in the *Treatise* are by and large identical to those in Aztec sources, one exception is worthy of note: the god Centeotl, whose ambiguous name can mean either "Corn God" (the traditional interpretation) or "Single God", is known in the area around Atenango, in Coixca and in Tlalhuica, as Ceteotl "God who is One"—a youthful unitary aspect of the remote dualistic deity of creation and sustenance known as Ometeotl, "God who is Two".

One other feature distinguishing Tlalhuica from Coixca is the word for "first", *achtopa* or *achtocopa* in Tlalhuica, *achtotipa* in Coixca. While the former bears comparison with Classical Nahuatl, the latter is related to such Tlaxcalteca terms as *cocoliztipan*, "in times of plague".

For Canger the most important feature of the Central Nahuatl dialects distinguishing them from the Peripheral ones is the loss of the stem final vowel in the perfect:

patlāni "it flies"

ōpatlān "it flew".

Although the perfect plural of all verbs in the *Treatise* is formed in this fashion, the perfect singular in part of the Tlalhuica dialect area retained the stem final vowel, as is the case in the present-day North Guerrero dialect just to the west. Attributed to Martín de Luna, a native of Xiuhtepc resident in Temimiltzinco, is the following (Tract 2, Chapter 2):

âço oquehuac, ocaâcociuc y notilmâ ?

(Classical Nahuatl *âço ôquēuh, ôcâcoc(uh) in notilmâ ?*)

"Has he lifted up, taken up my cloak?"

A further example is to be found in a Tlalhuica text of Tract 3, Chapter 1:

onimitztlachpani (Classical Nahuatl *ônimitztlachpan*)

"I have swept for you".

In Tlalhuica texts from Tlaltiçapan and Cuetlaxxochitla, however, and in all texts in the Coixca dialect, the stem final vowel is lost not only in the perfect plural but in the singular as well. The suffix for the perfect singular, lost in postconsonantal position in Classical Nahuatl and in the Guerrero dialects, is nonetheless found once in a Coixca text (Tract 7, Chapter 6):

onechhuältitlanqui (Classical Nahuatl *ônèchhuältitlan*)

"she has sent me forth".

Since the majority of spells contain invocations of the type "well now,

please come forth (sg.) . . .”, further isogloss areas may be demarcated on the basis of a comparison of the manner in which this is formulated from town to town. *Tlacuel*, roughly “well now”, is found in one form or another in virtually every Tlalhuica town for which we have texts, but is found in Coixca only in the border towns of Mescaltepec and Mayanalan.

“Come forth!” is found throughout the seventeenth *Treatise* area, with the exception of the North Coixca-Southwest Tlalhuica border region, in the form *xihualhuia* or a variant thereof. In Coixca the alternate form *xihuallauh* is attested, exclusively in North Coixca but alongside *xihualhuia* in all other parts of the dialect area. In Iguala, Tequacuilco, Xicòtlan, and other towns of the border region, the singular and plural forms of these verbs fall together, perhaps as a result of conflicting dialect influences.

Plurals of nouns and pronouns are of the greatest rarity in *Treatise* texts, and so few conclusions can be drawn as to the form they customarily took. On nouns the plural marker *-tin* is attested only for Coixca, while *-mê* is recorded in Tlalhuica and Coixca.

Pronouns take a variety of forms in the *Treatise*. The full singular form, of the type *yêhuatl*, is found throughout both dialect areas. The type *yêhua* is attested only for the Coixca border town of Mescaltepec, and the type *yê* is restricted to the border area around Atenango. A reduplicated form *yêyêhuatl* is recorded also in a Tlalhuica text from the Atenango area. The plurals *yêhuan* and *yêhuantin* are recorded for the Tlalhuica town of Xiuhtepec and the Coixca town of Iguala respectively. This contrasts sharply with the present-day situation in which the Tlalhuica area has pronoun plurals in *-tin* and the Coixca area in *-mê*. In all parts of Central Guerrero the singular pronoun is today only of the type *yêhua*.

Most of the Central Dialects have now palatalized the initial vowel *e-* to *ye-* (i.e., *etl* versus *yetl*, “bean”), including almost all the fifteen villages in Morelos surveyed by Karen Dakin (1974), but Ruiz de Alarcón has only *e-* (e.g., *ezçoque*, “they are bloodied”); *ye-* is apparently a fairly recent innovation, as is the change of the glottal stop before a consonant to *h* in Morelos (Dakin *ibid.*).

Important lexical isoglosses pointed out by Canger are those separating the area of usage of *pitzotl* for “pig”—or “peccary”—in the Central Dialects from that of *coyame* in the Eastern Peripheral Dialects, and *tletl* for “fire” in the Central Dialects from *tlexuchtli* in the Western Peripheral Dialects. The *Treatise* is true to both *pitzotl* and *tletl*. One final point worthy of mention is that the *Treatise* conforms to the Central Guerrero practice of using *ca* for the simple answer “no”.

In summary, the dialects of the spells in the *Treatise* are not all that different from Classical Nahuatl, but exhibit several features of importance for the historical study of Nahuatl dialects, in particular the Morelos and Central Guerrero divisions of the Central Dialect area.

The Provenance of Nahuatl Texts in the *Treatise*

Where no statement of provenance has been made by Ruiz de Alarcón, the likely place of origin of a Nahuatl text, by which is meant an unbroken passage of Nahuatl, is added in parentheses.

TRACT 1

- Chapter 4: Don Baltasar de Aquino - Atenango District (Coixca)
- 5: Don Diego de Mendocça - Cuetylaxochitla

TRACT 2

- Chapter 1: Juan Vernal - Iguala
 2, Texts A-B: (Iguala)
 Texts C-E: Martín de Luna - Xiuhtepec and Temimiltzinco
 3: Juan Matheo - Comallan
 4: Cuetlaxxochitla
 5: (Southeast Tlalhuica)
 6: (Coixca?)
 7: Miguel - Xicòtlan
 8: (Coixca, near Atenango)
 9: Agustín Jacobo - Oapan District
 10: (Coixca)
 11: (Coixca)
 12: Martín de Luna
 13: Martín de Luna
 14: (Tlalhuica, near Atenango)
 15: (Tlalhuica, near Atenango)
 16: Juan Matheo
 17: (Coixca)

TRACT 3

- Chapter 1, Texts A-D: (North Tlalhuica)
 Text E: (?)
 2: (North Tlalhuica)
 4: Don Martín Sebastián y Çerón - Chilapa
 5: (Coixca)
 6: (Coixca)
 7: (Coixca)

TRACT 4

- Chapter 1: (Coixca)
 2: (?)
 3: (Coixca)

TRACT 5

- Chapter 1, Texts A-F: (North Tlalhuica)
 Texts G-O: (Coixca?)
 2, Texts A-B: (North Tlalhuica)
 Text C: María Magdalena - Uzumatlan, Oapan District
 3: Magdalena Juana - Oapan

TRACT 6

- Chapter 1: (North Coixca)
 2: (North Coixca)
 3: Francisca Juana - Mescaltepec

TRACT 7

- Chapter 1, Texts A-B: Catharina Juana - Tequacuilco
Text C: (?)
- 2: María Salome - Tetelpan
- 3, Texts A-B: Marta Mónica - Teteltzinco
Texts C-D: (?)
- 4: (Coixca)
- 5: (Coixca)
- 6: (Coixca)
- 7: (North Coixca)
- 8: (Coixca)
- 9: Woman - Mayanalan
- 10: Marta Mónica
- 11: (Coixca)
- 12: Catalina Paula - Huitzuco
- 13: (Coixca)
- 14: (Coixca)
- 15: (Coixca)
- 16: Domingo Hernández - Tlaltiçapan
- 18: (North Coixca)
- 19, Text A: (Tlalhuica)
Text B: Tlaltiçapan
Texts C-D: Martín de Luna
- 20: Martín de Luna
- 21: Isabel María - Temimiltzinco
- 22: Woman (Coixca, near Atenango)
- 24, Text A: (Coixca, near Atenango)
Text B: Petronilla - Tlayacapan
- 25: Magdalena Juana - Tepequacuilco
- 26, Text A: (Tlalhuica)
Text B: Isabel Luisa/Lucía - Mazatec area (North Coixca)
Text C: (North Coixca)
- 27: Don Martín Sebastián y Çerón
- 28, Text A: Magdalena Petronilla Xochiquetzal - Huitzuco
Text B: Justina - Huitzuco
- 29, Texts A-B: (?)
Text C: (South Tlalhuica?)
Texts D-G: Don Martín Sebastián y Çerón

ENDNOTE

1. In this Appendix we use the Ruiz de Alarcón, rather than modern phonetic, spelling for phonemes, morphemes, and words.