

## A HUNDRED YEARS OF MILPA ALTA NAHUATL

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### Part 1. The modern literary heritage of Milpa Alta

The community of Milpa Alta, located in the high country southeast of Xochimilco, is justly famous as the home of Doña Luz Jiménez, whose autobiography *Life and Death in Milpa Alta* and collection of stories *Los cuentos en náhuatl de doña Luz Jiménez* are milestones of twentieth-century Nahuatl literature. In addition to her own literary achievement and a career as model and muse for a generation of Mexican artists, Doña Luz also assisted Benjamin Lee Whorf and Fernando Horcasitas in their Nahuatl research. The same fertile intellectual soil that nurtured Doña Luz has given Nahuatl studies a distinguished collection of texts from individuals whose lives span an entire century. While the first of the Milpa Alta texts I will consider here were published in 1913, they were collected from contemporaries of the parents of Doña Luz. The most recent Milpa Alta texts were published hardly more than a year ago. And so, as we approach the centennial of the birth of Doña Luz, we also celebrate a century of Nahuatl writing from Milpa Alta.

Isabel Ramírez Castañeda, identified simply as a teacher, contributed a paper to the Eighteenth International Congress of Americanists in London in 1912, and it was published the following year in the Proceedings under the title "El Folk-Lore de Milpa Alta, D. F., Mexico." The paper includes seven short texts and some words and phrases in Nahuatl. A pair of the texts have to do with the ceremony of the first-fruits of the harvest: what share-croppers say to the land-owner, and how he replies. It is notable that the land-owner as well as the people who work his land speak Nahuatl. The other texts are formulae that accompany curing rituals.

Ramírez Castañeda describes Milpa Alta as having been founded by members of the ruling class of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, who fled Cortés and found refuge in the Sierra de Ajusco, bringing their servants with them.<sup>1</sup> In the early twentieth century, nearly four centuries later, she describes the society as still consisting of a wealthy class and a working class. Children of the upper class, she writes, are educated in Mexico City and are apart from the traditional Nahuatl society where healing rituals are carried out. But the first-fruits ceremony is clearly an example of the interaction of the two classes.

(Writing from his fieldwork in Milpa Alta in the 1950s, R. A. M. van Zantwijk also describes Milpa Alta as a complex community including a linguistically and socially conservative group who traced their ancestry to the nobility of Tenochtitlan and another group of much less conservative subsistence farmers and day laborers whose language exhibited much more assimilation to Spanish. On the other hand, doña Luz, whose parents belonged to this latter group, never alludes directly to class stratification in Milpa Alta and only gives the barest indirect hints.)

Ramírez Castañeda was clearly both well-educated and bilingual. Perhaps she was one of those Mexico City educated children of the Nahuatl-speaking landed class of Milpa Alta. In any case, it was she and a young man identified only as Lucio who in 1912 wrote the Nahuatl texts Franz Boas and Herman K. Haebler published in the *Journal of American Folk-Lore* in 1926. In the article, Ramírez C. and Lucio are identified as "both natives of Milpa Alta." Identified as "informants", they are said to have written the texts themselves in Mexico City and assisted in translating them. "Lucio" may have been Lucio Tapia, who was the principal of Milpa Alta's Concepción Arenal school in 1908 when Luz Jiménez entered as a student.

In 1920 Boas and Pablo González Casanova both published Nahuatl texts identified only as from Milpa Alta. Like the those provided by Ramírez Castañeda and Lucio, they had undoubtedly been collected elsewhere, probably from displaced Milpa Alteños in Mexico City, because Milpa Alta stood empty and abandoned following a massacre in 1916 in which the men and boys of Milpa Alta were rounded up and machine-gunned by forces of Venustiano Carranza. The women and children fled to Xochimilco and Mexico City and were only be-

<sup>1</sup> This is in accord with popular local history. A more expanded version states that a population already living in Milpa Alta was joined by refugees from the collapse of Tenochtitlan.

ginning to return home in 1920 when Boas and González Casanova published the texts.

Although her mother reestablished residence in her home town, Luz Jiménez remained in Mexico City working as a life model for the National Academy. She appears in murals in the National Preparatory School and the National Palace, in paintings by Fernando Leal, Jean Charlot, Diego Rivera, and other painters of the 1920s, and also in photographs by Edward Weston and Tina Modotti. She was often in the home Anita Brenner, writer and editor, which served as a salon for the radical artists and intellectuals of the post-Revolutionary period. Luz served as model, muse, and tour guide to centers of indigenous culture, such as Milpa Alta and Chalma.

In 1930 Brenner recommended Luz and Pedrita Jiménez and Miesio Gonsález to Benjamin Lee Whorf as informants. In the late winter and early spring of that year he elicited texts and sample sentences from them, which appear in a manuscript about Milpa Alta Nahuatl but not in Whorf's 1946 publication on the topic.

In the 1940s doña Luz met the anthropologist Robert Barlow and worked with him until his death at the beginning of 1951. During this period Barlow recorded and transcribed her speech as she told folktales much in the spirit of the ones published by Boas and González Casanova, and one of these transcriptions/translations was published after his death in *Estudios de cultura náhuatl*. At the same time doña Luz herself wrote contributions to *Mexihkatl Itonalama*, a Nahuatl-language newspaper produced out of Barlow's home in Azcapotzalco, as did some other residents of Milpa Alta.

Fernando Horcasitas met doña Luz at Barlow's house around 1948, and she later went to work for him as informant. The result of their long collaboration were two books in Nahuatl. The *Cuentos* collection contains forty-four stories, including dramatic reportage of a disastrous flood in 1935 and President Cárdenas' personal subversion of the relief effort. Her autobiography has two parts. The first relates how daily life was evolving in Milpa Alta in the twilight of the Porfiriato leading up to the eve of the 1910 Revolution. The second provides an eyewitness account of the upheaval and violence of the next decade, with Emiliano Zapata playing a central role.

During the 1950s R. A. M. van Zantwijk, a Dutch anthropologist, went to live in Milpa Alta. In 1960 he published a book containing some observations about local Nahuatl speech and a number of texts, including letters written to him by residents of the town.

Also in 1960 the mother of doña Luz died. According to Horcasitas, she was 102 at the time of her death. Sadly, doña Luz herself was killed in a traffic accident in Mexico City five years later. Both books of her stories were published posthumously.

In the 1970s Horcasitas and Yolanda Lastra de Suárez made a survey of Nahuatl speaking communities. In Milpa Alta they collected a small vocabulary, and a woman of the same generation as doña Luz dictated a short text for them. These they published in the journal *Anales de Antropología*.

Yolanda Lastra and Jorge Suárez composed a comprehensive questionnaire of over four hundred items for use in a more detailed Nahuatl dialect survey. The questionnaire was taken by fieldworkers to many communities in Mexico, including Milpa Alta and one of its outlying villages, Santa Ana Tlacotenco. The responses to these questionnaires have been published by Lastra.

One of the respondents to the questionnaire was Carlos López Ávila of Tlacotenco, who on his own between 1971 and 1974 wrote in Nahuatl an 84-page "Legendary History" of Milpa Alta, a sort of historical romance into which is set a very traditional indigenous border survey.

Finally, Librado Silva Galeana, also from Tlacotenco, has been publishing Nahuatl essays in *Tlalocan* and *Estudios de cultura náhuatl* since the mid-1980s. And so it is that in the 1990s Milpa Alta completes a century full of literary endeavor.

## Part 2. Salient characteristics of Milpa Alta Nahuatl

Given so many texts from the same place, we have a chance to explore the question, "What wakes Milpa Alta Nahuatl distinctive? English speakers need just hear the vowel in "out" and "about" to recognize a Canadian or a Tidewater Virginian. Nahuatl speakers are exquisitely sensitive to local variation and have a social and emotional stake in placing people. Can we extract from the abundant Milpa Alta data what it might be that would identify a Milpa Alteño? The written record supports fieldworkers' statements that people in Milpa Alta say "nochi" rather than *mochi* for "all" and that in first-person singular reflexive constructions they compress the subject and reflexive prefixes *ni-no-* to "no-". The second-person plural subject prefix is "nam-" rather

than *am-*, the object prefix is "name:ch-" rather than *ame:ch-*, and the corresponding pronoun is "namehhua:n".<sup>2</sup> There is no contrast between words beginning with initial /e/ and with initial /ye/. Milpa Alta speakers say "tlitl", "tixtli", and "tlīca" for *iletl*, *textli*, and *tlei:ca*. Everyone says "ihki" for *ihqui* 'thus, just so', whether or not they pronounce /w/ as [h] elsewhere. They say "tlatihuani" instead of *tlahtoa:ni*, and when they say it, they mean 'gentleman', not 'ruler' or 'governor'. One can apply it to an indigent person, as Lucio did when he wrote "pobre tlatihuani."

Although Ramírez Castañeda and González Casanova write "àmo" and Silva Galeana writes "ammo", everyone else seems to have simple "amo" with no saltillo for 'no, not'. On the other hand, Milpa Alta has saltillo in "ahque(n)" 'who' where other varieties of Nahuatl have a long vowel: *a:c*. People seem to vary quite freely between pronouncing the /k/ in *nica:n* 'here' and *a:xca:n* 'now'. When they drop it from *nica:n*, the resulting "nian" is homophonous with a ubiquitous form "nian" 'neither', which is borrowed from Spanish *ni aun*. (Handout 1.)

These might seem enough salient features to identify Milpa Alta Nahuatl, and they have already been noted by Whorf, van Zantwijk, Lastra, and Horcasitas. But each of these fieldworkers worked with just a few speakers. It is good to see which of their observations hold for a larger sample. Second, all the dialect features mentioned above are characteristic of a larger area than just the Federal District.<sup>3</sup> Let us look at what else we can extract from the literature of Milpa Alta.

#### a. Merger of saltillo and weakened consonants:

In addition to the texts themselves, which are written in a variety of notations, we have commentary by Whorf, van Zantwijk, Lastra, and Horcasitas on Milpa Alta pronunciation. Whorf heard the "saltillo" as a sharply audible glottal closure followed by an aspirated release.

<sup>2</sup> Only Whorf records the 2nd person plural prefixes as *am-* and *ame:ch-*. Yet one of his informants, doña Luz, has *nam-* and *name:ch-*. Whorf probably understood these as *in am-* and *in ame:ch-*. While this is likely the historical source of the initial *n*, the reanalysis has been complete. Milpa Alta speakers in this sample don't produce *am-*, *ame:ch*, *amehhua:n*.

<sup>3</sup> The omnipresent phenomena of nasal-omission, intrusion, and substitution that Karttunen and Lockhart documented in colonial period Nahuatl documents from all over Mexico are well-represented in the Milpa Alta texts. About the only place Horcasitas writes final saltillo in the speech of doña Luz is when he perceives it as [n].

He claimed this made it quite distinct from the pronunciation in Tepoztlan, where saltillo was simply [h], (as it was and is pronounced in many other Nahuatl communities around Mexico). At the end of words, Whorf wrote, the glottal catch is nearly inaudible, however, leaving behind just the aspiration.

The texts clearly demonstrate that in Milpa Alta speech syllable-final consonants are weakened to the point of near inaudibility when followed by another consonant.<sup>4</sup> This is indicated by pervasive writing of them as "h" or a diacritic on the preceding vowel or by total omission of them. (Handout 2.)

Frow Whorf's description of the audible glottal closure of saltillo in Milpa Alta, one would expect that saltillo and the [h] realization of the first segment of a consonant cluster would not sound the same. Yet for the most part Milpa Alta texts do not distinguish saltillo from weakened consonants, writing them all with "h". Whorf himself confused the two. In his notation he writes saltillo with an apostrophe before the "h": "h." Yet what he transcribes as "pitsa'htli" does not contain saltillo, but is from *pitzahtli*/pit<sup>a</sup>akt'i/. (Handout 3.)

Native speakers themselves (Lucio, doña Luz, van Zantwijk's correspondents, López Avila, and Silva Galeana) sometimes write as though the weakened consonants have their full value and as though word-final saltillo is audible, while linguists transcribing their speech write the weakened consonants all as "h" and do not usually write word-final saltillo at all. This is particularly apparent for doña Luz, since we have samples of her own writing as well as transcriptions of her speech by Barlow and Horcasitas. For example, doña Luz writes "tlaltikpaktli," while Horcasitas transcribes "tlaltihpahtli." (Handout 4.) Barlow tends to transcribe more syllable-final full consonants than Horcasitas, as in "šiktemo", "tikpiah"; his segmentation of words is better; and he frequently writes saltillo as "h" at the end of words as well as internally. Still, there is a difference between the way Barlow and Horcasitas transcribed doña Luz's speech, and the way she wrote it herself, a demonstration of the contrast between what the native speaker intends and what the fieldworker perceives. No one was wrong. Barlow and Hor-

<sup>4</sup> By "weakened" I mean devoiced in the case of resonants and "de-obstruantized" in the case of stops, affricates, and fricatives. The result is that all consonants are potentially pronounced as [h]. (See Karttunen and Lockhart 1977.) However, in the case of Milpa Alta speech, weakening for is evident specifically /k/, /t/, and /w/. Insofar as geminate /ll/ is often written as single "l" consonant-weakening probably affects the first segment of /ll/ much as it affects the first one of /tt/ in the verb *ilta* 'to see something/someone'.

casitas recorded the results of weakening, while doña Luz wrote the consonants she meant, whether they were audible or not.

With respect to saltillo, Horcasitas went a step beyond. He said, in agreement with Whorf, that saltillo was very audible,<sup>5</sup> but when he published the *Cuentos* and the autobiography, he omitted saltillo almost entirely. Most instances of "h" in these books are weakened forms of /k/, /t/, or /w/. Comparison of doña Luz's own writing with Barlow's and Horcasitas's transcriptions shows how cautious we must be in drawing generalizations from a single questionnaire or from one individual's transcriptions.

#### b. Distinctive vowel length

Just as one might draw the conclusion from some of the sources that final saltillo has been lost from Milpa Alta Nahuatl, one might also conclude that the contrast between long and short vowels is no longer operative. In one of her contributions to *Mexihkatl itonalama*, doña Luz writes the word for 'moon' with a double vowel repeatedly, "meētstli," but she does not double any other vowels in the text.

The dialect questionnaire has a section which elicits minimal pairs, and it succeeds in getting contrasting forms for 'to burn'/'to hide', 'to follow'/'to sow', etc. But when attention is not focused on minimal pairs (which may be well-known shibboleths among Nahuatl speakers) most long vowels are not so marked by fieldworkers or native-speaker writers.

Even very common words are handled inconsistently. For instance, in the detailed questionnaire done in Milpa Alta, the vowel of *a:tl* 'water' is not marked long, but the vowel in derived *a:tic* 'something watery' is. Despite plenty of evidence that some vowels are long and that a few minimal pairs are maintained, from the written record contrastive vowel length might appear moribund in Milpa Alta.

There are two factors that we must take into consideration, however. First of all, fieldworkers transcribing Nahuatl and listening for prolongation of vowels may be missing phonetic cues for vowel length. In his 1930 manuscript and again in his 1946 publication Whorf remarks on relative pitch of the stressed syllable (usually penultimate) and the following syllable. He demonstrates that the relative tone for the two

<sup>5</sup> Personal communication. However, in the original transcriptions by Horcasitas, Thomas Ford, and Sarah O. de Ford, which are included in Box 19 of the personal papers of Horcasitas at the Tulane University Latin American Library, saltillo is reliably indicated with the apostrophe and occasionally with "h".

syllables is influenced by whether the final syllable is open or closed, but then he gives three minimal pairs in which *all* final syllables are open and the distinction is by pitch alone. In each of these pairs, one member has a long vowel in the stressed syllable and the other has a short vowel. (Handout 5.)<sup>6</sup> Native speaker/writer and fieldworker alike may not note relative pitch in terms of vowel length unless in a citation form the vowel is also noticeably prolonged.

The second consideration is this. Just as nobody, not even the meticulous writers Librado Silva Galeana and doña Luz or the equally meticulous transcribers Whorf and Barlow, ever writes all the saltillos, nobody writes all the long vowels. But when we consider the whole body of written Nahuatl from Milpa Alta, we see that the vowels that are marked long are for the most part ones we would expect to be long (based on other sources that mark vowel length, including the dictionary of Tetelcingo (Morelos). There appear to be errors, but they are relatively few. Intuitive knowledge of distinctive vowel length extends beyond the minimal pairs to much more vocabulary, but it is not clear how far. Between fieldworkers possibly missing the pitch cue for it and native speakers not having a tradition of writing it, it is hard to tell. This situation is in marked contrast to the weakening of the first consonant in a consonant cluster described above, which is clearly characteristic of everyone's speech all the time.

### c. Vowel slippage

Van Zantwijk, Lastra, and Horcasitas noticed that within the district of Milpa Alta, a tendency to pronounce /o/ as /u/ was localized in Santa Ana Tlacotenco. This is borne out by the data, although—oddly enough—not by van Zantwijk's own. In his examples the only instances of "u" are in two words "cuzan" 'very much' and "tuzan" 'pocket gopher'. Van Zantwijk says that the former, used synonymously with *cencah*, is particular to Milpa Alta. It also appears in Whorf's Milpa Alta text (as "ko-sa") and in doña Luz's *Cuentos* (as "coza"), but Joe Campbell has recorded it as far away as the west coast of Michoacan. Whorf took it for the noun *cosa* borrowed from Spanish (1946:379),

<sup>6</sup> In spite of these pairs from Milpa Alta, Whorf concluded that the it was Tepoztlan, not Milpa Alta, where relative pitch was determined by whether the penultimate vowel is long or short. In the 1930 manuscript he then reinterprets Rincón's and Carochi's minimal pairs in terms of tone rather than in terms of vowel length and Saltillo.



although why that would be used as an intensifier is unclear. The Nahuatl noun *tozan* was borrowed into Spanish as *tuzan*, and the *tuzan* in van Zantwijk's example may be a back loan. But there are plenty of unquestionable instances of "u" for /o/ in the data from López Avila and Silva Galeana, and this is in marked contrast to the rest of the Milpa Alta texts.

In the detailed questionnaire answered by López A., there are proportionally fewer replacements of *o* with "u" than in his "Legendary History," but there are still plenty. They are rare in word-final position unless a consonant following the vowel has been omitted. Both short and long vowels are realized as [u], and for many instances of a stem with [u], there is another instance of the same stem with [o].

Silva Galeana shows a preference for "u" in his writing, although he also writes "o" often. Again, both short /o/ and long /o:/ are written part of the time with "o" and part of the time with "u". (Handout 7.) There is no obvious conditioning factor. Santa Ana Tlacotenco speech is set off from that of Milpa Alta center and the other surrounding communities by the tendency to pronounce /o/ as [u], but there is no general rule about how often or where.

In contrast, variation between [o] and [yo] is general throughout Milpa Alta and is almost entirely restricted to one environment, the antecessive prefix. This prefix is always word-initial. Whorf thought that "yo-" was the contraction of *ye o-* (*ye* being a particle meaning 'already') and that "yo-" only occurred with the preterite and was a loan translation from Spanish. This is not borne out by the Milpa Alta texts, however; "yo-" appears with equal frequency with preterite and imperfect verbs, and there is no sense distinction to be found between verbs prefixed with "o-" and those prefixed with "yo-." With few exceptions, the Milpa Alta speakers/writers vary freely between using the two forms. The unidentified informants of Boas and González Casanova, and doña Luz favor "o-"; Alfonso Lawrrabakio and López Avila use "o-" almost exclusively; and Silva Galeana favors "yo-".

In the texts of Ramírez Castañeda and doña Luz distal *on* also occasionally appears as "yon." (Handout 8) But though this may begin to look analogous to a process that yields "yetl" from *etl* 'bean' and "yeyecatl" from *ehe:catl* 'wind', it does not affect all stems beginning with /o/. It remains tied almost, although not quite, to the antecessive prefix.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> All Milpa Alta's stems begin with [ye], but this is not a productive process either. The Spanish particle *entonces* has been borrowed into Nahuatl and appears with great frequency in the Milpa Alta texts, but not as "yetonces."

The vowel /i/ is often recorded as "e", especially in word-final position, notably in the writing of López Avila and the questionnaire he answered, but also with less frequency in the other texts. (Handout 9.)

This lowering of /i/ to [e] runs counter to a "drag-chain" phonological change commonly seen in Nahuatl in which /a/ is raised to [e], /e/ is raised to [i], and /i/ is vulnerable to being dropped altogether in initial position, yielding pairs such as "ihuan"/"huan", "ihcuac"/"cuac", "ipan"/"pan", etc. (abundantly attested in Milpa Alta). The virtually universal Milpa Alta forms "tlitl," "tixtli," and "tlīca" corresponding to *tleitl*, *textli*, and *tlei:ca* fall into this more expected pattern, as do "yencuic" and "ayemo," which van Zantwijk claimed as characteristic of Milpa Alta. (Handout 10.) Yet while these fit into a widely observed pattern, they, too, are for the most part bound to particular lexical items. In the texts of Milpa Alta *mi(y)ac* appears almost to the exclusion of "miek", which is used only by Silva Galeana and rarely by doña Luz. Nor does one find instances of \**titl* for *teitl* 'stone'. One might expect "tlin" for *tlein* 'what?', but it is nearly universally pronounced as "tlaon." Only López Avila produces "tlin," and even he provides the characteristic "tlaon" form on the questionnaire.

There are other scattered, yet persistent vowel changes. The postposition *-tloc* 'near' appears in several different texts as "-tlac", "-tlakw", and strangely "-tlohk", while /a/ appears as "o" in "ompo" and "ompoyon" in Horcasitas's transcription of doña Luz's speech.

What we have here seems like something of a muddle if we are looking for contextually conditioned, exceptionlessly functioning phonological rules or correspondences. Instead we find many/most members of the speech community sharing special pronunciations of certain individual words, and a bit of evidence of these pronunciations beginning to extend out to a few other words. At the same time, it appears that contrastive vowel length has shrunk down to some restricted lexical set. We have tendencies rather than rules, and initially these tendencies are determined lexically rather than by phonological/phonetic context. Learning parts of one's language atomistically would seem to be much harder than to do so by generalization. If this is the case, the Nahuatl speakers of Milpa Alta in this century have done a particularly heroic job.

#### c. Grammatical characteristics and calques from Spanish

Whorf was of the opinion that structurally Milpa Alta Nahuatl had more in common with the sixteenth-century Nahuatl of Tenochti-

tlán than Tepoztlán Nahuatl did, but that lexically it was much more influenced by Spanish, because of its closer proximity to the capital. Van Zantwijk makes a point of the difference between conservative speech and the Nahuatl of common laborers, providing sample comparisons. His samples of "Teomexica" speech are selfconscious and archaizig, loaded with compounding and noun incorporation, studded with neologisms for things like 'train', 'bus', and 'television'. (Handout 11.) They even contain rhetorical difrasismos and are much in the purist spirit of the productions of the people in the Malinche volcano area whom Jane and Kenneth Hill dub the "linguistic terrorists" (Hill and Hill 1986: 122-141). On the other hand, the contrasted "macehualli" speech the reader is invited to view as degenerate and amusing contains Spanish loan vocabulary and calques that are common in colonial-period Nahuatl notarial documentation. Thus van Zantwijk's view of Nahuatl usage in Milpa Alta in the 1950s was colored more by contemporary local prejudices than by historical fact.

The folktales recounted by Ramírez Castañeda, Lucio, the unidentified informants of Boas and González Casanova, and by doña Luz are replete with Spanish particles such as *pues* and *entonces*. Spanish *que* appears as a relative pronoun, or Nahuatl interrogative *tlein* (in its Milpa Alta "tlaon") is used noninterrogatively as the equivalent of *que*. The Nahuatl number *ce*: 'one' or the longer form with classifier *cente(tl)* has assumed the function of the Spanish indefinite article *un*. Nahuatl *cequintin* corresponds to plural *unos*. Formulae for beginning folktales are *ce tonalli* 'one day' and *ce viaje* 'once upon a time'. (Handout 12.)

Double plural forms with both Nahuatl and Spanish suffixes, which are common in midto-late sixteenth-century documents are also common in twentieth-century Milpa Alta texts, but whereas the 16th-century double plurals were Spanish loans where the Nahuatl plural suffix followed the Spanish one, in Milpa Alta one finds Spanish plural *-s* added to Nahuatl agentive nouns. (Handout 13.) As in the colonial-period texts, borrowed Spanish words are often strongly assimilated to Nahuatl pronunciation and integrated into the morphology, as in the case of "xenolatin" 'ladies' that Boas failed to italicize as a Spanish loan. But the old-fashioned double plural form "clixtianosme" in one of Van Zantwijk's texts looks like a selfconscious archaism. (Handout 14.) A subtle expression of Spanish influence on Nahuatl are the two parallel uses of the Nahuatl verb *pano*: in doña Luz's description of the 1935 flood. The verb literally means 'to pass over', especially to

ford water. She writes of the pilgrims "tlen *opanotaya* ica ipan toxolal" 'who were passing through our yard'. But in the same text, she repeatedly uses *pano*: in the idiomatic sense of Spanish *pasar*: "*Opanoc* ipan xihuitl novecientos treinta y cinco" "*Pasó* en el año de (mil) novecientos treinta y cinco"; "tlen opapano" "¡que ha pasado!" (Handout 15.)

Striking to the reader are clauses and sentences that have word-for-word correspondences with Spanish ones (Handout 16.):

tic pia	ti nech macaz	in cahuitl	(López Ávila)
Tienes	que darne	tiempo	

ipan otlí	sanima	mocuepa de cristiano	(Boas text)
En el camino,	inmediatamente,	se convirtió en cristiano	

San niman	inin tlatsikakonetl	oyak	(doña Luz)
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Luego	este hombre flojo	se fue	
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in wintito	oksepa	itlanimaiknewan	
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a emborrachar	otra vez	con sus amigos	
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Zan quemmanian,	teotlahcan anozo ipan domingo,	(Silva Galeana)
Sólo a veces,	en las tardes o en los domingos,	
oninahuiltiaya	nochan intloc in nocniuhuan	
jugaba	en mi casa con mis hermanos	

People like doña Luz, López Ávila, and Silva Galeana, who have become writers in Nahuatl may have been to some extent rebuilding Nahuatl for themselves as they went along, and Spanish has been a major resource for them, just as it was for Nahuatl notaries throughout the colonial period. Particularly in the case of López Ávila, one has an impression of a writer struggling with his language, getting in over his head like a college freshman trying to master expository prose. When López Ávila complains that "ciertos especialistas" have gone so far as to say what he has written is not Nahuatl, it is possible to see why they said so and also to see how wrong that judgement is.

There are further details of Milpa Alta speech as well, particularly ones peculiar to individual speakers<sup>8</sup> and other ones that Milpa Alta

<sup>8</sup> Ramírez C. writes "II" in many places where there should be a single "I". Lucio has [g<sup>w</sup>] for /w/. Horcasitas usually transcribes *onca:n* as "oncuan" for doña Luz. López A. is especially given to final "e" for /e/. Whorf and Boas note palatalization of final /k/ and /t/.

shares with other Nahua communities in a wide area to the east of the Federal District.<sup>9</sup> What would Nahuatl speakers themselves seize on as the identifying characteristics of Milpa Alteño speech? It would not necessarily be one of the most regular or the most frequent pronunciations, lexical items, or grammatical constructions. In a study of the speech of the West Indies, another area where people are hypersensitive to linguistic nuance, Peter Roberts remarks that, "General conclusions about an individual's speech... are reached as a result of salient features used, irrespective of the actual frequency with which they are used." (Roberts 1988:21) In surveying the fine details of Milpa Alta usage in its century of literary production, I am in the same position as Boas, González Casanova, Whorf, Barlow, and Horcasitas. We make a note of everything, never quite knowing what is important and what is insignificant to the people who produced it.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> A construction shared by Milpa Alta and Puebla/Tlaxcala Nahuatl is reduplication of the noun stem in the singular in the presence of an attitudinal suffix: *tetipitontli* 'hill' (Boas), *iciciguantzin* 'his wife', *tlatlacoton* 'stick' (Lucio, *totochton* rabbit' (Ramírez C.), *inkokoton* 'their jacket', *inkokoyolton* 'their bell' (Orosko/Arambura).

<sup>10</sup> The Department of Linguistics at the University of Texas has a demonstration tape of regional American dialects that contains a sample of the speech of a woman who took classes and worked diligently to rid herself of her New York City accent. In the sample she makes one slip. Generally people who hear the tape the first time know something is amiss but aren't sure what. When they guess or are told, they immediately identify the single instance in which she betrayed her origins.

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A Hundred Years of Milpa Alta Nahuatl  
Frances Karttunen

(Appendix)

Catalogue of Milpa Alta Texts

1912. Isabel Ramírez Castañeda. Milpa Alta. Bilingual. Identified as "Profesora, Mexico." Said by Boas to be "native of Milpa Alta." Paper in proceedings of 18th International Cong. of Americanists. Also wrote and translated three texts for Boas in 1912, which he published in 1926.

1912. "Lucio." Said by Boas to be "native of Milpa Alta." Wrote and translated texts published by Boas in 1926. Could have been Lucio Tapia, who in 1908 was principal of the Concepción Arenal School in Milpa Alta, where Luz Jiménez was a student. At that time he shared living quarters above the school with a school inspector named Guzmán.

1920. Unattributed Milpa Alta texts published by Boas and Haeberlin.

1920. Text "de un individuo de Milpa Alta" published by González Casanova as "Un cuento en mexicano de Milpa Alta, D. F."

1930. Whorf field notes. Principal Milpa Alta informant: Milesio Gonsales. Assistance from Luz Jiménez and Pedrita Jiménez. Includes text and sample sentences, but not attributed to specific informants. Article based on notes published 1946. Whorf's writing is

- excellent source of information about Milpa Alta pronunciation that is not easily obtainable from orthography or transcription.
1946. González Casanova's, *Cuentos indígenas*, published. (Sources not identified. Some may have been from Milpa Alta.)
1949. Luz Jiménez, Story taped by Robert Barlow. Transcription and translation published in *Estudios de cultura náhuatl*, II, 1960.
1949. Fidencio Villanueva Rojas, *Aztecacuicame, Cantos aztecas*, 13 pages, Poetry.
1950. Contributions to newspaper, *Mexihkatl itonalama* by Luz Jiménez (Sept. 8, Oct. 6), Kayetano Orosko and Magdalena Aramburo (Nov. 10, 1950), Alfonso Lawrrabakio (Dec. 8).
- 1957-1965. Luz Jiménez, *Los cuentos en náhuatl de doña Luz Jiménez*, 44 stories collected over long period and published posthumously in 1979, Ed. by Horcasitas and Sarah O. de Ford.
1957. Roberto Baranda Salcedo, Letter to van Zantwijk, published by Z. in 1960.
1959. Miguel Vilchis Mancera, Letter to van Zantwijk, published by Z. in 1960.
1960. Diverse texts published by R. A. M. van Zantwijk, some unattributed, others attributed. Including: four unattributed, apparently transcriptions of oral texts; four unattributed poems; four poems attributed to Milpa Alta poet Fidencio Villanueva Rojas; Milpa Alta versions of some poems widely known among Nahuatl-speaking communities; two unattributed essays; two personal letters (above, 1957, 1959).
- 1963-1965. Luz Jiménez, *De Porfirio Díaz a Zapata: memoria náhuatl de Milpa Alta*. Autobiography. Published posthumously in 1968, Ed. by Fernando Horcasitas.
1976. Two men and one woman, all over sixty, from the Milpa Alta village of San Bartolomé Xicomulco provided a short vocabulary list to Yolanda Lastra de Suárez and Fernando Horcasitas, and an 89-year-old woman from the Milpa Alta village of San Salvador Cuauhtenco dictated a short text to them. Published in *Anales de Antropología*, vol. XIII, 1976, p. 103-136.



1976. Informant: Petra Romero de Rivera, Tomás Rivera Romero y Bardo Rivera Romero. UNAM dialect questionnaire elicited by Jeff Burnham and Wick Miller for Milpa Alta. Published in 1986 as questionnaire 12.2 in Lastra, *Las áreas dialectales del náhuatl moderno*.
- 1975, 1976, 1981. Carlos López Ávila, UNAM dialect questionnaire elicited by Yolanda Lastra (1975), Wick Miller (1976), Martha Ruth Islas (1981) for Santa Ana Tlacotenco. Published as questionnaire 12.3 in Lastra, 1986.
1982. Carlos López Ávila, *Malacachtepec Momoxco: Historia legendaria de Milpa Alta*, Published by CIESAS, Casa Chata, Santa Ana Tlacotenco, 86 running pages of text.
- 1984-1989. Librado Silva Galeana from Santa Ana Tlacotenco, University education, translator of fray Juan Bautista's *huehuetlahtolli*, Published texts in *Estudios de cultura náhuatl* and *Tlalocan*, 1984-1989.

1. *Some varieties of Nahuatl Milpa Alta and adjoining areas*

mochi 'all'	nochi
ni-no- 'I-myself'	no-
am-, ame:ch-, amehhua:n 'y'all'	nam-, name:ch-, ame(h)huan
ye 'already'	ye
ye:ctli 'something good'	ye:ctli
yetzticah 'to be-Honorific'	yetzticah
etl 'bean'	yetl
eztli 'blood'	yeztli
epatl 'skunk'	epatl
tletl 'fire'	tlitl
textli 'flour'	tixtli (but NOT *titl < tetl 'stone')
tlei:ca 'why?'	tlica
ihhqui 'thus, just so'	ihki, ihke
a:c 'who'	ahque(n)
nica:n 'here'	nican, nian (cf. nian 'neither' < Sp. ni aun)
a:xca:n 'now'	axcan, axan

## 2. Consonant weakening/\_\_\_C

*h*

- tenamihti < te:na:micti/te:na:mikti/ (Ramírez C.)  
 teihnohtilli < teicno:ittilia/teikno:ittilia/ (Ramírez C.)  
 oquihtac < O:quittac/o:kittak/ (Lucio)  
 xinehchia < xine:chchiya/šine:ččiya/ (Lucio)  
 ohsépà < occeppa/okseppa/ (Whorf)  
 tlatsihke < tlatziuhqui/t'at<sup>s</sup>iwiki/ (doña Luz)

*diacritic*

- ti ñotlaca < ti-icno:tla:cah/ti:kno:t'a:kah/ (Ramírez C.)  
 ìqui < iuhqui/iwiki/ (Ramírez C.)

*zero*

- nipia < nicpiya/nikpiya/ (Boas)  
 quita < quitta/kitta/ (Boas)  
 noiui < no iuhqui/no iwiki/ (Boas)  
 opehque < o:pe:uhqueh/o:pe:wkeh/ (doña Luz)

3. Whorf's pitsa'htli < pitzactli/pit<sup>s</sup>akt'i/ (/k/, not saltillo)

4. tlaltikpaktli (doña Luz) 'the earth's surface'  
 tlaltihpaktli (Horcasitas)  
  
 nikneki (doña Luz) 'I want it'  
 niknek (Barlow)  
 nihnequi (Horcasitas)  
  
 tlacah (doña Luz) 'people'  
 tlaca (Horcasitas)  
 tikpohpoaskeh (doña Luz) 'we will cleanse him/her'  
 topopoazque (Horcasitas)

## 5. Whorf:

- pátla change, exchange      patla  
 pátla knead, stir, mix up      pa:tla

tcítci or tcéctci dog	chichi
t[c]ítci nurse, suck (baby, sub- ject)	chi:chi:

tókà follow	toca
tôka sow (seed)	to:ca

6. Letter to van Zantwijk from Roberto Barando Salcedo, Tlaco-  
tenco:

Tehuan *cuzan* titlacoya "Nosotros sentimos mucho"

Whorf 1946: kone-tl *ko-sa* mawiltiani 'the child is very playful'

doña Luz (*Cuentos*): quename *coza* oquiauh "cómo había llovi-  
do tanto"

7. López Avila questionnaire:

Missing C:	otlapu	otlapoh
	oni?ku	onicco:uh/o:nikko:w/
	okwepu	ocuepo:n

Short/o/:	cucumahtli	tzotzomahtli 'rag(s)'
	numetu	nometo:n 'my sheep'

Long/o:/	papalutl	pa:pa:lo:tl 'butterfly'
	uwala	o:hua:llah

tutuchti/ayotochtli	to:ch- 'rabbit'
yUlkatl/yolo	yol- 'to live'
numetu/nosiwa	no- 'my'

Silva Galeana:

Short/o/:	muchipa	mochipa 'continually'
	yuac	yohuac 'at night'

Long/o:/:	xupantla/xopantla	xo:pantlah 'rainy season'
	mihyupachoa/iztayotl	-yo: (nominal suffix)

8. Oquicuitòyon (Ramírez C.)	o:quicuitoh on
ompoyon (doña Luz)	ompa on

9. *López A.:*                      *doña Luz:*                      *Lucio:*  
     tonalle, tunalle                      topixque                      topixque  
     cualle                      nansintle                      (and all agentives)  
     tlahtole  
     nequiztle                      *Boas:*                      *Orosko/Arambura:*  
     polihue                      ihke                      siwapel
10. tetipitontli (Boas)                      tetepe:to:ntli 'hill'  
     ilehuia (Ramírez C.)                      e:le:huia: 'to desire  
    something'  
     notlapich (Lastra/Horc. text)                      notlapech 'my bed'
- yenkwiik (Orosko/Arambura)                      yancuic 'something new'  
     yencuic (Zantwijk)  
     yenwik (UNAM, Milpa Alta quest.)  
     yenk<sup>w</sup>ik (López A.)  
     ayemo (Whorf, doña Luz, Zantwijk)                      ayamo: 'not yet'  
     yecac (doña Luz)                      i:yacac 'its ridge'  
     huepanhuítia (Ramírez C.)                      huapa:hua- 'to raise  
    children'
11. *Neologisms*
- from Zantwijk:                      tepozcoatl 'train' (lit: metal snake)  
    tepozmohuilana 'bus' (lit: metal self-propelled)  
    huecaittayotl 'television' (lit: far vision)  
    tepoztonaltlatamachihualli 'clock'
- from other texts:                      teposyoyoli 'bus' (UNAM quest. MA)  
    tepoztlamachotiloni 'clock' (doña Luz)
12. *Indefinite articles:*
- se kalli 'a house' (López A.), se tlakatl 'a person' (Lawrrabakio)  
     cente amatl 'a (piece of) paper' (Lucio)  
     cequintin metztli 'several months' (doña Luz)  
     cequintin tlacâ 'some people' (Van Zantwijk text)
- ce tonalli 'one day', ce viaje 'one upon a time' (Lucio)

13. *Double plurals:*

mimihquez (doña Luz)	mi:micqueh 'corpses'
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<i>Triple plurals:</i>	1.	2.	3.
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inimequez (doña Luz)	ini:n-meh -que	-s
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inomeques (Boas)	ino:n-meh -que	-s
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- |                                  |                              |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 14. xenolatin (Boas text)        | señora-tin 'ladies'          |
| clixtianosme (van Zantwijk text) | cristiano-s-meh 'Christians' |

15. tlen *opanotaya* ica ipan toxolal 'who were passing through our yard.'

*Opanoc* ipan xihuitl novecientos treinta y cinco "Pasó en el año de (mil) novecientos treinta y cinco";

"tlen *opapano*" "que ha pasado!" (doña Luz)

(Notice distributive. Flooding happened in several places.)

- |             |               |            |               |
|-------------|---------------|------------|---------------|
| 16. tic pia | ti nech macaz | in cahuitl | (López Avila) |
| Tienes      | que darme     | tiempo     |               |
|             |               |            | (Boas text)   |

ipan otlí	sanima	mocuepa de cristiano
-----------	--------	----------------------

En el camino, inmediatamente, se reconvirtió en cristiano

San niman	inin tlatsikakonetl	oyak (doña Luz)
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Luego	este hombre flojo	se fue
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in wintito	oksepa	itlanimaiknewan
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a emborrachar	otra vez	con sus amigos
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(Silva Galeana)

Zan quemmanian,	teotlahcan anozo ipan domingo,
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Sólo a veces,	en las tardes o en los domingos,
---------------	----------------------------------

oninahuiltiaya	nochan	intloc in nocniuahuan
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jugaba	en mi casa	con mis hermanos
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