

THE XALAQUIA CEREMONY

CHARLES E. DIBBLE

The present study is an attempt to explore the possible meaning or meanings of a ceremony called *xalaquia*. The term is apparently limited to Sahagún's *Historia* and his *Primeros Memoriales*. Sahagún's explanation thereof occurs only once in the corresponding Spanish text.

The ceremony is first mentioned in Book II, in the month Uei tecuilhuitl. According to the Nahuatl text, after a woman had been arrayed as the likeness of the goddess Xilonen, "she entered at four places" —*nauhcampa yn aquja*, "or she entered the sand"—*anoço xalaquja*. Thus the entering at four places is a ceremony which is equated with entering the sand, i.e., the *xalaquia* ceremony. The Nahuatl text gives the meaning of the ceremony: "it was said 'she enters the sand' because in this way she made known her death—that on the morrow she would die—" *ynic mitoa xalaqui, ic quimachtilia yn jmiquiz, in miquiz muztla*. The Nahuatl text continues by giving the four places she entered and uses the verb *aqui* or *aquia*. *Xalaquia* does not occur in this portion of the text. In personal correspondance, Dr. Angel Maria Garibay K. suggested *aquia* is probably an assimilation of *aaquia* "enter the water". The four places of entry were Tetamazolco, Necoquixecan (Necoc Ixecan), Atenchicalcan and Xoloco. These four places or stations "followed, accompanied the four year-bearers —*acatl, tecpatl, calli, tochtli*—" *çã quitoctiaia, çan qujujaltiaia yn nauhtetl xiuhtonalli yn acatl, in tecpatl in calli, in tochtli*.¹

Sahagún's corresponding Spanish text adds further detail: "many women surrounded the woman [arrayed as the goddess Xilonen] and took her to offer incense at the four places" —*cercábanla muchas mujeres; llevábanla en medio a ofrecer incienso a cuatro partes*.

¹ Sahagún, 1950, II, 97-8.

"The offering took place on the afternoon prior to her death" *esta ofrenda hacia a la tarde antes que muriese*. "This offering was called *xalaquia* because she was to die the following day." *A esta ofrenda llamaban xalaquia porque el día siguiente había de morir*. The four places are mentioned and Sahagún adds that "these four places where the offerings were made commemorated the four year-bearers" *estos cuatro lugares donde ofrecían era en reverencia de los cuatro caracteres de la cuenta de los años*.²

It seems probable that the four places mentioned can be related to the four year-bearers and the four directions as follows: Tetamazolco —acatl— east; Necoc-Ixcan —tecpatl— north; Atenchicalcan —calli— west; Xollocó —tochtli— south. It is further possible that the four places were located along the four principal causeways at points where the causeways reached the lake shore.

The Nahuatl text and Sahagún's corresponding Spanish clearly relate the places to the year-bearers: Tetamazolco, Necoc Ixcan, Atenchicalcan, Xollocó —acatl, tecpatl, calli, tochtli—. The evidence relating the four year-bearers to the directions appears in Sahagún's Calendar Wheel (fig. 1), and its accompanying text as found in Book VII of the *Florentine Codex*. The text explains:

It proceedeth in this way: they begin with the east, which is where the reeds are (or, according to others, with the south, where the rabbit is) and say One Reed. And thence they go to the north, where the flint is, and they say Two Flint Knife. Then they go the west, where the house is, and there they say Three House. And then they go to the south, which is where the rabbit is, and they say Four Rabbit. And then they turn to the east, and say Five Reed.³

Some of the places mentioned have been located. Tetamazolco was a deep stretch of water, a launching place for boats at the east end of the causeway which led eastward from the ceremonial center.⁴ It was said to be near Tepetzinco.⁵ Necoc Ixcan (the place which faces both directions) has not been located. It could conceivably be where the north causeway intersects the *Tezontlalli* canal the boundary between Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco?⁶ Or it could be at

² Sahagún, 1956, I, 180.

³ Sahagún, 1950, VII, fig. 20.

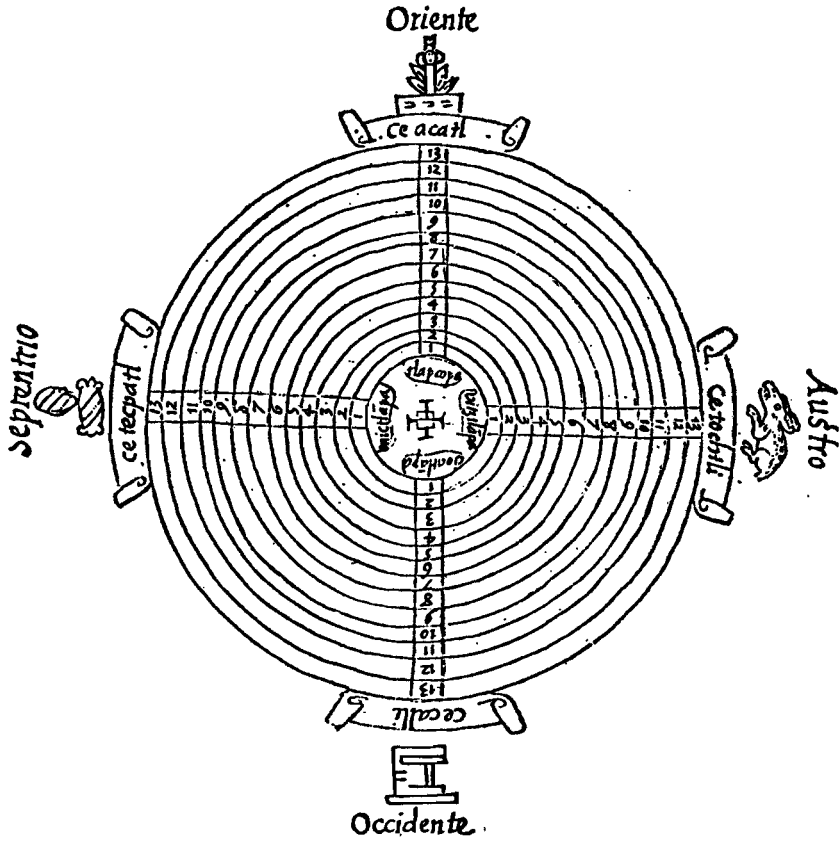
⁴ Marquina, 1960, fig. 1; Sahagún, 1950, II, 84.

⁵ Sahagún, 1956, IV, 62.

⁶ Caso, 1956, 9.

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Calendar Wheel (Florentine Codex).

the water's edge where the causeway bifurcates to Tepeyacac and Tenayuca, as shown in a map attributed to Hernán Cortés?⁷

The Nahuatl text states that Atenchicalcan was so named because "there the water gushed forth" —*uncan oalcholoia yn atl*, and "there the wind faded away—" *uncan oalpopoliujaia yn ecatl*.⁸ A temple called Atenchicalcan can be ruled out.⁹ A subdivision of Cuitlahuac called Atenchicalcan¹⁰ is likewise unlikely. A possibility is a canal or break in the causeway to Tacuba called Atenchicalco. Caso interprets the name as meaning "*en la orilla del chichical*" and locates it "*entre San Juan de Letrán y Zarco*".¹¹ Xolloc was a canal and a fortification at the southern edge of the island and along the causeway that led to Ixtapalapa.¹²

If there were the single reference to the *xalauia* ceremony, the form and meaning thereof would be clear. The impersonator destined to be sacrificed entered (and/or offered incense) at four places. The ceremony signified the participant would die the following day. A secondary meaning related the four places to the four year-bearers and the four directions. However, the term appears elsewhere in Book II and in Book IX, but without a corresponding explanation in Sahagún's Spanish text. These occurrences will be considered in the order of their appearance.

During the month Quecholli, bathed slaves were sacrificed in honor of Mixcoatl. The Nahuatl text relates that: "when the very feast day had arrived, when the twenty days of Quecholli had ended, then there was entering into the sand, then those who were to die entered the sand. After midday they then took them to where they would die. They took them in procession around the sacrificial stone". *Auh in oacic, in vel iquac ilhujtl, Quecholli inic tlamj cempoalli: uncā xalacoa, uncā xalauj, in mjquizque: vmmotzcalo, in tonatiuh: mec qujnvisa in vmpa mjquizque: qujmōiaalochoitia in techcatl*. Subsequently they took them to the *calpulco* where they kept them in vigil during the night and sacrificed them the following day.¹³

During the month of Panquetzaliztli, which did honor to Huitzilopochtli, the merchants were charged with the sacrificing of bathed

⁷ Marquina, 1960, fig. 1.

⁸ Sahagún, 1950, II, 97.

¹⁰ Gibson, 1964, 12, 42.

¹¹ Caso, 1956, 17.

¹² Marquina, 1960, 25.

¹³ Sahagún, 1950, II, 127-8.

slaves. The Nahuatl text records: "when they had been completely arrayed, when they had assembled, when they had been given gifts, then they took the bathed ones that they might enter the sand.¹⁴ When they had reached the temple-pyramid of the demon, then all climbed up the pyramid. When they came to the top, then they circled the sacrificial stone" in *ōtecencoaloc, in oncenvetz, in ontetlauhtiloc: njman ie ic qujnwica in tlaaltiti, xalaquizque: in onacique tlacateculotl iteupan, mec tleco in teucalticpac, in vmpantvetzito: mec qujoalioalooa in techcatl*. Subsequently they were brought down from the temple-pyramid, they held vigil over them during the night and sacrificed them the following day.¹⁵

During the month of Izcalli, bathed slaves were adorned as Ixcōauhqui impersonators of Xiuhtecuhtli.¹⁶ The Nahuatl text states: "upon the morrow, on the morning of [the feast of] Izcalli, the bathed ones entered the sand. They brought them into the sand there at Tzonmolco" in *ie iuh muztla, in ie oallatvi Izcalli: in tlaaltiti onxalaqui qujmonxalaquja vmpa tzommolco*. Subsequently they were taken to the *calpulco* where they were bound during the night and sacrificed the following day.¹⁷

Mention of the *xalaquia* ceremony occurs also in Book ix, where the activities of the merchants are described. It may well be the same ceremony as the one described for the month Panquetzaliztli.¹⁸ The Nahuatl text records: "And the fourth time that they invited guests was at the time when, on the morrow, the bathed ones were to die. While the sun was still a little strong they took them to [the temple of] Vitzilopochtli. There they brought them into the sand, there they made them drink the obsidian-knife-wash-water." "*Auh inic nappa tenotzaia: icoac in ie iuh moztla miquizque tlatlaaltiti, oc achi uei in tonatiuh, in quihuica ispan Vitzilobuchtli, in ompa quimoxalaquiaia, ompa quioalitia in itzpatlactli*."¹⁹ Dr. Garibay translates the phrase "*quim on xalaquiaya ompa quioalitia itzpatlactli*" as "los metían en arena (es decir), les daban a beber las lavazas de la piedra del sacrificio".²⁰

¹⁴ Seler translates *xalaquizque* as "das sie in den Sand hineingehen (geopfert werden)". Cf. Seler, 1927, 209.

¹⁵ Sahagún, 1950, II, 133-4.

¹⁶ In addition to Yacatecutli, Xiuhtecuhtli was a god of the merchants. Cf. *Ibid.*, 119-20.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 150-1.

¹⁸ Sahagún's Spanish text informs us: "De esta manera dicha hacían banquete los mercaderes en la fiesta de panquetzaliztli." Sahagún, 1956, III, 56.

¹⁹ Sahagún, 1950, IX, 63.

²⁰ Sahagún, 1961, 146-7.

In an article presently in press, entitled *The Institution of Slave-bathing*, Dr. Arthur J. O. Anderson, citing Dr. Garibay's translation and Durán's several references to the stupifying effect of *ytzpacalatl*, suggests that "the sand-entering ceremony (*xalauquia*) either accompanied the drinking of obsidian-knife-blade-wash-water or was a term which meant the same thing".

Finally, apart from the occurrences in Sahagún's *Historia*, a similar ceremony is mentioned in his *Primeros Memoriales*. It occurred during the month of Cuauhtleua and reads as follows: "And when the sun set, then the sacred banners were implanted in the sand. Everyone took there the sacred banners which had been prepared in the houses. They ascended to the top of the mountain, whercupon all the commoners offered blood sacrifices there in the courtyard of the devil. All the commoners, nobles, lords carried the sacred banners. For this reason was it called 'sacred banners are implanted in the sand'.²¹ And there was a circular procession."²² *Auh in iquac ye onaquiz tonatiuh. Auh in iq... teteuh xallaquilo, vnca mochi quivalcuja, y calpā mochivaya teteuitl vncā onevaya in tepeticpac ic omoxtlavaya macevalti in vncā diablo itoalco, muchintin q'valcuia in macevalti, in pipilti, in tetecuhti, ipāpa ū motenevaya teteuh xalauquilloya; ioā tlayavaloloya.*²³ The passage refers to the sacrifice of small children (*tlacateteuhme*) to Tlaloc. The pictorial scene accompanying the text shows the carrying of the sacred banners (*teteuitl*) and the small children (*tlacateteuhme*).

From the several instances of the *xalauquia* ceremony, it is possible to construct a composite picture. A form of the ceremony occurred during the months of Cuauhtleua, Uei tecuilhuitl, Quecholli, Panquetzalitzli, Izcalli. The ceremony was associated with rituals venerating the goddess Xilonen and the gods Tlaloc, Xiuhtecutli and Vitzilopochtli. It involved bathed slaves, sacred banners, the merchants. It related to the obsidian-knife-blade-wash-water, to the offering of incense, to the four year-bearers, to the four directions, to the entering at four places on the island and perhaps to the encircling of the sacrificial stone. However, reference to the four directions, the year-bearers, entering the sand or entering at four places is limited to the Xilonen example.

²¹ Seler translate *teteuhxalauquilloya* as "das (nach den vier Richtungen) In-den-Sand-Pflanzen der Opferstreifen". Cf. Seler, 1927, 55.

²² For alternative translations of this passage, see Seler, 1927, 54-5; Garibay, 1948, 292; Jiménez Moreno, 1974, 19-22.

²³ Sahagún, 1905-8, VI, fol. 250.

A factoring out of the common denominators in the several instances proves more difficult. The ceremony was performed by the impersonator of a diety or by those sacrificed in honor of a diety. The ceremony, usually in the afternoon, was a prelude to the actual sacrifice on the following day and a portent of the impending sacrifice. The ceremony seems to have been intimately associated with a limited category of sacrificial victims, that is, children who were especially purchased for the Cuauitleua ceremony and slaves who had been purchased and "ritually bathed" or "purified".

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