

NAHUATL NAMES FOR BODY PARTS

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CHAPTER XXVII of Book X of the "Historia General de las Cosas de Nueva España" deals with the body parts. Fr. Bernardino de Sahagún made no attempt to translate the Nahuatl of the chapter, instead he commented briefly on the problems of conversion and education leaving most of the Spanish column blank. The Nahuatl text is not a treatise on each of the body parts, but is rather a compilation of adjectives and verbs which are habitually applied to the body parts listed. There are no complete sentences.

The writer is aware of two published studies on the subject matter of this chapter. Working, not from Sahagún, but from the Spanish-Nahuatl of Molina's dictionary, Dr. Rafael Martín del Campo¹ has published an excellent preliminary study of the body parts. In 1940 Professor Dr. August Freiherr Von Gall² published his translation of this chapter.

While the body parts can be generally equated with Spanish and English terms, the identification of areas of the body, and the grouping of body parts differs in the Nahuatl to a degree that the translation of some terms becomes problematic. An example is found on Fol. 94 of the Florentine Ms. *To-maiuia, tonepaleuia: yn vncan titopaleuia, tomaiauia, tonepaleuia: iehoatl in toma in toxi, in tixtelolo*. Our moving parts, our helping parts, there where we help ourselves. Our moving parts, our helping parts, these are our arms, our legs, our eyes.

¹ RAFAEL MARTÍN DEL CAMPO: *La Anatomía entre los Mexica* (Revista de la Sociedad Mexicana de Historia Natural. México, 1959).

² DR. AUGUST FREIHERR VON GALL: *Medizinische Bücher (tici-amatl) der alten Azteken aus der ersten Zeit der Conquista* (Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte der Naturwissenschaften und der Medizin. Berlin 1940). Band 7, Heft 4 und 5, pp. 119-216.

The names for some areas of the body reveal the limiting factors inherent in Nahuatl linguistic terms. An example is the word *tilaoaciutl*, which on Fol. 71V applies to areas on the surface of the body. This can be translated as "thickness". However, for *tilauac* Molina gives "cosa gruesa, así como manta, tabla, seto, papel, torillas y esteras, y cosas semejantes". Hence implicit in the terms is the idea of expanse and a degree of flatness. The term is explained on Fol. 94 of the Ms.: *totilaoaca, totitiloaca: in nacatl tilaoac*. Our thick, our thick places, the thick flesh. Referring to the body, *tilaoaciutl* denotes the comparatively flat surfaces where there is considerable depth between the skin surface and the skeletal framework. The antonym is *canauacantli* which refers to the area over the temples.

A word which proves troublesome in translation is *tzotzolli* which in some contexts becomes *tzotzollotl* or *tzotzoltic*. Dr. Von Gall translates the word as "Venen" (veins). This rendition seems improbable.

There are three ways of exploring the meaning of this term as it applies to the body: the Spanish-Nahuatl of Molina; the definition in the Nahuatl text, that is, the adjectives and verbs used to describe the term; and Thirdly, the body parts wherein *tzotzolli* is used as a suffix or *tzotzoltic* as a modifier.

We know the basic word is *tzoliui*. The reduplication of syllables may indicate plurality, but it does not change the general meaning. This we gather from Fol. 94V of the Ms. which reads: *totzoliuhca, totzotzoliuhca. totzoliuhca, totzotzolica: yn vncan titzoliuhque*. For *tzoliui* Molina gives "estrecharse algo". The terms for "estrechura como entrada de puerta" are *tzoliuiliztli, amo coyualiztli*; "estrecha tierra" is *tlaltzoliuhyan*. As body parts of animals, Molina gives: "papada (wattle) de gallo", *totoleltzotzolli* or *uexoloeltzotzolli*, and for "padada (jowl) de puerco", *coyame eltzotzolli*. Finally, referring to the human anatomy, Molina gives *ytetzotzolli* for the lower part of the abdomen (bajo del vientre).

It appears from the examples cited from Molina, that *tzotzolli* would refer to places on the body or parts of the body which tend to hang somewhat free from the fleshy mass.

Turning to the Nahuatl text of Chapter XXVII, we read on Fol. 90V: *tzotzoliuhcaiutl: ceceltic, tilaoac, chiaoa, cecelia, chiaoa, tlachiaoa. . .*: tender, thick, greasy, it becomes tender,

stains, stains things. Other characteristics are given on Fol. 72R. *Chiaoaciao*, *Suchio*, *etic*, *çoquitic*, *paltic*, *chiaoa*. Oily, fatty, firm, resilient, colored, it stains.

The Nahuatl words suggest that *tzotzolli* denotes the places on the body which hang free due to an accumulation of fatty tissue.

The following body parts are given wherein *tzotzolli* enters into the word composition: lips (*totentzotzol*), abdomen (*itit-zotzolli*), neck (*toquechtzctzol*), chest (*eletzotzolli*), calf (*tocotztzotzol*). The qualifying adjective *tzotzoltic* occurs describing flesh (*nacatl*) thick or fleshy areas of the body (*titaoacaiutl*), the back (*cuilapantli*), the upper thigh (*tometzto-maoia*).

On the basis of examples cited *tzotzoliuhcayotl* might best be translated as "flabbiness", and *tzotzolli* as a "flap" or a "fold". Since the Nahuatl text gives an exhaustive list of words used to describe each body part, *tzotzolli* may refer to a part or a condition found only on those individuals who are excessively fat or extremely old. On the other hand, the meaning might be more general, allowing it to be translated as "bulge" and thus refer also to the fleshy prominence created by the flexing of the muscles. In support of this second possibility is the association of the term with the calf, chest, thigh, and back.

