

# ANCIENT AMERICAN POETS



JOHN CURL

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**The Flower Songs  
by Nezahualcoyotl**

**The Songs of Dzitbalché  
by Ah Bam**

**The Sacred Hymns of the Situa  
by Pachacutec**

**Translated from  
Nahuatl, Maya and Quechua  
with  
Lives of the Poets  
and Introductions**

**by John Curl**

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## Preface

The very idea of ancient American poets and poetry may sound strange to some ears. In the United States we are usually taught that American poetry is an extension of English poetry, in Canada French poetry is often included, and in Latin America schools teach the Spanish and Portuguese traditions. Yet there were rich traditions of poetry on this continent long before the first European colonists arrived.

The ancient Mayas and Nahuas recorded their literature, culture and history using indigenous writing systems, and the Incas probably recorded theirs on their quipus, knotted strings. The Maya and Nahua screenfold books, and the Inca quipus, were almost all destroyed in the first years of the Conquest. When these old recording systems were forbidden by the conquerors, many people in each of these cultures quickly learned to write their own languages in the European alphabet, and used it to record their own cultures for their own uses. Much of the oldest American literature has come down to us from these early Native books and manuscripts, written in alphabetic Nahuatl (Aztec), Maya, and Quechua (Inca). Among the literature they contain is a body of poetry by ancient Native Americans, in the original languages, and biographies of some of the poets.

The Flower-Songs of Nezahualcoyotl (Nahuatl), the Songs of Dzitbalché (Yucatec Maya) and the Sacred Hymns of Pachacutec (Quechua) are all



roughly contemporary in their dates of composition in the mid-1400s, though the earliest manuscripts containing them are from over a century later.

Most of these poems were meant to be accompanied by music, which makes them “lyric” poetry in the original sense of the word. Pachacutec’s hymns were sung. Nezahualcoyotl’s flower-songs were recited over a drum cadence. Some of the Dzitbalché “dances” were surely sung, while others appear to have been spoken. Whether they are poems or songs or both is ultimately a hollow question, since no true line exists between poetry and song.

By the same token, no true line exists between oral and written literature. The very fact that language is based on words, means that it cannot stray too far from the oral, and must return to it. While the Mayas were the only Native American nation to develop a complete writing system to record their literature, most Native nations had highly sophisticated mnemonic aids and traditions of memorization. The Nahuas used pictographs and ideographs; the Incas used the complex knots of the quipu. Many of the northern Native nations likewise used symbols to record their history and culture, such as the Lenape’s Walam Olum, both pictographic Algonkin chronicle and historical epic poem. Melody, meter and rhyme are of course universal mnemonic devices for poetry and song. The embedding of poems and songs into ceremonies also served to preserve them intact.

The civilizations of the Nahuas, Mayas and Incas were aristocratic. Nezahualcoyotl and Pachacutec were both kings. Ah Bam was a member of the lower nobility. Because the native historians recorded

detailed biographies of their royal families, we know much about the lives of Nezahualcoyotl and Pachacutec. We have less information about Ah Bam, who wrote during the colonial period, although many of his songs are ancient. The early Native manuscripts also recorded numerous anonymous poems and songs, many presumably composed by commoners, about whom we know nothing beyond the general facts of their lives.

The sophisticated and cultured world that produced these Indigenous poets was disrupted and destroyed by conquest. The European invasion was followed by a concerted campaign by the conquerors to degrade the people who were being colonized, by trying to blot out all memory of the accomplishments of the native cultures. Their children were educated to believe that the colonizers even did them a favor by destroying the old culture. It is only in recent times, as the descendants of both colonized and colonizers struggle to heal our cultures today, that the world is ripe to appreciate the accomplishments of the Native civilizations.

A large body of ancient and early indigenous literature has emerged, and more keeps appearing.

Nahuatl, Maya and Quechua were all once *linguas francas*, the common languages spoken over large areas, and are all still living languages, widely spoken today. They remain among the largest Native American language groups. Contemporary Nahuatl, Maya and Quechua have of course changed considerably from the languages in these poems, just as English has changed from the language of Chaucer or Shakespeare. Nahuatl speakers today total over 1.7 million, spread across central Mexico. The Mayan languages taken together total about

seven million speakers in southern Mexico, Yucatán and Central America, with about 800,000 speaking Yucatec Maya. Quechua has over six million speakers, mostly in Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador.

The apparent divide between Anglo America and Latin America follows the boundaries of colonialism, not of native culture. There has always been a cultural continuity between the northern and southern Indian nations. The resurgence of American Indian consciousness and nationalism today, both north and south, makes this clear. These poets and poems are really part of our Pan-American cultural heritage, our American roots. That is why it is important for us today to reclaim, as much as possible, knowledge of the world that was destroyed. The inheritors of colonialism owe much to the descendants of the colonized. Recognition of their classic literature is long overdue.

The only classical American Indian work sometimes embraced in the cannon of world literature is the Popol Vuh (Pop Wuj) of the Maya-Kichés. On rare occasions the Books of Chilam Balam or the Apu Ollantay are included. Yet there are many other works that deserve to be widely read. The Flower-songs of Nezahualcoyotl, the Songs of Dzitbalché and the Sacred Hymns of Pachacutec are the heritage of us all, and deserve to take their places as classics of American literature.

The poems and poets of this amazing lost American world are of immense importance to our common future.

## **ABOUT THESE TRANSLATIONS**

I began these translations in the 1980s, after a conversation with translator-poet, Jack Hirschman. I had been reading Spanish translations of Indigenous literature, and thought that they contained knowledge that could change the world. I wished I could translate them into English, and bewailed the thought that the originals were in languages I would probably never know fluently.

Jack replied, “You don’t have to speak a language fluently to translate a poem. You just have to be able to translate the poem.”

To do these translations, I collected all the available original texts and previous translations (mostly in Spanish), as well as various dictionaries and grammars of the original languages. I immersed myself in the languages one at a time, Nahuatl, Yucatec Maya and Quechua, using previous translations as gateways into the original texts.

Although I am not a linguist, I can chat some in Spanish and French, and I have studied Latin and other tongues. I studied French civilization at the Sorbonne. Besides studying the classical versions of Nahuatl, Maya, and Quechua, the idioms of past centuries, I’ve also studied the living languages today in the places that they’re spoken. I studied Yucatec Maya at Na’atik in Felipe Carrillo Puerto, Quintana Roo, Mexico. I studied Huastec Nahuatl at the Casa de Cultura in Chicontepec, Veracruz. I studied Quechua in Cusco, at Proyecto Peru. In addition, I studied Maya-Kiché at Academia Latinoamericana Mayense in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala. And I studied Diné bizaad, the Navajo language, at the To’hajiileeje Reservation in New Mexico. Each of these wonderful languages is

unique and overflowing with culture, history, and humanity.

Hopefully these translations reflect some of the brilliant light of the original poems.

# The Flower-Songs of Nezahualcoyotl

Ancient Nahuatl (Aztec) Poetry



from Codex Ixtlilxochitl

Introduction  
The Flower Songs  
The Life of Nezahualcoyotl

## Introduction

Nezahualcoyotl (“Fasting Coyote”) was considered by his peers to be the greatest poet of ancient Mexico. His compositions had vast influence, stylistically and in content. Filled with thought, symbol and myth, his poetry moved his people’s culture so deeply that after his death generations of poets to follow would stand by the huehuetl drum and cry, “I am Nezahualcoyotl, I am Nezahualcoyotl,” and sing his poems and keep them alive.

Nezahualcoyotl was not only a great lyric poet, but was famed as an architect, engineer, city planner, reluctant warrior, law-giver and philosopher. The cultural institutions he established included a library of hieroglyphic books, a zoological garden-arboretum, and a self-governing academy of scholars and poets. He led his city-state out of foreign domination, and transformed it into a wellspring of art and culture. The seventh ruler (*tlacatecuhtli*) of Texcoco, a large pueblo on the north shore of Lake Texcoco, ten miles across the water from the capital of the Aztecs, Nezahualcoyotl promoted a renewal of Toltec learning, based on the peaceful religion of Quetzalcoatl, at the very moment when the Aztec cult of sacrifice was coming into ascendancy. All the Nahuatl-speaking city-states in the Valley of Mexico looked to Nezahualcoyotl’s Texcoco as the cultural center of their world.

The story is not a simple one and the chronicles of his life themselves are contradictory. However, the spirit of paradox is embedded in the soul of ancient Mexico.

The complex surfaces of many flower-songs (*xochicuicatli*) often make them difficult to understand for many people in our culture. We do not have ready categories for them. They require an effort. Yet they contain many gems of universal lasting value, and offer great rewards to those willing to make that effort.

### **Nahuatl Poets, Poetry & Ceremonial Flowers**

Most of the flower-songs that have come down to us are in two collections from the second half of the 16th century. Although transcribed as they were sung at that time, they clearly contain many songs and parts of songs that are much older.

The form of the flower-song as it has come down to us, seems to have had its beginning in the generation before Nezahualcoyotl. But it was his generation, and particularly he himself, who perfected the form and brought it to its greatest heights.

Nezahualcoyotl lived at a moment when the anonymous singer, *cuicani*, of his people's tradition, who received verses in a song quest, began to speak of personal feelings and ideas, and emerged a remembered poet. In form and content Nezahualcoyotl was an innovator; he perfected a style that numerous other poets copied. He was also part of a poetic movement, a generation of poets and singers who were moving beyond the earlier modes of Nahua poetry.

From the older tradition come the anonymous sacred hymns, twenty of which have come down to us transcribed by Sahagún. While most of the sacred hymns are direct and formal, the flower-songs can take off wildly in many directions from a theme. Flower-songs were a channel to invoke the



deity in an individual and personal way. They were also connected with the ingestion of hallucinatory mushrooms and similar substances. Poetry and art were ecstatic gifts of the gods.

Flower-songs kept close to the rhythms and patterns of speech. Their poetics included the repetition of ideas in couplets or parallel form; a tendency to speak in metaphors; the use of repeating synonyms and metonyms. Kennings were frequent, two words used together becoming a traditional metaphorical name for a third thing, such as “eagles and jaguars” meaning “warriors;” “mat and chair” meaning “authority;” or “flower and song” meaning “poetry.”

The texts indicate no regular length of line or stanza, no rhyme or meter. The variety seems almost Whitmanesque. Refrains appear, change and disappear in no strict pattern or order. Many of the poems as we have them seem long and confusing. Many seem to break into different voices in different stanzas, often in dialog, but not always. Repetitive syllables such as “Ohuaya, Ohuaya” follow verses of many of the songs. These are vocables or litanies, which have no translatable meaning, but define the stanza.

Flower-songs were performed to the open-hand beat of the huehuetl drum, each poem to a distinct cadence, the beat-patterns preserved along with the poems in some of the ancient texts.

The themes of flower-songs seem limited, yet they were put together in endless variations: meditations on the meaning of life and death, on the pleasures of living and loving, on friendship, on relations between the poet and the deity; lamentations for the brevity of life and fame; elegies

on poetry; memorials to great leaders; celebrations of cities and the people, verses on the ecstasies of singing and war. They were sometimes composed for a particular occasion, to make a critical commentary on it.

The two prophetic poems that we have only in translation by Ixtlilxochitl, do not seem to be in quite the same style as the songs in the two major collections. The style is more straight forward and grammatical. However, the originals may have been more similar.

Although these poems are usually all known as “flower-songs” today, to Nezahualcoyotl and his contemporaries, the word *xochicuicatl*, “flower-song,” described only one particular style among many that we usually include in the genre. *Xochicuicatl* were literally songs about flowers or relating to the ceremonies of the goddess Xochiquetzal. This entire body of poetry/song became known as “flower-songs” because the word “flower” and its cognates occur in them so often, not only when they are referring to flowers per-se, but as symbols, metaphors and imagery with many different implications. The Nahuatl phrase “*in xochitl in cuicatl*,” meant “flower and song” literally, but figuratively meant “poetry” or “art.” The poets themselves probably called the whole genre *netotiliztli*, “dances of joy.”

There were two general categories of song and dance, *netotiliztli* and *macehualiztli*. The *netotiliztli* were the worldly dances, associated with entertainments. They were performed during the fiesta parts of holidays, as well as in other venues. Though they might refer to religious ceremonies, they were not a ritual part of them. The

*macehualiztli*, dances of merit, were the sacred hymns, a ritual part of religious ceremonies.

There were many modes of *netotliztli*. *Xochicuicatl* (flower-songs proper) and *xopanquicatl* (spring songs) were spiritual and lyric. *Yaocuicatl* or *cuauhtlicuicatl* (warrior songs) were about heroes and hunters. *Iconocuicatl* or *tlaocolhcuicatl* (orphan and suffering songs) lamented life's insecurities. Besides these were *huehuecuicatl* (songs of old people), *cihuacuicatl* (songs of women) and others. There were also various regional styles: Tezcocan, Mexican, Otomí, Tepanecan, Acolhuan, Tlaxcalan, Huastec, Totonac. Otomí style songs were not in Nahuatl but in the Chichimec language. Nezahualcoyotls wrote flower-songs in Otomí as well as in Nahuatl.

Nezahualcoyotl's flower-songs are the earliest ones that we can attribute to a known poet, except for one song by Tlaltecatzin, a poet of his father's generation. Tlaltecatzin's poem is a curious one, in that it combines sex and death, while overt erotic elements and love themes are missing in all other flower-songs that have come down to us. Yet there is something incoherently ecstatic in the flower-songs. Moreover there are reports that Nahua love songs were actually common. It is perhaps from this combination of the profanely secular with the sacred, from this duality, that the form of flower-songs originally sprang.

While the sacred hymns were sung in and around the temples, the flower-songs were performed more often in noble homes and in other secular venues, as well as in the House of Song.

Poet-singers, called *cuicapicque* (songmakers) or *xochitlahtoani* (flowerspeakers), performed publicly

at the many holidays, festivals and religious ceremonies that filled the year in the Nahua world. They also presented their works in circles of poets and musicians, which met regularly. Both nobles and commoners, women as well as men, could be song-makers. Many of the *cuicapicque* were professionals. All the noble houses had their singers who composed chants about their own glorious deeds and those of their ancestors. The religious sects also kept salaried composers who lived in the temples and created divine chants praising the gods. Besides singing their own original compositions, *cuicapicque* would perform and embroider great works by other poets. However, many of the songmakers who composed flower-songs, like Nezahualcoyotl, were not salaried professionals. Many men who did not have the temperament of a warrior found this as a road to personal achievement and success. These independent singers received their primary payment in praise, but were also often rewarded by the king or nobles for their work.

Sometimes a group of poets would perform together, each poet taking a turn with a poem on the same theme, creating a dialog. On occasions they spoke through the voices of historic or mythologic personages. The poetic dialog that resulted, the "dialog of the songs," approached theater or drama.

The poets would usually perform accompanied by a *huehuetl* drum, *teponaztli* and sometimes a flute. The *huehuetl* was an upright skin-stretched drum crafted from a hollowed log two to four feet high with a diameter of twelve to eighteen inches, open at the bottom, standing on three legs cut from its base. It was usually carved with designs and symbols, and was beaten with the hands. The

*teponaztli* was a horizontal wooden drum or “gong,” hollowed in the center but left closed on both ends, flattened on top, with two tongues of different lengths cut into it. The *teponaztli* was beaten with rubber-tipped sticks. Nahuatl musicians also played flutes, double flutes, triple flutes and pan pipes, using a pentatonic or five-note scale. These instruments were all six to eight inches long, usually of clay, but also of bamboo or bone.

Singing and music were part of everyone’s education. In the evening after school at the *telpochcalli*, the school for the common people, both girls and boys went to the *cuicacalli*, the House of Song, which stood next to one of the temples. In the Toltec conception, a city did not really exist until it established a place for the drums, that is, a House of Song. This was a singing, music and dance school, as well as a residence for the teachers, and consisted of many large rooms around a courtyard. Attendance was required of all boys and girls, who were taught separately but brought together in the courtyard for common dances. In the House of Song were lodged the *huehuetl*, *teponaztli*, rattles, flutes, shell trumpets, outfits and regalia of the dancers. Taught at these schools were primarily the sacred hymns and the dances that went with them.

But during the day, before the girls and boys arrived for their studies, the House of Song doubled as a dance hall for warriors and *ahuilnenqui*, “pleasure women.” As Friar Diego Duran, who grew up in Texcoco, describes it around the year 1570:

“Let us now speak of the ordinary dance which the warriors and soldiers performed daily, during the daytime, in that same building and school of dance. They went there to dance as a pastime...

These warriors, known as *tequihuaque*, went there and, dressed in their best, danced in fine style. When one of these men saw a harlot (sic) looking at him with a certain amount of interest, he beckoned to her and, taking her by the hand, danced with her in that dance. Thus he spent the entire evening with that woman, holding her by the hand while they danced...”

He describes the rhythms as lively. “These were dances and songs of pleasure, known as ‘dances of youth,’ during which they sang songs of love and flirtation...”

In contrast, Duran wrote that the sacred hymns “were sung slowly and seriously; these were sung and danced by the lords on solemn and important occasions, and were intoned, some with moderation and calm.” The sacred hymns were sung or chanted both inside and outside the temples, addressed directly to specific deities. A number of sacred hymns have come down to us, twenty of them preserved by Padre Bernardino de Sahagún around 1558-1560 in the Florentine Codex. None have any attribution of authorship. Sahagún wrote of them, “The children who went to the *calmecac* learned by memory all the verses of songs to sing, called divine songs, whose verses were written in their books in characters.” Groups of poets and elders called *tlapizcatzitzin* (conservators) approved new compositions and taught divine songs in honor of gods. They called public meetings to teach the songs to all the people. They were still singing and dancing *macehualiztli* after the Conquest, for Duran saw them. “These songs were so sad that just the rhythm and dance saddens one. I have seen these danced occasionally with religious chants, and they were so sad that I was filled with melancholy and woe.”

He goes on to say that, although he was fluent in Nahuatl, he really did not understand the words to the songs.

“All the native lays are interwoven with such obscure metaphors that there is hardly a man who can understand them unless they are studied in a very special way and explained so as to penetrate their meaning. For this reason I have intentionally set myself to listen with much attention to what is sung; and while the words and the terms of the metaphors seem nonsense to me, afterwards, having discussed and conferred, they seem to be admirable sentences, both in the divine things composed today and in the worldly songs.”

The soil in which flower-songs grew was a combination of the profane and the sacred, the social and the ceremonial.

The flower-songs that we have are not about love and flirtation, like the ‘dances of youth.’ They are poems of a high seriousness, but sung to the same lively rhythms as other worldly songs. The transcribers simply might have not written down the more bawdy songs.

The friar goes on, describing the custom:

“The dance they most enjoyed was the one in which they crowned and adorned themselves with flowers. A house of flowers was erected on the main pyramid... They also erected artificial trees covered with fragrant flowers where they seated the goddess Xochiquetzalli. During the dance some boys dressed as birds and others as butterflies descended. They were richly decked with fine green, blue, red and yellow feathers. These youths ascended the trees, climbing from limb to limb, sucking the dew of the flowers. Then the ‘gods’ appeared, each wearing

robes such as the idols wore on the altars - a man or a woman dressed in the guise of each. With their blowguns in their hands they went around shooting at the 'birds' who were in the trees. Then the Goddess of Flowers - Xochiquetzalli - came out to receive them, took them by the hand, making them sit next to her, treating them with great honor and respect, as such divinities deserved. There she presented them with flowers and gave them to smoke, and then she made her representatives come to amuse them. This was the most solemn dance in the land, and I rarely see another one danced today unless it is by exception..."

Now we are clearly in the realm of the *xochicuicatl*, the flower-song. We have four songs that Nezahualcoyotl composed for the Farewell to the Flowers or for a similar festival held in the spring: "Stand Up, Beat Your Drum" (RS#55), "Song of Spring" (RS #56), "Already It Begins" (RS #57), and "The Flower Tree" (CM #20).

"Among the most solemn feasts was the one called Farewell to the Flowers, which meant that frost was coming and flowers would wither and dry up. A solemn festivity, filled with rejoicing and merrymaking, was held to bid them farewell. On that same day they commemorated a goddess named Xochiquetzalli, which means Flowery Plumage.

"On this day they were as happy as could be, the same happiness and delight they feel today on smelling any kind of flower, whether it have an agreeable or a displeasing scent, as long as it is a flower. They become the happiest people in the world smelling them, for these natives in general are most sensuous and pleasure-loving. They find



gladness and joy in spending the entire day smelling a little flower or a bouquet made of different kinds of flowers; their gifts are accompanied by them; they relieve the tediousness of journeys with flowers. To sum up, they find the smelling of flowers so comforting that they even stave off and manage to survive hunger by smelling them. Thus they passed their lives among flowers in such blindness and darkness, since they had been deceived and persuaded by the devil, who had observed their love for blossoms and flowers...

“On this day their persons, temples, houses and streets were adorned with flowers.... Thus decorated with flowers, they engaged in different dances, merrymaking, festivities and farces, all filled with gladness and good cheer. All this was in honor of and reverence for flowers. This day was called Xochilhuitl, which means Feast of the Flowers, and no other finery - gold, silver, stones, feathers - was worn on this day - only flowers. Besides being the day of the flowers it was the day of a goddess, who, as I have said, was called Xochiquetzal. The goddess was the patroness of painters, embroiderers, weavers, silversmiths, sculptors, and all those whose profession it was to imitate nature in crafts and in drawing. All held this goddess to be their patroness, and her feast was specially solemnized by them...”

The Feast of the Flowers was continued after the Conquest in a changed form, like so much of the old religion. The last day of the twenty-day Farewell to the Flowers was October 26, only a few days before the Days of the Dead, still celebrated today with these same flowers.

## **Giver of Life: the Toltec Duality of Quetzalcoatl**

Nezahualcoyotl addressed many songs to the Deity, without however ever mentioning a proper name. Instead, he (and the other Nahuatl poets) called Him by certain of His aspects or qualities such as Life Giver, One for Whom All Live, He Who Makes the World Live, Author of Life, Highest Arbiter, Lord of the Far and Near, Lord of the With and the By, Inventor of Himself. These were all epithets for Tloque Nahuaque, the Unknown God, who was also the Creator, Quetzalcoatl, the “white” Tezcatlipoca.

From the time of the Toltecs, the Valley of Mexico was dominated by the clash of forces represented by the deities Quetzalcoatl and “the black” Tezcatlipoca.

Quetzalcoatl was the Feathered Serpent who lives in the wind, the deity of civilization, of culture, knowledge, peace, fertility, the bringer of the arts and crafts, writing, singing, poetry. He gave life to the first people of this fifth world and the gift of corn for sustenance. Quetzalcoatl was closely associated with Ehécatl, deity of the wind, and Tlaloc, master of rain. Tlaloc in turn was associated with Coatlicue, goddess of the earth. Quetzalcoatl had been the patron deity of the great city-state Teotihuacán, predecessor to the Toltecs.

Tezcatlipoca, “Smoking Mirror,” the night sky, was the deity of destruction and death, the patron of warriors and sorcerers. Tezcatlipoca was closely associated with Mixcoatl, the old Chichimec deity of the hunt, and later with Huitzilopochtli, patron of the Aztec warrior orders. Tezcatlipoca, unlike Quetzalcoatl, demanded human sacrifice.

This dichotomy played out in history as it did in myth.

In the late tenth century, under the Toltec chieftain-priest Quetzalcoatl-Topiltzin, follower of the Plumed Serpent, the city of Tula (Tollan) became a great center of a cultural renaissance where all the arts and sciences blossomed, the inheritor of the earlier culture of Teotihuacán and predecessor to Nezahualcoyotl's Texcoco. This cultural renaissance was destined to be short-lived.

There were two distinct groups among the Toltecs of Tula: the Nonoalcas, who were blood descendants of Teotihuacán and followers of Quetzalcoatl; and the Tolteca-Chichimecas, who were the newly acculturated groups, wanderers from the north only recently come into contact with civilization, followers of Tezcatlipoca.

According to the legendary history, a struggle developed between the chieftain Quetzalcoatl-Topiltzin and Tezcatlipoca-Huemac, high priest of the Toltec warrior orders. Quetzalcoatl-Topiltzin was a Nonoalca and Tezcatlipoca-Huemac was a Tolteca-Chichimeca.

Quetzalcoatl-Topiltzin tried to lead the people of Tula to reject the deities of militarism and sacrifice, and instead pay peaceful homage to the Feathered Serpent. But Tezcatlipoca-Huemac grew jealous and demanded human sacrifice. A mortal struggle ensued.

Rejecting civil war, Quetzalcoatl-Topiltzin yielded the city to Tezcatlipoca-Huemac, leading his followers out of Tula, disappearing into exile toward the east, toward Tlillan Tlapallan, "land of the red and black," where according to the legend, he became the morning star, the planet Venus, and

from where he would return someday to reclaim his throne. According to another version, he led his followers to Yucatán and built Chichén-Itzá.

Without Quetzalcoatl-Topiltzin the city of Tula lost its cohesion, spirit and will. When attacked by new waves of Chichimec bands, it succumbed. Tezcatlipoca-Huemac met a violent death. Bands of Toltec refugees scattered to the shores of Lake Texcoco and many other places in the Valley of Mexico, further south to the Mixteca and beyond. Tula in its heyday was soon looked back on as a golden age.

When Xolotl and his Chichimec band established control over the region, he took a Toltec princess as wife. By mixing his family with Toltec descendants, Xolotl's lineage became Toltec. The ruling lineages of every province and pueblo in the valley of Mexico soon all vied to connect their family lines with the Toltecs. This connection became an essential credential to power. With the blood connection came the infusion of Toltec culture and values.

But the dominant Toltec culture that the Valley of Mexico inherited was the legacy of Tezcatlipoca, not Quetzalcoatl. When a new ruler was sworn in, it was to Tezcatlipoca that he took his oath of office, and from whom he asked guidance. The Feathered Serpent's cult continued in a lesser capacity, often in disguise, as "the white Tezcatlipoca."

So it was in the time of Nezahualcoyotl. That is why the name of Quetzalcoatl never appears in any of his songs, yet underlies every verse.

Yet, according to Toltec cosmology, all divinity proceeds from Omeyocan, "The Place of Duality." So while Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca were

antagonists, opposites, light and dark, they were also associated with each other, and even more, they were part of each other.

Before this world there were four previous worlds created and destroyed, according to the myth; and Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca took turns as creator and destroyer.

Tezcatlipoca had four aspects, which corresponded to the four directions and also to different deities. The “black” aspect was the original Tezcatlipoca, the night sky; the “red” Tezcatlipoca was Xipe Totec, god of spring; the “blue” Tezcatlipoca was Huitzilopochtli, tribal god of the Aztecs, deity of the sun; and the “white” Tezcatlipoca was Quetzalcoatl. So while Tezcatlipoca was the Destroyer, he was also the Creator.

The gods of Mexico were protean. At the same time as they were specific individual deities, they were also part of each other, and of everything else. They changed into each other. That was one of their main strengths in the very mixed society that was the valley of Mexico.

### **A Lexicon of Flowers**

To understand the concept and function of flower-songs, we need to look more deeply at the special meanings that flowers had for the Nahua people in Nezahualcoyotl’s time.

Xochiquetzal (Flower Quetzal), goddess of flowers and love, was the first wife of Tlaloc, deity of rain. It should be no surprise that flowers were associated with life-giving water, particularly in a place where the sun could be brutal. Xochiquetzal however was kidnapped by Tezcatlipoca, and made his wife. (Tlaloc got over it and found another wife.) She was also associated with a male counterpart,

Xochipilli, “prince of flowers,” deity of summer, patron of love, dance and games. He was sometimes associated with the “red” Tezcatlipoca. Xochiquetzal and Xochipilli were the patrons of the “floating gardens” of Xochimilco, at the east end of Lake Texcoco.

Xochiquetzal was also connected with Xochitl (Flower) one of the twenty calendric daysigns, the twentieth sign, the last day of every month. Xochitl was associated with “masters and craftsmen.” Xochitl people, according to the astrology, tended to be clean, diligent, hard-working, and to make a living with the skill of their hands. Men born under it were likely to be workers in “crafts that imitate nature” such as painters, metalworkers, weavers, sculptors or carvers. Women born under it were likely to be weavers, embroiderers, fine home decorators, well-adorned dressers and skilled at decorative presentation as cooks.

Poems or songs were “necklace of flowers.” Poetry was also “the floral drum.” The beauty of a song was “upright flowers.” The places where poets and singers met were the “house of the flowers,” “arbor of the precious flowers,” “flowery patio,” or “mat of flowers.”

The “place of the flowering tree” was Tlalocán, home of Tláloc, and final home of people who die by water. The “flower land” was Tamoanchan, the flowering western paradise, populated by women who died in childbirth.

The same word “flower” was also redolent with associations of war and sacrifice. “Flowery death” meant death in war. The “garden of dawn” was Tonatiuhichan, home of those who die in battle. The “flowers” were the warriors whose lives were so brief

and precarious, the captives, the sacrificial victims. Prisoners were “flowers of the battle,” “precious flowers of the jaguar,” “flowers of war,” “flowers of eagle,” “flowers of the shield.” Battles were “flowers of the heart of the plain,” “fragrant flowers of the jaguars,” “flowers of battle.” To say that “the flowers of war intoxicate me,” meant, “the fervor of war excites me.” “Paper flowers” were insignia worn by the gods and by sacrificial victims. The human heart was spoken of as the “flower of god,” or “flower of the heart.”

### **Authorship And Transmission**

The vast majority of the Nahua songwriters were anonymous, but about 40 Nahua poets have been identified (primarily by Garibay and León-Portilla), most of them nobles. Nezahualcoyotl is the author of some 36 to 41 songs (depending on how one counts), the most by far of any Nahua poet. Tecayehuatzin is the author of nine, Ayocuan three. We have two songs, or fragments, by at least sixteen other poets.

The poems that were written down in Spanish script in the sixteenth century are transcriptions of songs as they were sung and chanted at that time. The singers of that era quoted earlier poets - the great classic poets of the culture - in their poems. They built later songs as expansions and developments of the earlier works. Much of the poetry of Nezahualcoyotl has come down to us as quoted fragments and lyrics embedded into the songs of these later poets and singers. Nezahualcoyotl appears as a speaker in various dialog poems. Many of the attributions of authorship are by internal evidence. The scholar A. M. Garibay was the first to interpret the “I am”

formula as an indigenous Mexican convention indicating signature or authorship. In the example of Nezahualcoyotl, his interpretation is based on the word “niNezahualcoyotl,” which occurs frequently and means literally, “I Nezahualcoyotl.” According to this interpretation, in the context of the poem it means, “This is a poem of Nezahualcoyotl’s.” or “I am performing a poem of Nezahualcoyotl.” It might also mean, “I am performing a poem inspired by, or in the style of, Nezahualcoyotl.” It could also indicate that the singer is calling down Nezahualcoyotl’s spirit. The texts as we have them don’t always make this clear, so there is much room for debate over what is and what is not a poem of Nezahualcoyotl’s, or where one begins and ends.

Just the mention of Nezahualcoyotl’s name in a poem obviously does not make it his. There are also poems addressed to Nezahualcoyotl by other poets, and poems about Nezahualcoyotl. There are probably also poems among these composed by others but mimicking or in the style of Nezahualcoyotl. There is another school of thought that denies the interpretation of signature and does not accept the attribution of any classical Nahuatl poems to particular poets. They see the “I am” formula as meaning that the singer is calling down a spirit.

While some of these questions will never be entirely resolved, it is indisputable that Nezahualcoyotl had a reputation as the greatest classical Nahuatl composer of songs, and that the later poets thought they were singing his songs or his style of song. The acceptance of these songs as representative of at least the spirit of Nezahualcoyotl’s work, brings us as close to truth as the mists of time will permit.



I have tried to include a representative selection of the flower-songs in this collection.

### **Drum Accompaniment And Vocables**

The poems were originally performed accompanied by the large two-tone *huehuetl* drum. The beat-patterns for a number of poems are preserved in the texts.

Code:

to = low tone stressed

ti = high tone stressed

co = low tone unstressed

qui = high tone unstressed

For example, below are the cadences and codas for the five sections of "Song of Nezahualcoyotl," Cantares Mexicanos #46.

Section # 1: Totoco totoco tico totoco totoco.

At the end: tico titico titico tico.

Section # 2: Cititi cititi citi citi.

At the end: tocoto tocoti tocototocoti.

Section # 3: Tico toco tocoto.

At the end: ticoto ticoto.

Section # 4: Toto tiquiti tiquiti.

At the end: tocotico tocoti tototitiqui tototitiqui.

Section # 5: Toco toco tiqui tiqui.

At the end: tocotico tocoti.

In many of the songs, each stanza ends with repeated vocables, syllables without meaning outside of the rhythm of the song. They give structure to songs where lines and stanzas have widely varying lengths.

## **The Nahuatl Language**

Nahuatl is commonly known today as “Aztec.” However, the inhabitants of the city-state Mexico-Tenochtitlán called themselves “Mexicas” or “Tenochcas” and never “Aztecs,” which is a foreign appellation. Besides, Nahuatl was the language of much more than just the Mexicas (and the Tezcocans): it was the *lingua franca* of the entire Valley of Mexico, comprising many city-states, stemming back to the fabled Toltec city Tula and probably to Teotihuacán.

Today Nahuatl-speaking people are still one of Mexico’s largest Indigenous groups, numbering over one million people spread over the central parts of the country. Most call themselves “Mexicas” today. Nahuatl-speaking people are also now commonly called “Nahuas.”

Modern Nahuatl is quite different from the language of Nezahualcoyotl. The shape of the modern language was of course strongly influenced by centuries of proximity to Spanish. The language of these poems is far more complex than conversational Nahuatl. It is sometimes considered an esoteric language known as Nahuatlatoalli.

### **Nahuatl Pronunciation**

Vowels and stress as in Spanish

Consonants as in English, except:

x = sh

z = s

qu before e or i = k

qu before a or o = kw

h is breathed

tl with tongue poised for t, but with air released at the sides



# The Flower Songs of Nezahualcoyotl



Nezahualcoyotl sees a vision (Códice Xolotl)

## IN CHOLOLIZTLI CUICATL

O nen notlacatl. Ayahue!

O nen nonquizaco teotl ichan in tlalticpac.  
Ninotolinia. Ohuaya ohuaya!

In ma on nel nonquiz in ma on nel nontlacat  
ah niquitoehua yece. Yeehuaya! Tlen naiz  
anonohuaco tepilhuan? At teixco ninemi? Quen  
huel xon mimati. Aya Ohuaya ohuaya!

Ye ya nonehuaz in tlalticpac? Ye ya tie in  
nolhuil? Zan nitoliniya tonehua noyollo tinocniuh  
in ayaxcan in tlalticpac ye nican. Ohuaya ohuaya.

Quen in nemohua—Aya!—in tenahuac? Mach  
ilihuiztia nemia tehuic teyaconi. Aya! Nemi zan  
ihuiyan zan icemelia. In zan nonopechteca zan  
nitolotinemi a in tenahuac. Ohuaya ohuaya.  
Zan ye ica nichoca—Yeehuaya!—nicnotlamati no  
nicnocahualoc in tenahuac tlalticpac. Quen  
quinequi noyollo—Yeehuaya!—ipal nemohuani? Ma  
oc mehel on quiza a icnopillotl. Huiya! Ma oc  
timalihui—Aya!—monahuac titeotl. At ya nech  
miquitlani? Ohuaya ohuaya.

Azomo ye nelli tipaqui ti ya nemi tlalticpac? Ah  
ca za tinemi ihuan ti hual paqui in tlalticpac. Ah ca  
mochi ihui titotolinia. Ah ca no chichic teopouhqui  
tenahuac ye nican. Ohuaya ohuaya.

Ma xi icnotlamati noyollo. Yeehuaya! Maca oc  
tle xic yococa. Yeehuaya! Ye nelli in ayaxcan  
nicnopiltihua in tlalticpac. Ye nelli cococ ye  
otimalihuico in motloc monahuac in ipal nemohua.  
Yyao yyahue ahuayye oo Huiya.

Zan niquintemohua—Aya!—niquilnamiqui in  
tocnihuan. Cuix oc ceppa huitze in cuix oc  
nemiquihui? Zan cen ti ya polihuia zan cen ye  
nican in tlalticpac. Maca cocoya inyollo itloc

inahuac in ipal nemohua. Yyao yyahue ahuayye oo  
Huiya.

Romances de los Señores #36 (21r-22v)  
*(De Nezahualcoyotzin cuando andaba huyendo  
del rey de Azcapotzalco.)*

## SONG OF THE FLIGHT

In vain I was born. *Ayahue*.

In vain I left the house of God and came to earth. I am so wretched! *Ohuaya, ohuaya*.

I wish I'd never been born, truly that I'd never come to earth. That's what I say. But what is there to do? Do I have to live among the people? What then? Princes, tell me! *Aya. Ohuaya ohuaya*.

Do I have to stand on earth? What is my destiny? My heart suffers. I am unfortunate. You were hardly my friend here on earth, Life Giver. *Ohuaya ohuaya*.

How to live—*Aya*—among the people? Does he who sustains and lifts men have no discretion? Go, friends, live in peace, pass your life in calm! While I have to live stooped, with my head bent down when I am among the people. *Ohuaya ohuaya*.

For this I cry—*Yeehuya!*—feeling desolate, abandoned among men on the earth. How do you decide your heart— *Yeehuya!*—Life Giver? Already your anger is vanishing, your compassion welling! *Aya!* I am at your side, God. Do you plan my death? *Ohuaya ohuaya*.

Is it true we take pleasure, we who live on earth? Is it certain that we live to enjoy ourselves on earth? But we are all so filled with grief. Are bitterness and anguish the destiny of the people of earth? *Ohuaya, ohuaya*.

But do not anguish, my heart! *Yeehuaya!* Recall nothing now. In truth it hardly gains compassion on this earth. *Yeehuaya!* Truly you have come to increase bitterness at your side, next to you, O Life Giver. *Yyao yyahue auhuayye oo huiya*.

I only look for, I remember my friends. Perhaps they will come one more time, perhaps they will return to life. Or only once do we perish, only one time here on earth? If only our hearts did not suffer! next to, at your side, life giver. *Yyao yyahue auhuayye oo huiya.*

*(Composed when he was fleeing the king of Azcapotzalco, either during his first flight in 1418, when he was 16, or during his second flight, around 1426, when he was 24. This is the earliest poem that may be dated.)*



## IN XOCHINQUAHUITL

Xiahuilompehua xiahuiloncuican ticuicanitl huiya ma xonahuiacany, onelelquixtilon ypalnemohuani. Yyeo ayahui ohuaya.

Ma xonahuiacani ye techonquimiloa ypalnemohua ye xochimaquiztica netotilo ye nehuihuio—Aya!—moxochiuh—A ohuaya—yao yao ho ama y yehuaya ahuayyao aye ohuaya ohuaya. Ye momamana, ye momana ya in tocuic. Maquizcalitec zan teocuitlacialico moyahuan Xochincuahuatl oo. Ye mohui xohua in zan ye motzetzelo. Ma in tlachichina quetzaltototl ma in tlachichina in zacuan quecholan. Ohuaya.

Xochincuahuatl timochiuh, timaxelihui, tihuitolihui: o ya timoquetzaco in yehuan. Ixpan timomati tehuan nipapan xochitl. A Ohuaya ohuaya.

Ma oc xon ya tica oc xon cuepontica yn tlalticpac in. Timolinia tepehui xochitl, timotzetzelo—Yohuaya ohuaya! Ah tlamiz noxochiuh ah tlamiz nocuic yn noconyayehua—Aaya!—zan nicuicanitl. Huia. Xexelihuiya ya moyahua yaho cozahua ya xochitl za ye on calaquilo zacuan calitic. A ohuaya ohuaya.

Yn cacaloxochitl in mayexochitl—Aya ohuaye!—tic ya moyahua, tic ya tzetzelo xochincalaytec. A ohuaya ohuaya.

Yyoyahue ye nonocuiltonohua on nitepiltzin niNezahualcoyotl huia nic nechico cozcatl in quetzalin patlahuac ye no nic iximati chalchihuitl. Yahoo in tepilhuan. Ohuaya ohuaya. Yxco nontlatlachia nepapan cuauhtli ocelotl, ye no nic yximati chalchiuhtliya in maquiztliya. Ohuaye.

Tiazque yehua xon ahuiacan. Niquitto a o ni Nezahualcoyotl. Huia! Cuix oc nelli nemohua oa in tlalticpac? Yhui. Ohuaye.

Anochipa tlalticpac. Zan achica ye nican. Ohuaye ohuaye. Tel ca chalchihuitl no xamani, no teocuitlatl in tlapani, no quetzalli poztequi. Yahui ohuaye. Anochipa tlalticpac zan achica ye nican. Ohuaya ohuaya.

Cantares Mexicanos #20 (16v-17r)

## THE FLOWER TREE

Begin the song in pleasure, singer, enjoy, give pleasure to all, even to Life Giver. *Yyeo ayahui ohuaya.*

Delight, for Life Giver adorns us. All the flower bracelets, your flowers, are dancing. Our songs are strewn in this jewel house, this golden house. The flower tree grows and shakes, already it scatters. The quetzal breathes honey, the golden flamingo breathes honey. *Ohuaya, ohuaya.*

You have transformed into a flower tree, you have emerged, you bend and scatter. You have appeared before God's face as multicolored flowers. *Ohuaya, ohuaya.*

Live here on Earth, blossom! As you move and shake, flowers fall. My flowers are eternal, my songs are forever: I raise them: I, a singer. I scatter them, I spill them, the flowers become gold: they are carried inside the golden place. *Ohuaya, ohuyaya.*

Flowers of raven, flowers you scatter, you let them fall in the house of flowers. *Ohuaya, ohuyaya.*

Ah, yes: I am happy, I, prince Nezahualcoyotl, gathering jewels, wide plumes of quetzal, I contemplate the faces of jades: they are the princes! I gaze into the faces of eagles and jaguars, and behold the faces of jades and jewels! *Ohuaya ohuyaya.*

We will pass away. I, Nezahualcoyotl, say, enjoy! Do we really live on earth? *Ohuaya, ohuaya.*

Not forever on earth, only a brief time here! Even jades fracture; even gold ruptures, even quetzal plumes tear: Not forever on earth: only a brief time here! *Ohuaya, ohuaya.*

## **A ZAN CHALCHIHUITLI**

A zan chalchihuitli quetzal on patlahuac  
moyollo motlatol totatzin! Ehuaya.

Tonteicnoitta tonteicnopilitta. In zan cuel  
achitzin ca in motloc monahuac. Ohuaya ohuaya.

Chalchiuh itzmolini moxochiuh ipalnemohua.  
Yexochimimilihui xiuhquechol cuepuntimani. In  
zan cuel achitzin ca in motloc monahuac! Ohuaya  
ohuaya.

Romances de los Señores #34 (20v)

## **IT IS PURE JADE**

It is pure jade, a wide plumage, your heart,  
your word, O Father! *Ehuaya*.

You pity man, you watch him with mercy! Only  
for the most brief moment is he next to you, at  
your side! *Ohuaya, ohuyaya*.

Precious as jade your flowers burst forth, O Life  
Giver. As fragrant flowers they are perfected, as  
blue parrots they open their corollas. Only for the  
most brief moment next to you, at your side!  
*Ohuaya, ohuyaya*.

## ZAN NOMPEHUA NONCUICA

Zan nompehua noncuica—Aya!—acohui ye  
noconehua in zan ca ye icuic in ipalnemohua.  
Yayahue Ohuaya ohuaya.

Cuicailhuizol yecoc hual aciz in Moyocoyatzin  
in antepilhuan ma on netlanehuilo in  
cacahuaxochitli. Ahuayya Ohuaya ohuaya.

In ya qui yancohui—Ayahue Huiya!—quen  
noconchihuaz imaxochitica—Yehuaya!—ma ic  
ninapantihui ni ya patlaniz ninotolinia ica nichoca.  
Ohuaya ohuaya.

Cuel achic monahuac—Yehuaya!—ipal  
nemohuani in ye nelli tonteicuilo hua ac at on  
teicnomati a in tlalticpac? Ohuaya ohuaya.

Nepapan cuauhizhuayoticac in mohuehueuh in  
ipal nemohua in xochitica celiztica—Ayahue!—ic  
mitz on ahuiltia a in tepilhuan—Huiya Ohuaya!—  
achi ye yuhcan in cuicaxochitli huel imanican.  
Ohuaya ohuaya.

In quetzalizquixochitl on cuepontoc ye  
oncan—Huiya!—ihcahuaca on tlatohua—  
Yeehuaya!—in quetzalayacachtototl ipal  
nemohuani teocuitlaxochitl—Aya!—  
cuepuntimani—Ya!—achi ye yuhcan in  
cuicaxochitli huel imanican. Ohuaya ohuaya.

Zan tzinitzcan zacuan ye tlahuquechol ica  
titlatlapalpohua ye mocuic zan tiquimoquetzaltia in  
nocnihuan in cuatli ocelo ic tiquim ya melacuahua.  
Ohuaya ohuaya.

Ac icnopilli naconacitiuh in oncan piltihua  
mahuiztihua—Yeehuaya!—in mocnihuan in  
cuauhtli in ocelo ic tiquim melacuahua. Ohuaya  
ohuaya.

Romances de los Señores #37 (22v-23v)

## I BEGIN TO SING

I begin to sing, I elevate to the heights the song for him by whom all live. *Yayahue ohuaya ohuaya.*

The festive song has arrived: it comes to reach up to the highest arbiter. O lords, borrow precious flowers! *Ahuayya ohuaya ohuaya.*

Already they are being renewed: how will I do it? With your branches I adorn myself, I will fly: I am unfortunate, for that reason I cry. *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

A brief moment at your side, O you by whom all live. Truly you paint the destiny of man. Can you pity the unfortunate here on Earth? *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

With variegated flowers adorned your drum is erected, O you by whom all live. With flowers, with freshness—*Ayahue!*— You give pleasure to the princes. *Huiya ohuaya!* A brief instant in this form is the house of the flowers of song. *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

The beautiful yellow corn flowers open their corollas. *Huiya!* The warbling quetzal of him by whom all live makes a jingling clamor. *Yeehuaya!* Flowers of gold open their corollas. *Aya!* A brief moment in this form is the house of the flowers of the song. *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

With colors of the golden bird, with red-black and lucent red you decorate your songs. With quetzal feathers you ennoble your friends, eagle and jaguars, you make them valiant. *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

Who has the piety to reach above to where it ennobles one, to where it brings glory? *Yehuaya!* Your friends eagles and jaguars, you make them valiant. *Ohuaya ohuaya*

## NIC QUETZA TOHUEHUEUH

Nic quetza tohuehueuh niquin nechicohua—  
Aya!—tocnihuan on in mehelquiza niquin cuicatia.  
Tiyazque ye yuhcan xi quilnamiquican xi ya  
mocuiltonocan—Aya!—in tocnihuan. Ohuaya  
ohuaya.

In cuix oc no ihuiyan canon ye yuhcan—Aya!—  
cuix oc no ihuiyan canon ximohuayan? Aye  
ohuaya ohuaya! Ma tihuiyacan, yece ye nican in  
xochinahuatilo, yece ye nican in cuicanahuatilo  
tlalticpac. Ehuaya! Xi mocuiltonocan xi  
moquimilocan a in tocnihuan. Ohuaya ohuaya.

Romances de los Señores #38 (23v-24v)

## I ERECT OUR DRUM

I erect our drum, I assemble my friends. *Aya!* Here they find recreation, I make them sing. Thus we must go over there. Remember this. Be happy. *Aya!* Oh, my friends! *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

Perhaps now with calm, and thus it must be over there? *Aya!* Perhaps there is also calm there in the Bodiless Place? *Aye! Ohuaya ohuaya!* Let us go. But here the law of the flowers governs, here the law of the song governs, here on earth. *Ehuaya!* Be happy, dress in finery, O friends. *Ohuaya ohuaya.*



## **TI XIUHTOTOTL**

Ti xiuhtototl ti tlahquechol ti ya patlantinemi.  
Moyocoya ipal nemohuani: ti mohuihuixohua ya  
timotzetzelohua nican moqui nochan moqui  
nocalla imancan. Ohuaya ohuaya.

Monecuiltonol moteicnelil huel ic nemohua in  
ipal nemohua in talticpac: ti mohuihuixohua ya  
timotzetzelohua nican moqui nochan moqui  
nocalla imancan. Ohuaya ohuaya.

Romances de los Señores #40 (24v-25r)

## **YOU, AZURE BIRD**

You, azure bird, shining parrot, you walk flying. O highest arbiter, life giver: trembling, you extend yourself here, filling my house, filling my dwelling here. *Ohuaya ohuaya*.

With your piety and grace one can live, O author of life on Earth: trembling, you extend yourself here, filling my house, filling my dwelling here. *Ohuaya ohuaya*.

## MELAHUAC XOPANCUICATL

Talpan temoc in xochitl tlalpan, quitemohuia  
yn ipalnemohuani zaniman—Yehua!—yectli ya  
xochitl zaniman—Yehua!—cozahuic xochitla.  
Ohuaya ohuaya.

In maic neapanalo o antepilhuan anteteuctin  
ayahue ychoquiz tlatelotihuitza—Aya!—ca  
quitemohui yn ipalnemoani zaniman yehua yectli  
ya xochitl zaniman yehua cozahuic xochitla.  
Ohuaya ohuaya.

Ach tleon i quinequi in toyollo in tlalticpacqui  
huel teyol quima yn ipalnemoa moxochihuaya ma  
onnetlanehuilo cozahuic xochitla ca ycahuaca  
xochitl ayac quicentlamittaz ynic timiquizque.  
Ahuaye ohuaya.

Intlanel teocuitlatl ma xoyatlatiya intla  
mochalchiuh mocozuki moquetzal zan  
tictlanehuico ayac quicentlamittaz ynic  
timiquizque. Ahuaye ohuaya ohuaya.

Yecan tinemico xochipan tinemico. Ach in  
tocnihuan, oo, ma iuhcan quentetl ma on  
nemohua. Ohuaya ohuaya.

In ni Yoyo[tzin] ye nican paqui toyollo, tixco  
timatico yectli totlatol, antocnihuan yca nichico.  
Ohuaya ohuaya.

Huixahuee ye ninotolinia icnopilotl—Aya!—in  
anahui in ahuellamati, zan nontlatlacoxtinemi in  
tlalticpac ye nican. Ohuaya ohuaya.

Ca ya nihuizoc. In quinequi in noyollo yn  
imahuizon Tiox ho, ipalnemohuani ye oqui piltihua  
y nica mahuiztihua tlalticpacqui in teucyotl in  
tlatocayotl. Ohuaya ohuaya.

## A PLAIN SPRING SONG

Flowers descend to earth, Life Giver sends them, sacred yellow flowers. *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

Let all be adorned, princes, lords. Life Giver sends them, these wailing piles of sacred flowers, these golden flowers. *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

What do our hearts want on this earth? Heart pleasure. Life Giver, let us borrow your flowers, these golden flowers, these wailing flowers. No one can enjoy them forever, for we must depart. *Ahuaye ohuaya ohuaya.*

Though they may be gold, you will hide them, though they may be your jades, your plumes. We only borrow them. No one can enjoy them forever, for we must depart. *Ahuaye ohuaya ohuaya.*

O friends, to a good place we've come to live, come in springtime! In that place a very brief moment! So brief is life!

I, Yoyontzin, say, Here our hearts are glad. Friends, we have come to know each other and each other's beautiful words. Yet they are also dark. *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

Yes, I suffer, grieve, I am joyless, inconsolable on Earth. *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

I am a hawk. My heart longs for Life Giver God's glory. Here on earth lords are born and they rule through his glory. *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

## ZANIO IN XOCHITL TONEQUIMILOL

Zanio in xochitl tonequimilol, zanio in cuicatl ic huehuetzin telel a in tlalticpac. Ohuaya ohuaya. In mach noca om polihuiz in cohuayotl, moch noca om polihuiz in icniuhyotl? In ononya yehua ni Yoyontzin. Ohuaye! On cuicatilo in ipalnemoani. Ohuaya ohuaya!

In ma ya moyol iuh quimati in antepilhuan in ancuaht'anmocelo ah mochipan titocnihuan zan cuel achic nican timochi tonyazque o ye ichan. Ohuaya ohuaya.

Nitlayocoya nicnotlamati—Aya!—zan ni tepiltzin ni Nezahualcoyotl—Huiya!—xochitica ihuan cuicatica niquilnamiqui in tepilhuan in oyaque yehuan Tezozomocztzin ihuan Cuahcuauhtzin. A ohuaya ohuaya.

Oc nelli nemoa in Quenonamican: ma ya niquintoca in tepilhuan. Huiya! Ma niqitquili toxochiuh—Aya!—ma itech nonaci yectli yan cuicatl, Tezozomocztzin ihuan Cuahcuauhtzin. A ohuaya ohuaya.

O aic om polihuiz in moteyo nopiltzin ti Tezozomocztzin. Anca zan ye mocuic. O a ica nihualchoca in zan nicnotlamatico zan tiya ehuan. Ohuaya ohuaya.

Zan nihuallayocoya nicnotlamatia ayoc in ayoc in quenmanian titech ya ittaquiuh in tlalticpac in zan tiya ehuan. Ohuaya ohuaya.

Cantares Mexicanos #40 (25rv)

## ONLY FLOWERS ARE OUR ADORNMENT

Only flowers are our adornment, only songs turn our suffering to delight on earth. *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

Will I lose my friends and companions? Already I have gone, I, Yoyontzin, to the house of song of him who makes the world live! *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

Let your hearts know, O princes, O eagles and jaguars: not forever will we be friends here: only for a very brief moment and then we all go away to His house. *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

I am sad, I grieve, I, Lord Nezahualcoyotl, when with flowers and songs I remember those princes who went away, Tezozomoc and Cuacuauhtzin. *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

Do they live there still in the realm of mystery? If only I could follow after the princes! Let me carry our flowers and begin the beautiful songs next to Tezozomoc! *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

O my prince Tezozomoc: never will your renown have to end: with a song in your honor I come to suffer and cry: you too have gone away to his house! *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

I come here to feel the sadness, anguish: never more, oh, never more will you come to see us on earth: you too have gone away to his house! *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

*(The Tezozomoc addressed in this song is surely not the ruler who ordered his father's death. Tezozomoc was a common name, and the name of a friend and a cousin who died young. On the other hand, the Cuacuauhtzin addressed probably is the same man whose death Nezahualcoyotl caused from love for Azcalxochitzin. Nonetheless, the song seems filled with strange ironies. It must have been composed after 1443, the year of Cuacuauhtzin's death.)*

## **MAQUIZCUEPONI IN MOXOCHIUH**

Maquizcueponi—Ohuaya!—in moxochiuh—  
Aya!— chalchimmimilihui xochiizhuayo in tomac  
mani quetzalli yexochitl yece tonequimilol  
antepilhuan. Huiya Yyayya! Zan tictotlanehuiya in  
tlalticpac. Ohuaya ohuaya.

Ma izquixochitli ma cacahuaxochitli  
neneliuhtimani ye tomac on mani quetzalli  
yexochitli yece tonequilnilol antepilhuan. Huiya  
Yyayya! Zan tictotlanehuiya in tlalticpac. Ohuaya  
ohuaya.

Zan nihuallaocoya zan nitizahuacihui. Canon  
tihui ye ichan o ayoc hual ilotihua. Yeehuaya!  
Cen tihui oc canon tihui. Ohuaya ohuaya.

Ma itquihuani ichan xochitli cuicatli. Ma ic  
ninapantihui teocuitlacacal oxochitli  
quetzalizquixochitli in tomac on mani o ayoc hual  
ilotihua cen tihui oc canon tihui. Ohuaya ohuaya.

Romances de los Señores #41 (25r-26r)

**AS JEWELS YOUR FLOWERS  
OPEN THEIR BUDS**

As jewels—*Ohuaya!*—your flowers open their buds—*Aya!*—surrounded by emerald foliage. They are in our hands. Precious scented flowers, they are our attire, O princes. We only have borrowed them on earth. *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

Precious and beautiful flowers go away intermingled! They are in our hands. Precious scented flowers, they are our attire, O princes. We only have borrowed them on earth. *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

I sadden, mortally pale. There, from Your house, to where we go: oh, there is no return, no one yet returns here! Once and for all we go away there to where we go! *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

If only we could bring the flowers and the songs to Your house! If only I could go away adorned with golden crow flowers, with beautiful fragrant flowers. In our hands they are now. But oh, there is no return, no one yet returns here! Once and for all we go away there to where we go! *Ohuaya ohuaya.*



## NI HUALACIC YE NICAN

Ni hualacic ye nican ye ni Yoyontzin—Huiya!—zan nic xochiehelehuia—Yeehuaya!—nixochintlahtlapanaco ya in tlalticpac ye nican noconyatlapana in cacahuaxochitl, nocon ya tlapana icniuhxochitl. In ye tehua monacayo in ti tepiltzin Nezahualcoyotl teuctli Yohyontzin. Yyao ohuili! Yya ayyo yao ayaha! Yohuaya.

Zan nic ya temohuitihuitz mocuic in yectli, ihuan nic ya temohuia in tocnihuan. Aya! Ma on papacohua yehua icniuhtlamachoya. Ya ohuili! Yya ayyo yao ayaha! Yohuaya.

Achin ic nonahuia o achin ic ompahpactinemi noyollo in tlalticpac. Ye ni Yoyontzin nixochiehelehuia oo Nixochincuicuicatinemi. Ya ohuaya ohuaya.

Nic nehnequi nic ehelehuia in icniuyotl in tecpillotl nixochiehelehuia oo Nixochincuicuicatinemi. Ya ohuaya.

O anca yuhqui in chalchihuitl—Ohuaya!—zan ca yuhqui in cozcatl in quetzalli patlahuac ipan ye nicmatia yectli ye mocuic—Aya!—ipalnemoani ica nonahuia ica nonnitotiya huehuetitlan oo xopan cala itic in ye ni Yohyontzin. Huiya! Ha noyol quimati. Ohuaya ohuaya.

Ma xic huel in tzotzona moxochihuehueuh ticuicanitl. Iyehuaya! Ma izquixochitl in ma cacahuaxochitl in ma on moyahua—Aya!—ma on tzetzelihui ye nican huehuetitlan oo. Ma in tahuiyacan. Ohuaya ohuaya.

Ya zan ca xihquechol tzinizan tlahquechol oncan on cuicatlatohua ya in xochitl ic paqui. Hoo alilili yao ayyaha ohuaya ohuaya.

A oncan ya ihcac in Xochincuahuil in huehuetitlan. Ayahue! Zan ye itech on nemi ya in quetzalin quechol in tototl ipan mochiuhtinemi o in Nezahualcoyotzin o in xochitl ic paqui. Hoo alilili yao ayyaha ohuaya ohuaya.

Cantares Mexicanos #25 (18v-19r)

## I HAVE ARRIVED HERE

I have arrived here, I, Yoyontzin, yearning only for flowers, cutting flowers on the earth, cocoa flowers, cut flowers of friendship, which are your body, O prince. Lord Nezahualcoyotl I am, Yoyontzin. *Yyao ohuili yya ayyo yao ayya yohuiya.*

I only come bringing your beautiful songs, I carry them down, finding friends. Be joyful here, let your friendship be revealed. *Yyao ohuili yya ayyo yao ayya yohuiya.*

I take delight a brief time, only fleetingly is my heart glad on earth. I, Yoyontzin: I yearn for flowers. *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

I live with flowery songs. I want and desire deep brotherhood, nobility. I yearn for songs: I live in flowery songs. *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

As jade, as jewels, as a wide plumage of quetzal, I value your song, Giver of Life, with these I take enjoyment, with them I dance between the drums in the flowery house of spring. I, Yoyontzin, my heart enjoys it. *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

Sound your flower drum beautifully, singer; scatter perfumed corn flowers, chocolate flowers, they are spilled as rain here next to the drums. Let us enjoy them. *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

Already the long-necked turquoise bird, the black trogon, the red parrot sing and warble there, joyful with the flowers. *Yao ayyaha ohuaya ohuaya.*

Already the flower tree is raised there next to the drum. The precious red bird is in it: Nezahualcoyotl has become a bird, joyful being with flowers. *Yao ayyaha ohuaya ohuaya.*

## **TZINITZCAXUCHITLA IHUA QUIMALINA**

Tzinitzcaxuchitla ihua quimalina in yectli yan cuicatl ic tonteyapanaco tucuicanitli —Huiya!—Ic tontequimilohua nepapan xochitli. Ma ic xon ahuiyacan in antepilhuan. Ohuaya ohuaya.

Cuix oc yuh nemohua canon ye yuh quenonamican? Canin cuix oc ahuiyalo? A ca zaniyo nican tlalticpac xochitica ya hual iximacho cuicatica ya ye on tlaneuh ti tocnihuan. Ohuaya ohuaya.

Ma moxochiuh ica xi mapana in tlahquechol xochitl—Aya!—tonatimania in cacaloxochitli ma ica titoquimilocan tlalticpac ye nican yece ye nican. Ohuaya ohuaya.

In zan achitzinca in ma ihui cuel achic on netlanehuilo ixochiuh—Ayehuaye!—ya itquihui in ichan teotl ihua ximohuacan no ye ichan auh in amo zan ic on polihui in telled in totlaocol. Ohuaya ohuaya.

Romances de los Señores #39 (24rv)

## **WITH BLACK FLOWERS AND STRIPES OF GOLD**

With black flowers and stripes of gold you interlace the beautiful song. With it you, singer, come to adorn the people. *Huiya!* With a spectrum of flowers you dress the people. Enjoy! *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

Perhaps like this the dead live now, beyond, in the place of mystery? Is there perhaps pleasure there? Or is it only here on earth? With flowers knowledge is given, with flowers one is shown, O my friend! *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

Regale yourself with flowers, shining macaw flowers, brilliant like the sun; with flowers of the crow let us regale ourselves on the earth, here but only here. *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

Only a brief instant will it be thus: for a very brief time you are lent your flowers. Already they are carried to their house, to the Bodiless Place, which is also your house. Is this not so? With this knowledge, our sadness and bitterness perish. *Ohuaya ohuaya.*

## TEPONAZCUICATL

*Titoco titoco titocoti*

Niquetzal xochiatototl ilhuizol mana. Aya!  
Nicuicatl ilhuicatl Anahuac, on nemi—Aya!—  
noyollo tlacatempan, a nic moyahua ya  
noxochiuh—Aya!—ica yehua ihuintihua tepilhuan.  
Oo, nequimilolo, Yaya ye yahao.

Nicnotlamatia, yaya yaha ohua. Zan nentlamati  
noyol, nicuicanitl chiuhnahuatl itempan  
xochitlalpan. Ya nicnihuan ma ya huiyelo—Aya! —  
niquilolo. Ya oncan yehuaya.

Chalchiuhtli ololohuic a nicnocozcattia,  
nicuicanitl ye nomacehual. Ayehuaya! chalchiuhtli  
in popoca zan nictimaloa cuicatl —Aya!—quihuinti  
ye noyol xochintlalticpac on nequimilolo. Ya oncan  
yehuaya.

Zan noncuica nentlamati in tlalticpac. Aya! Ni  
cuicanitl, Ohuaye, tan iticpa quiza notlayocol—  
Aya!—cuicatl. Aya! Quihuinti ye noyol  
xochintlalticpac on nequimilolo. Ye oncan yehuaya.  
Aya.

Toltecayotl ye nicuilohuitehuaz, nicuicanitl  
nocuicayo nemiz a in tlalticpac, cuicatl ica  
nilnamicoz ohua nipinohuan, niaz nipolihuitiuh  
cozcatozpetlac ninotecatiuh chochotiaz  
nononanhuan ixayotl pixauhtiaz notomio oloxochio  
nitepehui. Cocahuicatl itempan, o ca yehua.  
Ayahue aya.

Aye aya ohuaye! Nicnotlamati amopinohuan,  
ihuiPETlacotl niHUICALONI canin Tlapalla poctlan  
tihuatoC. Ompa yan noyaz niyaz nipolIUHTIUH,  
cozcapetlac ninotecatiuh, chochotiaz  
nononanhuan.

Cantares Mexicanos #50 (31rv)

## TEPONAZTLI DRUM SONG

*Drum: titoco titoco titocoti*

I, a quetzal feather, a bird of the flowering water, I flow in celebration. I am a song. In the wide wall of the water, my heart walks on the lips of the men. I am beautifying my flowers; with them the princes become intoxicated. There is adornment. *Yayaye yahao.*

I suffer, ay, my heart is desolate, I a poet on the Shore of the Nine Currents. In the world of flowers, take pleasure, all of you, O my friends; already it is time to be adorned. *Yahueha.*

I put on a necklace of round jades, I, a singer, these are my payments. The jades sparkle, I exalt them in my song. They enrapture my heart. Let all be adorned in this flower world.

When I, a singer, sing on earth, my inner sadness departs. They enrapture my heart. Let all be adorned in the flower world beyond. *Yahue aya.*

I will leave a work of painted art. I, a singer whose songs will live on earth: with songs I will be remembered, O warriors, I will go away, I will disappear, I will be strewn on a mat of jewels and yellow feathers. The old women will cry for me. Their wails will drain my bones; as a flowery log I will be scattered there on the shore of the doves. *Aya ohuaya.*

*Ayao ata ohuaye.* Warriors, I suffer. I'm carried along on a canopy of feathers. In Tlapallan, smoke will disperse. I will go there, I will disappear, strewn on a mat of jewels and yellow feathers.

I

## CUIC NEZAHUALCOYOTZIN

*Totoco totoco tico totoco totoco. Ic ontlantiuh: tico titico titico tico*

Nican ya quetzaco tohuehueuh. Ao!  
Niquimitotia cuauhtloocelo. In ca tiya ihcac in  
cuicaxochitl. Nic temoa a in cuicatl ye  
tonequimilol. Ayyo.

Quiyo quiyonca. Aya. Nichoca. Aya! Ni  
Nezahualcoyotl. Huiya! Quen ni ye nonyaz o ya  
nipolihuiz oya Miquitlan? Ye ni mitz cahua  
noteouh ipalnemoa ti nech nahuatia ye niaz  
nipolihuiz oya Miquitlan. Ayyo.

Quen on maniz tlalli in Acolihuacan? Huiya!  
Cuix oc quenman o ticmomoyahuaz in  
momacehual? Ye mitz cahua noteouh ipalnemoa.  
Ti nech nahuatia ye niaz nipolihuiz oya Miquitlan.  
Ayyo.

Zanio cuicatl tonequimilol, quipoloa—Aya!—in  
totlacuilolli tepilhuan, oo. Ma ya ahuilihua nican.  
Aya! Ayac ichan in tlalticpac, oo. Tic ya  
cencahuazque huelic yexochitl. Ayyo.

*Quititi quititi quiti quiti tocoto tocoti tocototocoti.  
Zan ic mocueptiuh.*

Ma xochicuico—Aya!—ma ihtoa nic huana—  
Ayyahue!—teihuinti xochitl. Ahuaya! Yehcoc ye  
nican poyoma, xa huallan timaliuhtihuitz. Ayyo.

Maxochitl o yehcoc ye nican. Ayyahue! Zan  
tlaahuixochitla moyahua—Aya!—motzetzelo a an ca  
zo yehuatl nepapan xochitl. Ayyo! Zan comoni  
huehuetl ma ya nehtotilo. Ayyo.

In quetzalpoymatl a ic icuilihuic noyol,  
nicuicanitl in xochitl a ya tzetzelihui ipan cuel  
nicuiya. Ma xon ahuiacan. Ayyo! Zan noyolitic on

tlapani in cuicaxochitl nic ya moyahua in xochitla.  
Ayyo.

Cuicatl ya ninoquimilotehuaz in quenmanian,  
xochineneliuhtiaz noyollo, yehuan tepilhuan on  
teteuctin in. Ayyo.

Zan ye ic nichoca in quenmanian, zan nic aya  
ihtoa noxochiteyo nocuicatoca, nic tlalitehuaz in  
quenmanian, xochineneliuhtiaz noyollo, yehuan  
tepilhuan in teteuctin in. Ayyo.

*Tico toco tocoto. Ic ontlantiuh: ticoto ticoto.*

Toztli yan quechol nipatlantinemia in tlalla  
icpac oquihuinti. Ye noyol. Ahuayyai.

Niquetzaltototl niyecoya ye iquiapan yceltcotl y  
xochitlcpac nihueloncuica oo nicuicaihtoa paqui.  
Ye noyol. Ahuayyai.

Xochiatl in pozontimania yn tlalla icpac  
oquihuinti. Ye noyol. Ahuayyai.

Ninochoquilia niquinotlamati ayac inchan on  
tlallicpac. Ahuayyai.

Zan niquitoaya ye niMexicatl ma niyahuiya  
nohtlatoca tequantepec niyahui polihuin  
chiltepehua—Aya!—ye choca in tequantepehua.  
Ohuaye ohuaya.

Maca qualania nohueyo yehua Mexicatli  
polihui chil. Ahuayyai!

Citlalin in popocaya ipan ye moteca y za ye  
polihuia zan ye xochitecatl. Ohuaye Ahuayyai! Zan  
ye chocaya Amaxtecatl aya ca ye chocaya  
tequantepehua. Ahuayyai.

*Toto tiquiti tiquiti. Ic ontlantiuh: tocotico tocoti  
tototiqui tototitiquiti*

Oyamoquetz huehuatl ooon ma annetotilo  
teteuctin—Aya!—ma onnetlanehuihuilo



chalchihuitl on quetzal i patlahuac ayac ychan  
tlalticpac. Ayio! Zan nomac onmania ooo  
yxochiuh—Aya!—ipalnemoa ma onnetlanchuilo  
chalchihuitl.

Oyohualin colinia oon in icelteotl ipalnemoa  
anahuac o onnemia noyol. Ayio.

Yn yancuica oncan quixima ipalnemoani ca ye  
Nonoalco ahuilizapani in teuctli yehua  
Nezahualpilli y yece ye oncan—Aya!—in  
tlacochtenanpan atlixco. Ayio! Zan momac otitemic  
motlahua' zomal a ica ticahuilitia ycelteotl in teuctli  
yehua. Ayio.

Yyeho aye icnotlamati noyollo zan Ninonoalcatl  
zan can nicolintototl o nocamapan—Aya!—  
Mexicatl. In cayio.

Onquetzalpipayauhtoc motlachinolxochiuh yn  
ipalnemoa zan ca nicoli. In cayio.

*Toco toco tiqui tiqui. Ic ontlantiuh: tocotico tocoti.*

Ma ya pehualoya nicuihua in ma ya oncuico ye  
nicaan—Aya oya!— ye'coc yehuan dios—In cayio!—  
yn ma ycaya onahuilihuan tepilhuan a—Aya!—  
mocuic—Oya!—yehuan dios oncan titemoc yehuan  
dios oncan huelin oncan tlatat y ye... In cayio!

Yn oncan tlahuizcalli milintimani mochan—  
Aya!—moxochiuh aya dios aya chalchiuhcueponi  
maquitzetzelihui on netlamachtiloya—In cayio!—  
yn oncan yao nepapan izhuayo moxochiuh—Aya!—  
dios. In cayio.

Zan ye xochitl moyahua oo zan ca ytlatol yn  
ipalnemoani oon tepan ye moteca anahuac oo yca  
tichuelmana atlon yan tepetl. Ayio.

Zan te momac mania cemanahuatl in niman ye  
tehuatl toconyaittoaya ipalnemoani.

Cantares Mexicanos #46 (28v - 29r)

## SONG OF NEZAHUALCOYOTL

*Drums: Totoco totoco tico totoco totoco. At the end: tico titico titico tico*

Our drums are ready; already I inspire the eagles and jaguars to dance. Already you are on your feet, song flower. I search for songs, our adornments. *Ayyo.*

Toward the end of it all I, Nezahualcoyotl, go weeping. Why must I go lose myself in the land of the dead? Already I leave you, by whom all live, you command me to lose myself in the land of the dead. *Ayyo.*

How will things continue on Earth, in Acolhuacan? In time will you disperse all your dependents,  
spirit of all I leave behind?

Only songs are our adornments. Already He destroys our painted books, the princes. Be joyful here, no one has his house on earth; we must leave the fragrant flowers. *Ayyo.*

*Drums: Quititi quititi quiti quiti tocoto tocoti tocototocoti. Just thus it will come back in.*

Let there be flower songs. Let my younger brothers sing. I drink intoxicating flowers; already they have arrived, the flowers that make us dizzy, they come to glorify. *Ayyo.*

Let there be flowers. Bouquets of flowers have already arrived here; flowers of pleasure are scattered, many-colored flowers rain entwined. The drum resounds: let the dance begin. *Ayyo.*

I, the singer, plumes of narcotic flowers tint my heart; already I scatter flowers, they are quickly

taken. Enjoy. Within my heart the song flowers burst, already I scatter flowers. *Ayyo*.

With songs I must deck myself, with flowers my heart must be entwined: they are princes, they are kings! *Ayyo*.

For this I cry sometimes and say: The fame of my flowers, the renown of my songs, I will leave abandoned someday: with flowers my heart must be entwined: they are princes, they are kings! *Ayyo*.

*Drums: Tico toco tocoto. At the end: ticoto ticoto.*

As a parrot, as a quechol bird, I fly above the earth, my heart drunk. *Ahuayyai*.

I am a quetzal, I arrive in the One Spirit's place of rain, beautifully over the flowers; singing, my heart fills with joy. *Ahuayyai*.

Flowers flood the earth: my heart is drunk. *Ahuayyai*.

I cry and grieve, for no one has a home on earth. *Ahuayyai*.

I, a Mexica, say, let me have pleasure as I march to Tecuantepec: I go to destroy the Chiltepecans, so the Tecuantepecans may weep.

If only these warriors of mine, these Mexicas, were not so warlike! They destroy! *Ahuayyai*.

A comet showers down upon them. Perished are the Xochitecans, weeping are the Amaxtecans, weeping are the Tecuantepecans. *Ahuayyai*.

*Drums: Toto tiquiti tiquiti. At the end: tocotico tocoti tototitiqui tototitiqui*

The drums have begun; now let the dancing start, lords, put on your fine jades, wear the broad

feathers that you borrow. No one has a house on this earth! Already I hold the flowers of Life Giver, the borrowed jades.

Life Giver, the Creator, is shaking his rattles; in Anahuac my heart is thrilled. *Ayio*.

There, in Nonoalco, the Place Beyond, the Water Place, on the flood crest grasping his spear-thrower, Lord Nezahualpilli appears. Life Giver brings him down once more. *Ayio*.

Grasp your spear-thrower, Lord. This gives the One Spirit pleasure. *Ayio*.

My heart grieves, I am a Nonoalcan, a quail who speaks Mexica. *In cayio*.

My feathers fall like mist, my burning flowers, O life giver, I am a quail. *In cayio*.

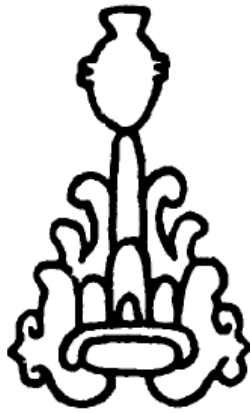
*Drums: Toco toco tiqui tiqui. At the end: tocotico tocoti*

Brothers, let it now begin, let there be music. *Aya, oya!* God has arrived! Now let there be pleasure because of these songs, these princes. O God, you've descended from beyond, born beyond, beyond. *In cayio*.

In your home beyond, dawn is woven; your flowers, your songs bloom like jades, their petals fall like bracelets from the place where one knows joy, from beyond, your many flowers and leaves, O God. *In cayio*.

These flowers, scattered words of Life Giver, shower down on Anahuac. With these you make the city endure. *Ayio*.

Your hands are the world. It is you who sees, O life giver.



Glyph of Texcoco

## **The Life of Nezahualcoyotl** (1402-1472)

Ce Mazatl Acolmiztli Nezahualcoyotl was born on the day 1 Deer in the year 1 Rabbit, or April 28, 1402. He was the first legitimate son of the Tezcocan ruler Ixtlilxochitl, by his queen, Matlalcihuatzin, an Aztec princess. His blood joined the peoples of Texcoco with Mexico-Tenochtitlán, which was to become his second home. Acolmiztli, his original given name, means Shoulder of Puma. Later he received the name Nezahualcoyotl, Nezahualcoyotl, during his hard years in exile. He was also known by the astrological day of his birth, Ce Mazatl, One Deer, and the nickname Yoyontzin. He had many siblings and half-siblings.

Somewhere between the ages of six and eight, he started attending the *calmecac* school, where noble children were sent. There the foremost Aztec scholar of his time, Huitzilihuitzin, took him under his wing and taught him the history and wisdom of the Toltecs. The *calmécac* was presided over by the Toltec deity Quetzalcoatl, while the *telpochcalli* schools, which the majority of the population attended, were presided over by the patron deity of the city, Tezcatlipoca. Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca were in many ways opposites and opponents. Yet they also formed a strange unity, a dynamic dichotomy that worked itself out in the society and was to play an essential role in Nezahualcoyotl's life.

Originally Nezahualcoyotl's metropolis of Texcoco, "Place of Rest," had been founded by a wandering Chichimec people who called themselves the Alcolhuans, hunters and nomads from the

desert, formerly living in caves and wearing animal skins. They arrived about the year 1000 at Lake Texcoco. The Alcolhuans settled there, receiving permission from Xolotl, the Chichimec overlord of the region, who had taken over hegemony of the Valley of Mexico after the fall of the Toltecs of Tula.

The Toltecs' own ancestors had also been Chichimec nomads, immigrating from the north a century earlier into the area where Teotihuacán's great civilization had once flourished. Although Teotihuacán was deserted when they arrived, many of the descendants of people who had dispersed from that great city still lived in towns nearby, while others had moved further on, notably to Cholula. By living near them over a period of time, these rough Chichimecs became the sophisticated Toltecs of Tula, the inheritors of Teotihuacán's culture. In Nahuatl, *toltecatl* means a craftsman or artist.

A century later, Nezahualcoyotl's Alcolhuan ancestors went through a similar process of transformation. The same civilizing forces continued at work in the valley of Mexico. Near the spot where the Alcolhuans began to build Texcoco, was a small community of Toltec refugees from Tula. Learning the ways of civilization from them, the Alcolhuans soon shed their animal skins for cotton clothing, their nomadic ways for farming and village life.

Through several generations, the Alcolhuan chiefs adopted Toltec-Teotihuacán culture as their own. Under Xolotl's grandson, the Chichimecs changed from a hunting to an agricultural people. The following ruler moved the Chichimec capital from Xolotl's Tenayuca across the lake to Texcoco. The fifth ruler, Nezahualcoyotl's grandfather, decreed that their official tongue would no longer be

their rough Chichimec language, but the silvery one of ancient Tula, Nahuatl. He summoned learned scribes from the Mixteca, where the Toltec arts had been highly preserved, to teach them hieroglyphic book painting. The Tezcocans began to follow the Toltec religion, taking Quetzalcoatl as their cultural divinity, while integrating their old tribal deities into Tezcatlipoca, patron of the military orders. The dichotomy of Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca, peace and war, day and night, opposites in eternal struggle but forming a strange unity, runs through Mexican history. The history of Texcoco, like Tula before it, was swept up in this struggle.

While the little Alcolhuan settlement was busy growing into the metropolis of Texcoco, meanwhile on the opposite lake bank another wandering desert people arrived, the Mexica or Tenochcas, known to us as Aztecs. They too took Nahuatl as their new mother tongue, and began their own city, Mexico-Tenochtitlán, on a barren island across the lake ten miles away. While the Aztecs were still struggling with survival, the Tezcocans were the dominant force in the region and becoming a high culture.

At the same time, a third center was growing powerful, the Tepaneca city of Azcapotzalco, ruled by another branch of Xolotl's imperial Toltec lineage. Azcapotzalco, not far from Mexico-Tenochtitlán, became the dominant city on the west side of the lake, and held the Aztecs as a subject people.

When Nezahualcoyotl was eleven, his grandfather died. A struggle ensued between his father, Ixtlilxochitl, and the ruler of Azcapotzalco, Tezozomoc, over who had the right to succession in the line of Xolotl as the next Great Chichimetl, the supreme ruler.



The Tezcocan army surrounded and sieged Azcapotzalco for four years. Finally Tezozomoc sued for peace, finally agreeing to recognize Ixtlilxochitl as supreme ruler. Texcoco quickly disarmed but as soon as their guard was down, Azcapotzalco attacked, with help from Mexico-Tenochtitlán. This happened in the year 4 Rabbit, or 1418, when Nezahualcoyotl was sixteen years old. Ixtlilxochitl was caught unprepared. Texcoco held out for fifty days, but finally Ixtlilxochitl, Nezahualcoyotl and the rest of his family fled. The Tepanecas pursued.



Nezahualcoyotl witnesses his father's death  
(Códice Xolotl)

Leaving the rest of the family hiding in a nearby forest, Ixtlilxochitl, Nezahualcoyotl and two Tezcocan captains climbed down a deep gorge, followed by enemy soldiers. As the enemy

approached, Ixtlilxochitl ordered Nezahualcoyotl to hide in a tree. From that vantage point he watched his father fight to the death. The Tepanecas left him where he fell. When they were gone, Nezahualcoyotl cremated his father's body in accordance with Toltec ritual.

Tezozomoc offered a reward for Nezahualcoyotl's capture dead or alive but, with help from his great-uncle Itzcoatl, who was destined to become the Aztec ruler, Nezahualcoyotl escaped over the hills to Tlaxcala, where he had relatives and friends. He didn't stay in one place long, but moved around the various nearby city-states. Already a poet, he composed "Song of the Flight" while in exile. There are many stories of this period, filled with danger and narrow escapes.

To stamp out a budding revolt in Texcoco, Tezozomoc sent soldiers asking every child in the region who the king was. Those who answered Ixtlilxochitl or Nezahualcoyotl were killed. He made Nezahualcoyotl's own brother, Tilmatzin, puppet governor of Texcoco, and instituted annual tribute payments. He dismantled Texcoco's realm, dividing up the land among bordering states, each governed by one of his allies. Texcoco itself he gave to Mexico-Tenochtitlán. Tezozomoc and his harsh regime became increasingly hated.

Nezahualcoyotl laid low for six years. Finally several of his aunts convinced Tezozomoc to permit him to come out of hiding and live in Mexico-Tenochtitlán, arguing that the threat had passed. Nezahualcoyotl spent the next two years there quietly working as a builder. He found he had a genius for construction, creating the park at Chapultepec and engineering an aqueduct from it to

the city. At the end of that period, those same aunts convinced Tezozomoc to grant Nezahualcoyotl permission to return to Texcoco. His presence there, they claimed, would help support the regime.

Back home in Texcoco at last, Nezahualcoyotl stayed out of politics and seemed to be living the life of an idle young lord. But as Tezozomoc aged, he became concerned that Nezahualcoyotl might challenge his choice of succession, seeing how his abilities and personality had won him many friends. Rather than attack him openly, Tezozomoc arranged several plots on his life, all of which were foiled.

As Tezozomoc approached death, he named a young son as successor, passing over his eldest son, Maxtla. At the public declaration of the new emperor, Maxtla stopped the proceedings, claimed and took the throne. He killed his brother, as well as the rulers of Mexico-Tenochtitlán and Tlatelolco, and sent his men to kill Nezahualcoyotl. Once again Nezahualcoyotl fled the city and went into hiding. Another price was put on his head.

From the mountains Nezahualcoyotl began to organize rebellion, slowly forging an alliance of Tezcocan exiles with many of the neighboring city-states, Tlaxcala, Huexotzingo, Cholula, Chalco and others. Their combined armies routed Maxtla's garrisons on the east side of the lake and, on August 11, 1427, at the age of 25, Nezahualcoyotl led his triumphant followers into Texcoco.

But Maxtla still dominated the west side of the lake, with Mexico-Tenochtitlán still under his control. Nezahualcoyotl forged a secret alliance with his great-uncle Itzcóatl, who had become ruler of Mexico-Tenochtitlán. With the smaller city of Tlacopan, their Triple Alliance attacked

Azcapotzalco by land and by canoe. After a campaign of one hundred fifteen days, the Tepaneca capital was burned and Maxtla was dead.

Crowned supreme ruler (*tlacatecuhtli*) by his people, Nezahualcoyotl set to work to rebuild his shattered city. Under his leadership, Texcoco rose from destruction and reached heights of culture not seen in the valley of Mexico since the fall of Tula. Toltec learning, after an eclipse of generations, blossomed again in Texcoco and ignited a cultural renaissance in the entire valley of Mexico.



(Códice Azcatitlan)

At the very heart of Texcoco he placed an innermost courtyard surrounded by a square of buildings housing the council chambers and halls of justice, quarters for himself and for four hundred

other chiefs, scholars, artists, historians, philosophers, musicians, and poets. In a large hall nearby was the university, whose library of hieroglyphic *amoxtli* books was the greatest on the continent (later burned by Cortés).

He promoted the arts, sciences and humanities: astronomy, calendrics, engineering, architecture, history, philosophy, law, sculpture, painting, music, song, poetry. He saw that they recorded and preserved their knowledge in the great library.

Nezahualcoyotl's engineering genius made it possible for Texcoco and Mexico-Tenochtitlán to become great metropolises. He engineered the first aqueduct to bring fresh water from Teotihuacán to Texcoco, as he'd already done from Chapultepec to Mexico-Tenochtitlán, and watered the fields with canals. He planted a park with a thousand cypresses. He devised and built a dike that stretched across the entire lake, separating the brackish water of the north-east from the fresh water of the south-west. Before that, during flood years salt water had often ruined the harvests at the *chinampas* of the floating gardens of Xochimilco.

Nezahualcoyotl devised a code of eighty laws, the first codification of the law in the Valley of Mexico, which covered property rights, criminal activities and morality, harsh by our standards but so comprehensive and concise that all the other Nahua city-states adopted the code as their own. He organized a form of government by councils. The Council of Justice, the supreme court of the land, had seats reserved for common citizens. The Council of Music was directed to encourage art and science. They would meet regularly to exchange information and teach. Nezahualcoyotl paid the

teaching fees for orphans. On certain days, new works of poetry and history were presented before it by their authors. Goldsmiths, feather workers, poets and musicians would receive prizes for achievements and punishments for bad craftsmanship. There was a school of divination art. In the innermost courtyard at the very center of Texcoco, the philosopher-poets debated in “the dialog of the songs.” The Council of Justice awarded prizes for merit, while the willful falsification of historical truth was punishable by death. That harsh punishment was in response to what had happened in Mexico-Tenochtitlán, where the emperor had ordered all history books destroyed and history rewritten, in order to better legitimize his branch of the Aztec dynasty as heirs to the Toltecs.



Court at Texcoco (Codex Quinatzin)

He saw that widows and aged and wounded soldiers were taken care of with food and clothing from the royal storehouses. He opened the forests to permit the poor to gather dry wood for their fires, which had been forbidden. During times of drought he opened the royal storehouses to all people in need.

A sensuous man, Nezahualcoyotl had numerous concubines and children by them, but approached the age of 40 without ever having married and so had no heir apparent. Feeling loveless, he fell into a great melancholy. One day while walking along the lake shore in this sad state he met Cuacuauhtzin, the governor of a small neighboring city, who invited him home to dinner, where a young woman named Azcalxochitzin served their table. Nezahualcoyotl was so taken by her charm and beauty that all sadness left him and he realized that she possessed his heart. However, she was Cuacuauhtzin's betrothed. Crazy with desire, Nezahualcoyotl ordered Cuacuauhtzin to be sent into battle against their perennial rival, Tlaxcala. He fought there and died. Nezahualcoyotl took Azcalxochitzin as his wife. The following three years were filled with drought and plagues of locusts, which Nezahualcoyotl took as punishment for his transgression.



Nezahualcoyotl and Azcalxochitzin (Códice Xolotl)

It was not long before the question arose over whether Texcoco or Mexico-Tenochtitlán would be the dominant city-state in the region. Mexico-Tenochtitlán had swelled to double Texcoco's population of about 150,000. That clearly tipped the balance toward the Aztecs, together with the militance they had developed as they rose from slaves to masters. When his uncle Itzcóatl died and Moctezuma I succeeded him as ruler of Mexico-Tenochtitlán, Nezahualcoyotl journeyed there and proposed a continuation of their alliance. The Aztec council replied that the price of peace would be Texcoco recognizing the primacy of the Aztecs. Nezahualcoyotl handled the situation with statesmanship. They arranged a fake war. The two armies met on a field and exchanged ritual insults. The Tezcocan army retreated, and a small Aztec force followed to the outskirts of Texcoco. Nezahualcoyotl himself set a symbolic fire to the temple atop the main pyramid in Texcoco. Thus the Aztecs gained recognition as the dominant power of the region, and no one got hurt.

But with the rise of Mexico-Tenochtitlán came their obsession with the heart sacrifice. The cult of sacrifice, intimately connected with the Aztec warrior orders, spread as the Aztec ascendancy spread, throughout the entire Nahua world. The Aztec cult made inroads into Texcoco. A temple to Huitzilopochtli, Master of War, was begun in the center of Nezahualcoyotl's city.

Peace came to the entire valley of Mexico and beyond. The Triple Alliance ruled unchallenged. Yet at this very point of triumph, with the ascendancy of the Aztecs, the inner contradictions of their society began to burst. They did not know how to handle peace. Many of their social structures had



been built around war. The Aztec warrior orders thought they needed war to function, though it was increasingly hard to find anyone to fight. Warriors were rewarded with the highest honors, and those who met death on the field of battle were believed to live eternally in the fields of the sun. A new generation was recruited into the warrior orders, but they had few situations in which to test their skills or win glory. According to the creation myths of the priests of the warrior orders, the priests of Tezcatlipoca and Huitzilopochtli, the world had been created and the sun made to move by the sacrificial death of the deities. The priests of the warrior orders saw this world as being kept alive by ritual blood sacrifice in recreation of this myth, and for that they needed prisoners of war. When a terrible drought and famine began in 1449, the priests of Tezcatlipoca and Huitzilopochtli cried that the gods were angry that there were so few prisoners to sacrifice. In response the Triple Alliance instituted the War of the Flowers, staging combats with Tlaxcala, Uexotzinco and Cholula every twenty days, solely to capture prisoners for sacrifice.

Nezahualcoyotl had seen death and sacrifice all his life and had become increasingly sickened by it. He had always struggled with the sacrificial priests of “the black” Tezcatlipoca, by promoting Quetzalcoatl, the Giver of Life (also known as “the white” Tezcatlipoca). Now he also had to deal with the Aztec priests of Huitzilopochtli, who were far more devoted to the heart sacrifice than the priests of “the black” Tezcatlipoca had ever been. He found himself in the same situation that the legendary Toltec *tlatoani* Quetzalcoatl-Topiltzin had been in during an earlier epoch in the city of Tula, when Quetzalcoatl-Topiltzin had combated Tezcatlipoca-

Huemac over the issue of blood sacrifice. That struggle had resulted in the exile of Quetzalcoatl-Topiltzin and the destruction of Tula, and Nezahualcoyotl did not want this struggle to destroy Texcoco.

Instead of the weapons of war, Nezahualcoyotl struggled using the weapons of poetry and music. He stopped attending the blood sacrifices. At the dedication ceremony of Huitzilopochtli's temple in the year One Reed (1467) he performed a poem in which he prophesied the temple's destruction in another One Reed. The Aztec calendar repeats every 52 years.

### **IN A YEAR SUCH AS THIS**

In a year such as this, this now-new temple will be destroyed. Who will be present? My son or grandson?

Then the earth will be diminished; the chiefdoms will end; the small and seasonless maguey will accidentally be cut, small immature trees will bear fruit and the defective earth will be continually diminished.

Then malice, transgressions and sensuality will reach a height, young boys and girls will have sexual relations, people will rob each others' homes.

Awesome events will occur in this time; the birds will speak and the tree of light, of health and sustenance, will arrive.

To free our children from these vices and calamities, make sure that from an early age they give themselves to integrity and work.

(Ixtililxochitl)

Directly facing Huitzilopochtli's temple, Nezahualcoyotl built an opposing pyramid. On its top he placed a tower nine stories high, each for one of the nine heavens; on the ninth story he put a chapel filled with musical instruments, drums, shells, horns, flutes, bells, cymbals, and then a tenth story with a black roof gilded with stars on the outside, and gold, gems, and precious feathers within. This temple, which the people called the Chililitli after one of the instruments, he dedicated to Tloque Nahuaque, the Lord of the With and the By, the Unknown God, Creator of All Things, God of Causes, Master of the Far and the Near, He Who Invented Himself, Life Giver, Who is as Night and as the Wind. No image was allowed in this temple, only flowers and incense, and no sacrifice of blood. Every day at dawn, noon, sunset and midnight, the hours at which the sovereign prayed, the instruments would be played to call the people to higher consciousness.

In recognition of his accomplishments as a visionary, the people began to address him as *tlamatini*, "he who knows," the highest honor that could be paid to a poet in ancient Mexico.

Meanwhile Azcalxochitzin was passing toward the end of her childbearing years; Nezahualcoyotl himself was aging, but still had no heir. He retired to his hilltop garden retreat at Tezcotzingo, where he had built rock-cut baths, sculptures and a massive aqueduct system. There he fasted forty days. Every day at dawn, midday, sunset and midnight he prayed and offered copal incense. There he composed sixty songs of praise to the Unknown God, the Creator and Principle of all things. When

he emerged from his retreat, he received news that Azcalxochitzin was pregnant. She bore him a son, Nezahualpilli, "Fasting Prince," who was destined to become a poet almost as renowned as his father.

Nezahualcoyotl's health and vigor remained extraordinary until he reached 71, after reigning 42 years. Falling ill and realizing his approaching death, he called his children together and named Nezahualpilli, seven years old, as his successor. "I find myself very close to death," he said, according to Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, his descendant and biographer, "and when I am dead, instead of sad lamentations sing happy songs, showing valor and strength in your spirits..."

Nezahualcoyotl died quietly in his bed in the year 1472, 6 Flint.



# **The Songs of Dzitbalché by Ah Bam**

Ancient Mayan Poetry



Mayan Scribe (from Madrid Codex)

Introduction  
The Songs of Dzitbalché  
The Life of Am Bam

## Introduction

The Songs of Dzitblaché include most of the ancient Maya lyric poetry that has survived. In these songs, the poet speaks of personal feelings and ideas, of love, philosophy, ancient rituals and spiritual values.

The original title page reads, "The Book of the Dances of the Ancients that it was the custom to perform here in the towns when the whites had not yet arrived. This book was made by the honorable Mr. Bam, great-grandson of the great Ah Kulel of the town of Dzitbalché in the year 1440." The title, "Songs of Dzitbalché," was given to the collection by the first translator into Spanish, Alfredo Barrera Vásquez, and it is by this name that it is generally known. Written above the title is the word *kolomché* - a ceremonial dance - and below it is the first poem, "I Will Kiss Your Lips."

The manuscript itself was probably written in the 1700s, though it could be a copy of an earlier manuscript. Some of the material it contains is clearly much older, probably from the 1400s. A number of the poems incorporate fragments of ancient ceremonies; others are descriptions of those ceremonies. It is not always possible to distinguish between the two. The poems about the ceremonies were written by Ah Bam during the colonial period, while the ceremonies described are clearly ancient.

Many of the songs begin with an expository section, explaining the ceremony related to the song. Most of the poems use the most typical device of Mayan poetry: couplets, the repeating of key words and phrases in consecutive lines. There are however very few choruses or refrains.

Five of the pieces could be classified as love (and ritual love) songs: I Will Kiss Your Lips; Let Us Go to the Receiving of the Flower; Flower Song; and To Kiss Your Lips Beside the Fence Rails.

Two are prayers: To the Great Lord Ah Kulel; The Mourning Song of the Poor Motherless Orphan.

One is a hymn to sunrise: For the Traveler on the Road at Dawn.

At least four of the “songs” appear to have been spoken or chanted like poems. As Barrera Vásquez states, “Although we give the title of songs to all the texts of the codex, some of these appear to be more narrations or explications without any characteristic (of song) other than that of being written in columns, in the manner of meter, without having it properly.”

I have translated fourteen of the songs for this volume.

Mayan songs and dances were of course accompanied by music. An ensemble consisted of flutes, trumpets, whistles, gongs, drums and rattles. Melodies were played on wooden or reed flutes. The most common Mayan percussion instruments were large horizontal gongs (*tunk’ul*) made from hollowed trees, which were struck with rubber-ended sticks, giving a deep mournful sound;



smaller drums made of wood, gourd or tortoise shell, beaten with the palms; rattles of clay, wood or gourd containing seeds or pebbles. There were two kinds of trumpet, one made from a conch shell, the other from a long thin hollow stick, with a large twisted gourd at its end. Whistles were made from both cane and deer bone.

The Songs of Dzitbalché is closely related to the Book of Chilam Balam (the Jaguar Priest), the “Bible” of the Yucatec Mayas. The various existing manuscripts of Chilam Balam also date from the 1700s, but are copies of much earlier material. The name Bam is most likely a contraction of Balam, “Jaguar.”

Beyond the facts that he has included in this manuscript, nothing specific is known about Ah Bam’s life. However, much about him can be gathered from the wealth of information known about the time and place.

### **The Manuscript**

The manuscript of the Songs of Dzitbalché surfaced in Mérida, Yucatán, in 1942. Eighteen pages of Spanish paper about 6” x 8 1/2”, bound on one side with henequen thread. It was written in colonial Yucatec Maya, with all capital letters, in ink, using a sharpened stick and a feather quill, in the alphabetic script that the Mayas learned during the early colonial period, after they were forbidden, under penalty of death, to write in hieroglyphics or possess screenfold books. The format and layout of the manuscript have similarities to European poetry books. The lyrics or poems are laid out with lines and stanzas, some in two columns. Each song begins on a new page. Most have titles. According to

the analysis of the extraordinary linguist Barrera Vásquez, the manuscript had to have been made around or after 1742 because certain orthography it uses did not come into practice until then. However, Barrera Vásquez had to admit, it could easily be a copy of an earlier codex, as was the custom.

### **Deities and Ceremonies In The Songs**

Many of the songs relate to specific Mayan deities, ceremonies and rituals.

The Mayas had two primary deities, male and female, with many aspects. It is through the different names of their various aspects that they are called on in the Songs.

Itzam Ná (“Iguana House”) was the male Creator of the Universe, the Sky deity, the Sun. He went by different names according to his many aspects. Among these aspects mentioned in the Songs are: Hunabku (“One Being God”), Kinich Ahau (“Father Sun”), Cit Bolon Tun (Deity of Medicine) and Kukulcan (“Feathered Serpent”).

Ix Chel (“Rainbow Woman”) was the female force, the Creation Goddess, wife of Itzamná Also known by Ix Chebel Yax and many other names, she was the Moon, Earth and bodies of water, patroness of weaving, painting, procreation and medicine.

Other important supranatural beings include the deities of rain (Chacs), of maize, of the planet Venus, the four Bacabs who each held up a corner of the world, the gods of Evil (Mams), Death and the Underworld (Metnal or Xibalba).

## **Receiving of the Flower**

Song: Let Us Go To The Receiving of the Flower.

The Receiving of the Flower was the wedding ceremony. In this song it seems to be a public ceremony in the town center, though other sources place it in the bride's house.

## **Flower Ceremony**

Song: Flower Song.

The Flower Ceremony was a rite to keep or bring back a lover. A group of women, under the direction of a woman elder, met at night at a rock spring in the woods by the light of the moon. While the group of naked singers danced around her, the patient, also naked, threw plumeria flowers into the water, transforming it into a love potion.

## **Interrogation of the Chiefs Ceremony**

Song: Lord Rattlesnake, Lord Precious Feathered Serpent

The purpose of the Interrogation of the Chiefs in the Language of Zuyua was to ascertain the lineage credentials of Mayan chiefs. The interrogator was the *halach uinic*, the "true man," the Batab. The ritual took place at the beginning of each new katún. It consisted of a series of arcane questions in an occult language, based on Toltec-Itzá knowledge, with the equally arcane answers known only to those in families eligible to become chiefs. The questions and answers had supposedly been passed down from father to son since the fall of Tula, the city in central Mexico where Kukulcan was ruler before he and his followers emigrated to Yucatán.

This poem tells a mythological story in verse, a tale similar to the Egyptian story of the sphinx. Kukulcan (Quetzalcoatl, Feathered Serpent), named only in the title, is the protagonist who answers the riddle and thus defeats the Centipede. Kukulcan represents enlightenment in struggle with the forces of darkness. This myth probably refers to the ceremony of the Interrogation of the Chiefs. In another interpretation, Edmonson suggests that the Centipede and the seven jumping heads represent the Spaniards and their seven-day week.

### **Calendar Ceremonies**

Songs: The Dark Days of the Last Month of the Year; Those Who Build Houses and Temples; Speech to the Lord, Sustainer of the Tun-Years; Speech of Cit Bolon, Priest of the Tun Year, Savant of the Uinal Month; Extinguishing the Ancient One on the Mountain.

In one way or another all Mayan ceremonies are calendrical. Mayan culture is so infused with calendar lore that to try to understand the culture without studying the calendar is not possible.

Counting days was the basis for all Maya calendrics. They kept track of two basic cycles, upon which all the others were built, the Sacred Year of 260 days, and the solar year of 365 days. Together meshed, they formed a Calendar Round of 52 years.

There were 20 different days (*kins*). The 260-day Sacred Year was formed by combining the 20 days with the numbers 1 to 13. The Maya solar year (*haab*) was divided into 18 months (*uinals*) of 20 days, which made a 360-day *tun*, plus a final month of five days, the *uayeb*, adding up to 365 days.

The last two uinal months before the end of the year stressed pleasures and diversions. However the five-day uayeb was dangerous and unlucky, a period of abstention from food, washing and sex. If the uayeb ceremonies were not conducted properly, a year of sickness and disaster might result. A uayeb someday would lead to the end of this world. There were four different Year-Bearers, deities who presided over years in rotation.

For the uayeb (referred to in “The Dark Days of the Last Month of the Year”), an idol of the one of the patron deities was set up at the house of one of the principal chiefs. Another idol was erected at a pile of stones at one of the four cardinal points outside of town, and a special road built to it with arches of green branches. There they made offerings to the deity, then carried the idol to the house of the chief where the ceremonies continued. The New Year was a time of renewal. All utensils were destroyed and new ones made. The “Ancient One” referred to in “Extinguishing the Ancient One on the Mountain” was the temple (“mountain”) fire, which was extinguished after having been kept burning all year, after which “new fire” was kindled with a fire drill.

The *katún* was a 7200-day cycle (almost 20 years) made of 20 tuns (360 days). There were 13 different katúns, each with different auguries and predictable tendencies. In this way they saw history as repeating. This was the basic time frame in which the Mayas recorded their history. They kept track of what happened in each katún so as to better deal with the present and future. A commemorative stone was erected at the end of each katún. The ending of one katún and the beginning of a new one

was also probably the occasion of a *kolomché* dance, the subject of two poems in the original Dzitbalché anthology, but not translated in this current selection. The *kolomché* was a reenactment in dance of the arrow ceremony, a cultural transformation in which one dancer throws arrowlike reeds at another and the would-be target triumphs by catching them all.

There is far too much information about the Maya calendar and its ceremonies for me to go into here. I encourage the reader to pursue this knowledge, which can be found in many excellent sources.

### **The Yucatec Maya Language**

The Mayan language family diverged from a common stock over the centuries into the large variety of related languages found throughout the Maya region today, much as the Romance languages diverged from Latin. There are 28 Mayan languages with numerous dialects. Yucatecan Maya however, forms one of the three major subgroupings, the others being Huastecan and Southern Mayan. All the Mayan language speakers together total about 4 million people. Yucatec Maya remains understandable throughout the Yucatán peninsula, despite minor local differences. Over 450,000 people speak Maya in Yucatán today.

## **Maya Pronunciation**

Vowels and consonants approximately as in Spanish, except:

c = English k

x = English sh

dz, tz = English ts

u followed by another vowel = English w

Glottalized sounds (emphatic versions): The sounds usually written today as p', t', dz' (ts'), ch' and k' do not exist in English or Spanish. They are glottalized or explosive versions of p, t, ts, ch and c, made approximately by holding the breath then releasing it while making the sound.

Colonial Mayan was written in a number of variations. The most common are:

ph, pp = p'

th = t'

dz = ts'

chch = ch'

Stress is generally on the last syllable.

## The Songs of Dzitbalché



Kukulcan, Yaxchilan



## **BIN IN TZ'UUTZ' A CHI**

Bin in tz'uutz' a chi  
tut yam x cohl.  
X ciichpam zac,  
yan yan a u ahal

## **I WILL KISS YOUR MOUTH**

I will kiss your mouth  
between the plants of the milpa.  
Shimmering beauty,  
you have to hurry.

**TZ'UTZ' A CHI  
TU CAAP COOL HOK CHE**

Tz'a ex a hatz'uutz nokeex;  
tz'ooc u kuchul kin h cimac olil;  
xeech u tzou tzotzel a pol;  
tz'a u lemcech ciichcelmil a nok  
tz'a hatz'utz xanaab;  
ch'uuicinzah a nuucuuch tuup  
tu tupil a xicin;  
tz'a malob ooch';  
tz'a u keexiloob a x ciichpan caal;  
tz'a, uu baakaal  
hop men hop tu nak a kab.  
t kailbelt caa i laac ciichpameech  
hebiix maix maace  
uay tu t cahil, H' Tz'iitbalcheé.

Cah in yacumaech  
X Cichpan Colelbiil.  
Lai beiltic  
in kaat ca ilabe'ech  
h'aach zempeech ciichpamech,  
tu men cu yan  
ca chii CPAAC ech ti x buutz' ek,  
tu men ca u tz'ibooltech  
tac lail  
u yetel u x lol nichte kaax.

Chen zacan zacan a nok,  
h' x zuhuy,  
xen a tz'a u cimac olil a chee  
tz'a utz ta puczikal  
tu men helae  
u zutucil cimac olil  
tu lacial uinic  
lail c u tz'aile  
u yutzil ti teech.

**TO KISS YOUR LIPS  
BESIDE THE FENCE RAILS**

Put on your beautiful clothes;  
the day of happiness has arrived;  
comb the tangles from your hair;  
put on your most attractive clothes  
and your splendid leather;  
hang great pendants in the lobes of  
your ears; put on  
a good belt; string garlands  
around your shapely throat;  
put shining coils  
on your plump upper arms.  
Glorious you will be seen,  
for none is more beautiful here  
in this town, the seat of Dzitbalché.

I love you, Beautiful Lady.  
I want you to be seen; in  
truth you are very alluring,  
I compare you to the smoking star  
because they desire you  
up to the moon  
and in the flowers of the fields.

Pure and white are your clothes,  
maiden.  
Go give happiness with your laugh,  
put goodness in your heart,  
because today  
is the moment of happiness; all  
people  
put their goodness in you.

**COOX**  
**H C KAM NICTE**

Cimaac olailil  
tan c kayiic  
tu men bin cah  
C’Kam C’Nichte.  
Tu lacailil x chuup x loob bayen  
chen chehlah chehlameec u yiich  
tut ziit u puucziikalil  
tut tz’uu u tzem.  
Bail x tumen?  
tumen yoheel  
t’yolal u tz’iic  
u zuhuyil colelil ti u yaacunah

Kayeex Nichteil!

C’yant ceex Naacon  
yetel Noh Yum Ah Kulel  
ah tan caan chee.  
Ah Culel hkay:  
“Coneex coneex  
c’tz’a c’olaalil tu taan X Zuhuz  
X Ciichpan Zuhuy  
Colelbil u Lolil Loob ayen  
Tut can caan che  
U Colebil X M Zuhuy Kaak u,  
beyxan x cichpan X’Kamleooch,  
X ciichpan Xah Zoot,  
yetel x’ciichpam colel  
x zuhuy X Ttoot much.  
Laitie tz’iic utzil  
cuxtalil uay yok peetne  
uay yok chakme  
tu zuut lumil

uay uitzil.”

Coox coox  
coneex palaleex;  
beey c tz'aic cici cimag  
olil uay Tz'itil Piich  
Tz'itilbalche.

**LET US GO  
TO THE RECEIVING OF THE  
FLOWER**

Let us sing  
flowing with joy  
because we are going to  
the Receiving of the Flower.  
All the maidens  
wear a smile on their pure faces;  
their hearts  
jump in their breasts.  
What is the cause?  
Because they know  
that they will give  
their virginity to those they love.

Let the Flower sing!

Accompanying you will be the  
Nacom  
and the Great Lord Ah Kulel  
present on the platform.  
Ah Kulel sings:  
“Let us go, let us go  
lay down our wills before the  
Virgin  
the Beautiful Virgin and Lady  
the Flower of the Maidens  
on the high platform,  
the Lady Suhuy Kaak,  
the pretty X’Kamleooch,  
the lovely X’Zoot  
and the beautiful  
lady virgin X’T’oot’much.

They are those who give  
goodness  
to life here in this region,  
on the plains and in the district  
here in the mountains.”

Let us go, let us go,  
let us go, youths;  
we will give perfect rejoicing  
here in Dzitill Piich,  
Dzitbalché.



## **KAY NICTE**

X ciih x ciichpan u  
tz' u likil yook kaax;  
tu bin u hopbal  
tu chumuc can caan  
tux cu ch'uuuytal u zazicunz  
yookol cab tu lalacal kaax  
chen cici u tal iik u utz'ben booc.  
U tz' u kuchul  
chumuc caan  
chen zacttin cab u zazilil  
yook tu lalacal baal.  
yan cimac olil ti tu lalacal malob uinic.

Tz'ooc cohol tu ichil u naak kaax  
tuux maixi mac men max  
hel u y ilconeil leil  
baax c'taal c'beet.

T tazah lol nichte,  
u lol chucum, u lol u tz'tul,  
u lol x milah;  
t tazah pom,  
h ziit,  
beyxan x coc box,  
beyxan tumben hiib took yete tumben  
kuch tumben luch,  
bolnm yaax took,  
bumben peetz'ilil,  
bumben xoot,  
beyxan n can x ulum tumben xanab,  
bu lalacal tumben lail xam u kaxil  
c'hool,  
b tial c pooc niicte ha  
beyxan c hoop zahub

bey u x kiliiz.

Tz'oci, tz'oci  
t yan on tu tz'u kaax,  
tu chi noh haltun  
utial c'paat u hokol  
x ciichpan buutz' ek  
yookol kaax.  
Pitah nookeex  
luuz u kaxil a holex  
ba teneex  
hee cohiceex uay yokol cabile  
x zuhuyex x chupalelex hel u.

## **FLOWER SONG**

The most alluring moon  
has risen over the forest;  
it is going to burn  
suspended in the center  
of the sky to lighten  
all the earth, all the woods,  
shining its light on all.  
Sweetly comes the air and the  
perfume.  
It has arrived in the middle  
of the sky,  
glowing radiance  
over all things.  
Happiness permeates all good  
men.

We have arrived inside the  
woods  
where no one will see  
what we have  
come here to do.

We have brought plumeria  
flowers,  
chucum blossoms, dog jasmines,  
milah blooms;  
we have the copal,  
the low cane vine,  
the land tortoise shell,  
new quartz, hard chalk powder  
and new cotton thread,  
the new gourd cup,  
the large fine flint,  
the new weight,

the new needle work,  
gifts of turkeys, new leather,  
all new, even our hair bands,  
they touch us with nectar  
of the roaring conch shell  
of the ancients.

Already, already  
we are in the heart of the woods,  
at the edge of the pool in the  
stone  
to await the rising  
of the lovely smoking star  
over the forest.  
Take off your clothes,  
let down your hair,  
become as you were  
when you arrived here on earth,  
virgins, maidens  
of the changing moon.

**U YAYAH KAY  
H OTZIL X MA NA  
X PAM OOT CHE**

Hach chiichanen caa cim in na  
caa cim in yum.  
Ay ay in Yumen!  
Caa t ppat en tu kab  
t yicnal in laak  
miix maac y an t en uay y okol cab.  
Ay ay in yumilen!  
Cu man cappel kin  
cu cimil ten in laak  
tin ttuluch c ppate en  
tin ttuluch hum. Ay ay!

Tz'u man lail kin tin hun ppat cen  
caa tu han ch'ahen u bizen t nin  
u ppel tz'ul tu kab.  
Ay ay in yumilen!  
H'loobil hach yaab yayab loob  
tin manziic uay  
yokol cab. Miix ua bikin  
bin hauc in u okol.

Miix in uonel yan  
hach chen tin hum  
chen bey in man  
uay tin lum  
h'kin yetel akab  
chen okol okol  
xuupzic in uich  
lail xuupzic ool.  
Yam loob hach chich.  
Ay in Yum!  
Ch'aten otzilil tz'a u tibitil

leil yah muukyaa.  
Tz'aten u tz'oc cimilil  
ua tz'aten toh olal  
in Ciichcelem Yumil!

Otzil otzil  
baai tu hun y ook lum  
ua yan ca u kaat  
tu ttuluch hum  
kaat men kaat tu hol nah nahil  
tu lacal maac ilic  
heleili u tz'iic yacunail.  
Inan yotoch inam u nok  
inan kaak.  
Ay in Yum! Chaten otziii!  
Tz'aten toholal utial caa paatac  
in muuk yahtic.

**THE MOURNING SONG  
OF THE POOR MOTHERLESS  
ORPHAN  
DANCE TO DRUMBEATS**

I was very small when my  
mother died,  
when my father died.  
Ay ay, my Lord!  
Left in the hands  
and company of friends,  
I have no family here on earth.  
Ay ay, my Lord!  
Two days ago my friends died,  
and left me insecure  
vulnerable, alone. Ay ay!

That day I was alone  
and put myself  
in a stranger's hand.  
Ay ay, my lord!  
Evil, much evil  
passes here  
on earth. Perhaps  
I will never stop crying.

Without family,  
alone,  
very lonely I walk  
here in my land,  
crying day and night  
only cries consume my eyes and  
soul.  
Under evil so hard.  
Ay, my Lord!  
Take pity on me, put an end

to this suffering.  
Give me death,  
or give my soul transcendence  
my Beautiful Lord!

Poor, poor  
alone on earth  
pleading  
insecure lonely  
imploring door to door  
asking every person I see to give  
me love.  
I who have no home, no clothes,  
no fire.  
Ay my Lord! Have pity on my!  
Give my soul transcendence  
to endure.



## **H'KAY BALTZ'AM**

Kin kuilancail t cah nahlil.  
U caah h tippil t zazilil I kin tut haal  
caan  
t cu bin u bin bey nohol  
bai t xaman bey t lakin bey xan t  
chikin,  
tumtal u zazil yokol cabilil  
eh hook chen tiul tz'iic.  
X kuuluuch yeet maaz yeet chiic yeet x  
tz'unun  
cu yaalcab t cuchil.

X baach, x zac pacal, tzuutzuuz,  
bey nom, chaan beech, yeet x kook, x  
zac chich,  
h zaay c'yalcu tuumben  
lail kaxil chiich cu hoopz cu kay  
tumen  
h'eeb ziam cen utzilil.

X Ciichpan Ek  
hohopnan yook kaax  
cu butz'ilan ca lamat lamat  
u taal u cimil u  
yook yaxil kaax.

Cimmaac olilil kin kuilail uay  
tee t cahalil;  
tumen tumben kin c'talal zasztal  
t tu lalac uinicil t cah muul ba uay  
t cahalil.

## **THE SONG OF THE MINSTREL**

Today divine fiesta begins in the  
villages.

Dawn streams over the horizon,  
south north east west,  
light comes to the earth,  
darkness is gone.

Roaches, crickets, fleas and  
moths  
hurry home.

Magpies, white doves, swallows,  
partridges, mockingbirds,  
thrushes, quail,  
red ants rush about,  
all the forest birds begin their  
song because  
morning dew brings happiness.

The Beautiful Star  
shines over the woods,  
smoking as it sinks and  
vanishes;  
the moon too dies  
over the forest green.

Happiness of fiesta day has  
arrived  
here in the village;  
a new sun brings light  
to all who live together here  
in the village.

**HTI TU BELIL UA  
U TAAL KIN UAY**

Tii ca kay, chan zac pacal  
tu kablail yaax che.  
Tii yan xan x ciip chohil chan x  
chuuleeb  
beyxan x kukun lail zac chich  
tu lacal ciimac y ool  
u y alaakoob Yum Ku.

He bix xan h Colebil y an y aalak h'e:  
ix chan x muukuy, chan x tz'itz'iibil  
Yetel chan x chinchinbaclal  
lail xan x tz'unuun.  
lail la iix u yaalak chiich  
X Ciichpan Xunan Colebil.

Lail ua yan cimaac olil ichil lay bal  
cheob  
baax ten ma u cimaactal ol ton?  
Ua beilooob lai ti ob tac tu zasztal  
pencech hatz'utzoob  
chen kay chen baxaal  
cu man tu tucuuloob.

**FOR THE TRAVELER ON THE  
ROAD AT DAWN**

Doves singing  
in the ceiba branches, there,  
flycatchers, little yellowbirds,  
cuckoos, mockingbirds, there,  
all happy,  
the birds of the Lord.

Likewise the Lady has her birds:  
the little birds, the small  
cardinals,  
canaries, hummingbirds,  
they are the birds of the  
Beautiful Lady.

If such happiness is among the  
animals,  
why shouldn't our hearts be  
happy too?  
At dawn they are  
most beautiful  
when only songs and games  
pass in their thoughts.

**T NOHHOCH YUM  
AH CULEL  
T CAHIL TZ'ITBALCHÉ,  
AHHAU CAN PECH**

Talen talen  
tut t aan a caan che i  
in nahmaat teech  
a cici olal H'Ciichcelem In Yum,  
tutmen tech  
ca tz'ic u malobil  
utzil baal y anal a kab,  
yan a u utzil  
lohil than.

Ten cin uilic baax uutz  
yet baxil kaaz uay  
t tee lumail tz'a t en a zazil,  
in Hahal Yum,  
tz'aat en yaab naatil  
t in ih tucul yeettel ti in naat,  
utial caa in chinchin hool teech  
zamat zamat kin.

Likiic u puul yahil  
Tu uey cizin ti u okol  
Ua ma hah baax  
cin tzeectic techi  
Cimic in na, cimic in yum,  
Cimic in colel, cimic in u alaak  
Ua bax c in tzolic inYum  
C in ba haah.

Ten c in katic i teech,  
Ciichcelem Yumil Can,  
nohocch eech t a cuchil

t caanil ley cin ttziiceech  
Ciichcelem T Humnaab Ku,  
teech ca tz'ic uutzil  
beyilil kasil baal uay yokol cabe  
ttanilceech t Nohhoch Uum,  
Ah Culel.

**TO THE GREAT LORD  
AH KULEL  
OF THE TOWN OF  
DZITBALCHÉ,  
AND HIGH PRIEST PECH**

I have come, come  
before your lofty tree,  
my Beautiful Lord,  
to ask happiness,  
because you bestow no evil,  
only good is in your hand,  
I ask your blessing,  
your redeeming words.

I see good and evil  
in this land,  
so shine your light on me,  
true Father,  
plant understanding into my  
thoughts  
and into my intelligence,  
so I can honor you every day.

If what I declare is not true,  
hurl harmful spells  
of the demon witch at me,  
let my mother die, let my father  
die,  
my wife, my animals, let them all  
die,  
if what I say, my Father,  
is not true.

I implore you,  
Beautiful Sky Father,  
great in your seat above,  
I revere you,  
Beautiful and Only Lord,

you who dispense good  
and bad here on earth,  
I call on you, Great Father,  
Governor.



**KAMA THAN TIH  
U YUM LATT KAB TUNOOB**

In yumileex cin taal cheen  
chinchin u taaniil in uich.  
Tz'ooc kin bolon  
ma in tunt mix ilmail x chupil,  
mix in chau cohol  
ah kaz tuculil tin nattil.  
Otzil tumen  
cin taal yeetel in tumben uitt  
in tumben piixen tzemilil.  
yeetal xan yan cah uile, in Yum,  
ten má ti caaxtiic u kazil  
keban tu tan a uich  
in hahal Yum Humnab Ku,  
laibetic chen  
t zaac han zaac in pixam  
in tal in uileech ta cuchil  
tu men ti t eech c in kubic  
tu tuliz  
in u olal yetel in tucul  
uay yokol lumeil.

T cheen teech ci alah uoltic  
uay tee yokol cabil.  
tumen teech, Nohochil Kin,  
ca tz'ic utz uay  
yokol cab ti tu lalac baal  
yan u cuuxtal  
tumen teech tz'anneech a  
laattleil lum  
tuux cu cuuxtal tu lalac uinic  
yetel teech u ha lohilla  
ca tz'iic utzilil.

**SPEECH TO THE LORD,  
SUSTAINER OF THE TUN-YEARS**

My Fathers, I come  
with my face bowed.  
Nine days  
I have not touched or visited a woman,  
nor permitted evil thoughts  
to enter my mind.  
I am poor  
yet I come with new trousers,  
new tunic.  
And thus, my Father, as you will see,  
I am not looking for evil in my heart  
as I come before your face,  
my True One God Father,  
but for purity,  
my soul like dawn,  
I come to see you in your place,  
to bring you  
my entire will and consciousness  
here on earth.

Only in you  
do I confide entirely  
in this world,  
because you, Oh Great Sun,  
grant goodness  
here on earth  
to all things alive,  
because you are the Giver  
and Sustainer of this earth  
where all people live,  
you are the true redeemer  
who gives only good.

**H UAYAH YAAB  
T'KAAL  
KIN EEK**

U kinil t'okol u kinil  
kaziil baal. Chakaab cizin  
hekaab miitnal,  
in nan utzil chen yan lobil  
ah uat yetel okol.  
Tz'ooc u man hun ppeel tuliz haab  
lail habil h'kaban helae.

Cutaibil xan hun kal  
kin x ma kaba  
u yail kin u kinil loob  
heek kinoob.

Inan x ciichpan zazilil t yiich  
Hunaab Ku u tial u palil  
uay yokolcab,  
tumen ti lei kin kinooba  
tum ppizil u keban y okol cab  
tu lalac uinic:  
xiib yetel x chuup  
chichan yetel nohoch  
otzil yetel ayikal, miatz yetel h'num  
Ah'haucan, Aculel  
Batab, Nacon, Chacoob  
Chumthanoob, Tupiloob.  
Tu lalac uinic hellae cu ppizil u keban  
tiail lail kin; tumen bin kuuchoc  
u kinil lai  
ti el kina u tz'ooc yokol cab.

Tumem  
tu bizic u xocxocil tu lalac

u kkeban uincoob  
uuay t lume tumen.  
Ti u tz'ic Hun ppeel  
x nuc homa  
betan yetel u kaat h kamaz tu lacal  
u yalil yich lei  
max cu yok ticoolob  
cu mental ti ob  
uay t lum.  
Lai can h'tulnaac lail x nuc homa  
cu tz'o.

**THE DARK DAYS  
OF THE LAST MONTH  
OF THE YEAR**

The days of crying, the days  
of evil. The demon is free,  
the infernos open,  
there is no goodness, only evil,  
laments and cries.  
An entire year has passed,  
the year numbered here.

Come is a month of  
days without name,  
painful days, days of evil,  
black days.

The beautiful light of the eyes of  
Hunab Ku for his earthly sons  
has not yet come,  
because during these days  
the transgressions of all people  
on earth  
are measured:  
men and women, children and  
adults  
poor and rich, wise and  
ignorant;  
Ahaucanes, Ah Kuleles,  
Batabs, Nacoms, Chacs,  
Chanthanes, Tupiles.  
All people's transgressions are  
measured in  
these days; because the time  
will come when  
these days will mark the end

of the world.

For this  
there will be a count of all  
the transgressions of people  
here on earth.  
Into a great glass  
made from the clay of tree  
termites,  
Hunkabu puts the tears  
from those who cry over the evils  
done on earth.  
When the great glass is filled to  
the brim  
it will end.

## **H UA PAACHOOB Y ETEL PPUZOOB**

Tz'u lam kaabet  
u ppizil u xociil ua hay ppel  
haab ua katum  
kin maanaac  
le u kinil uay te cahobaaleil  
h nucuuch chaac uincoob  
laitiob liiz u paakleil  
u uchben cahob  
helah c'ilic  
uay Peten H Chakan,  
tu lacal lail cahoob ttittanoob  
yook lum  
uay he lah  
t aan c'ilic ttuuch  
men ttuuch y okol canal uitzoob.

Lail cu talziic  
tu uay t cahoob c tz'iic  
u thanilbaal baal lail c'iliic he la  
baax c ohelma;  
tu men zazammal  
ci ilic t c chumuuc caan  
u chiculil bax alan ton  
tumen h uuchben uincoob  
uay i cahale,  
uay t lume.

Ti c tz'iic u hahil cool  
utial caapaactac  
xocic u ba y an t y iich  
lai caan yocol akab by c chum  
tu chumuc bey ua tun chimil  
t an canza.

## **THOSE WHO BUILD HOUSES AND TEMPLES**

Essential  
to count the haab years or  
katuns  
that have passed since  
the great powerful men  
raised the walls of the ancient  
cities  
that we see now  
here in the Province of the  
Plains,  
all these cities scattered  
on the earth  
here and there, on high hills.

Here in the cities, we try to give  
meaning to what we see today in  
the skies  
and what we know;  
for day to day  
at midday  
we see in the skies  
the signs told to us by  
the ancient people of this land,  
the ancient people of these  
villages  
here on our earth.

Let us purify our hearts  
so at nightfall,  
and at midnight,  
from horizon to zenith  
we may read the face of the sky.



**AH'TZAAB CAN  
H KUUKUL KUUL CAN**

Ti teech uinic  
tal in uiilic  
baaxten uay peten,  
uay h chakan,  
uay te lum  
cu uchben h ua paach uincoob  
hebiix xan h ppuuz  
maliicil cohoc teil  
lumoob maix  
maicx uinic bayanon  
tz'ooc u yantaal  
lemc eech yaab kin  
uay cu ximbancuba  
Xah Chaapaat  
hum uuc u tiichil u poil yaat chen  
laiti ca u ilic u kaatal ta beel  
utial u hanteech  
yetel utial u tz'a t eech  
loobil tah cuxtal  
ua ma t a naatiic  
baax cu kaatic teich.

Ma tun hel caa kuuch u kinil  
u yantahma maixl u ailic  
tie ca tu yuub, he caah  
tz'iicinahi tu men laitiel  
maix u chahal u tz'iic  
leil u nuctah ti el iih  
Ah X Chapaat lai ti nuce tii.

Lai betiic haach tu chah lobil  
le baax c utz'iic u y aal  
nuca tiel tumen h'tabzabiel tumen.

**LORD RATTLESNAKE  
LORD PRECIOUS FEATHERED  
SERPENT**

To you, human,  
I come to tell you  
that here in this region,  
this plain,  
here in this land,  
back in the era of ancient giants  
and hunchbacks  
when even no people such as us  
had as yet ever arrived,  
a very long time ago  
Lord Centipede passed here,  
and had with him seven jumping  
heads;  
you could see them  
quickly crossing the road  
to devour you  
or put evil  
in your life  
if you couldn't understand  
the riddle he asked.

But the day arrived  
when there was One who  
answered.  
When he heard,  
Lord Centipede became furious  
because One had understood,  
responded  
and answered his riddle.

So it was Lord Centipede  
who was the one who was  
tricked,  
became gravely ill and died.

## **KIILIZ TUUP YOK UITZ**

Kaman kin tu haal caan  
t chikin  
tunkul h huub yetel zacatan  
tii t hhoopz x kay luuch  
xiix tun tu lalacal pax  
tut tazahal oc.

X ppiitum cu bin u kuuchul  
tu tanleil Popil Nah  
Yum Ahau Can  
ti an xan H'Holpoop  
yetel H'Chaacoob  
bey Yum Ah Culel yetel u  
amtahatz'aob.  
Tz'u kuckul h'pax kayoob  
h'paaltz amoob  
h'okotoob h'ualak  
zutzihoob bey h'ppuuz  
yetel nac yaoob.  
Tu lalacal u uinicil tal tu pach  
Ah Ahau Can  
tu cimac olil cu beetabil  
tu chumuc kiuicil c cahtalil.

Tz'u hooppol y oocol kin  
tu haal na caan,  
tu tiibit taal u hooppol  
lail x pom.  
Yum Caan kamiic  
u buutz' kak utial u chiil  
t cu yiich Yum Kin.

Coneex  
c on t chum yaax che  
coox tz'aic c keex  
u tial tumben haab.  
Tz'ooc tz'oocil u maan yaayaa kinil  
cooneex u muulail tam balil cahalil,  
coni lakin  
u tz'ay u xocomcheil  
Kiliiz Kam Kak  
yookol uitz.

Taalz eeix l tu lalac baal tumben;  
puleex tu lalac baal h'uuchben.

Yum Ku tz'u tz'iic cahc  
manz u lobil kin  
uay t cahalil  
tu men u cahtal u laik kin,  
u laik uinal,  
u laik haab,  
u laik kaatum.

Utial u tal uchucpahal un kaal haab  
u tial h katum,  
coon eex  
c tz'aic  
tumben xuul tum  
tu hol cahnalil.  
C caaxtic h zac tuniich  
utial c eeziic  
u laak haab u man.

**EXTINGUISHING THE  
ANCIENT ONE  
ON THE MOUNTAIN**

The sun sinks into the lap  
of the western sky,  
the drum beats, the conch  
trumpets,  
the singing gourds sound,  
all people assemble.

The acrobats leap as they arrive  
at the Council House of Lord  
Serpent,  
where the Chief Holpop  
and the Rain Priests wait,  
along with Lord Ah Kulel and his  
attendants.

The minstrels have arrived, the  
clowns, dancers, contortionists,  
jumpers, hunchbacks,  
and spectators.

All the people have come to see  
Lord Serpent  
and the performance in the  
plaza.

As the sun sinks  
into the lap of the sky,  
it is the moment to begin.  
Light the copal.  
Lord Sky receives  
the smoke and fire  
for the face of Father Sun.

Then let us go,  
go to the trunk of the ceiba tree  
to make our offerings  
for the new year.

The painful days are gone,  
we will reunite in the village.  
We go to the east of the village,  
to the wooden column of the  
ancestor,  
the Receiver of the Fire  
on the mountain top.

Bring all new things;  
throw away all the old.

Lord God has granted  
that the evil days,  
the last days of the year,  
which we have passed  
together here in the village,  
the evil days have ended,  
and another day has come,  
another uinal month,  
another haab year,  
another twenty-year katun.

To complete  
the count of years for the katun,  
we will erect a new stone  
to mark its end  
at the village gate.  
We will find  
a white stone  
and mark the passing  
of another year.

**PAAY CHI  
H'ZIIT H'BOLOM TUM  
UINAL TE H'MIATZ**

Uinat te paay chi  
H miatz tz'ac yah  
Ti u y an pomol chi kaax  
Beec kaaxin  
Tikal tikal o hom.

Ch'iic lum paak  
Bacal che, h bohom  
Bey likin bey xaman  
Bey chikin bey nohhol  
Ti cu taal tu cam ppel xaay  
Beil can  
Tuux yan u popil  
Nahil bel H'Miatz  
Hunnaab Ku i  
Lail cu kaazic ti uinic  
Tahl han cuuxtal  
Uay yokol cab  
Ti maax ac u kaat u tz'a u baa  
Yol h'cambal.

U uay t'lumil yan  
U tz'iic tu toh yolal  
H'tumen u Yumil  
Kaak ha iik lum  
Yumil uay yokol cab  
Tut tu lahcbail mentahan,  
Tu men Yum Hunnaab Ku,  
Lai t liti  
Tz'iic utz yeet kaaz ichil  
Maloob yetel lob  
Tu men lait ti e

C u tz'iic u zazilil yokol cab  
Tu men laiti u Yumil  
Tu lacal baal yan  
Yan lu kab,  
Bey kin bey h'u  
Bey x buutz' ek,  
Be u lol zaz caan  
Bey muyal bey chaac  
Bey h x lelem bey  
H'uz bey ch'iich  
Bey baal che  
Bey.



**SPEECH OF CIT BOLON  
PRIEST OF THE TUN YEAR  
SAVANT OF THE UINAL  
MONTH**

The Curer Sage  
speaks to open each month,  
so medicinal herbs can be found  
in the woods,  
beec in the woods,  
in rolls in rolls  
he takes the living herbs,  
borage, heliotrope,  
from the east as from the north,  
from the west as from the south,  
he comes by the four branches  
of the road of the skies  
to the mat,  
to the House of the Wise,  
of Hunab Ku,  
the Only God  
who reminds us  
that life here is difficult  
in this world  
for whoever wants  
to put himself in the fires  
of comprehension.

He gives health here on earth,  
the Lord  
of fire, water, air, soil,  
Lord of the world, of all things  
made by him,  
Lord Hunab Ku,  
he who distributes the good and  
the bad

to good and bad people,  
he who gives light to earth,  
the Keeper of all things,  
all things under his hand,  
thus sun and moon  
thus the smoking star, that  
luminous flower  
of the skies,  
thus clouds and rain,  
thus lightning and the smallest  
fly,  
thus creatures of the air and the  
ground,  
thus.

## **The Life of Ah Bam**

The byline of the Songs of Dzitbalché gives us almost all the information we know about the author, Ah Bam, but that is really a wealth of information. It reads, “This book was written by the honorable Mr. Bam, great-grandson of the great Ah Kulel of the town of Dzitbalché in the year 1440.”

That date obviously cannot refer to when the existing manuscript was actually written or transcribed. The manuscript can be reliably dated to some three hundred years later, but manuscripts were copied and recopied over and over, and many of the Songs of Dzitbalché clearly contain cultural content from before the Spanish invasion.

It is most likely that Ah Bam lived during the Colonial period, was a follower of the old culture, and a collector of ancient songs. On this assumption, we can reconstruct his life to some degree.

Besides the Maya name Bam, he must have had a Christian name too. He had to have been baptised. But significantly he chose to not use his Christian name in the manuscript. He was obviously writing for a traditional Mayan audience, not a Spanish one.

He must have been sent to a Franciscan school, where all the children of noble lineages learned to read and write Maya using Spanish characters. Biblical writings and choir song books were the main texts. We can see the form of the choir song in the way the Dzitbalché poems are laid out by lines, in the European manner.

Alongside the official colonial government, a traditional Mayan government continued, often almost invisible to the conquerors. This shadow

government, made up of elders of the lineages, as it had been since ancient times, was the organization that really ran things and held the society together. Ah Bam was clearly a prominent person in that system. He was probably prominent in the colonial system as well, perhaps even the town clerk, whose job it was to transcribe community business in alphabetic Mayan, a position that the Spaniards created in every town in northern Yucatán.

Ah Bam was an elder when he wrote his book. To achieve prominence in Yucatecan Maya society necessitated marriage and a large family, so we can safely conclude that Ah Bam was the respected head of an extended clan. If the codex as we have it was written in the early 1740s and is the original manuscript, we can conclude that Ah Bam was probably born around 1680.

Besides all his duties as an elder, he had to have found time to keep a *milpa* throughout his life, a plot of ground where he grew corn, beans, sweet potatoes and squash. Rich or poor, aristocrat or commoner, to be a true Maya who keeps to traditional ways, a man needed to have and to work his milpa, for the maize plant was a god.

Although ostensibly Christianized, the Mayas secretly retained much of their traditional religion. Ancient rituals continued to be performed in the family circle, in private gatherings and in the fields of the milpas. In this way Ah Bam must have been seeped in the old religion. He was surely a practitioner. These texts contain transcriptions of old songs and poems that Ah Bam must have heard and sung in those secret gatherings where the old culture was kept alive. He was not alone in writing them down. Mayas in every town translated their old

hieroglyphic books into alphabetic writing - the Books of Chilam Balam - and read them out loud in secret gatherings, where the old songs were sung and chanted, accompanied by a drum and, on special occasions, ancient plays were performed. No ancient Mayan drama from Yucatán has survived, but one has come down to us from the Guatemala highlands, the Rabinal Achí.

Dzitbalché is a small town a few kilometers south of Calkiní, the ancient capital of the province formerly known as Canul, stretching for about seventy kilometers along the western coast of the Yucatán peninsula above the city of Campeche. In ancient times Dzitbalché was an important town due to its proximity to the capital and its location on the main road, which followed along the western foot of the Puuc hills.

When the Spaniards arrived, Yucatán was divided into fifteen Chiefdoms, each ruled by a hereditary Batab, a political-military chief, also known as a *halach uinic* (“a true man”) or *ahau* (lord). This arrangement had been in place since the fall of Mayapán a hundred years earlier, around the year 1441. Each Batab lived in his capital city or center. In the surrounding territory were smaller self-governing towns and villages (*cahob*), each run by a town chief, a Holpop, appointed by the Batab. Among the Holpop’s duties was to be lead singer and chanter in ceremonies, and to be in charge of the musical instruments of the town. The Ah Kulel was the first assistant and advisor to the Holpop, and therefore the second most important and powerful person in the town, at least politically. Musical ability was one of the most important qualifications needed to rise to those positions. The Holpops and the Ah Kulels were also inventors of songs, poets.

Lineage (*chibal*) as well as ability determined social positions among the Yucatec Mayas, both before and after the Conquest. Each province of Yucatán was organized around its “first” and “second” lineages, which together traditionally held the most important public positions. Dzitbalché is located in the old province of Canul, in which the Canuls were the first lineage. A Canul was always the Batab (provincial chief) and ordinarily appointed a Canche as his Ah Kulel (assistant, second in power). This arrangement was usually reflected on the local level. The Batab usually appointed Canuls as Holpops (village chiefs) and Canches as village Ah Kanuls. The Canul lineage were descendants of Mexicans originally invited into Mayapán from Tabasco as a garrison. The Canches were the second lineage of the province, below only the Canuls. However, in some circumstances the Batab might appoint a member of the second lineage as Holpop instead of a first lineage candidate.

When Mayapán, the centralized capital of Yucatán, was abandoned in 1441, all the lineages dispersed and founded independent provinces. The Chronicle of Calkiní tells us that the leaders of the Canul and Canche lineages, Tzab Canul and Namay Canche, led their people to jointly found the province of Canul, with the capital at Calkiní, not far from Mayapán to the north and Dzitbalché to the south. Tzab Canul was the first Batab at Calkiní, and Namay Canche was his Ah Kulel. The Canuls were the first lineage and the Canches the second. Several years later Tzab Canul appointed Namay Canche to be Holpop of Dzitbalché, despite being of the secondary lineage. After that, Canches succeeded each other as Holpop of Dzitbalché generation after generation. At the time of the

writing of the Chronicle of Calkiní (1579), the narrator, Alonso Canche, tells us that his father Napot Canche was then the current Holpop of Dzitbalché.

To return to the byline of the Songs of Dzitbalché: “This book was written by the honorable Mr. Bam, great-grandson of the great Ah Kulel of the town of Dzitbalché in the year 1440.”

The first phrase in Mayan is, “Laiil h’an altteah dzib taan tun men yum h’ Ah Bam.”

*Altteah* is equivalent to *analte*, which means a traditional Mayan screenfold “book,” made of bark surfaced with white lime and written in hieroglyphics. The Mayan word for a Spanish book is “hu’n.” So Ah Bam does not actually call this a book, but a traditional screenfold.

“Men yum h’ Ah Bam.” *Men* is a verb root which means “to do or make something,” and also refers to a native priest or shaman: today in Yucatán a shaman is still called a *h-men* or “one who does.” *Yum* means “father” or “the honorable.” *Ah* is the equivalent of “mister.” *Bam* is a shortened form of *Balam*, meaning “jaguar,” like the great Chilam (priest) Balam, famous for his prophecies, whose name graces the Book of Chilam Balam. Together with the internal evidence of the attitudes expressed in the poems, his very name strongly indicates that Ah Bam was probably a chilam, a native priest.

Ah Bam does not give his family or lineage (*chibal*) name, but he had to have been either a Canul or a Canche. The great-grandfather mentioned easily might have been Namay Canche, the famed Ah Kulel who led the Canche lineage out of Mayapán when that great city fell, and who later became Holpop of Dzitbalché. The term “great-

grandfather” does not necessarily refer strictly to only four generations, but could simply mean “ancestor.”

The very fact that Ah Bam signs his name to his *analte* book may seem unusual for an American Indian of his time, since artists are traditionally anonymous in many American Indian cultures. But writers were not always anonymous in ancient Mayan society. The concept of authorship was part of the culture. A Mayan scribe-writer-artist, known as *ah dzib*, signed his work with the glyph “u dzib,” “his writing,” followed by the author’s name. Sculptors had an equivalent way of signing their works. The *ah dzib* was scribe, writer and artist at the same time. There were no distinctions. The *ah dzibob* belonged to the nobility, and their work brought them high status.



“U dzib”

Ah Bam does not give the year in the Spanish form, but as “*hum pic hum baak ca kaatun*,” that is, “one pic, one baak, two katuns.” The date is in the Maya counting system. The Mayas were constantly refining their calendar count, so there are several possibilities of the equivalent date in our calendar. Maya counting was primarily by twenties instead of by tens; however there were variations in the calendar count. A *pic* is equal to 20 x 20 x 20, or 8,000, but in the colonial era it was usually considered the equivalent of a millennium, or 1,000 years. A *baak* is equal to 20 x 20, or 400 years. A



*katun* is equal to 7,200 days (20 x 20 x 18), almost 20 years, so two *katuns* equal about 40 years. If a *pic* is considered 1,000 instead of 8,000, the year is 1440 A.D.

That date can be read two ways: to refer to the time when Ah Bam wrote the book or when his great grandfather was Ah Kulel. Since 1440 was before the arrival of the Spaniards, it cannot possibly be the year the book was written, at least in alphabetic form. It is possible that it was written in hieroglyphic Mayan in that year and later translated into alphabetic Mayan, but that is highly speculative. It is also possible that 1440 is a mistake, but since the Mayas were so very concerned with accuracy in dating, that is doubtful. A more probable interpretation is that 1440 refers to the time when Ah Bam's great grandfather - or ancestor - was Ah Kulel, first advisor to the chief.

Why single out that one year? Because that was the last year before the fall of the great city of Mayapán, a watershed event in Mayan history. The most important lineages in Yucatán all proudly traced their descent and authority back to Mayapán, the only centralized and unified Mayan government Yucatán had ever seen, founded by the legendary leader Kukulcan (Feathered Serpent). Out of a time of chaos, constant war, insecurity and poverty, the rule of Kukulcan and the Itzás had brought order, peace, security and prosperity. Culture and the arts once more flourished. Forever after, the heyday of Mayapán was remembered with reverence by the Mayas of Yucatán as a golden age and Kukulcan as the epitome of a wise, benevolent, almost godlike ruler.

So by saying that his great grandfather was Ah Kulel during the era of Mayapán, Ah Bam is endowing him with the highest authority, respect and credibility and, as his great-grandson, himself also.

However, many Mayas did not look favorably on some of Kukulcan's successors, and came to view the later Itzás with resentment, as foreign interlopers.

When the Spaniards conquered Yucatán, they did not abolish the native aristocracy at first but, on the contrary, confirmed the power structure of the old system for those Maya nobles who were willing to cooperate in the new power system. The Spaniards simply reappointed the cooperative Batabs, Holpops and Ah Kulels to the positions they already held, and replaced any who resisted.

When the conqueror Montejo arrived in the province of Canul in 1541, the Batab Nachan Canul went into hiding, leaving his Ah Kulel Napot Canche to officially meet them. Because of this, Montejo appointed Napot Canche as Governor instead of Nachan Canul. After that a Canche was always Governor of the province in the Spanish colonial system, but to the Mayas however, the Canuls remained the real Batabs of Canul province.

Whether Ah Bam was a Canche or a Canul, and many other questions about his life, may be cleared up by further research. Somewhere in the annals of Dzitbalché or Calkiní there is probably much more information about Ah Bam, waiting for someone to dig it out.



# **The Sacred Hymns of Pachacutec**

Ancient Inca Poetry



(from Herrera)

Introduction  
The Sacred Hymns and the Situa  
The Life of Pachacutec

## **Introduction**

The hymns of Pachacutec Inca Yupanqui, composed for the Situa ceremony around 1440-1450, are among the world's great sacred poetry.

The eleven hymns, or jaillis, in Quechua verse, were sung to the accompaniment of instruments during the annual Inca ceremony of the Situa Raymi, held at the first new moon after the Spring equinox.

Pachacutec, considered by many to be the greatest Inca emperor, transformed the vision of the first Inca, Manco Capac, into Tawantinsuyu, Land of the Four Directions, the Inca empire.

In appreciation of the sacred Inca hymns, the great Quechua scholar Jesus Lara wrote, "Among the hymns... there are fragments of profound beauty, interpreters of a high level of spirituality reached by the Inca people. Many of them seduce by their transparent simplicity, for the elemental gratitude in them for the deity who creates and governs, who grants sustenance, peace and happiness. Many captivate by their elevation contiguous with metaphysic. All by the emotional force that palpitates in them."

### **Inca Poets, Poetry and Music**

Traditions of poetry and song were deeply engraved in Inca culture, encompassing both sacred and secular forms, shared by the common people and the aristocracy. Prayer songs, ceremonial songs, work songs and love songs were part of the texture of daily life. Poetry, music and dance were

integral to all the great Inca religious festivals. Each region throughout the empire retained its language and culture, and cultivated its own fine arts, as well as taking on the superimposed Quechua and Inca culture. On special occasions theatrical dramas were performed with interludes of poetry and music. Only one complete ancient Inca drama has come down to us, the great “Apu Ollantay,” in which Pachacutec is a major character.

Sacred *jaillis*, or hymns, were prayers and philosophical ponderings. Inca Priests greeted each sunrise and sunset singing *jaillis*, usually accompanied by music, beseeching Tijski Wiracocha (The Creator), Inti (the Sun), Illapa (Thunder-Lightning), Pachamama (The Earth Mother), Mamaquilla (the Moon), and all the *huacas* (spirits of places) to grant health, prosperity and happiness to the people, the Inca and the empire. Sacred hymns were usually composed by poets who were also priests.

While the Incas are usually thought of as Sun worshipers, in reality their worship focused more on Wiracocha, the Creator. The Sun was the tangible manifestation, but the invisible Wiracocha was above the Sun, just as his golden icon was placed higher than the Sun’s on the many-tiered stage they erected in the center of the Great Plaza at Cuzco during festivals. The primary invocation in all but two of these hymns is addressed to Wiracocha. Many of these same hymns are secondarily consecrated to the other deities. Besides Wiracocha, only Pachamama (Earth Mother, in Hymn 9) and Inti (the Sun, in Hymn 10) are invoked alone. The most important *huacas* (spirits of places) were physical manifestations of Wiracocha at various shrines. Wiracocha was the immanent and

omnipresent Creator and maintainer of the world and of the other deities. His numerous attributes and aspects included Pachawállpaj, World Creator; Pachakáma, World Governor; and Pachayacháchij, World Teacher. He was a gentle benevolent deity, forever bearing gifts for humankind, keeping the people safe and at peace.

The Inca founder Manco Capac, like Pachacutec, was a poet. Three of Manco's jaillis survive. We have sacred hymns from a few other Inca emperors too, Capac Yupanqui (the fifth Sapa Inca), Inca Ruca (the sixth) and Huascar (the twelfth). The jaillis of Manco and Inca Ruca are prayers, while those of Capac Yupanqui and Huascar are exorcisms of offending huacas. In addition we know that both Manco and Pachacutec not only composed jaillis but also invented in other verse forms.

The sacred jailli was considered the highest poetic form. There were secular jaillis as well. Jaillis encompassed historical and agricultural modes and themes. Heroic hymns celebrated the military exploits of the Inca kings and warriors. Unfortunately no heroic jaillis have survived, but we have a number of anonymous agricultural hymns. These jaillis were sung by the working people during sowing and harvesting, particularly during collective work in the fields of the Sun and of the Inca, the fields that formed the common stores which were distributed to the people in years of poor harvests and supported the religious establishment and the governing aristocracy.

There were many other forms of poetry and song. *Taki*, the generic term for "song," encompassed a variety of styles and subjects. The *arawi* was a love song; the *wawaki* a dialog in verse.

The *wayñu*, *qhashwa*, *samak'uika*, *qharuyu* were songs for different dances. Two poetry forms were often recited without music: *wankas* (elegies or laments) and *aranways* (humorous verses usually performed as part of a larger theater piece). Composers were both aristocrats and commoners.

Inca poets (*arawikujs*) composed in the usual full spectrum of poets' concerns. Usually accompanied by music, they sung of love, life, spirituality, politics, of the gods and heroes, the dignity and trials of work, of working the soil. A good number of their works have come down to us, in a variety of forms. Unfortunately most are anonymous. The Emperor-poets are the only ones whose authorship and biographies have been preserved.

Quechua poets liked their verses brief and without obvious artifice. Arawikujs didn't care about metrics, and scorned technical rigidity. The meters of their verses were determined by the inner necessities of meaning and poetics. Inside the forms of the songs there was great flexibility. The rhythm was the natural fluidity of the language. The number of syllables in each line was highly mutable. A line of poetry usually consisted of only five or six syllables, and rarely more than eight. Rhyme and assonance were common but not necessary. Many Quechua words have the same endings. Blank verses were common.

An Inca musical group included drums, ocarinas, tambourines, bells, trumpets (of conch, gourd, ceramic or wood), and bean shell anklets (worn by dancers). In Cuzco, jaillis were sometimes accompanied by a group of women playing golden drums set with precious stones. Andean music



today, noted throughout the world, is rooted in the music of Inca times. Now as then, the flute, played on a pentatonic scale, in a minor key, provides its most distinctive sound.

### **Pachacutec's Other Works**

Besides the eleven jaillis of the Situa, his only surviving works are his aphorisms and laws, and his deathbed poem, as well as the title of a song for the Capac Raymi.

### **The Aphorisms and Laws**

Transmitted by Garcilaso El Inca in Spanish translation, we have a series of Pachacutec's aphorisms and laws, among which are:

"He who envies the good draws evil from them for himself, just as the spider draws poison from flowers."

"Drunkenness, rage, and madness are similar, but the first two are voluntary and revocable, the third permanent."

"The noble and courageous man is known by his patience in adversity. Impatience is a sign of a vulgar and low mind, badly taught and worse trained."

"Governors should mind two things with great attention: first, they and their subjects should observe and fulfill the Inca's laws perfectly; second, they should consider with great vigilance and care the common and particular interests of their province."

"One who cannot govern his house and family will be much less competent to govern a state, and should not be given power over others."

“The physician or herbalist who is ignorant of the virtues of herbs, or who knows the virtues of some but does not seek to know the virtues of all, knows little or nothing. He must work until he knows them all, whether useful or injurious, in order to deserve the title he claims.”

“He who seeks to count the stars before he can count the scores and knots of the quipus deserves derision.”

### **The Song for the Capac Raymi**

Pachacutec composed not only jaillis but cast his poetic inventions in other verse forms too.

During the ceremonies of Capac Raymi, “Feast of the First Inca,” so-called because it was initiated by Manco Capac, young Inca noblemen passed a series of trials to win their first arms. The initiate dancers, all dressed in red shirts with red and white fringes down to their feet, and puma skins draped over those, with the heads and necks covering their own, accompanied by conch shell trumpets, sang and performed the taki (song) titled “Wari.” This song was given to Manco Capac by the Creator, along with a command that it be sung only at this ceremony. Two hundred years later Pachacutec expanded the ceremony, as he did many others, and added the taki titled “Coyo,” composed by himself (or received by him as poets have always received their poems). “Coyo” was performed with drums twice a day for six days during the initiation. No written trace remains of the lyrics of either “Wari” or “Coyo,” unless, for all we know, they might still be sung somewhere in the Andes today.

### **The Deathbed Poem**

Pachacutec composed and sang his last poem, his final words, on his death bed. A Spanish

translation of it is included in “Historia de los Incas,” written in 1572 by Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, one of the most sympathetic and accurate of the Conquistador chroniclers. I have included it in his biography.

### **The Quechua (Runasimi) Language**

Quechua (Qhëshwa) - or, more properly, Runasimi, meaning literally “People Mouth” - is an agglutinative language, adding syllables onto a root to form long meaningful words. By the addition of small particles to Quechua verbs, one can express numerous subtleties of thought and emotion. Many words have several synonyms, each with a slight twist of meaning. Runasimi contains many onomatopoeic words. Although outlawed for a period by the Spaniards after the revolt of Tupac Amaru II, Quechua survived and has about seven million speakers today. It is described by native speakers as an extraordinarily expressive idiom.

Quechua was not the original language of the Incas. The Inca aristocracy themselves actually spoke a private language among themselves, probably a related language of the same family. Quechua probably was first spoken in ancient times in small chiefdoms in the Abancay river valley, east of Cuzco. When the Incas emigrated into the Quechua-speaking area of the Cuzco valley around the year 1200, they continued to speak their original language among themselves, but kept it secret and uncomprehended by the common people. The Incas made Quechua into the lingua franca of the empire. Their secret language is now lost, though traces surely remain, perhaps even in these jaillis.

Although the Incas had no writing proper, they carefully recorded and preserved their culture and

history, relying on a highly developed mnemonic device, the quipu (khipu). The knotted strings of quipus contained chronicles of the past, genealogies, ceremonies and poetry, as well as accounting and statistical information. Upon the death of an emperor, his successor always had the life and exploits of his predecessor composed into historical ballads and recorded on quipus (the events chosen were of course subject to the vagaries of politics). Quipucamayocs - professional quipu readers - could access vast quipu libraries which held many keys to the past.

Though most of the quipus were quickly destroyed by the Spaniards, a number of ancient quipus survived the flames and exist today. However, the ability to really read their complexities died with the last Inca quipucamayoc. Even if the tradition had not been so violently terminated, basic questions of interpretation would remain, human memory being more variable than the written word. A simplified form of quipu, the "tally cord," is used by Quechua llama shepherds today. In the Huarochirí community, and probably in others, each clan (*ayllu*) owns ancient quipus which are used as sacred ritual objects in the investiture of power to community offices in their traditional political system.

### **Names and Attributes of Wiracocha in the Jaillis**

Pachacutec tried to bond all the diverse tribes and nations that had become provinces of Tawantinsuyu into a new unified nation. Toward this end he promoted the worship of the Creator, Wiracocha (Wiraqöcha), over all other deities and huacas (spirits of places). Instead of trying to replace

regional and local deities, Pachacutec had them assimilated into Wiracocha. The Creator adopted the names, attributes and huacas of the principal deities of the provinces. In most cases this was no problem, since many of these deities already were Creator gods and gift-bringers. They assimilated into Wiracocha without losing their original names and attributes. Pachacutec used the Situa and the other annual Inca ceremonies and poem-prayer-songs in this cultural revolution.

Below are some of the other names and attributes of Wiracocha, many of which can be found in various jaillis:

Kamaq, churaq = Molder, Maker; He who infuses life and sets all things in order

Tijsi (Teqse) = Cause, origin, root, foundation, beginning of all

Qaylla = End of all

Pachaq ch'ulla = Unique in this world

Ukhu ch'ulla = Unique in the underworld

Tawapaka = Fortunate

Kusi usapuq hayllipu = Lucky, happy, victorious

Illa = Shining, flashing, gleaming

Tukapu aknupu = Elegantly, showily dressed

Wallpay wana; Wallparillaq = Industrious, diligent worker

T'itu = Provider

Qhön = Thunder crash (onomatopoeic)

Wiraqochaya = My Wiracocha

Apu = earth spirit, sacred mountain; "Lord"

Apuqochan = Lord of the Lake =  
Apotinuiracochan = huaca (spirit of place) at  
Ayabamba, beyond Tambo

Atun (Hatun, Hatun apu) Wiracocha = Lord  
Without Measure = huaca at Urcos

Chanka (Chuquichanka) Wiracocha = Lord of  
Mountains = huaca at Hyaypar

Corcos Wiracocha = huaca at Ayabamba

Urusayua Wiracocha = huaca at Ayabamba

Aksa Wiracocha = Lord of Prayers = huaca  
(location unknown)

Kuniraya Wiracocha = originally Kuniraya, deity  
of the Warachiri

Tunapa Wiracocha = originally Tunapa, deity of  
the Titicaca region

Pachawálpaj Wiracocha = World Creator

Pachakáma Wiracocha = World Governor

Pachayacháchij Wiracocha = World Teacher

The root meanings of the name Wiracocha have  
been debated by many scholars. “Qocha” in  
Quechua means “ocean” or “lake;” “Wira” means  
“fat” or “grease” (by extension: abundant,  
healthy, successful). “Wiraqocha” is used in  
Quechua today when speaking very formally, to  
mean “Lord,” “Sir” or “Mister.”

## Pronunciation of Quechua

Vowels and consonants in general as in Spanish.

sh and w as in English

q as ch in Scottish loch

Glottalized and plosive consonants:

ch', k', p', q' and t' are pronounced approximately by holding the breath (closing the glottis), then releasing it and pronouncing the letter with a sudden unsticking of the tongue or lips

Aspirated consonants:

chh, kh, ph, qh, th are pronounced with a slight h after the letter.

Older spellings include:

tt = t'

c = k, k', kh

cc = q, q', qh

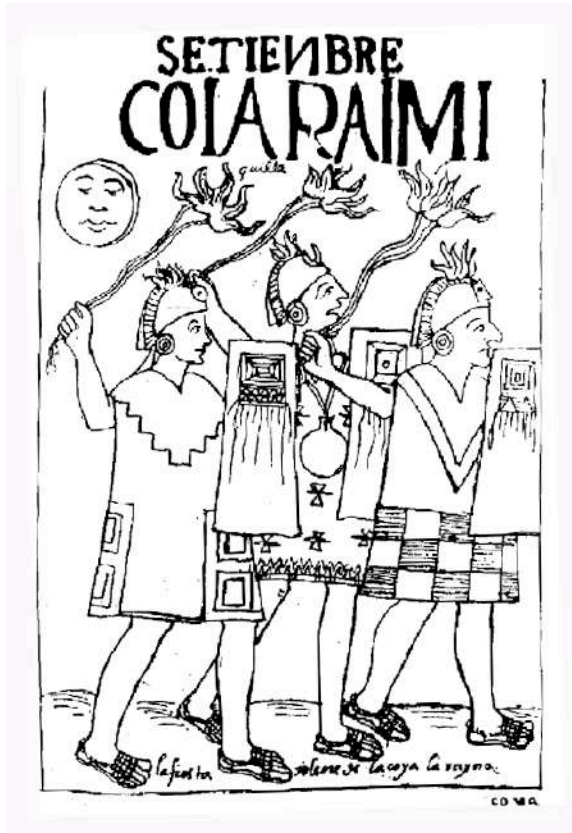
Accent is usually on the second to last syllable.



*Pachacutec*

(from Huamán Poma)

## The Sacred Hymns of Pachacutec and the Situa Ceremony



*The Situa ceremony*  
(from Huamán Poma)



The Incas kept both a solar and a lunar calendar, and used a combination of the two to determine their main annual festivals, which were related to the agricultural cycle. The Situa Raymi, Brilliant Feast, was a purification ceremony held at the first new moon after the Spring equinox.

Situa Raymi came in the lunar month of Coya-Raymi, the Queen's Feast. The Queen was Mamaquilla, Mother Moon, the Sun's bride and Queen of all the stars and planets. This was her month and began with her feast. The highest Inca women and the Virgins of the Moon played central roles in the ceremonies. Coya-Raymi was a month for sowing and planting. It was also a time when the previous year's stores were running low. In years of thin harvests Coya-Raymi was the season that hunger began to set in.

The rainy season also began at this moment, and the first rains often brought sickness to the people. Pachacutec Inca Yupanqui instituted the Situa to ask the Creator Wiracocha and the other deities to protect them from sickness. The Situa honored and invoked the Creator, Sun, Thunder, the huacas (spirits of places; sacred objects) and - on one particular day - the Moon and Earth Mother Pachamama.

To determine the equinox they used tall carved stone columns that Pachacutec had erected in the middle of a large stone ring in the great central square in Cuzco, in front of the Temple of the Sun. Across the middle of the ring a line was drawn east to west. Every day the Sun Priests took careful daily observations of the columns' shadows. When the shadows fell exactly along the line and at midday cast almost no shadow, they decked the columns

with flowers and aromatic herbs, placed the golden throne of the Sun on top of the column and showered it with offerings of gold, silver and precious stones.

The Virgins of the Sun made enormous quantities of *sancu*, little round loaves of half baked roughly ground corn dough the size of a peach, cooked briefly in dry pots. They made *sancu* only twice a year, for the sacrifices of Situa and for the Sun Feast, Inti-Raymi, the greatest of Inca festivals, which took place at the winter solstice, three months earlier. As the seasons are reversed in the southern hemisphere, Inti-Raymi was in June and Situa in September.

On the day of the new moon that began the month of Coya-Raymi, at high noon, the Inca and all the chiefs of his council and the other principal lords went to the Curicancha, the House of Gold, the Temple of the Sun, the very heart of Cuzco and the Inca world. There they determined how the Situa would be celebrated that year. At that very time chiefs and priests all over the Inca empire were doing the same to prepare for their local ceremonies, and sending delegations to the capital with llamas and the icons of their huacas (spirits of places or sacred objects).

On the first day of the moon after the equinox all able-bodied citizens began a three-day fast, with only a little raw corn and water, and abstained from sex. During this time they baked the special loaves of *sancu*, into which they mixed a few drops of blood obtained by pricking the skin of a child between five and ten between the eyebrows. All infirm people and foreigners had to leave the city. To assure quiet, dogs were taken out beyond city limits.

To begin the ceremony, a group of four hundred armed men assembled in the square in front of the Sun Temple. The icons of the Creator and Thunder were brought from their own temples to the Temple of the Sun to join the icon of the Sun. The Sun Priest came out of the Temple and proclaimed the feast to the assembly.

From the Fort of the Sun on Sacsayhuaman, the high fortress behind Cuzco, a richly dressed Inca, wrapped in a blanket, holding a spear with a band of colored feathers attached at different points with rings of gold, ran down to the main square and met four other Incas similarly dressed. He touched his spear to theirs and said that the Sun had told them to go forth as his messengers to expel the diseases.

The four hundred armed men walked to the great golden urn near the center of the square, crying, "O sickness, disasters, misfortunes and dangers, leave this land." One hundred faced in each of the four directions, and cried, "Away all evils, all evils away."

Each group left the square running to one of the four directions. As they passed, every person in Cuzco came to their door, shaking her or his mantle or cloak, crying, "Let the evils be gone. We have greatly desired this festival. Wiracocha, Creator of all, let us live another year, so we can see another feast like this."

Each of the groups of armed men followed their four roads to nearby villages, where they passed the cry onto others waiting there. These in turn ran to the next village, and ultimately to a river where they bathed and washed their clothes and weapons. The four rivers would carry the evils away and empty them into the sea.

When all had returned to Cuzco, music and dancing began. All danced, including the emperor, then went to bathe in rivers and fountains. That night they lit large straw torches and passed them one to another in the streets, and shot rocks from slings into the air.

Finally back at their houses, each rubbed some sancu corn dough on his or her face, then over their doorways, and in places where they stored food and clothes. They threw some into the fountains, saying, "Keep us free from sickness. May no sickness enter this house." Each sent some sancu to their relations and friends. The Incas put sancu on the mummies of the ancestors of their lineages, whom they preserved and worshipped.

The next day everyone feasted and drank chicha, beer made of boiled white corn; everyone shared in the feast, even the poorest, and no one was permitted to quarrel.

That night they brought out the icons (huacas) of the Sun, the Creator and the Thunder again. The priests rubbed sancu on them to warm them. In the morning everyone brought their best foods to the priests to offer to the huacas. Each clan lineage brought out the mummies of their ancestors, washed them in the bath of their lineage, and rubbed sancu on them to warm them. They placed their favorite foods before them, then ate the foods. The priests washed the huaca of the Creator and the Inca tribal huaca Huanacauri, then warmed them both with sancu.

That morning the Inca, his wife and the lords all came into the great plaza dressed in finery. The Sun Priests brought out the principal icon of the Sun, called Apupunchau, Lord of Day, with two gold

figures of the Sun. Several women came forward: those with the titles Inca-Ocillo and Palla-Ocillo, followed by the Coya-facsa, the daughter or wife of the Inca dedicated to the Sun. They placed the image of the Sun on his golden bench in the plaza. The priests of the Creator, the Thunder and the principal huaca Huanacauri brought out their icons and the richly dressed mummies of their ancestors, and placed them on their golden seats.

The entire population then came out, dressed in their best clothes, and passed the day in eating, drinking and other enjoyments. Dressed in red shirts down to their feet, with garlands of flowers on their heads, accompanied by musical canes, which made a music called tika-tika, they danced the taki (song) called "Alansitua Saki." They gave thanks first to the Creator, then to the Sun and the Thunder, for having spared them, and prayed for another healthy year.

The Sapa Inca, with the Sun image before him, came forth with a great gold goblet of chicha, which he handed to the priest, who in turn emptied it into the golden urn. The chicha passed through the urn to a pipe below, which took it to the Houses of the Sun, the Thunder and the Creator.

The next day they assembled again as before, but bringing a huge flock of llamas, which had been transported to Cuzco from all corners of the empire. These were the flocks of the Creator, the Thunder and the Sun, raised on lands set aside for them. All were without any blemish and had never been shorn. The Sun priest selected four of the most perfect, and sacrificed them to the Creator, the Sun, the Thunder and the huaca Huanacauri.

The priest had sancu spread on large golden plates and sprinkled it with llama blood, making *yahuar-sancu*. The priest said, "Take care how you eat this sancu; whoever eats it in sin and with a double will and heart, is seen by our father the Sun, who will punish him with grievous troubles. Whoever eats it with a single heart, the Sun will favor him and reward him, will grant children and happy years and all that he requires."

All stood and vowed to never speak against the Creator, the Sun or the Thunder, to never be false to their Lord Inca, on penalty of condemnation and trouble.

The priest of the Sun took some sancu in three fingers and ate it. One by one everyone followed, even the littlest children.

The priests then killed the four sacrificial llamas, and looked for signs on their inflated lungs. From these signs they judged whether or not the year would be prosperous. They burned the sacrificial llamas before the Creator, the Sun and the Thunder, and gave a very small piece of their meat to each person.

The entire flock was then killed and a share of the meat given to every person in Cuzco. As each man entered the square, he pulled off a piece of llama wool and offered it to the Sun.

As the priests distributed the llama meat, they sang the twelve jailli prayers, the Sacred Hymns.

(1)

**Jaili Hoq**

A Teqse Wiraqocha  
Qaylla Wiraqocha  
Tukapu aknupu Wiracochan  
Kamaq, churaq  
“Qhari kachun, warmi kachun,” nispa  
Ilut’aq, ruraq  
Kamasqayki,  
churasqayki  
Qasilla qespilla  
kawsamusaq  
Maypin kanki?  
Hawapichu?  
Ukhupichu?  
Phuyupichu?  
Llanthupichu?  
Uyariway!  
Hay niway!  
Iniway!  
Imay pachakama, hayk’ay pachakama  
kawsachiway  
Marq’ariway  
Hat’alliway  
Kay qusqaytari chaskiway  
Maypis kaspapis Wiraquchaya

(1)

### **Hymn One**

Oh Creator, root of all,  
Wiracocha, end of all,  
Lord in shining garments  
who infuses life  
and sets all things in order,  
saying,  
“Let there be man!  
Let there be woman!”  
Molder, maker,  
to all things you have given life:  
watch over them,  
keep them living prosperously,  
fortunately  
in safety and peace.  
Where are you?  
Outside? Inside?  
Above this world in the clouds?  
Below this world in the shades?  
Hear me! Answer me!  
Take my words to your heart!  
For ages without end  
let me live,  
grasp me in your arms,  
hold me in your hands,  
receive this offering  
wherever you are, my Lord,  
my Wiracocha.



(2)

**Jailli Iskay**

**Oración para que multipliquen las  
gentes**

Wiracochan

Apuqochan

T'itu Wiraqochan

Wallpay wana Wiraqochan

Tukapu aknupu Wiraqochan

Runa yachakichun, sarmi yachakuchun

Mirachun Ilaqta pacha

Qasilla qespilla kachun

Kamasqaykita waqaychay hat'alliy

Imay pachakama, hayk'ay pachakama .

(2)

**Hymn Two**  
**Prayer that the people may**  
**multiply**

Creator  
Lord of the Lake,  
Wiracocha provider,  
industrious Wiracocha  
in shining clothes:  
Let man live well,  
let woman live well,  
let the peoples multiply,  
live blessed and prosperous lives.  
Preserve what you have infused  
with life  
for ages without end,  
hold it in your hand.

(3)

**Jailli Kinsa**  
**A todas las huacas**

Qaylla Wiraqochan  
Teqse Wiraqochan  
Apuqochan  
Wallpay wana Wiraqochan  
Chanka Wiraqochan  
Aksa Wiraqochan  
Hatun Wiraqochan  
Qaylla Wiraqochanta  
Qankuna aynichiq  
hunichiq  
Llaqta runa yachakuq qhapaq  
Hawaypi ukhuypi purispapas

(3)

**Hymn Three**  
**To all the huacas**

Creator, end of all things  
root of all  
Lord of the Lake  
active diligent Wiracocha,  
Lord of Mountains  
Lord of Prayers  
Lord of Rituals  
Lord without measure,  
Creator, end of all,  
who rewards and grants:  
Let the communities  
and peoples prosper  
and also those who journey  
outside or within.

(4)

**Jailli Tawa**

O Wiraqochan  
Kusi usapuq hayllipu Wiraqochaya  
Runa khuya maywa  
Kaymi runa yana  
waqchiyki  
runayki  
kamasqayki,  
churasqayki  
Qasi qespilla kakuchun warmaywan  
churinwan  
Ch'in ñanta  
Ama watequintawan yuyachunchu  
Unay wata kawsachun  
Mana allqaspa,  
manana p'itista  
Mikhukuchun, uqyakuchun

(4)

### **Hymn Four**

O Lord  
fortunate, happy,  
victorious Wiracocha,  
merciful and compassionate  
toward the people:  
Before you stand  
your servants and the poor  
to whom you have given life  
and put in their places:  
Let them be happy and blessed  
with their children  
and descendants;  
let them not fall into veiled dangers  
along the lonely road;  
let them live many years  
without weakening or loss,  
let them eat, let them drink.

(5)

**Jailli Pisqa**

O Wiraqochaya  
Teqse Wiraqochaya  
Wallparillaq  
Kamaq, churaq  
Kay hurin pachapi mikhuchun  
uqyachun nispa  
Churasqaykiqta, kamasqaykiqta  
Mikhuynin yachachun  
papa sara  
Imaymaná mikhunqan kachun  
Nisqaykita kamachiq mirachiq  
Mana muchunanpaq  
Mana muchuspa  
qanta ininanpaq  
Ama qasachunchu,  
ama chikchichunchu  
Qasilla waqaychamuy

(5)

### **Hymn Five**

O, my Lord,  
my Creator, origin of all,  
diligent worker  
who infuses life and order  
into all,  
saying, "Let them eat,  
let them drink in this world:"  
Increase the potatoes and corn,  
all the foods  
of those to whom you have given  
life,  
whom you have established.  
You who orders,  
who fulfills what you have decreed,  
let them increase.  
So the people do not suffer and,  
not suffering, believe in you.  
Let it not frost  
let it not hail,  
preserve all things in peace.



(6)

**Jailli Soqta**  
**Oración al Sol**

Wiraqocha  
P'unchaw kachun, tuta kachun nispa niq  
Paqarichun, illarichun  
nispa niq  
P'unchaw churikiqta qasillaqta  
qespillaqta purichiq  
Runa ruwasqaykiqta  
k'anchay k'anchay kananpaq  
Wiraqochaya  
Qasilla qespilla p'unchaw Inka  
Runa yana michisqaykiqta killariy  
k'anchariy  
Ama unquchispa,  
ama nanachispa  
Qasiqta qespiqta  
waqaychaspa

(6)

**Hymn Six**  
**Prayer to the Sun**

Lord Wiracocha,  
Who says  
“Let there be day,  
let there be night!”  
Who says,  
“Let there be dawn,  
let it grow light!”  
Who makes the Sun, your son,  
move happy and blessed each day,  
so that man whom you have made  
has light:  
My Wiracocha,  
shine on your Inca people,  
illuminate your servants,  
whom you have shepherded,  
let them live  
happy and blessed  
preserve them  
in peace,  
free of sickness, free of pain.

(7)

**Jailli Qanchis**  
**Oración por Ynga**

A Wiraqochan  
Teqse Wiraqochan  
Wallpay wana Wiraqochan  
Hatun Wiraqochan  
Tawapaka Wiraqochan  
Qhapaq kahun, Inka kachun nispa niq  
“Qhapaq churasqaykiqta  
Inka kamasqaykiqta”  
Qasilla qespillaqta waqaychamuy  
Runan yanan  
yachakuchun  
Awka ripunari usachun  
Imay pacha,  
hayk’ay pachakama  
Ama allqachispa  
Churinta mit’antawampas waqaychay  
qasisqallaqta  
Wiraqochaya

(7)

**Hymn Seven**  
**Prayer for the Inca**

Oh Lord, Wiracocha,  
origin of all things,  
diligent Lord,  
Creator beyond measure,  
Fortunate Wiracocha  
Who says, "Let there be lords,  
let there be Incas:"  
Preserve the Lord you have raised,  
the Inca you have given life,  
preserve him blessed and safe.  
Let the people, his servants,  
live well.  
Bring victory over his enemies  
for ages without end.  
Do not shorten his days,  
or his children's or descendants',  
keep them fortunate, in peace,  
my Lord.

(8)

**Jaili Pusaq**

Wiraqochaya  
Wallpay wana Wiraqochaya  
Runaqa qasi qespillaqa  
Qhapaq Inka churiyki, warmaykipaq  
Kamasqayki, waqaychamuchun  
Hat'allimuchun  
Pacha  
chakana,  
runa, llama, mikhuy  
Pay kaptin yakuchun yachakuchun  
Qhapaq Inka kamasqaykiqa  
Wiraqochaya  
ayniy, huniy, marqariy, hat'alliy  
Imay pachakama.

(8)

### **Hymn Eight**

My Lord  
diligent worker, Wiracocha:  
Preserve the Lord Inca,  
your son, your child  
him whom you have given life.  
Lead him by the hand  
happy and blessed.  
In all seasons  
let the people, the flocks,  
all living things,  
let them grow.  
My Creator:  
answer the Lord Inca,  
whom you have infused with life,  
hear him,  
grasp him in your arms,  
hold his hand  
forever.

(9)

**Jaili Isqon**

Pachamama  
Kuirumama  
Qasillaqta qespillaqta  
Qhapaq Inka wawaykiqta  
marq'ariy,  
hat'alliy

(9)

**Hymn Nine**

Pachamama  
Earth Mother  
Cloud Mother:  
Grasp the Lord Inca, your son,  
in your arms,  
blessed and safe  
hold his hand.



(10)

**Jailli Chunka**  
**Oración por todos los Yngas**

A P'unchaw Inka, Inti Yayay  
“Qusqu Tampu  
kachun atikup”  
“Llasakuq kachun,” nispá  
Churaq, kamaq much'asqayki  
Kusi qespi kachun  
Ama atispa  
Ama llasasqa  
kachunchu  
Atikupqaq  
llasa qhapaq  
Kamasqayki, churasqayki

(10)

**Hymn Ten**  
**Prayer for all the Incas**

Oh Inca Sun, Light, my Father  
who says,  
“Let them be masters  
of Cuzco and Tambo,”  
or who says,  
“Let them be plundered!”:  
Orderer, giver of life,  
I adore you.  
Let us live happily, in peace,  
let us not be defeated,  
let us not be despoiled,  
but let us be masters.  
Grant to those you have infused  
with life  
and raised into their places,  
grant them abundance and  
treasures.

(11)

**Jailli Chunka-hoq-niyuq**  
**Oración a todas las huacas**

O Pachaq ch'ulla Wiraqocha  
Ukhu ch'ulla Wiraqochan  
“Waka willka kachun,” nispa  
Kamaq  
Hatun apu  
Wallpay wana  
Tayna allasto allonto Wiraqochay  
“Hurin pacha, hanan pacha kachun,”  
nispa niq  
Ukhupachapi puka umaqta  
Churaq hay nipway, “Huniyway?”  
Qespi qasi kamusaq  
Wiraqochaya  
Mikhuyniyuk,  
minkhayuq,  
sarayuq, llamayuq  
Imaynayuq,  
hayk'aynayuq  
Ama kachariwaykuchu Imaymaná,  
hayk'aymaná  
Chikamanta hatunmanta  
nak'asqa watusqa  
umusqamanta

(11)

**Hymn Eleven**  
**Prayer to all the huacas**

Oh Wiracocha, unique in this  
world,  
Wiracocha, unique in the  
underworld,  
who says,  
“Let there be spirits  
and lesser spirits.”  
Life-giver,  
Great diligent Lord,  
“Tayna allasto allonto,”  
my Wiracocha  
who says,  
“Let there be an underworld;  
let there be an upper world,”  
commander of the Sun in the  
underworld,  
tell me what you want,  
listen to me.  
Let me live fortunate and blessed,  
my Wiracocha,  
with all living things,  
with your help,  
with corn, with llamas,  
with all that exists.  
Do not abandon us to all sorts  
of maledictions,  
sortileges and spells.

**(12)**

**Jailli Chunka-iskayniyuq**

A Teqse Wiraqocha  
Qaylla Wiraqocha  
Tukapu aknupu Wiracochan  
Kamaq, churaq  
“Qhari kachun, warmi kachun,” nispa  
Ilut’aq, ruraq  
Kamasqayki,  
churasqayki  
Qasilla qespilla  
kawsamusaq  
Maypin kanki?  
Hawapichu?  
Ukhupichu?  
Phuyupichu?  
Llanthupichu?  
Uyariway!  
Hay niway!  
Iniway!  
Imay pachakama, hayk’ay pachakama  
kawsachiway  
Marq’ariway  
Hat’alliway  
Kay qusqaytari chaskiway  
Maypis kaspapis Wiraquchaya

**(12)**

**Hymn Twelve**

Oh Creator, root of all,  
Wiracocha, end of all,  
Lord in shining garments  
who infuses life  
and sets all things in order,  
saying,  
“Let there be man!  
Let there be woman!”  
Molder, maker,  
to all things you have given life:  
watch over them,  
keep them living prosperously,  
fortunately  
in safety and peace.  
Where are you?  
Outside? Inside?  
Above this world in the clouds?  
Below this world in the shades?  
Hear me! Answer me!  
Take my words to your heart!  
For ages without end  
let me live,  
grasp me in your arms,  
hold me in your hands,  
receive this offering  
wherever you are, my Lord,  
my Wiracocha.



*Quipu*

(from Huamán Poma)

The prayers were followed by a great feast of llama meat, with vast amounts of chicha, for four days, with continuous music and *takis* (songs). The second day was particularly dedicated to the Creator, the Sun and Thunder; the fourth day was for the Moon and Earth Mother.

On the fifth day the chiefs and people of all the subject nations came forward with their huacas and made offerings to the Creator, the Sun, the Thunder, to Huanacauri and the Sapa Inca. The Sun priest sprinkled blood-sancu and the chiefs stood and sang the final hymn, a repetition of Jailli 1.

The Sun Priest distributed sancu again, and the people ate more llamas. Each nation passed the day singing and dancing their traditional regional *takis*. This continued for two days, until the Priest of the Sun distributed the last *sancu*, and the people ate the last llamas. The ceremony of the Situa was then complete.



*Pachacutec*

(from Huamán Poma)



## **The Life of Pachacutec (1418-1471)**

The Incas were the last aristocracy in a long line of civilizations dating back many thousands of years in the South American highlands and western coast.

The Inca dynasty was founded by the legendary Manco Capac around the year 1200. There are contradictory stories about Manco's origin. One story has him emerging from a cave about 18 miles south-east of Cuzco, along with three brothers, four sisters and ten ayllus (clans or extended families) of followers. According to another story, the Sun created Manco and his siblings on an island in Lake Titicaca, 200 miles away. In either case, believing that they were blessed with special abilities by the benevolent Sun (manifestation of the Creator), Manco and the others left their place of origin in search of a new home in a fertile valley. Arriving in the Cuzco valley, Manco tested the ground with a golden staff, and realized that this was the chosen place, Navel of the World. The ruling Inca family and clan adopted a highly structured system of marriage to continue their blood lines. The Sapa Inca was

unchallengeable head of the family, clan and state. With the growing pueblo of Cuzco his center, Manco invented the core ideas of the Inca order, which his successors perpetuated and developed.

Manco and his wife-sister Mama Ocllo gradually organized and established authority over the neighboring Quechua and Aymara villages. According to legend, Manco taught the people the sciences and arts of the soil, agriculture, husbandry, irrigation, industries; Ocllo taught spinning, weaving, sewing, all the domestic arts and sciences. Manco's only rule at first was for every member of the village or tribe to share in the common labor and its produce, the fruits of the Sun. He instituted an annual work cycle following the seasons. Because people suffered greatly during the cold and wet months, he set up public store houses, whose contents were distributed as relief to all in times of need or calamity. The Sun mandated that the Incas bring this system to the world, so all could benefit from the benevolence of the Sun.

As well as a culture hero, Manco was a conqueror: clans who refused to accept his power were driven out of the Cuzco valley. However, he never expanded much beyond that immediate area. The region was scattered with small independent city-states, variously fighting and forming alliances. A battle might determine hegemony, but the defeated pueblo would soon re-arm and the cycle would repeat. On this very tenuous basis, through their superior organizational abilities, both economic and military, the Incas became the dominant power in the immediate region. But at the time of Pachacutec's birth, two hundred years later, the Incas were still just a small kingdom, still in this same seemingly endless cycle of insecurity.

It was Pachacutec's unique genius to perfect Manco's ideas, to generalize and expand them into an agrarian socialistic system, and to spread them thousands of miles along the west coast of Tawantinsuyu (as the Incas called it) up to Ecuador and down to Chile and Argentina, to the entire known world.

There are conflicting stories about Pachacutec's early life. This account follows the story passed down by most of the chroniclers.

Pachacutec was born about 1418, the third son of Viracocha Inca (the eighth of the dynasty) and Coya Mama Runtu, the Inca's wife and sister. Like all the Inca emperors, Viracocha also had children by many other women.

As a boy Pachacutec was known as Cusi. He and his father did not get along. Viracocha found him unmanageable. His father grew much closer to an "illegitimate" son named Urcon. When Cusi was a teenager, Viracocha decided to send him away from a prince's life in Cuzco to work as a herd boy to the llama and alpaca flocks belonging to the Sun, which were used for wool and in ceremonies. For three years Cusi tended the flocks. Meanwhile, the elderly Viracocha Inca named Urcon as his successor. Succession was through the male line but went to the son who proved himself the most worthy. Selection of a new Sapa Inca had to be approved by the Council of Elders.

One day while Cusi was herding, a stranger came up to him and identified himself as an ancestor, a brother of the first Inca, Manco Capac. The spirit warned Cusi there would be an attack by an enemy. Cusi ran to Cuzco and told his father, but

Viracocha Inca refused to listen and just banished him back to his flocks.

While this was happening, the Chancas, a neighboring tribe about sixty miles west of Cuzco, were arming for a war of expansion. Three months later they made their move, while Cuzco was still unprepared.

Hearing news of the approaching Chanca army, Cusi hurried back to Cuzco again to help defend it. But Viracocha, Urcon and their close followers panicked, abandoned the capital and fled to a fortress ten miles north. Cusi stepped into the vacuum and hurriedly rallied the people to brace for the assault. The Chancas stormed Cuzco but were pushed back. In a series of battles that followed, Cusi led the people of Cuzco to defeat the invaders.

Cusi offered the city back to his father, but the humiliated Viracocha had lost his taste for ruling, and abdicated in favor of Urcon. However, accused of cowardice, Urcon was not acceptable to the people of Cuzco. Another of Cusi's brothers fought Urcon and killed him. By general acclamation Cusi was crowned the ninth Sapa Inca at the age of about twenty and received the name Pachacutec, "World Overturmer" (or World Reformer), from the people he had rallied to save.

Pachacutec's first priority as emperor was reorganizing, rebuilding and governing Cuzco. This he did for his first three years. A visionary urban planner, Pachacutec rebuilt Cuzco into a living reflection of Inca concepts of society and the universe. The new Cuzco was shaped like a puma, with its head the fortress of Sacsayhuaman and its heart the new Coricancha Sun Temple facing the great plaza. Pachacutec turned the course of two

rivers so they crossed the city, providing clean water. He greatly expanded the agricultural terrace system that sustained the economy. He built an astronomical observatory, the Ushnu. On the horizon he had forty-one high columns (*ceques*) erected, forming astronomical sight lines. These determined the solstices and other celestial events, as sighted from the Coricancha Sun Temple in the city's heart. These sight lines also divided the city into administrative quadrants organized around different clans. He had other columns erected in the great plaza to determine the equinoxes.



Anahuarque (from Huamán Poma)

Following Inca tradition, he married his sister Mama Anahuarque Coya. According to Huamán Poma, Mama Anahuarque “had a round face like his. She was beautiful, with small eyes and mouth...” Like all Sapa Incas, he had children by many other women.

Pachacutec spent the next three years sojourning in other parts of the Inca realm. He returned to Cuzco determined to end the constant threat of warlike neighbors and bring security to his people. At the same time he felt chosen to fulfill Manco’s vision of Inca destiny. He began the great project of his life: to spread and universalize the Inca way of life throughout the entire known world, and to try to usher in a era of general peace, prosperity and civilization.

Pachacutec tried to unify the empire through a vast cultural as well as administrative reorganization. Each of the conquered provinces had its own religious cult, based primarily on nature deities and local *huacas* (spirits of places). Pachacutec unified worship by emphasizing Wiracocha, the Creator, above and beyond all other deities. At the same time he did not interfere with each locality’s traditions, since the Creator, as well as Earth Mother, Sun, Thunder and Moon, were already part of their worship in various forms. He devised an official ceremonial round - of which the Situa was part - to be performed everywhere in Tawantinsuyu.

He began a three year series of military sorties to expand the region of Inca domination, first to the northeast (Chinchasuyu), then to the east (Antisuyu). Much of the area was assimilated without serious warfare, as news had spread that

acceptance of the Inca system brought prosperity. For the following three years he visited the new parts of the realm, overseeing their reorganization, promulgating new laws, while allowing each tribe to follow its ancient customs as long as they did not conflict with the new order. Inheritance of land and organization of authority he permitted to vary according to the customs of each province. He tried to rationalize and harmonize the legal system throughout the empire, decreeing that many laws should be consistent throughout the realm. He made subject peoples into citizens. Pachacutec oversaw the building of roads, bridges, irrigation canals, farming terraces, temples, fortresses, palaces, inns. He had storehouses erected in all the villages to put away supplies for years in need, when they would be distributed to all the people. He founded many new colonies in regions made fertile by Inca irrigation methods, instituting the system of *mitimaes* in which he turned recalcitrant subject peoples into colonists in other areas. He expanded the system of *chasky* runners so that rapid communication could take place throughout Tawantinsuyu.

After that he left for more conquests in the Chinchasuyu, sending out his brother Capac and his heir Tupac Inca to conquer the coastal plains, then later directing them into Ecuador.

Badly in need rest, Pachacutec decided to spend the next six years in peace, consolidation and construction. He increased the Inca schools (originally begun by his great grandfather Inca Roca). He turned Quechua (Runasimi) into a *lingua franca*, having it taught to all throughout empire. He established terraced and irrigated fields everywhere and apportioned plots to each family according to

their ability to work it. He set up a system of collective labor for both public and private works. The whole population was organized to till the public land (the fields of the deities and the Inca), as well as their own family plots. This was followed in sowing, harvesting and storing. Widows, orphans and the disabled were all cared for. He had the community build housing for all in need. A homeless person would make a request to the local Council, which would appoint a day for the house to be built. The entire community would assemble and quickly complete the work. He established that every citizen should have a job, and fair compensation for it. He instituted holidays every month; daily markets in the pueblos and cities; a regional fair every nine days so villagers and field workers could come to market (the first “weekends” on this continent). He had each province and city surveyed and laid out their limits. Around 1450 he began the construction of Machu Picchu.

Under Pachacutec’s wise leadership, the Empire of Tawantinsuyu succeeded in distributing the public wealth to suppress the scourges of hunger and economic misery throughout the realm. He knew that the Incas’ greatest strength was not their army but their ability to improve the general economic productivity by concentrating natural resources, organizing the workforce, conserving the surplus product and redistributing it in times of need. He did this over long distances and involving large numbers of people, without interfering with the traditional Andean system of mutual aid and clan (*ayllu*) relationships of reciprocity. On top of the traditional system, Pachacutec added the Inca institution of the *mita*, labor tax, through which all had to put in work in the fields of the Inca (the state)



and the Sun. Through the system of redistribution, their *mita* work came back to the people. All benefited by the State infrastructure.

His reign is estimated to have spanned 1438 to 1471.

But there were also injustices built into the Inca system, which could be rigid and authoritarian. The working people had little class mobility or personal freedom, and bore the burden of the aristocracy. The system of *mitimaes* tore whole villages away from their ancestral roots and planted them in other regions. Subject tribes often revolted against Inca domination.

However oppressive Inca society may have been for some people, it was truly mild compared to the rule of the Spaniards. Nothing the Incas did in any way approached the chattel slavery of the ancient Old World or of colonized America. Even compared with our modern mass capitalist society, the Incas' offer of economic security might look attractive today to people caught hopelessly in unemployment, menial jobs or homelessness.

We have several conflicting accounts of Pachacutec's personality. Garcilaso El Inca writes glowingly, "Because of all (his accomplishments), his gracious disposition and mild rule, he was loved and worshipped as a second Jupiter... He lived in peace and tranquillity, as well obeyed as he was truly loved, and as well served as his goodness merited."

However, Huamán Poma describes Pachacutec as meteoric: "a handsome tall man with a round face. When something angered him, his eyes became terrible like a puma's, and he lost all control." Poma goes on to say that Pachacutec drank and ate to

excess, and when he went into one of his rages his sister-wife Mama Anahuarque Coya was afraid of him.

Another description of his personality is found in the great classical Quechua drama “Apu Ollantay,” an historical play with musical interludes, probably written in the 1490s, author unknown. “Apu Ollantay” tells a story of love, punishment and forgiveness. One of the main characters, the aging Pachacutec, near the end of his life, is portrayed as a stern defender of custom, law and order.

In the play, Ollantay, one of Pachacutec’s generals, is having a forbidden affair with the king’s daughter, Cusi-Coyllur. Inca aristocrats were permitted to marry only other Incas, and Ollantay was from another tribe. In spite of this, Ollantay asks Pachacutec for permission to marry her. Pachacutec, the defender of conventional order, rejects him out of hand. Ollantay retreats with his tribal army to the fortress of Ollantaytambo, forty kilometers away from Cuzco. Pachacutec, fearing a revolt, sends an Inca army after him. However, the rebel forces defeat the Inca army and Ollantay continues to hole up in his fortress. Meanwhile Pachacutec, in a rage, throws the pregnant Cusi-Coyllur in prison and gives her new baby daughter to the Virgins of the Sun to raise in the Sun Temple. At that point Pachacutec dies. The plot is resolved when Pachacutec’s son Tupac, the new Inca, finally defeats Ollantay through a ruse, then forgives both him and Cusi-Coyllur, reunites the surprised couple with their daughter and permits them to marry. Tupac appoints Ollantay as governor of Cuzco while he himself marches off to war.

Despite the rigidity of his later years, Pachacutec was probably truly loved by most of his people, and left an indelible mark on his civilization.

His death is described by the chronicler Sarmiento de Gamboa:

“And then he called to the Incas Orejones of Cuzco, his relatives, and to Tupac Inca, his son, to whom in few words he spoke in this manner:

‘Son...I leave you to these our relatives; they are now your fathers, so let them counsel you. Look after them, and they will serve you. When I am dead, take care of my body, and put it in my house Patallacta. Place my golden sculpture in the House of the Sun, and in all my subject provinces make the solemn sacrifices, and at the end perform the Purucaya feast, so I can go rest with my father the Sun.’

“And this finished, they say that he began to sing in a low and sad tone, in words of his tongue, that in Spanish sound like:

‘As a lily in the garden  
I was born,  
and thus I was raised,  
and as I came into my age,  
I aged,  
and since I had to die,  
I dried out like this and died.’

“And having finished these words, he rested his head against a pillow and expired...”



## **SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

### **THE FLOWER SONGS OF NEZAHUALCOYOTL**

#### *Sources and Translations*

Most of the surviving Nahuatl songs can be found in two major collections, “Romances de los señores de la Nueva España” and “Cantares mexicanos.” Both were compiled between 1560 and 1582. A few songs are duplicated in both the Romances and the Cantares, attesting to their authenticity and popularity. Neither manuscript has a compiler’s name attached, though there is solid evidence of the identities of both.

The Romances, containing 10 flower-songs attributed to Nezahualcoyotl (or 11, depending on how one counts), were probably collected by Juan Bautista Pomar, a great-grandson of Nezahualcoyotl. Although no scribe’s name or date is on the only existing Romances manuscript, that manuscript was discovered bound together with Pomar’s history of Texcoco, “Geographical Relation of Texcoco,” dated 1582. The two manuscripts are of the same vintage. Pomar wrote in his own language and for his own people, to conserve their history, traditions and culture.

The Cantares Mexicanos, with 24 to 28 flower-songs attributed to Nezahualcoyotl, was probably collected by the Indigenous informants of Fra Bernardino de Sahagún as part of his great work known as the Florentine Codex.

Since the Nahuas already had a written literary tradition before the Spaniards arrived, they learned the alphabet from the friars very quickly after their own ancient books were banned and burned. Soon many Nahuas could read and write in their own language, using the Spanish alphabet. Almost every Indian town appointed a notary to keep local records.

Two more of Nezahualcoyotl's songs are found, in Spanish translation, in "Historia chichimeca," a history written in Spanish by Alva Ixtlilxochitl, another descendant of Nezahualcoyotl and surely an associate of Pomar. This book and "Relation of Texcoco" are the primary sources for Nezahualcoyotl's life and the history of his city-state Texcoco. More of this history and a paraphrase of a Nezahualcoyotl poem have been passed down in "Monarquía Indiana," another contemporary book by Fray Juan de Torquemada. The sacred hymns can be found in the Florentine Codex, "Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca" and "Anales de Cuauhtinchan."

The quotes from Friar Diego Duran can be found in "Historia de las Indias de Nueva España" (1581), the first part translated into English as "The Aztecs: History of the Indies," and the subsequent parts as "Book of the Gods and the Rites, and the Ancient Calendar" (Tr. by Heyden, O. and Horcasitas, F., New York, 1964 and Norman, 1971).

There is no complete translation into English of the Romances. The best Spanish translations to date are still those by Garibay and León-Portilla. León-Portilla's beautiful English

renderings of some of his Spanish translations are also excellent. Bierhost's complete translation of the Cantares is precise and scholarly in many ways, but also rife with interpretations of these poems as "ghost songs." In my own English translations I have used all of these works to try to find my way to understanding the originals.

Most of the songs in both the Cantares and the Romances have no titles and, in some instances, several seem to be run together. For consistency and convenience in identifying the songs, I am retaining Garibay's song numbers for the Romances and Bierhorst's for the Cantares. The song numbers are followed by the manuscript pages where they can be found.

In the original manuscripts some of the songs contain stanzas apparently interjected by the singer at the time of compilation, usually addressed to Nezahualcoyotl. These have been omitted here.

Garibay's translations of most of the ancient songs into Spanish, along with commentaries, published over three decades beginning in 1937, changed the way ancient Nahuatl poetry was studied. His classic translations of the flower-songs are still the standard against which all other translations must be based. Yet another standard Nahuatl linguist and grammarian, J. Richard Andrews, could say about his work, "At times the Spanish translation is closer to invention than translation..."

To translate poetry so difficult and arcane in the original, from a language so different from English, from texts so dense and intense, where

words placed together often mean something else, forces the translator to take liberties with the text. The Nahuatl texts are confusing in many places, the punctuation inconsistent, rife with copyists' mistakes, so all translators are called on to some extent to reconstruct the poems. There is ambiguity in numerous phrases, making one correct translation not possible. Because of the complex and contradictory nature of these songs, any coherent translation requires an interpretive point of view, making it open to valid criticism. That will always be the case in translations of the flower-songs. Every translation is bound to be different, not only in shades of meaning but in omissions and inclusions. There will never be one definitive translation of most of these poems. The translator needs to cross vast linguistic and cultural gaps to wind up with results that are understandable to the general reader.

The best modern biographies of Nezahualcoyotl that I have seen are by J.L. Martinez (1972) and Frances Gillmor (1949)

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## **THE SONGS OF DZITBALCHÉ**

### ***Sources and Translations***

In translating these texts I primarily referred to Barrera Vásquez's pioneering translation into Spanish (Mérida, 1965). I also referred to Munro S. Edmonson's English translation (Mexico, 1971), which is loosely based on Barrera Vásquez, but less literal.

Useful in understanding these texts is an acquaintance with the various Books of Chilam Balam (Barrera Vásquez, 1948, and many other translations), the Ritual of the Bacabs (Roys, Norman, 1965), the Title of Calkiní (Barrera Vásquez, Campeche, 1957) and Fray Diego de Landa's Relación de las cosas de Yucatán (Gates, New York, 1978).

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and Goetz, Mexico, 1950, Norman, 1953), and the Rabinal Achí (Monterde, Mexico, 1979).

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## **THE SACRED HYMNS OF PACHACUTEC**

### ***Sources and Translations***

Pachacutec's hymns have come down to us in a manuscript entitled "Fables and Rites of the Incas" ("Fábulas y Ritos de los Incas"), written between 1570 and 1584 by Cristóbal de Molina, priest of the hospital for native people in Cuzco. Some evidence suggests that Molina was a mestizo.

Although Molina seems to have known Quechua fluently, many lines in the hymns are confusing or unintelligible to both native Quechua speakers and

scholars today. Quechua spelling was in its infancy at the time, and very inconsistent. A variety of Quechua sounds do not exist in Spanish and most Spanish ears have difficulty distinguishing them (as do most English ears). Early chroniclers wrote those sounds in a variety of ways, since there was no ready place for them in the alphabet. Word division was inconsistent and could be arbitrary.

Furthermore the only manuscript we have is a copy, probably made by someone who probably did not know Quechua and who easily might have copied many words incorrectly.

Molina gives his own translations into Spanish along with the Quechua originals, but these are sometimes loose, so it is not always possible to correct the Quechua text from Molina's Spanish. For a few lines in Hymn 11, Molina gives no translation at all, but repeats the original words, including the incomprehensible, "Tayna allasto allonto." Perhaps these words are not garbled Quechua at all, but a phrase in the private language of the Inca elite, about which we know almost nothing.

The first publication of Molina was an English version by Clements R. Markham in 1873, in which however he simply translated Molina's Spanish translations into English. Since then a number of attempts have been made at reconstructing the poems in Quechua, with varying results, beginning with José Gregorio Castro (1921), followed by Juan A. Rozas (R. Rojas, 1937), J.M.B. Farfán Ayerbe (1945), Jesus Lara (1947, revised 1961), John Howland Rowe (1953), Teodoro L. Meneses (1964) and Henrique Urbano (1989).

I am using a comparison of the original Molina with the Rozas, Lara, Rowe and Urbano reconstructions as the basis for these translations, referring also to the other reconstructions and Spanish translations. I am

assuming that the small variations between the repeated hymns are copyist's errors. The Quechua versions included here closely follow the Urbano reconstructions.

There are good biographies of Pachacutec by J. Imbelloni (1946) and M. R. T. de Diaz Canseco (1953).

For more information about the ancient Quechua literary world, one might start with "La poesía Quechua" (1947) or "La literatura de los Quechua" (1961), both by Jesus Lara.

The jaillis of Manco Capac can be found in the work, "The Antiquities of Perú," by Don Juan de Santa Cruz Pachacuti-Yamqui Salcamayhua, an indigenous Quechua, probably written about 1610-1620. Other important early sources of and about Inca poetry include the works of Garcilaso El Inca, Felipe Huamán Poma de Ayala, Fray Martín de Morúa, Pedro de Cieza de León, Sarmiento de Gamboa, Juan de Betanzos, Francisco de Avila, Miguel Cabello Valboa, and the collections of Antonio Valdez, P.P. Justiniani, José Armando Méndez and Ishmael Vásquez.

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