

TEXTS ON NAHUAT¹ HEALING METHODS

HAROLD KEY

Summer Institute of Linguistics

ORIENTATION

The following texts are selected and edited from a tape² recording of conversations between two native³ speakers of Nahuat. Minor items have been added by direct dictation. These are presented to record some of the methods of curing illnesses now in use among the people of this district.

TEXTS

1. *Fevers*: H.: para in totonic ton cualtia para se tayis paramaj quisa in cocolis? *For a fever, what is good to drink so the illness will leave?* R.: pues, para ne totonic ongac se pajti santa mariajxiutzin epasot zorrillo maj se quiquetza ca se contzin cualtzin maj moloni huan maj tayi se taza ne cocoxquej. Yejua saj. *Well,*

¹ This is the dialect of Nahuatl as spoken in the Sierra region of northern Puebla, Mexico, in the immediate vicinity of Zacapoaxtla. The data were gathered under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, Glendale, California, U.S.A.

The phonemes, adapted to Spanish orthography, are as follows: p, t, (written tz), č (written ch), k (written qu or c), kw (written cu), g, s, š (written x), h (written j), m, n, l, w (written u or hu), y and i, e, a, and o. Length is phonemic but need not be written to distinguish any meaning in this paper. Stress is normally on the next to last syllable of each word.

² The author owes thanks to Mr. Arch McKinlay, a linguistic investigator previously in this area, for his valuable assistance in extracting this material from the tape. The original data can be obtained through the office of the Summer Institute of Linguistics.

³ Heraclio Oropeza, the questioner, is a native of Xalacapan, and Rutilio Huertaj, farmer near Taijtíc, answers the questions.

(for) that fever there is a remedy, leaf of Santa Maria⁴ (tiny *chrysanthemum parthenium* Smith), and of the epasot zorrillo (*Chenopodium foetidum* Sch. Family of Quenopodiaceas). Have someone put it in a nice little pot to boil (and) have the sick one drink it. That's all.

H.: huan queman temaca totonic ton cualtia para maj se moojxili huan para maj tecahua in totonic? And when fever hits a person, what's good to put on so the fever will leave person? R.: maj momoxtalican se granadajxihuit huan ica se tzictzin, atomat maj quiojsacan, huan quisas in totonic. Have people place on abdominal region a leaf of pomegranate and with a little, with a water tomato (small, green fruit) have them anoint them, and the fever will go away.

2. *Upset stomach*: H.: huan queman tetezilcua se ipox, ton cualtia para maj se tayi? Xquelnamiqui, para queman tetetzilcua se ipox? And when a person's stomach is churning, what is good to drink? Think, for when a person's stomach is upset. R.: queman tetetzilcua se ipox cuali pajti nojon tal soquitiztin huan in semilla den cilantro. maj quiquetzacan no ca se contzin. cuali maj moloni huan tzictzin manzanilla. yejua saj. When a person's stomach is upset, a good remedy is a little dirt (a little) muddy and the seed of cilantro (*Corriandrum sattivum* L. Family of Umbeliferas). Have persons cook it also with a little jug. Let it boil well and (with) a little manzanilla (*matricaria chamomilla*). That's it.

⁴ Source of botanic identification, reference was made to Maximino Martinez, *Plantas Medicinales de Mexico*, Tercera Edición, Ediciones Botas, 1944, Imp. M. León Sánchez, SCL-M.R. del Toro de Lazarín, 7.

3. *Rabies*: H.: huan queman tequejtzoma se itzcuinrabiaj, ton cualtia para amo tecuis in rabia? *And when a rabid dog bites a person, what does good so the rabies won't take?* R.: queman tequejtzoma se loco itzcuinti, simi cuali pajti in tzopilonacat, maj moloni huan caldito medio xolo maj tayi ne in taquejtzon, in aconi quejtzomac. huan yejua saj nojon pajti. *When a rabid dog bites a person, when a crazy dog bites a person, a very good remedy is buzzard meat. Let it be boiled and let the bitten one drink the soup half-cooked. And that's all of that remedy.*

4. *Whooping cough*: H.: huan para miquetataxis, ton cualtia para quisas? *And for whooping cough, what is good so it will go away?* R.: para miquetataxis oc se pajti ongac nojon tzojpiloijuit. maj quitehuatzacan tech se comal huan quicuechocan ca se tetzin, huan in til maj quitalican tech sequi atzin huan maj tayican. *For whooping cough there is another cure, buzzard feather. Let them be toasted on a griddle and grind them with a small stone, and the ash (toasted powder) let it be put in some little water and let it be drunk.*

H.: nejua nicayic que in epat cuali pajti, para in miquetataxis. may quimolontican ninacalyo huan maj quicuacan huan maj tayican se caxit de caldo miacpa. huan no maj quitetehuatxacan in nacat den epat ticoijtic huan maj quicuacan huan ijcon quincahuas in miquetataxis in pilimej. *I heard that the skunk is a good cure for whooping cough. Let them boil its meat and let them eat it and drink a bowl of soup several times. And also let them roast the meat of the skunk in a fire*

and eat it and thus the whooping cough will leave the children.

5. *Sores, boils:* H.: huan para cocomej, para pajtisquej, ton pajti ongac? *And for boils, so the will heal what cure is there?* R.: para se cocot monequi cualtzin maj quiixpacacan huan quihuajhuatzacan. huan ca tajchinol xihuit, cualtzin maj moloni tojtotoctzin maj ica quipacacan nojon cocot, huan maj quialpichican ca refino, huan yejua saj jon. *For a boil-sore it is necessary wash it well and dry it. And with leaves of tajchinol (tlachinoli), that have boiled well, very hot, let them clean the sore, and let them spray it with liquor from mouth, and that's it.*

6. *Chills:* H.: huan queman se sejsecui, ton cualtia para tecahuas? *And when one has a chill, what is good to drive it away?* R.: queman simi quimaca tejsecuilis nojon cocoxquej, monequi maj quitemacan tech se temascal, huan maj quiojsacan tzictzin refino, huan maj quipiyican ca se manga, huan maj cochi cualtzin mosehuis para hualtanesis imostica pactoc ya. *When a sick one is hit hard with a chill, it is necessary they take him to a bathhouse, and that they rub him with a little liquor, and that they wrap him up in a blanket, and let him sleep well and rest well so his tomorrow will dawn with him already cured.*

7. *General illness:* H.: huan queman se cocoxquej mococoa huan quinequi mopajtis, ton pajtis? *And when a sick person is sick and needs to heal himself, what cure is there to cure?* R.: se cocoxquej de pehua mocaxania maj quipacacan, maj quiquetzacan tech se cajaxpas de at, huan maj quimaxacualocan sequi xihuit

de necaxan, huan maj quipacacan ica, huan maj tajco vasito maj tayi. yejua saj nojon. *A sick person beginning be ill some more, then bathe him, let them put on to boil in a bowl of water, and let them rob some leaves of necaxa, and let them bathe him with it, and let him drink half a glass of it. That's all of that.*

8. *Sprains and bone breaks:* H.: huan queman mometznecuiloa acsa o mometzpostequi, ton pajti ongac? *And when one twists a foot or breaks a leg, what remedy is there?* R.: maj quipejpepechohuilican nojon xihuitzin den mochihua tech in cuohuit, huan maj quieteyican, huan maj quimolontican cualtzin maj quichijchinohuilican campa quicocoa ca patzmait, para pajtis. *Have them plaster that plant that is formed in the tree and have them cut it; boil it well and dip hot liquid over injury with patzmait, to heal it.* H.: huan quipajpachosquej no cualti ica? *And it is good to massage with it?* R.: quipajpachosquej sayoj ca refino. quialpichiaj ica huan maj quimetzpajpachocan o quimapajpachos camp quicocoa. *They massage only with liquor. They spray it on with mouth and have them massage the foot or massage with where it hurts him.* H.: campa matapostec? *Where the break is?* R.:campa postec in iomiyo. *Where his bone is broken.*

9. *Burns:* H.: huan queman se mamatajtatia o se momotztajtatia, ton pajti ongac para sehuis campa se motajtati? *And when a person burns his hand or foot, what remedy is there so it will cool where one has been burned?* R.: maj momaxacualo tech mismo nitzon, in, no cristiano, tech mismo nitzon maj momaxajxacualo huan quitalili tzictzin aceite. *Have him rub himself*

in his own hair, the, that man, in his own hair let him rub himself and put a little oil on it.

10. *Cuts, wounds:* H.: huan ta acsa mometztequi, o momatequi, o motajcoyanteque, o campica yesqui, ton cualtia para moxilis, o ton quitalilis para moquetzas in esti? *And if someone cuts his foot, or cuts his hand, or cuts his trunk, or wherever it may be, what is good to put on it, or what will be put on it to stop the blood?* R.: para acsa momatequi, o mometztequi, para moquetzas in esti, maj quitalili, maj quicuitapilhuhuita se piotzin de nojon cuitpopoyo, huan maj quipatzca in ijhuit maj quisa nichoquilo huan maj quiojxili campata tecti para maj moquetzas in esti huan de amo, ongac oc se pajti ten mochihua tech in cucutaj, mojon ten quiliaj ichcatzitzin. *Jejua saj. For a person who cut his hand, or who cut his foot, to stop the blood, let him put, let him pull new feathers from a chicken of that class without many feathers (new feathers), and let him squeeze the feather to let the juice come out and rub it where cut to stop the blood and if doesn't work, there is another remedy that grows in the woods, that which is called lambs. That's it.*

11. *Blow on the head, unconscious:* H.: huan queman acsa mocuatapana, se tagat mocuatapana, ton pajti no ongac para ixpetanis? *And when someone cracks his head, a man cracks his head, what cure also is there so he will come to?* queman cuahuetztoc maj se quijto no, toni pajti ongac para pajtis naquen cuahuetztoc? *When a person's head falls out of control one can also say, what cure is there to heal one who is out?* R.: naquen cuahuetztoc, maj quitemolican se suatzin

o tagatzin naquen quimati tacuapajpachos. nojon quicuapajpachos huan quicualpichis ca vino blanco. *Some one is out, let them look up for him a woman or man who know how to massage the head. He will massage the head and spray from his mouth on him with white wine.* H.: huan niman? *And then?* R.: huan niman maj quitemacan para cuali mocahuas. *And then they put him in temascal (steam bath) so he will be fine.* H.: huan niman quicuapiquij, xa melan? *And then they wrap up his head, isn't true?* R.: quicuapiquij ca se payoj para maj amo quipitza in ejecat. *They wrap up his head with a shawl so he won't be struck by the wind.* H.: o tasal? *or a cloth?* R.: o tasal. *Or a cloth.* H.: quicuatilintiaj? *They wrap his head up tight?* R.: cuatilintiaj. yejua saj. yejua saj. *They wrap his head up tight. That's all. That's all.*

12. *Eyes:* H.: huan queman acsa tagat o suatzin quicocoa niixtololohuan o ixchichiltic nocta, ton pajti ongac para moojxilis para quisas nojon cocolis ten quipia tech niixtololohuan? *And when some man or woman has sore eyes or is very bloodshot, what cure should be apply to himself so that disease will leave that he has in his eyes?* R.: naquen se cristiano moixejecana-mictia huan quicocoj niixtololohuan, cuali in se cigarritoj maj quichichina, huan cabito maj moixtalili moixpepechohuili se cachito de cigarrojamatzin, huan maj quiixpopochuican ca mismo cigarritoj ipocyo. yejua saj. *The person who encounters a wind of death (evil wind) and his eyes hurt him, it is good to have him smoke a cigarrito, and plaster the remaining bit of cigarette paper beside his eyes, and blow in his eyes with the smoke of the same cigarette. That's it.*

13. *Teeth.* H.: huan queman mitzcocoj motanuan o se motancoch, ton pajti tictalilia? *And when your incisors or a molar hurts you, what remedy do you apply?* R.: queman tecocoa se itan, maj se quiojxili sequi nixixix de se cuacuchuej simi tiltic huan simi cuali. *When a tooth hurts, let one apply some urine of a very black cow and it's very good.* H.: in tapial? *The domestic animal?* R.: nixixix. yejua saj. *Is urine. That's all.* H.: huan queman coyoctic motan, ton ti-quijticalaquilia? *And when your tooth has a cavity, what do you stick down into it?* R.: queman coyoctic se tanto quipia se tocniu on tictaliliaj se granito de alcanfor. yejua saj. *When a tooth has a cavity, our brother puts in it for him a bit of camphor. That's all.* H.: huan nejua nicmatoc ocse pajti ten no cuali. in tejtzonquilit nichoquilo simi cuali para in tanti queman tecocoa maj se quitalili ijtic campa coyoctic huan ica nojon tamatia. *And I know another remedy which is also good. The malamujer (nettle-like), Urera caracasana (Jacq.Grisel) milk-juice (is) very good for the tooth when it aches. Let one put inside where the hole is and with that it is soothed.*

14. *Throat:* H.: huan queman mitzcocoa motoscacajtic, ton timotalilia, o pani de motoscac, ton timotalilia? *And when the inside of your throat hurts, what do you put on it, or on the outside, what do you put on yourself?* R.: queman tecocoa se itoscac de tonal ejeocat, techihuilia mal. cuali de tiotac queman se cochiti, maj se motoscaojxili tipitzin refinuto, huan maj se motoscapiqui, huan maj se mosehui tech so icochpet. *When one's throat hurts from the day wind, it does us harm. It is good in the evening when one goes to*

sleep, that one applies to his throat a little liquor, and let him wrap up his throat, and let him rest on his sleeping mat. H.: maj amo tetoscapitza in eجات, xa melan? *So the wind doesn't blow into the throat, true?* R.: para amo maj tetoscapitza in yohual eجات. *So the night wind doesn't blow into the throat.* H.: no ongaquej sequin tepajtianij, ten tetoscacalaquiliaj se ijuit, xa melan? amo queman tiquitani xa melan ijcon? nejua quemaj. queman nojon toscatzactoc tetoscacalaquiliaj se ijuit, huan ica yejua tetoscayectiaj. amo queman toconmatic? *Also there are some healers, who stick a feather down a person's throat, true? Haven't you seen that it is true? I have (yes). When one's throat is closed they put in a feather, and with it he cleans a person's throat. You didn't know of it?* R.: amo queman niquitac saj. *I just never saw it.* H.: ijcon tejuan tiquitaquej se viajo. *We saw it like that once.*

15. *Headache:* H.: queman tecocoa se itzontecon, ton pajti ongac? *When one's head hurts, what remedy is there?* R.: queman tecocoa se itzontecon asta quimaca totonic, nojon papaj den mochihua nican cerca, talijtic, quixtequij, huan quixtiliaj se amatzin de mismo papaj, cuan yej moixtaliliaj. *When one's head hurts till fever gets him, that potato that grows near here, in the ground, they slice open, and make a thin sheet (slice) from that same potato, and they put it on themselves.* H.: inacastan. *On his side.* R.: iixmacastan. metalilia eyi nahui ruedita moixtalilia. *On his temple. He puts three or four rounds on his face.* yejua saj. *That's all.* H.: quitejtequij yohualtzitzin, xa melan? *They cut it in little rounds, true?* R.: quemaj, yohualtzitzin. *Yes, little rounds.* H.: huan moixpejpepecholhuiliaj. *And*

plaster it on their temple. R.: moixpejpepechohuiliaj. huan caxani in tetonic. Plaster it on their brow and the fever slackens.

16. *Diarrhea*: H.: huan queman se tagat o se sihuat o se suapil o se oquichpiltzin quipia aminti, ton cuali para quisas o para pajtis? *And when a man or a woman or a girl or a boy has diarrhea, what is good to make it leave or to cure?* R.: para caxanis nojon, nojon cocolis, den quipia de simi yohui huan yohui calan. *To slacken that, that disease, who have to go out and go out (out of the house) to relieve themselves.* H.: in calanemilis. *The going outside.* R.: calanemilis para amo simi sequiros calan. *The going outside so he won't have to continue.* H.: para quicotonilis. *To reduce it.* R.: para cotonilis nojon cocolis, maj tayi nojon ajco quichihua se ocuiltzin sequi soquicon-tzitzin. maj quimolontican huan maj tayi se taza de atzin de nojon soquiat. simi cuali. yejua saj. *To reduce that illness, let him drink that which the insect (wasp-like mud dabber) makes overhead certain mud balls. Let them boil it and let him drink a cup of water of that mud-water. This is very good. That's it.*

17. *Loss of soul or spirit*: H.: huan queman motonalcahua se pili, toni pajti ongac, o ton pajti ticchihui-liaj? *And when a child's soul leaves him (his day goes away), what cure is there, or what remedy do we do for him?* R.: queman motonalcahua se pili, ticyolehua-tij in aconi tipitzin quimajmatilia, in acni tatonalnotza cuali, quilia-xicnotzati se nopili motonalcahuac. yohui quinotzati. quicohua se cerita huan popochtzin, huan se tzoajcal de at, amelat. yoj, nojon quicuij huan qui-

tzonicatezteloaj in pili campa motonalcahuac. *When a child has lost his spirit (his day has left) we call in someone who understands a little this matter, someone who calls the soul back well. He says to him, "Go call my child who lost his soul." He goes and calls him. He buys a wax candle and incense, and a gourd of water, spring water. That's what he uses and dips the child head first where he lost his spirit.* H.: huan ijcon sayoj quitzonicatezteloaj in pili? *And they just dip the child?* R.: ijcon sayoj quitzonicatezteloaj in pili den motonalcahuac. *Just thus they dip the child who lost his soul.* H.: motonalcahuac. *His soul left (lost).* H.: huan do ompa. quinotzaj. *And then. They call it.* R.: cuitequij in atzin, o taltzin, de campa motonalcahuac huan quinotzaj in pili den motonalcauoc. *They strike the water, or the ground, where the soul left, and call the child who lost his soul.* H.: huan quimacaj at maj tayi de campa huetzinc. *And they give him water to drink from where he fell.* R.: tzictzin saj. *Just a little.* H.: maj tayi. *For him to drink.* R.: maj tayi. *For him to drink.* H.: quialpichiaj? amo? *They spray him too? No?* R.: (grunt of affirmative.) H.: yejua saj? *That's all?* R.: yejua saj. *That's all.*