

The Account of a Punitive Sentence

INTRODUCTION AND TRANSLATION by ARCH MCKINLAY

Summer Institute of Linguistics

The Nahuatl text here presented is a copy of a contemporary manuscript in use by a group of dancers in Xalacapan, an Indian township under the jurisdiction of Zacapoaxtla, Puebla, Mexico. The dancers are known as the Santiagos or the Pilatos.

Dance teams of men and boys in many villages throughout the northern sierra of the state perform this dance as a votive offering at church festivals. It is well known around Cuetzalan and Teziutlan in addition to the villages near Zacapoaxtla. The master fluter of Xalacapan says that another longer manuscript exists in the hands of a *compadre* of his in Tzinacapan near Cuetzalan. One of the dancers of the Xalacapan troupe known in the dance and drama as "Archirio" came to the investigator's home and asked if he could have a typewritten copy made. The orthography was inconsistent and all word-final h's had been omitted. Suggested corrections in the text are enclosed in brackets. The investigator typed off the script in a consistent Spanish orthography.

The script as it now stands and as it is now currently used in Xalacapan is based quite apparently on the dialect of the plateau, Puebla City, Mexico Valley and the state of Morelos. The extensive use of verbs with the suffix of respect and two pronoun objective prefixes is not characteristic of the northern sierra of Puebla where there are degrees of respect but not to the extent found in this manuscript. All words known to be used in the plateau dialect and not locally have been italicized. Words like *chalchiwit*, 'emerald,' are not known locally. The dancers say the words without knowing the meaning, and yet the whole text is in good condition and the translation is certain except for two or three words. *Sentet*, "one," is definitely a word from the plateau of Mexico. The word is properly *sentetl* but the phoneme *tl* does not exist in the sierra, hence the word has been modified to fit local phonemic structure.

This mystery play concerns the death of Pontius Pilate who according to the story had incurred the wrath of God for his part in the death of Christ. Santiago Caballero is the one best qualified by his prowess and saintly life to apprehend Pilate and bring him to justice. In performing his task Santiago is compelled to take Pilate's life by the sword and Pilate dies as the dance and drama end. Santiago and his page, Cayin, are

dressed in red and are equipped with swords. Santiago is represented as mounted on a steed by wearing a hoop suspended from his waist. On the front of this hoop is attached half of a toy-size horse whose other half is attached to the back of the hoop. Santiago dances to represent the prancing of a charging horse, and swings his sword with assurance. Santiago carries a cross in his left hand as does Cayin also.

The Jewish Sanhedrin is performed by a line of men dancers from three to five in number dressed in red clothes and bandanna type handkerchiefs with red false faces. Their headdresses are those of the great, since they are adorned with peacock feathers, long conical hats that hang down the back. They carry bandanna flags and shields. The Pilatos have red clothes also but their hats are the regular palm hats with the brims cut narrow and adorned with colored paper. Their false faces are those of white men with pink skin and golden beards. There is more than one "de Poncio Pilato." Pilato Rey is the one who meets his doom. The form "de Poncio Pilato" is found in the Roman Catholic Version of the Apostles' Creed and has been apparently misunderstood as the "de" is part of the grammatical construction.

Pilato Rey is the best dancer and the one who dances at the head of the line. The apprentices or aspirants dance at the end of the line. The Pilatos are insolent in their attitude and shout a falsetto cry in mockery of the power of Santiago. As the Pilatos weave around Santiago and Cayin in the dance which pictures a battle, Santiago calls on heaven's aid in the desperate fight by drawing a cross on the ground with his sword. Pilato Rey shows his scorn and blasphemous disregard for things holy by turning his back on the cross as he passes it in the dance and by wiping his feet on the sacred sign. The dance goes on for as many days as the fiesta does. On the last day when the crowds are greatest Santiago apprehends Pilato by grabbing his clothes after many strokes of his sword have weakened Pilato. Pilato no longer struts as before, but he runs away from the grip of his subduer many times, and here enters the comic element. The crowd enjoys Pilato's careless disregard for property or people. He may dash through the cemetery and over the graves, or through the church and out the sacristy, or he may dash into a merchant's store and hide. Each time he is brought back. At last Pilato Rey and his closest associate kneel facing each other for their last words together. Here the comedy continues, for in mock grief and billingsgate the two cronies say many things that keep the crowd laughing. In the end as Pilato faints from loss of blood he is placed on a board and tied, then taken to the cemetery where he is loosed to dance at the next festival

in his town or any other town where the team may go to dance. Naturally dancing is part of the livelihood of these men since the *mayordomo* has to see that they are well fed, whether it be in their own town or a neighboring one.

The music is supplied by a fluter and a drummer. The tunes do not follow the modern diatonic scale of C major, but rather the older modes.

The present text comprises mostly the words of Santiago as he addresses the authorities asking for a warrant to arrest Pilato and for the paraphenalia he will need to dress the part of the avenger of Christ's death and to equip himself for the dangerous task. At intervals the crowd bursts forth in their approval of the worthy knight and in seconding his desires for regalia. In the same way, the cast breaks forth into cheers and shouts of joy at the prospect of the death of the villainous Pilate.

RELACIONES DE SENTENCIA

In *no-hueh-hueyinti*[n], in *no-tahtohque*[h], nan-De-Ponsos-Pilatos, nan-presidentes, in *no-rey Caibases*, in *axcan*, *ica quema*[h], *ica melahuac*, *cox amo huel cualtzin nan-qui-machiltihztinoaya*[h]? *Ica huel senca ni-yolo-chih-chicahuac*, *ihuan ica huel senca ni-yolo-tahtapaltic*, *huan nican namehuan namo-nomaticatzinco ica san niman ihsihucapan ma*[h] *nic-talilihtzinos. Inic sentet yahui tapitzalisti huan inic sentet yahui tatzotzonalisti. Ipa namo-tasoh-altepetzin mo-tenehua Jerusalem Palacio, huan nican i-ehuat no-nomaticatzinco huel cualtzin nik-motzintoquilihtzinos inic sentet istac amat tahcuilolisti, tapohualisti. Motokaytia carta quenami huel cualtzin nic-mo-tzin-toquilohtzinos huan nik-mo-tepotztoquilihtzinos.*

[Translation]

Saint James: My lords, Mr. Speaker, Pontius Pilates, dukes, nobles, your majesty King Caiaphas, may I make it known at once with your approval? I am brave and stalwart, and now let me place the issue in your capable administration without delay. (Fife and cymbal usually accompany this.) Here in this fair city known forever as the Palace of Jerusalem I am ready to place this writ in your hands, an affidavit and a proclamation at the same time, technically known as a writ. I can bring it and start legal procedure.

Tei huel contehtenehutihuitz huan *tei* huel conquixtihtihuitz nican namo-te[co]-tahtohca-nahuac huan nican namo-te[co]-tahtohca-ixpan. In axcan, san niman, *ihsihucapan* nic-ahsis-tamis-pachihuis to-ixco, to-yolo, in axcan. Banderas. Soldado de caballero.

In *no-hueh-hueyintin*, in no-tahtohque[h], nan-De-Ponsos-Pilatos, nan-presidentes, in no-reinadores, in no-rey Caibases, in axcan, ica quemah, ica melahuac, ica san niman, *ihsihucapan* mah nic-mo-tzintoquilih-tzino huan mah nic-mo-tzintepotztoquilihtzinos.

Ica no nican *tei* huel contehtenehutihuitz huan ica no nican *tei* huel contehtenquixtihtihuitz. Quemah, ica melahuac, ica na no *ihqui* qui-motitanilihtzinohqueh mah ki-mo-tzintoquilintzinoki. *Tein* i-tec[o]-tahtahca-nemactzin?

No-sempohualli ihuan mahtacti peso. Tamati costic in istac *chalchivit*. *Opiyaloti* oro den cadena in *tioxiwit* quenameh ica huel i-ehuat ompepetanic huan quenameh ica huel i-ehuat on-cacahuanic. In axcan, san niman, *ihsihucapan*, nic-ahsis-tamis-pachihuis to-ixco, in to-yolo, in axcan. Banderas. Soldados de caballeros. In axcan in *no-hueh-hueyintin*, in no-tahtohqueh, nan-De-Ponsos-Pilatos, nan-presidentes, in no-reinadores, in no-rey Caibases, in axcan, ica quemah, ica melahuac, ica san niman, *ihsihucapan*, *onic-mo-el-cahuilihtzino* ika ok sepa huan nican *copa onic-mo-ix-quepilihtzino*. In axcan, ica quemah, ica melahuac, ica

Chorus: He requests something in fine oratory, something in the power of you leaders in this august body to grant.

Saint James: Without second thought I pledge allegiance and take a solemn oath. The flags! The cavalry! . . . My lords, you chairmen, you Pontius Pilates, dukes, nobles, your majesty King Caiaphas, grant me the privilege of presenting the issue and let me take legal steps against him.

Chorus: Able in presentation and able in execution, they sent a good counsel to present it. What is this exquisite possession he offers in his bid?

Saint James: Thirty pieces of silver, and a fair yellow emerald. The sacred jewelry will be adorned with a golden chain. It has always shone and glistened so. I take the oath again bowing my head in fealty. Flags! Cavalry! In my rush today, my lords, Mr. Speaker, you Pontius Pilates, you dukes, nobles, your majesty King Caiaphas, I forgot it but I have it now. Let me present it

san niman, *ihsihucapan*, mah nic-mo-quepilihtzino huan nic-mo-tzin-toquilihtzino huan mah nic-mo-tepotz-toquilihtzino.

Ica no nican tei huel contehtenehutihuitz huan ica no nican tei huel contehtenquixtihtihuitz in ta quemah, ica melahuac. Ta ica no huel senca te-mamautih, huan ica no huel senca te-cuecue-tatzac, *inic sentet* istak amat tahcuilolisti mo-tokaytia carta de sentencia. Ica quemah, ica melahuac, in ta ica i-ehuat i-nomaticatzinco huel cualtzin ki-mo-nemiltihtzinoaya, huan ica san no *inqui* ki-mo-nequiltihtzinoaya in ta mah tic-mo-tapohuilihtzinoskiah in Jerusalem-Calten-Puerta. Huan ica san no *ihqui* qui-mo-nequiltihtzinoaya mah xic-mactilihtzinos in oc se pares in *tiocuitascrillos* [grillos?], huan ica san no *ihqui o-mo-tatanextihtzinoqui* i-tasoh-macpactzinco yoh se tacat ta-yolohpachihuihtzinohtihuitz, huan ica san no *ihqui* qui-mo-nequilitihtzinoaya in ta mah tic-mo-[ta]pohuilihtzinocan in Jerusalem-Tali. Ica san no *ihqui* qui-mo-nequilitihtzinoaya mah xic-mo-mactilihtzinosqueh in oc se pares in *tiocuita-cruz-comiento*, huan ica san no *ihqui o-mo-tatanextihtzinoqui* i-tasoh-macpactzinco yoh se tacat taxipawitihuitzta -yolohpachihuihtzinohtihuitz, huan ica san no *ihqui* qui-mo-nequilihtzinoaya mah xic-mo-mactilihtzinosqueh in oc se pares in *tiocuita-cadena*, huan ica san no *ihqui o-mo-tatanextihtzinoqui* i-tasoh-macpactzinco yoh se tacat ta-yolohpachihuihtzinohtihuitz, huan ica san no *ihqui* qui-mo-nequiltihtzinoaya ta ma[h] tic-mo-[ta]pohuilih-tzinocan in Jerusalem-altepet.

without delay and start legal steps at once.

Chorus: Truly an able pleader, and a fine orator! With this writ he has already reduced people to quaking and subjection, with a simple proclamation known technically as a warrant. Always an able executive, today his request is that the gate of Jerusalem by the porch be kept open. He likewise requests the grant of the last set of gold fetters. There will be as well a squire of noble heart accompanying him, carrying a light, and bringing comfort to the people. He was wanting Jerusalem to be opened. He was anxious to have the other pair of gold crosses, and the saintly squire alone will accompany him with a lantern and bringing comfort to the people. Also the other pair of gold chains, and the saintly squire will be along with him bearing a light, himself a comfort to all, and also that Jerusalem be opened up. Likewise kindly deliver to him the shield of gold. The good squire will accompany with light and providing consolation. He wanted the gate opened that is by the stonehouse with the flowers. And also

Ihqui in axcan ica quemah ica melahuac, ica san no *ihqui*, *an-mo-mactilihtzinosqueh* in se *tiocuita-chimali*, huan ica san no *ihqui o-mo-tatanextitzinoqui* i-tasoh-*macpactzinco* yoh se tacat ta-tolohpachihuihtzinohtihuitz. Ica san no *ihqui* qui-mo-nequiltihztinoaya ta ma[h] tic-mo-tapohuilihtzinocan in Jerusalen-Xochi-Tepancal-Puerta. Ica san no *ihqui an-mo-mactilihtzinosqueh* in se *tiocuita-istak-mantelex*, huan ica namehuan *amo-nomacicatzinco* xa amo huel cualtzin *an-qui-mo-machilitihztinoaya* in ta ica no huel *senca* yolo-chih-chicahuac, huan ica no huel *senca* yol-tahtapaltic in Señor Santiago de Caballero. In axcan, ica quemah, ica san no nican qui-mo-tehteneuhtihuitz ica san no nican *ihsihucapan an-qui-mo-yahui-po*[h]pohuilihtzinosquiah. In axcan, ica quemah, ica melahuac, ica san no nican qui-mo-tehteneuhtihuitz mah xic-mo-chiyalihtzinocan ipa se ome. In *no-hueh-hueyintin*, in no-tah-tohqueh, nan-De-Ponsos-Pilatos, nan-presidentes, huan no-rey in Cai-bases, huan *ihqui* in axcan, ica quemah, ica melahuac, ica no *ihqui*, qui-mo-tehteneuhtihuitz mo-tocaytia carta de sentencia. Axcan san niman *ihsihucapan* nic-ahsis-tamis-pachihuis to-ixco, to-yolo, in ca axcan. Banderas. Soldados de caballeros.

the gold and white ceremonial cloth, and could you publicly endorse him as brave and stalwart, this gentleman, Holy Saint James (Saint James the Knight). Here he is requesting quick action. He wants you here and now to issue enough new equipment for two. My lords, Mr. Speaker, nobles, your majesty King Caiaphas, he is mentioning what is technically termed a warrant.

Saint James: Here and now I cover my face in loyalty and cover my heart in an oath. The flags! The cavalry!