

THE *TEONANACATL* — IN PRE-CONQUEST ACCOUNTS AND TODAY

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Brother Toribio de Benavente, better known as *Motolinia*, describing the idolatry and bad habits of the Mexican Indians, gave this unusual report about one of their lesser known vices:

They had another drunkenness which made them more cruel: which was of some small mushrooms, which are found here as in Castilla; however the ones here are of such nature that eaten raw and being sour, one drinks afterwards or eats them with a bit of honey; and after a little while they were seeing a thousand visions, especially of snakes, and as they went completely out of their minds, it seemed to them that their legs and body were full of worms which were eating them alive, and thus, half raving, they went out of the house, wishing that somebody would kill them, and with that bestial drunkenness and the trouble they felt, it would happen sometimes that they would hang themselves. And they were also against the others much more cruel. They called these mushrooms *teonanacatl*, which means flesh of the God (the demon they adored) and in that manner, with that bitter food, their cruel god held communion with them.¹

Other pre-Conquest accounts, describing hallucinatory mushrooms and their effects, all written in the 16th Century, are available in Spanish (by Spanish monks and Mestizo historians like Duran and Tezozomoc) and in Nahuatl (Sahagún, Ms. de la Biblioteca Nacional de México). Collected after the Conquest, they base themselves, directly or indirectly, on Indian informants.

Not until recently, a renewed interest has been taken in these "intoxicating mushrooms".² In 1936 Robert J. Weitlaner disco-

¹ MOTOLINIA, *Historia de los Indios de la Nueva España*, Editorial Chávez Hayhoe (México, 1941), *trat.* I, *cap.* II, p. 25.

² Cf. the interesting summary by Demetrio Sodi, "Las Investigaciones con Plantas Alucinantes" in *Boletín del Centro de Investigaciones Antropológicas de México*, May, 1960, No. 7, pp. 14-18.

vered them still being used in ceremonies of the native *curanderos* among the Mazatec Indians in Huautla de Jiménez, State of Oaxaca, México. This discovery was followed by descriptions of non-Indians of Native mushroom ceremonies (Basset Johnson, Carrasco). However, only after the mycologists (the Wassons, Roger Heim) became interested, widespread scientific attention was aroused. Public interest awakened after *Life* magazine published an advance story from the Wasson's *Mushrooms, Russia and History*, with a picture spread of a mushroom ceremony in Oaxaca. Today, hallucinatory mushrooms are grown in greenhouses in Paris and their active substance is synthesized in Switzerland and the United States. Full-scale medical and psychological research programs are under way, among others, at the Institute of Personality Research at Harvard and the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

By correlating Indian and quasi-Indian pre-Conquest references to hallucinatory mushrooms with personal experiences encountered today under controlled group conditions, we hope to reach new insights into one little known facet of pre-Conquest culture.

Types of Hallucinatory Mushrooms

To ward off the impending invasion of Cortés and his Spaniards, the Aztec emperor Moctezuma II sent out some of the best magicians of his vast domain. One group of them came from a series of towns famed for their wizardry, which are found on an imaginary line that stretches itself from east to west south of the Valley of Mexico: Acapixtla (Yecapixtla today), Huaxtepec (Oaxtepec), Yauhtepec, Cuauhnauc (Cuernavaca), Ocuillan, Malinalco and Tenancingo.³ Strangely enough, this line extended to the northeast leads to *San Pedro Nexapa*, on the slopes of the volcano Popocatepetl, and, drawn out to the west, to *San Pedro Tlanixco*, on the slopes of the Sierra de Toluca (Tzinantecatli). Stranger even, in both San Pedros hallucinatory mushrooms are gathered and used to this day. The third prominent "Mushroom village", already mentioned, is *Huautla de Jiménez*, which, located near Teotitlan del Camino and Tehuacan, lies in another territory famous

³ OROZCO Y BERRA, Manuel, *Historia Antigua y de la Conquista*, vol. IV, p. 118.

in pre-Conquest times for its wisemen, astrologers and magicians.

In each one of the three locations the mushrooms are slightly different in appearance: The one in Huautla is named *Psilocibe mexicana*, the one in San Pedro Nexapa, *Psilocibe aztecorum Heim*, and the one in San Pedro Tlanixco, *Psilocibe wassonii*.

The last mentioned variety is known to me personally and was used in the already mentioned group experiments. They are called by the natives *mujercitas* (little women) or by their Nahuatl equivalent, *Cihuatizintli*. They women selling me the mushrooms in the market told me that they had to take a few bites of the mushrooms while picking them, "because otherwise the *mujercitas* will get mad and we will fall sick".

Also used in native ceremonies, but according to Heim of no hallucinatory value, are *hombrecitos* (little men, in Nahuatl: *tlacatzintli*) identified by the French mycologist as *Cordyceps capitata* and easily recognized by their phallic shape and *niños* (little children, in Nahuatl: *piltzintli*), a yellow mushroom known as *Nevrophyllum floccosum*.

Mushrooms in pre-Conquest Accounts

I have drunk mushroom wine, my heart cries,
I am desolate on this earth, I am a wretch. . .⁴

Thus a Nahuatl poet expresses his feeling of "Ephemeral Friendship". A feeling of desolation seems to be common to most pre-Conquest descriptions of the effect of intoxicating mushrooms. Orozco y Berra, writing in the 1870's but basing himself mainly on Motolinia, gives this account:

The *teonanacatl*, divine flesh, divine mushroom, bitter and disagreeable, was eaten to practice certain superstitious acts; they took two or three only with a little honey. They produced a state of intoxication with frightening hallucinations.⁵

That these mushrooms were widely used is shown by the fact that Alonso de Molina, in his *Vocabulario en Lengua Caste-*

⁴ GARIBAY K., Angel María, *Poesía Indígena de la Altiplanicie*, U. N. A. M. (Mexico, 1952), p. 103.

⁵ OROZCO Y BERRA, vol. I, p. 274.

llana y Mexicana in 1571 published for the first time, gives five different translations for the term "mushroom which makes drunk", namely: *xochinanacatl*, *tepexina nanacatl*, *ixtlauacan nanacatl*, *mazauacan nanacatl* and *tequinti nanacatl*.⁶

Often when disconsolate, dissolute, disintegrating states of personality are described, we find a reference to mushrooms in the Nahuatl accounts recorded by the Franciscan monk Bernardino de Sahagún. The following quotations are taken from their German publication and translation by Leonard Schultze-Jena. Only the first is from another source.

Of *yollopoliuhqui*, the deranged one, "the one who has lost his heart", it is said: *iuhqui nanacatl tiquatinemi*, "you are like one who always eats mushrooms".⁷ The angry young man, *in tlaveliloc telpuchli*, has turned into a mushroom, *nanacatl mochiuhtinemi*.⁸ This is also said of the angry full-grown man, *Itlaueliloc tetzon*, who has turned into a mushroom, who eats them all the time, *nanacatl mochiuhtinemi*, *quiquatinemi*.⁹ From the bad noblewoman without shame, *in amo qualli tetlapallo amo pinavani*, who is addicted to; mushrooms, *monananacatinemi*,¹⁰ it is only a short step to the prostitute, *aviyani*, who, besides drinking *mivintitinemi*, and chicle-chewing, *motlapavitinemi*, also has the vice of eating mushrooms, *monananavitinemi*.¹¹ The gallery of lesser members of society continues, downward, to the disintegrated young man, *telpuchtlavelitoc*, who also chews mushrooms consistently,¹² to the procurer, *te-tlanochiliani*, who has a whole repertoire of effects for he acts like an hallucinatory seed, *tepixvia*, an enchanter, and an hallucinatory mushrooms.¹³

After having found references to them in the reporting of attributes among the lower fringes of society, we suddenly

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 72.

⁷ SAHAGÚN, *Primeros Memoriales*, Edición facsimilar, pp. 127-9 (Garibay transl.).

⁸ SAHAGÚN, *Gliederung des alt-aztekischen Volks in Familie, Stand und Beruf*, aus dem aztekischen Urtext übersetzt und erläutert von Dr. Leonard Schultze-Jena (Stuttgart 1952), p. 26/27.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 36/37.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 50/51.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 58/59.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 242/243.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 244/245.

encounter a mention of them in Orozco y Berra's account of the coronation of Mocteucoma II:

The religious festivities ended, the lords gathered to eat woodland mushrooms, which contain that which confuses the mind, as if they were intoxicating drinks; while their minds were confused they saw visions, believed to hear voices; therefore, they took these hallucinations as divine notices, revelations of the future and augury of things to come.¹⁴

Orozco y Berra bases his accounts of the coronation on the descriptions by Durán and Tezozomoc, chroniclers writing in the 16th century. Durán says of the same incident:

... (they) were so intoxicated and out of their mind that many of them killed themselves by their own hands, and under the power of those mushrooms, they saw visions and had revelations of the future, and their demon spoke to them in their drunkenness.¹⁵

Tezozomoc has this to add:

... the strangers gave them mushrooms found in the mountain woods so that they would get intoxicated, and with that they began to dance; others went inside to their rooms to rest. Then they took the big lights of the patio and everytime they started the song the strangers began to dance and to sing; and so that they should not be known they dressed themselves with false hair.¹⁶ *

Mushrooms in the coronation festivities? Perhaps the *teonanacatl* was not so bad after all as a status symbol? The following text from Sahagún, the only report of an entire mushroom ceremony I could find written and preserved in Nahuatl, might throw a new light on the actual place taken by mushrooms in pre-Conquest Nahuatl culture.

Though not describing the coronation, it nonetheless is part of the important *fiesta* which the *pochteque*, the great merchants of the Aztec empire, gave the night before they sent their trading caravans to the distant, foreign commercial centers of the

¹⁴ OROZCO Y BERRA, vol. III, p. 375.

¹⁵ DURÁN, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España y Islas de Tierra Firme*, Editorial Nacional (México, 1951), cap. LIV, p. 431.

¹⁶ TEZOZOMOC, *Crónica Mexicana*, cap. LXXXVII, p. 419.* It is possible that we have here another translation making as little sense as the same author's description of the *tlachtli*, the ballgame.

Gulf and Pacific coasts. For the Nahuatl text we have depended on the paleography of Leonard Schultze-Jena; the translation into English, keeping close to the original without romantic enlargement and verbal ornamentation, is our own:

Ni man ye ic ualquiza im mihtotizque: in tlacatecatl in tlacochcalcatl, in ye mochintin quaquachicti, in otomi, in tiachcuau, auh; yehuantzin puchteca-tlahtoque ahmo mihtotia, zan onoque, mopistoque, ypampa ca yehuantzin in tecouachia. Auh in pochteca huehuetque, yehuantzin tenamiqui ysochitica in ietica, in amacozcatl xiuhtezayo, auh in ichquetzalli pepeyocyo metzcuitlatica. Uel yacattiuia, in tequeltitiloia, nanacatl; in quiquaya, ihquac, in quitouaya tlahtla pitzalizpan, ayamo tle tlaqualli quiquaya. Can oc iyo in cacauatl coniya youaltica.

Auh in nanacatl neocyo in quiquaya; in ihuquac ye intech quiza nanacatl, in oncan mihtotia, oncan choca auh y cequintin inoc iyollo quimati: calaqui, in oncan inyeyan motlalian caltech, aocmo mihtotia, can oncan ualtotimotlalia.

inaca commottilia, ye mizquiz, oncan chocatica, in aca commottilia, yaomizquiz, in aca commottilia, tequanqualoz. in aca commottilia, yaoc tlamaz, in aca commottilia, yehuatl immocuiltonoz, im motlacamatiz, in aca commottilia, tecouaz, tla-caua yez. In aca commottilia, tetlasximaz, tetztohtzonaloz, tetepacholoz. in aca commottilia, ihichtequiz, no tetepacholoz. in aca commottilia, tequatepachoz, quitzaoctiaz. in aca commottilia, atlan mizquiz, in aca commottilia, yehuatl in iuian yocosca monemitiz, ypan mizquiz. in aca commottilia, tlapanco ual-huetziz, mictiuetzic.

Yzzazo quesquich tepan mochihuaz, mochi oncan conittaya, in ahnoza ylaquiloz. auh in oquinauh nanacatl, ca tepan monohnonotza, quimulhuia. in tle ocommottilihque, auh i yehuantzin, in ahle oquiquahque nanacatl, no quichiuhthinemi, in tlein impan mochiuaz yuan in tlein quichiuhthinemi cequintin: in ahzo ihichtequi, in ahzo tetlahblesxima, —yzzazo izquitlamantli omihto: in tlamaz, in tequiuahecatic, in telpuchiyahcatic, in yaomizquiz, in motlacamatiz, in tecouaz, in cuicuicaz, in teal-tiz, in tetlasximaz, in mohquechmecaniz, in atlan mizquiz, in ilaquiloz, yzcaco tlein impan mochiuaz; mochioncan conittaya, in ahnozo anauac miquitih.¹⁷

¹⁷ *Gliederung...*, pp. 212 and 214 cf. Sahagún, Facsimile edition of Paso y Troncoso, ff. 37 and 37 v.

The Mushroom Party (translation of the text)

“The arrived those that were going to dance: the *Tlacateccatl*, the *Tlacochealcatl*, and those that were going to abandon themselves, the *Otomi* and the *Titichcaua*. Those of the merchant leaders who were not going to dance were the straight-laced, chaste ones, who bought themselves somebody. And the old merchants met them with flowers, with tobacco, with brilliant green paper collars and bunches of quetzal feathers, glistening in the moonlight.

Right at the beginning, as a refreshment, they ate mushrooms. Then they felt with it a burn, a red-hot blown fire inside, and not from hot food they were eating. Therefore they drank cocoa that was kept warm for the night. Thusly they ate the intoxicating mushrooms.

When they had finished eating them, they danced and they cried. Meanwhile some of them felt the effect: they went inside, they sat down, with their backs against the wall. They didn't dance anymore. They sat by themselves, in the same place and let their heads hang.

In that stupor, some imagined they were going to die and they cried; some were to perish in the war; some were to be eaten by wild beasts; some were to take prisoners of war; some were to be somebody rich, very rich; some were to buy and be owners of slaves; some were to be adulterers, were to be stoned, were to be stoned to death; some were to be thieves and be stoned to death; some were to become dissolute, were to end as drunkards; some were to drown; some were to be somebody peaceful, peacefully living to themselves and dying the same way; some were to fall from the roof and die suddenly.

There were many who were speaking to themselves as they saw how were they were to perish. And as the mushroom effect wore off, they met, huddled together to talk: the ones who had been in the stupor and those who had not eaten any mushrooms, who had'n't been in the stupor — and those were teasing the others all night long about what was going to happen: that they were perhaps thieves, that some of them were adulterers. There were so many things to pique them with: that one was to capture prisoners, the great works another was going to do; that one was to be a leader among the young men; that one was to die in the war;

that one was to be captured; that one was to be rich; that one was to be successful with women; that one was to wash slaves for sacrifice; that one was to be an adulterer; that one was to hang himself; that one was to drown; that one was to become dissolute. There were many of those that were teasing. . . And to themselves they imagined that they might go to their deaths in that far land. . .”

Mushrooms Today

The two mushroom experiments in which I took part were undertaken at different times, in different locations and in different group situations. Both times the *mujercitas* from the slopes of the Sierra de Toluca were used. The first experiment took place in the midst of the rainy season, in August; the second, towards its end, in October. Fresh mushrooms are available only during the rainy season.

On Thursday, market day, the first lot of mushrooms was bought from Doña Juana, who sampled them in front of us, in the shade of a churchwall, away from the tumult of the market. Upon the return to Mexico City, the mushrooms were washed in cold water. Since it wouldn't be till Saturday that all subjects could meet for the group session, they were kept till then on the center shelf of the refrigerator.

The experiment took place in a residence in Cuernavaca, forty miles south of Mexico. This city of "eternal spring" has a subtropical climate and an average, even temperature in the middle 80's. Throughout the experiment the usual atmosphere of the house was maintained. After an afternoon of swimming, the participants wore either sports clothes or swimming suits. Though surely a far cry from Aztec vestments, the attire offered probably the same freedom of movement as the *maxtlatl* and the *tilmatli* of the Aztec merchants and noblemen. The idea was to experience the mushroom effect in the usual informal occidental group situation, with the least possible changes.

At 17.00 hrs., I began eating eight of the bluishly tinted mushrooms measuring on the average 7 cm. in stemlength and 4 cm. in head diameter. Their taste was bitter-sour and left an acrid afterburn on the tongue and in the esophagus. I was seated at a garden table on the terrace. The large parasol above me had

its underside covered with a tasteless flowerpattern. Following my line of vision, about 2 m. beyond the table was a low hedge, then the length of the swimming pool. Farther on, 10 m. of lawn was followed by a line of trees forming the property line. It was about one hour before sunset.

After almost an hour I felt a slight, short pain in the nape of my neck. This was followed soon by a hardly noticeable increase in color perception. At about 18.10 hrs. I thought I saw some of the flowers in the pattern of the parasol move. At the same time I felt an extreme lightness and, coupled with it, a tendency to laugh. My eyes started watering and I had to visit the bathroom inside the house.

After I returned to my seat, I fixed my eyes on the fork in the tree at the end of my line of vision. Soon it took on the shape of a mask, but not in the sense that it was obviously a mask, but much more that one was reminded of one — about the way one is reminded of something or other in the shape of the inkplots of a Rohrschach test. This seems to be a very important point to note: Reality does not change completely while fixing the eye on a certain object. It is much more a seeing of forms based on the concrete image, or integrated into it. Soon afterwards the tree became the corner pillar of a kind of arcade, which changed continually its appearance. Suddenly, I noticed that I could return to the reality of my “table environment” at this side of the hedge. The table was still the table, with its glasses and the parasol overhead. And when I looked beyond the hedge . . . my tree became once more the corner of that marvelous arcade. The images in it were rapidly changing, composite patterns, comparable with finely made mosaik or an exquisite stained glass window. The entire situation appeared closest to sitting in a drive-in theatre: One can lose oneself in the image on the screen, but can also return to the reality of the confines of the car: to the coke on the dashboard and the box of popcorn.

At about that time an assistant put a portable radio in front of me. (Who had any idea of time?) Possibly the music might influence my visions. It didn't work. The radio music sounded tinny, grating, out of place. I wanted to be alone with my patterns.

I changed my point of concentration to the parasol above me and now its underside became my world of beautiful imagi-

nation. Within its circle, moving harmonically, changing consistently, appeared the most unusual designs of extremely brilliant, integrated colors. There literally thousands of them, one more perfect than the other. In their forms, not in their content, they reminded one of Mixtec codices. All was pure enjoyment. Later on I was told that I sat for an hour and a half staring at the parasol above me.

Another desire to urinate made me leave my position on the terrace. To enter the rest of the house, I had to pass through the kitchen. I noticed a pastel overcast in the interior. Otherwise, neither my visions nor my motions seemed impaired. The assistant who had brought the radio met me and said, "you should see how Ben is carrying on in the bar". Indeed, there seemed to be a clooping, singing sound in the bar-recreation room. As I entered the bathroom I was startled by the extreme luminescent brightness of a maroon towel hung up to dry. Also, the tile room seemed to be alive with hidden fluorescent light.

Then I went to the bar and saw my friend Ben sitting alone in an easy chair. The guitar laid across his knees, he was holding a nonsense dialogue interspersed with nonsense rhymes — with his barret. He recognized me immediately (there was never any difficulty in returning to the reality of recognition) and said, "You know what I just found out? A guitar, like a human being, has a musical side. . ." Here he struck the cords. Then he flipped the instrument over and tapped the bottom, ". . .and a drum side". Then he went into an explanation of the different opportunities of influencing human actions by using either the musical or the drum side of a guitar. At that instant I noticed that also to my repertoires of feelings a new perception of symbolic in human situations had been added.

Leaving Ben, I went to one of the bedrooms. Three other participants were lying on the beds, hallucinating. They appeared to be completely happy with themselves. Now and then a low chuckle might be heard. Lying down also, in the darkness of a night outside, I noticed that now I could turn to the hallucinations "inside me" at will, being able to change back with equal ease to the actual surroundings. Even while sinking away to see my "inside patterns", I could feel the texture of the bedspread with my fingers. My visions now consisted mainly

of ribbons of the republics' flags: French, German, Mexican and American.

Between spells of being absorbed in my patterns, I had an interesting experience of symbolic perception. On the bed next to me, a coed, college senior, was lying in a bundled-up position. Next to her a professor from a prominent university, quite her senior, stretched out full length. Suddenly, with considerable impact, I saw the situation as a symbolic relationship: The phallic posture of the father figure next to the womb position of the child. . . I might add, that mushrooms don't seem to have any aphrodisian qualities.

After some more time in the bedroom I returned to Ben in the bar. He was still conversing with his barret in a completely autonomous attitude. Then, for the first time, I noticed that objects had took on a *melted* look, but through conscious effort they could be kept *solid*. Only their *halo*, an aura of pastel color, could not be forced away.

Soon the effect began to wear away. It had been just about five hours since it set in. There were still waves of distorted perception, especially of colors. Then, abruptly, I was completely *back*, feeling purged somehow and hungry. There remained a lingering, heightened color awareness. Other wise, I felt no after effect or hangover. I thought only to feel a slight pain on my eyeballs, as after looking into bright sunlight. Eats and drinks were brought to the table. All participants *returned* one after another and began talking about their experiences. In this respect, nothing was changed from pre-Conquest times.

Exchanging impressions and adding information supplied by the assistants, the following pattern of mushroom effects established itself: 1) The effect sets in approximately an hour after the eating. 2) It is felt first by a change in color perception and a general relaxation. This leads to feeling happy to ridiculous and a loosening of the sphincters, mainly inducing a watering of the eyes. 3) The first hour or more is one of intense hallucination in a more or less catatonic state. 4) The quality of the hallucinations is completely subjective, seeming to depend on the psychological state of the person. 5) There seems to be no feeling of hostility. There might be manifestations of auto-sufficiency, a desire not to be bothered. If potential conflict situations arise, the tendency is to withdraw. 6) There occurred

definitely no schizophrenic state. All subjects had absolute control over their actions, whenever necessary. (It should be investigated to what extent this holds true for the quasicatatonic state already mentioned). 7) There is absolutely no difficulty in communicating verbally,¹⁸ though the sense of auto-sufficiency is such there is no or little desire for verbal communication. 8) There are no side or after effects worth mentioning.

The second experiment took place in a residence in a Mexico City suburb, in October. This time the mushrooms were eaten the same day they were bought in the Valley of Toluca. The effect was basically the same. The quasi-catatonic state at the beginning was less pronounced and shorter. A certain harmony with sound effects was achieved by listening to Handel's *Watermusic* played back on tape. The over-all experience was pronouncedly wavelike: periods of almost complete reality changing with waves of hyperreality and distorted color perception. There was an extremely heightened awareness of symbolic values in inter-human relations. Toward the end of the toxic state, I experienced for first time a morphic change of my hand: the skin seemed extremely pergamine, the hairs prominent and the fingers growing and shrinking. The effect occurred only after watching the hand for some time. It could be "cut off" at will without difficulty.

It should be noted that during the second experiment all participants spoke at least three languages with some fluency. (The first session was carried on in English). There was absolutely no difficulty sustaining verbal communication in whatever language seemed most convenient at the moment.¹⁸

Conclusion

A comparison between pre-Conquest accounts and present day experiences shows on the surface a considerable similarity of over-all effect. There is, however, a trend toward exaggeration in the Spanish and Mestizo chronicles. Closest to the effects en-

¹⁸ Though being born and brought up in Germany, I now speak more English than German. When I was asked during the toxic state, I had difficulty recalling the German word for *pea* (*Erbse*) and could think sooner of the Spanish *chicharo*. A perfectly natural lapse of memory which might also have happened any other time.

countered today comes the Nahuatl text about the *pochteca* party, collected by Sahagún.

Attributive expressions, involving references to mushrooms, also preserved in Nahuatl, may not mean a condemnation in pre-Conquest society as such. They are most likely used to create a strong image and evoke the intensity of the effect which must have been known widely — as is shown by the presence of five words for *intoxicating mushrooms* in the Molina vocabulary.

Since it was not meant for general publication, the *Pochteca* account seems to have preserved a considerable objectivity of relation. In the Spanish and Mestizo descriptions we are dealing with writings for wide publication, if not for propaganda. Therefore, they are in accordance with the opinion of the Catholic hierarchy that effect that cannot be controlled should not be approved. This explains also the emphasis on “horrible visions” and excessive acts. In turn, the *pochteca* report gives the whole range of the effect.

Three points seem to arise clearly from the comparison between pre-Conquest accounts and present-day experiences: 1) Nahuatl records are much less discolored and exaggerated than those written in Spanish; 2) in order to view manifestations of Nahuatl culture an undistorted, “humanistic” outlook is prerequisite and 3) we should try to comprehend pre-Conquest culture from within its context, perceive the complexity of its structure and should never accept without severe questioning, or take for granted, the value judgments made by opinionated observers hundreds of years ago —or even just yesterday.