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**Here it is. A Nahuatl translation of European cosmology : context and contents of the Izcatqui manuscript in the Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam**

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## English Summary

*Here It Is. A Nahuatl Translation of European Cosmology: Context and Contents of the Izcatqui Manuscript in the Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam.*

The Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam (Tropenmuseum) holds a manuscript that was made in Mexico in the indigenous language of Nahuatl. This handwritten text has been in Europe since the 1960's and is a unique manuscript in the Netherlands. It is studied by few and therefore its content remained enigmatic. Therefore the aim of the research here has been to understand its content. The manuscript contains 121 folios and is composed by six different hands that represent individuals who worked together to create it in a single period. The manuscript is dated on the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1758 and is said to belong to a *maestro* Felipe de Santiago tepetlatzin. There is no contextual information on whomever had the text composed or owned throughout its years of existence.

The manuscript in its current form was made in a period of almost 250 years after the arrival of the Spanish in the Mexican mainland. The process of colonization at large has resulted in a continuous discrimination and threat of indigenous languages and way of life. By the eighteenth century, the political, cultural and religious reality of the demographic composition of Mexico had changed drastically from the early 1500s, albeit in a variety of speeds, intensity and violence throughout the continent. Within this history and by means of this dissertation I zoom in on a particular moment in time, starting point 1758, and what at least 6 individuals were concerned with. The array of colonial documents, both in Spanish and indigenous languages allows us to interpret the tangible results of the interaction of people from different cultural backgrounds.

The Izcatqui manuscript is a collection of a variety of texts from Spanish and Latin sources that were translated into Nahuatl. The first ten folios set the reader immediately in a Christian worldview. Although without a source text, these ten folios highlight the content of a religious holy document that would grant indulgences to anyone baptized into the Catholic religion. This papal bull is known as a Holy Bull of the Holy Crusade. These papal documents were issued quite frequently; the first pages of Izcatqui refer to one such document that was issued during the papacy of Pope Gregory XIII. Through this issue, the West Indies were ideologically included to the Christian realm. The reader is not only informed on the benefits of the Catholic religion, but also made a participant by reading (i.e. orating) two prayers.

The main body of the manuscript is a translation of a Spanish astrological almanac or *reportorio de los tiempos*. Almanacs have a long history, going back to Babylonian times, and adopted and shaped by different cultures of the Mediterranean in centuries thereafter. These almanacs contained information on time reckoning, the seasons, agriculture, medicine and aforementioned astrology. Eventually, these almanacs were printed in Spain and other European countries from the late fifteenth century onwards. As there was no such thing as copyright there were also no limitations as to what someone could copy from an already published book. Although there are distinct differences in content between several *reportorios*, many of them are also alike. After comparing the Nahuatl manuscript with Spanish *reportorios*, it seems plausible that its composers consulted at least the works by Andrés de Li [1529], Sancho de Salaya [1542 and 1554], and Ambrosio de Gante [1581]. These almanacs were produced for

the order of San Bernardo. This order was well known for its own handwriting, style of initials and production of manuscript and books. In Mexico, its first convent was built in the capital in 1636. For now there are no other leads that would suggest a link between the source texts of Izcatqui and its place of origin, however for future reference this would be an avenue to explore.

The third source text that was consulted was a computational book written for clergymen in particular. This book would aid them to calculate Catholic feast days so they could communicate these dates to the members of their community. The manuscript lists several of these mnemotechnic methods using verses and diagrams.

The fourth source that we find in Izcatqui is an incorporation of a medicinal treatise by Greek Pédianus Dioscorides from the first century AD. As a traveling doctor for the Roman army he came across local medical treatments. He recorded over a 1,000 recipes. Centuries later, in 1555, Dioscorides' work was translated into Spanish by Andrés de Laguna. The *tlacuiloque* of Izcatqui familiarized themselves with this book and incorporated it into their own.

The four source texts that were identified came together in a miscellaneous Nahuatl text. The question of what the exact location of origin is remains unanswered. The only location that is certain to be related is its whereabouts before it came to The Netherlands, the city of Xalapa in the state of Veracruz. The text itself does not seem to give away any clues based on use of grammar or phonetical characteristic of some regions where Nahuatl is/was spoken, at least not unto this point.

Writing and reading itself however, was reserved for a small number of the population in the eighteenth century. The individuals that composed Izcatqui were well-educated, and operated within a religious and/or educational context. They felt a need to create a text that would be read by an indigenous readership. Not only did they provide a text that would be read by Nahuatl speakers, but they made a visible effort to offer them a text that would be understood by them. Terms from the Gregorian calendar and Zodiac signs are translated into the closest Nahuatl equivalent that would make sense to both the composers and its readers. In addition, several agricultural and ecological items from the Old World were replaced with those from the New World.

Izcatqui does not exist as a single manuscript when it comes to its content. The corpus nowadays is not large, however there are other examples of miscellaneous texts which, to varying degrees, contain translations from similar source texts and the *reportorio* being one the most pronounced ones. They come in different indigenous languages and in total span a period of over 3 centuries.

There are three examples in Nahuatl. The earliest known text is a handwritten addition to a printed *Doctrina Cristiana* by Pedro de Gante from 1553. The *tlacuilo* purposefully selected and merged information on agricultural practices, medicinal and other *consejos*, as well as Zodiacal information (dispersed in a Spanish almanac) in a short text. Similar to Izcatqui, the *tlacuilo* replaced some ecological products unknown to a Mesoamerican readership and only added information that would appeal to an indigenous readership. Second is the *Codex Mexicanus*, a manuscript that combines both indigenous central Mexican pictography and handwriting in the Roman alphabet, also from the sixteenth century. Its composer consulted an almanac for calendrical, astrological and medical purposes, adorned with images and tables that were copied from a *reportorio*. The final example is *Fonds Mexicain 381* from the seventeenth century. Here we have a beautiful example of a reference in the text itself that it was not just read, but consulted by a diviner.

In the language of Otomí, and also from the seventeenth century, there is the *Codex Huichapan*. The reference here to a *reportorio* is minimal, and seems only present for calendrical purposes. This example does indicate that the genre of the *reportorio* was known in other indigenous languages too.

The final examples support this notion too. These are three out of nine books that belong to the corpus of *Chilam Balam*, written in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Yucatec Maya. They are the *Chilam Balam* of Kaua, Ixil and Chan Cah. These include the most extensive amount of material from a *reportorio*. In addition to the other texts, the *Chilam Balam* of Chan Cah and Kaua include an old

Arabic story about a slave girl being sold to an Arabic King for an, to him, absurd amount of gold. He has her interrogated by the wisest men of the kingdom. Her net worth is only indicated by her replies from the knowledge contained in her mind. She wins the interrogation by answering with the complete description of the Zodiac signs and characteristics of people born under the guidance of these signs. Including the story of Doncella Teodora, the writers not only educated the reader on the content of a *reportorio*, but highlighted what was considered knowledge in the first place.

The *tlacuiloque* of Izcatqui created a manuscript at a particular moment in the history of colonial Mexico. They were preceded by over 200 years of people coming in from the Old World, who in parts forced those in the New World to perceive their world differently. Local ways of time reckoning and divination were deemed superstitious and in general no longer allowed by the new colonial power. At the same time, indigenous scholars familiarized themselves with science and literature that came along from over the Atlantic. The corpus of manuscripts that contain the rich information from a *reportorio* spans a region as large as Central Mexico to the peninsula of Yucatán and over three centuries. It seems reasonable to argue that the small corpus that is left today is just a small portion of texts that circulated once before. As is attested by Fonds Mexicain 381, these books in local indigenous languages, were consulted by a diviner to read the fates of those in need. The Spanish *reportorio* found its destiny in locally altered versions as a guide to life of its own.