

**The Life-cycle of a Tezcatlipoca Ixiptla;  
the rendering of teotl**

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The Aztec world was filled with the ever-present 'teotl' – a presence of what is often known as 'divinity' or 'deity.' The Aztec's had great reverence for the approach to the divine that the 'teotl' concept brought them. From it they constructed an array of rituals that envisioned and situated the Aztec state.

Among the more peculiar of these rituals are those surrounding 'ixiptla' of a teotl-form, namely the transient incarnation of 'god' by a chosen human. The ritual of a human ixiptla was consummated by the sacrifice of the human in a public ritual. The Spaniard's reaction to this practice portrayed an image of the Aztecs that has taken a great amount of scholarship to go beyond.

I offer that the life-cycle of Tezcatlipoca's ixiptla was considered to be a maturation of the Aztec state, from birth through sacred warfare to the taking of wives in adolescent maturity. The ixiptla's sacrifice at the peak of his mythological maturity ensure that the life of the Aztec state was renewed at its cosmological prime.

In order to convey this point I will develop a concept of the 'sacred body' of Tezcatlipoca, and then use this to illuminate the historical descriptions of the ixiptla presented by Bernadino Sahagún, David Carrasco and others. As well, I shall present some of Arid Hvidtfeldt's foundational material on 'ixiptla' and 'teotl' in the hopes that we may find additional clues to their interpretation.

Consideration of the life of an ixiptla, and the reoccurrence of the ritual, will frame a kind of 'research' performed by the priestly and ruling class in their attention to and exploration of teotl. The discussion shall help inform a view of teotl's forms and the way that state-sponsored ritual realized these forms to all social levels, thus establishing the Aztec 'empire' via poetic expression.

### **Sacred Body**

Tezcatlipoca has a close association to whirling things; tornados, whirlpools, & hurricanes. Tezcatlipoca's teotl may be that which moves these phenomena. Eva Hunt proposed as well that as the "god of all directions" this includes the whirling of the sky and its stars. At the center of this celestial whirling is the pole stars, which she proposes to be the body of Tezcatlipoca. The constellation we call Ursa Major. It is built from the case that the black

(star-less) circle of the ecliptic pole is the teotl's smoking mirror.

We may note that to the Maya, Tezcatlipoca was known as Hurakan, from hum (one), ra (third person possessive), kan (leg). "He has one leg" – and the origins of our word Hurricane. (Hunt, 241–2) So which is this "one leg," the one with the foot or without? Consider the metonym of the whirling sky of stars. At the center of the movement is the smoking mirror – all else moves about it. In connection with the human body, all else would be traversed by Tezcatlipoca's one human leg. It can take steps, but only in circles as the other leg, being without a foot, cannot take steps. The steps taken with the one foot move as the seasons and the sky; they 'change place.'

This interpretation complements the name of Tezcatlipoca's mirror being Itlachiayaque, "Place from Which He Watches", and the notion that he could see all by looking into the mirror. By looking at the movement of the night's sky & stars one could divine life on earth. In seeming confirmation, the Borgia Codex depicts Tezcatlipoca with all 20 day-signs attached to his body. Movement (earth) is on his cheek. Flower (sun) comes from his mouth. Etc. These celestial and calendrical associations to body, as well as others to come, remind us that the body of Tezcatlipoca was viewed in many simultaneous ways.

## Into the Earth

There is a story where the "earth monster" bites of the foot of Tezcatlipoca. Some depictions show an alligator / "earth monster" image with a foot in its mouth, signifying this relationship. This story of Tezcatlipoca's 'missing' foot may be grounded in his relationship to the constellation Ursa Major. In southern latitudes one of the stars of Ursa Major disappears due to the change in vantage on the celestial sphere. (Hunt, 153) The disappearance of a star from the constellation and the change in place on the earth go hand-in-hand. Thus, the star's disappearance is idiomatic to the earth, in its forms.

Several translation sources associate foot mutilation with sexual transgressions. As well, the word *yecoa* translates both in terms of carnal relations and war making. These are also placed alongside several stories in which the amputated foot of Tezcatlipoca bring fire (to man, the earth, etc.) Thus, the story of Tezcatlipoca entering the mountain Popocatepetal and it thereafter being volcanic as an account of impregnation of the earth. (Olivier, 264)

By themselves, these pieces may suggest that Tezcatlipoca's amputated foot is an allusion to an amputated sexual member. The suggestion is

potentially reinforced by stories throughout Mesoamerica of certain women and female figures possessing teeth within their vagina, much to the ruination of careless males. Olivier provides a host of cultural stories from the areas that make this association difficult to dispute, let alone overlook. (Olivier, 264)

These pieces alone cast a rather new light on the nature of Tezcatlipoca within the scope of Aztec society. However, Graulich's presentation that the Aztecs viewed copulation as war, and birthing as the taking of a captive, presents an additionally poignant vantage. (Olivier, 264) I propose that it lets us see an aspect of Aztec life that may have ranged from subliminal to overt – yet have been missed by historical reconstruction: that Tezcatlipoca's *ixiptla*, being a captive, was thus a child. Warfare for his capture was 'sex,' i.e. the intercourse of city-states practicing "sacred warfare."

From this new perspective we can consider the *ixiptla*'s life-cycle to be a maturation of the empire from infancy to sexual potency. The marriage to his four wives near end of his life-cycle is indicative of his arrival to adolescence. Olivier's historiographic analysis leads right up to this conclusion so well that it is a wonder that he did not take this next step.

## Emergence

When the existing ixiptla of Tezcatlipoca was sacrificed the one who had been groomed to take his place was immediately inducted via a ceremony at the temple of Tezcatlipoca. Among the first major experiences of the new ixiptla was to wear the flayed skin of the previous ixiptla, as part of the rites to inheriting his role. Shortly thereafter he would appear before the tlatoani (king), who had been fasting and secluding himself until this moment since he was without an ixiptla to carry his prayers. The tlatoani would receive him as his adored-one, and lavish him with praise and gifts.

Skin-wearing, in the nature of Xipe Totec, denotes a ripening in the manner of husking corn, or similar. (Thompson, 145) Thus the final removal of the skin of the previous ixiptla would present the ripening of the ixiptla wearing the skin. Similarly, the disrobing of flayed skin has been shown to be indicative of the drawing of the foreskin in procreation. (Garibay, 180) Therefore, the final removal of the flayed skin from the ixiptla may be indicative of the emergence of the genitalia (male & female) from the prepuce during infancy – another affirmation of the ixiptla's life-cycle being a maturation process.

After this emerging from his old skin, the ixiptla spends much of his time

traveling about the city sing, dancing and bringing people blessings and happiness. Particularly in the bringing of joy we may imagine him to be an image of an 'ideal child.'

### **Next transformation**

After his initial transformation into Tezcatlipoca's ixiptla, at one point during the year he would be taken before the tlatoani again. He was adorned repeatedly, arrayed and given gifts with great pomp. The tlatoani took to him as a beloved. These gifts formed the basis of the ixiptla's next stage of "transformation into the ruler's god;" Tezcatlipoca. This is considered to be tlatoani's rendering of the Tezcatlipoca to the ruler's preferences. "His god" i.e. his rendering and vision of the teotl's form within the city-state, but is treated as a favored child. (Carrasco, 35) Thus he became living symbol of physical, cultural and imperial splendor, and presented himself in the pathways of the city again for the people to behold the ruler's beloving of Tezcatlipoca.

### **Appearance in the Year's Festivals**

Sahagún relates how on the third day of Teotl Eco (the end of September) that Tezcatlipoca, named Telpochtli ('young boy') and Tlamatzincatl, would

arrive at peoples' houses. It was said that "He came here ahead; this one arrived first", and the stated reason for this early arrival is that "he indeed was still a youth; he was still strong" (Sahagún, II:127) He we see another piece of the Aztec consideration that Tezcatlipoca went through a life-cycle via his ixiptla.

The events of Quecholli (October – November) occurred, to some degree, in parallel with Toxcatl, and the former had strong erotic overtones. (Olivier 213) At it sat the ixiptla of four goddesses who were to be the wives of the Tezcatlipoca ixiptla.

During the feast of Uey Tozoztli (immediately preceding Toxcatl; April – May) Tezcatlipoca wed his four wives; Xochiquetzal (her plumage blooms – fertility) [sister of xochipilli, wife of Tlaloc], Xilonen (young maize ear), Atlatonan (patron of the deformed & lepers), and Uixtocihuatl (salt & salt water, older sister of Tlaloc). At this marriage the ixiptla hair was cut to the two-level style of a warrior and as well he changed his garments and adornments to those of a warrior. Both his marriage and his warrior status are indications of his arrival to a level of male maturity.

He then stayed with the women for 20 days, performing all aspects of life

as though married, including pleasure and ritual union. This was the time period between Heuy Tozoztli and Toxcatl, and were the last 20 days of the life-cycle of the ixiptla. There are suggestions that the wife ixiptla were of noble blood within the Aztec imperial state. In their impregnation they would bear into the ruling bloodlines the strength of the teotl at the prime of the Tezcatlipoca ixiptla 's life-cycle.

During four of the last five before the end of Toxcatl (Olivier, 212), the Tezcatlipoca ixiptla and the four ixiptla wives danced, sang, and distributed food and gifts at specific sites. In this time the ruler secluded himself within his royal palace. (Olivier, 194) They visited four ceremonial locations: Tecanmen; where the ixiptla of Titlacauan was guarded; in the middle of the lagoon at Tepetzinco, then on the fourth day at Tepepulco. This movement is a unification of the ritual landscape (Carrasco, 48) However, while this is happening, the Feast of Toxcatl has already gotten underway...

### **The Feast of Toxcatl**

Toxcatl was the fifth 'veintena' of the year, occurring mid-to-early May. It is during this festival that the present ixiptla sacrificed and a new ixiptla chosen. Perhaps the most overt aspect of the festival was the ending of the dry

season. At this time fields were burnt for re-sowing.

The walls all about the temple precinct were covered in flowers, and the courtyard and steps of the temple had agave leaves placed upon them. An image of the deity (though not the human ixiptla) was used in all ceremonies except the sacrifice, and there was a great exchange of flowers, food and gifts. The priests would decapitate the quail by hand, and then toss the bodies of the birds at the foot of the altar. (Olivier, 193-224) The renewal and fertility aspects of Toxcatl may show this ritual's meaning to be a prevailing over the bone-breaking teotl of Quail.

The people from the city gathered once again within the temple compound. Tezcatlipoca's ixiptla, fully adorned, presented himself at noon and ascended the temple steps. As he went up he broke his flutes and whistles on each of the steps, and upon reaching the top he was sacrificed. Olivier summates much evidence that the individual performing the sacrifice was the tlatoani himself, and that in Tezcatlipoca's ixiptla being 'a king's god' the tlatoani was symbolically sacrificing himself. (Olivier, 225)

It is unclear to me that several of Carrasco's assertions hold weight; chiefly his bespeaking of his flute may not symbolize a "return to the image of the

warrior" (Carrasco, 49) Breaking of his flute may not symbolize a "return to the image of the warrior" but rather may be only a ceremonial ending of a method of expression. As the flute and whistle is a part of the teotl's expression then to sacrifice the ixiptla with them intact may have been felt to imply a death to the expression. Thus the vehicles of that expression of ceremonial broken in order to ritually 'close' them as a route for expression. Now all that remains is the perfect body of the teotl ixiptla, prepared to offer itself (blood. heart. et al) for the continuity of life.

People then went to Ixhuacan, where people played music and danced. When night fell the young girls were again led to a courtyard, carrying with them a mixture of amaranth and honey that was bundled in a cloth adorned with skulls and bones. Young men threw arrows at these bundles and then raced to get to them so that they could keep them as relics. The first four to arrive received awards. Olivier offers the interpretation that the arrows and race of the young men was a symbolic training to perform warfare and capture the enemy – an enemy who may in time become a sacrificed ixiptla. The remains of the ixiptla would constitute a sacred bundle – the tribute of warfare. (Olivier, 195)

## **Post Ritual**

Alfredo Lopez Austin also brings focus to another reason for the death of an ixiptla – that the death was a ritual renewal of the teotl. (Carrasco, 47) Were the teotl not to die it would diminish in a corporeal aging process, as all that lives upon the earth is seen to do. Thus the teotl was always experienced in the vibrancy of its nature. The experience of teotl is clearly that of a great force, and the transience is ritualized through the life cycle experienced by all on the earth.

This ritual may inform part of our understanding why the tlatoani fasts in seclusion until the arrival of the new ixiptla. The previous ixiptla has broken his flutes upon the steps of the temple, and in doing so perhaps has 'broken' and unmade who the tlatoani was in the previous year. This could serve to alleviate the tlatoani of any transgressions he had performed, and give him the opportunity for renewal; to be reborn as Tezcatlipoca within a new ixiptla.

## **Landscape of ceremony**

Place is not a fixed construct, but rather is a thing derived of terrain, social, architectural, and calendrical domains. Many pieces of evidence portray

the city-state as we know a theater, the cosmos a projection of the human body, and the human body understood in terms of general cosmic processes. Lawrence Sullivan discussed synaesthetic unification of the senses as unifying the experience of body, state and cosmos. (Carrasco, 38) Tezcatlipoca becomes a representation of unity in the Aztec state, a vehicle for its growth, and a constancy amidst ever-present change. Thus he is the smoking (ever changing and unclear) mirror (reflection of individual, social, imperial and cosmic whole). (Carasco, 40) Similar to the "meandering footprints in the codices" the ixiptla's movement alter our direction of vision of and create striking juxtapositions, which synaesthetically unify to form a conception of place - of a multi-scale whole that is the body of both Aztec state and Tezcatlipoca.

### **Ixiptla and Teotl**

The nearly ubiquitous treatment of the word 'ixiptla' in historic academic texts is as "impersonator." I find that Anderson & Dibble's translation that teotl was "given human form" (Sahagún, II:66) is in contradiction to the concept of an "impersonator." (Carasco, 34) 'Impersonate' being a falsification, while 'given' implying an allowance. Hvidtfeldt notes that it is the widely-used Anderson-Dibble translation of Sahagún originates the interpretation of ixiptla as "image"

or "impersonator," likely from *ixtli* meaning 'face.' (Hvidtfeldt, 87)

Soustelle's presentation that in ceremonies "it was the god himself who died before his own image and in his own temple." (Soustelle, 8) and "god-presenter" (Clendinnen, 104, 110) inform a perspective that the *ixiptla* was more an 'incarnation' than else. (Tomlinson, 270) They were a source point through which a form of *teotl*, such as *Tezcatlipoca*, emerged. It is supported by the notion that a painted image is a presentation of a thing, and not a separate representation of that 'real' thing. Lopez Austin's statement of "*teteo imixiptlahuan*, ... men possessed by the god..." can still hold in the context of *teotl* 'emerging,' in that 'possession' proposed to occur due to the great force of the divine being made manifest – greater than that nature of the individual human, thus they lost themselves to the expression of it. (Carasco, 46)

I lay a position different than the interpretation suggested by statements such as the ever-common 'impersonator' and Carrasco's statement that "many ceremonies involved human beings in whom the god became encapsulated." (Carrasco, 46) The notion of 'encapsulation' does not ring with interpretations presented by himself and others – that place and space were mutable and of open expanse. Certain sites, humans, or conceptual wholes could be ascribed to having strong bearing upon a *teotl*-form, but they did not

limit it. I choose, instead, to work with the concept of 'emergence' – that teotl would express itself through a certain 'synaesthetic agglomeration.'

It is important to keep in mind Hvidtfeldt's clarification that "in many cases teo– at least clearly and incontestably involves the semantic aspect of 'high potency, intensification, excellence'" (Hvidtfeldt, 78) it is surprising to then see him seemingly forget this when he disregards the –tla suffix as a possible component of 'ixiptla.' In as much as my background is not in Nahuatl, I offer that this may be incorrect. He notes that 'tla means "A place where there is an abundance of" the thing that is denoted in the word–stem. This element of abundance is quite present in the 'bundling' concept ascribed to ixiptla, and offers confirmation to my assertion that an ixiptla was an bundling (i.e. an abundance of) all that was the teotl–form, and little or no presence of anything else.<sup>1</sup>

### **Bundling**

Thus the 'bundling' that is commonly connected with ixiptla of human or non–human form is in itself an intensification, and not merely and drawing together. Such an agglomeration may be either a natural formation (cave, storm, etc.) an architectural construct (temple, arena, social corridor, etc), statue, or individual human (in poetry, war, rulership, ixiptla). Each of these

agglomerations are not identified through a single element, but are critically composed of an array of sensory experiences, involving semi-orchestrated movement (dance, battle, etc), audible expression (war calls, song, instrumental music, etc), and symbolic presence of the human body, natural formations (mountains, lakes, etc) and the architectural elements that echo (as in a temple) or are conjoined (Tenochtitlan on the lake, etc).

Elements of the ritual scene then became the channel through which teotl expressed itself. It became 'place' as much as a teotl-form was understood to manifest through it. Teotl was not 'mimicked,' 'acted out,' or 'impersonated' by anyone or any thing; it could be expressed through some one or thing but it was not 'encapsulated' or 'contained' there.

Let us consider that the usage of teotl is so often based on the translation of Hvidtfeldt, who used the concept of "mana" to underlay his interpretations. Particularly, he describes something that is "outside the common processes of nature." (Hvidtfeldt, 19–21) Though Hvidtfeldt make no further affirmation of this component of his assumptions, he neither denies it. I thus bring attention to it in order to punctuate the notion that the 'teotl' of the Aztecs was a natural and inherent part of the world, and in no way outside or absent from life.

A thing 'had' great teotl the longer that it could continually manifest it. Natural features and events proved they could do this in their continuity and perseverance. A human could be identified with teotl by their endurance in performing a certain role; ruler, warrior, priest, artisan, farmer, etc. These roles represented patterns that created a greater whole, and as such were teotl-forms themselves – and thus the worship of 'gods' for each of these stations. The more challenging it was to endure in a role the more venerated a person was for the teotl they manifested. But to falter in the position was the same as the teotl not being present.

## **Renewal**

Ritual renewal was thus the way for a thing to maintain its teotl over the course of its life-cycle, and perhaps most conspicuously this entered consideration for the life-cycle of a tlatoani. Olivier asserts that the ritual life-cycle of enthronement presented "the mythical stages lived by their tutelary gods," of which included Tezcatlipoca. The enthronement ritual preceded and culminated in the creation of the bundle, *laquimilolli*. (Olivier, 78) Moreover, Olivier brings light to an interesting association between the tlatoani and Tezcatlipoca's year-long *ixiptla*; that the vestments of the ruler's enthronement "illustrate his transformation into a sacred bundle," and as well express, "his

passage inside the ground before his 'rebirth' as a sovereign." (Olivier, 80–81)

Lending credence to the tlatoani's rebirthing we may consider Hvidtfelt's translation of this passage from the Feast of Toxcatl in the Florentine Codex: "At that time, in these days,/ nothing more is known about Motecuçoma," then he add in parenthesis "(Motecuçoma does not appear at all)" (Hvidtfelt, 88) I offer that to the Aztec people, highly aware of this pivotal feast, the theatrical yet poignantly public disappearance of their tlatoani would shift all attention of rulership to "our lord" Titlacahuan / Tezcatlpoca's ixiptla. Whom, during this time of increased attention is sacrificed, his skin flayed and worn by the new ixiptla – the latter of which then goes to greet and 'call out' into public life again the tlatoani. The tlatoani, is later known to also wear the skin of the previous ixiptla. It would be all-too-symbolic if the tlatoani's skin-wearing were to have happened following his re-emergence (if only the historic sources were so detailed!). Hvidtfeldt himself indicates that for the tlatoani to be represented by the ixiptla is a possible as a direct linguistic interpretation of Sahagún's account. (Hvidtfeldt, 89)

A passage from the ceremony or Toçozontli may given further insight into the renewal of Tezcatlipoca's life-cycle. Hvidtfeldt translates "and he removed the flesh which was still left/ on the captive's hip-bone,/ and (took) a string–

coat/ to which was fastened a small heron plume./ And the hip-bone he thoroughly wound with paper,/ provided it with a mask./ And this was called (a) captive-teotl. [... malteotl]" and then follows up with his own comment "For the hip-bone originated from a captive he had taken and who had been sacrificed." (Hvidtfeldt, 82)

Based upon my previous point of captives and birthed infants being identical and bundles (ixiptla) being the 'incarnations' of teotl, I present that even though the hip-bone came from a captive that the ceremony of wrapping it in paper is akin to wrapping up a new-born baby and that the hip-bone has "captive-teotl" because the priest has ceremonially 'birthed' it.

One of Hvidtfeldt's translations of Sahagún's account of the Toxcatl feast also affirms the Tezcatlipoca ixiptla becoming a 'child of the state:' "Its (Toxcatl's) beginning was Tezcatlipoca's great festival,/ there was born (shaped), there was erected/ in order to die there/ his ixiptla...." (Hvidtfeldt, 85-86)

An interesting and verifying parallel to the life-cycle of the Tezcatlipoca ixiptla exists in the ceremonies held for Huitzilopochtli. In rituals pertaining to Huitzilopochtli warriors compete to win bits of amaranth dough. Then "they

carry with them the dough of amaranth seeds which they have won,/ take it home with them,/ for it is really their captive, they eat it,/share it with their families/ and their neighbours in the street,/ eat it together." (Hvidtfeldt, 131) Considering that Huitzilopochtli yearly life-cycle is considered to be something of a twin to Tezcatlipoca's this episode portrays a distribution of captive-teotl that connotes the life-cycle of Tezcatlipoca's ixiptla.

If there is any doubt of this let us revisit the end of the Feast of Toxcatl, wherein young boys throw arrows at amaranth bundles that had been set in place by young girls, and race to the bundles in order that they may win prizes (and take the bundles home?). In light of the similitude between birthing and child and taking a captive we may consider the amaranth bundles to be 'birthed' by the young girls and boys. The children are ultimately practicing for their later ritual roles in society; the women who will birth children and the men who will, under the banner of Huitzilopochtli, take human captives to become Tezcatlipoca's ixiptla.

Here we have a view of the many cultural levels that bundled teotl could be experienced across. Participation was something that involved people at all levels, and thus may have been seen as the 'life-blood' of the culture. Certainly the importance of offering human blood in 'birthing' ixiptla reinforces the

metaphor of blood within the 'cultural body.'

## Research

The process alluded to reinforces the notion that there is a kind of coherence being sought through ritual practice. That the decorating and adornment of a person, place or thing in the ritual objects & practices was not ornamental. Rather its 'decoration' was to be illustrative of the person, place, or thing's absence of all else that was not the nature of the teotl's pattern. Their 'birthing' of the teotl-form itself. It is as though the 'bundling' of an ixiptla is a process of lessening. It removes all else that is not indicative of the teotl, rather than packing together \*more\*.

Thus, the use of a living human allows a special form of incarnation to occur, where teotl is enabled to manifest in direct human form. This is different than 'distributed' human form of a society, or nature. Giving a body to ixiptla a teotl-form was reverence of it (allowing it human incarnation) as well as 'research' of it, that it may be more effectively worshipped, for the benefit of all.

My opinion that 'research' occurred is founded upon the potential of

human choice. The capability of the human for divinely-inspired poetic and musical emergence – by immersion in majestic beauty of stately social ritual, and free from future prejudice and psychological complication (because of ixiptla's actions) afforded by the guarantee of sacrifice. The latter being somewhat like the transformation of identity possible in role-playing, but pushed 'over the top' by the situation and timeliness of the experience.

In his endnotes Carrasco offers a compelling piece for considering that a kind of 'research' was being enacted. He states that it is "seeing of the ceremony and images [ixiptla] of the divine, that stimulates the senses most persuasively and leads to new knowledge or a special quality of knowledge." (Carrasco, 55) I feel the Aztec's choice to enact Carrasco's "synaesthetic crossing of sensory inputs" through a human form is founded in a desire to perform a kind of 'research' – a scrying of the teotl-form's inner nature. A practice undertaken by the priests, from their vantage of watching detailed difference of enactment chosen – drawn out, I suggest – by generation after generation of ixiptla as they undergo these transformations.<sup>2</sup> Performing this kind of 'research' through the life-cycle of Tezcatlipoca's ixiptla places it not only in the broadly graspable framework of a lifetime, it also portrays it through the life of the 'god of gods' (or 'teotl of teotl?') and the vitality of the Aztec state.

The view of a 'research' that is being performed may inductively draw us back to legendary Teotihuacan. It was there that the "gods were born in darkness" and that the state-sponsored practice of human sacrifice was created. Thus the dual origin of teotl ("gods") and state-sponsored ixiptla sacrifice may be more inextricably linked than previously considered.

### Notes

1: I offer this consideration while at the same time agreeing with his consideration that the word may not have been used with a determined form, but instead only appear with a possessive prefix denoting the ultimate 'ownership' of the ixiptla by the teotl-form it represented. (Hvidtfeldt, 80) Again, as much as my scholarly background has not been in Nahuatl, both of these considerations fit in with the conception of 'ixiptla' that I see within the remnants of Aztec culture. Even if they are in some disagreement, the great 'xochicuicatli' attempted by the culture may be an adequate basis to contemplate whether the formations of the word 'ixiptla' in themselves had a 'poetic' nature.

Hvidtfeldt, in his book "Teotl and Ixiptlatli" that is often held as the authoritative cornerstone on the teotl and ixiptla, discloses that "a few passages have been omitted in which the word ixiptla occurs, but in such a way that it is

not possible to decide what the teixiptla is – to us – in the context in question." He goes on to make the same comment regarding teotl. Given his otherwise exhaustive treatment of the topic it is surprising that the omissions would be those elements he feels unable to address. Instead, I would like to think that he would have documented those places so that future generations could more easily have their hand at them – rather than having to reproduce his work from scratch. (Hvidtfeldt, 99)

2: Here is also an undertone of an argument against a cosmologically-enforced hierarchy, based on the conceptions of the divine (teotl) interpenetrating all material things. In such a framework there is no 'top,' and perhaps this was some of Ahuitzotl's intention with allowing commoners into 'high ranks.' He may have been acknowledging the ability for teotl, as real and strong as that which 'built' the Aztec imperial state, to emerge from any person.

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