

Sahagun's Movable Feasts

Como una protesta y una apelación contra el acuerdo capitular de no favorecer con apoyo material la continuación de su "Historia", Sahagún envió al Papa San Pfo V un "Breve Compendio" de su obra. El "Breve Compendio", que últimamente formaba parte del Libro II del Códice Florentino, contenía dieciséis "Fiestas Movibles". El origen de dichas fiestas se encuentra en el texto náhuatl del Libro V (Libro IV del Códice Florentino) del Manuscrito de Tlatelolco. Las "Fiestas Movibles" guardan relación por un lado con el tonalpohualli y, por el otro, se asemejan a los ritos de los dieciocho meses del año. El presente estudio trata de averiguar el razonamiento de Sahagún para discutir las por separado.

By 1569 Fray Bernardino de Sahagún had completed his "Historia", had prepared a final copy which he submitted to the Father Commissary, Fray Francisco de Ribera, for approval and further financial aid. The response from the provincial Chapter of 1570 was unfavorable, and he was ordered to dismiss his scribes and work alone (Sahagún 1956, I: 107). To circumvent Chapter orders and secure financial aid, Sahagún prepared a summary in Spanish, a "Breve Compendio", which he sent to Pope Pius V in Rome (Oliger 1942: 28-78). The "Breve Compendio" included the prologue to Book II, a summary of the eighteen ritual months of the annual calendar, and a listing of sixteen movable feasts. This portion of the "Breve Compendio" was subsequently incorporated into the Florentine Codex as the prologue and Chapters 1-19 of Book II. Chapter 19 contained a comment on the nemontemi and a dis-



cussion of the sixteen movable feasts. Sahagún also compared the movable feasts with the movable feasts in the Christian calendar and contrasted them with the fixed feasts of the eighteen ritual months, which are presented at length in Book II (1956, I: 108, 132, 139).

The fact that Sahagún specified sixteen movable feasts suggests that subsequent writers drew from his works or followed his lead. Jacinto de la Serna recorded the same sixteen movable feasts in the same order. Furthermore, he considered them as separate from the fixed feasts and the tonalpohualli (1). The content is essentially the same although the Serna Text is much longer and with added detail. Serna listed the deities for each feast but, with one exception, Ce Ozomatli, he did not list the appointed day for each feast (1953: 172-181). Lorenzo Boturini Benaducci also commented at length on the sixteen movable feasts but cited Serna rather than Sahagún (1746: 59, 154 f.).

The movable feasts seem not to have found a permanent home nor a bonafide separate identity. They share characteristics with the fixed eighteen ritual months because they entail public ceremonies honoring deities, yet they function within the framework of the 260-day divinatory calendar (tonalpohualli), thus making them movable when contrasted with the fixed ceremonies of the 365-day period. Sahagún discussed the movable feasts in Book II as an addendum to the fixed feasts, yet the source of his information was the Nahuatl text of the 260-day tonalpohualli which is contained in Book IV.

Fortunately, we can document the steps Sahagún followed to draft his summary of the movable feasts. The tonalpohualli, as it appears in the Nahuatl text of Book IV, contains two kinds of information. It gives the good and bad days as they functioned to determine the fate of the individual. This is the information utilized by the tonalpohualli at birth and during the transition periods of the life cycle. It also lists the birthdays or special days of the deities and the rituals associated therewith. It is not to be wondered that these two kinds of information be together because, in final analysis, one's fate was in the hands of the gods. This information belongs in the tonalpohualli (the reckoning of the days), because we are dealing with days, not months, assigned to or identified with specific deities.

Sahagún has prepared his summary of the eighteen ritual months by abridging the lengthy Nahuatl texts of Book II. He did similarly for information on the movable feasts. As Glass has previously noted (1978: 20), Sahagún worked with and reviewed the Nahuatl text of Book IV (2) as found in the Tlatelolco MS also known as "Memoriales en 3 columnas" (Sahagún 1905-1907: VII, 280-385). From the lengthy texts he extracted the rituals associated with the deities and marked the exact location of each movable feast with a cross and a number (Fig. 1). They total seventeen (Table I). The Nahuatl text thus formed the basis for the description of the movable feast. One example will suffice to demonstrate the relationship. For the day Four Motion, the Nahuatl text in Book IV of the Tlatelolco MS translates as follows (3):

When it was this day, when Four Motion set in, they slew quail and offered incense before the image of the sun; they placed on it what was known as the spreading red arara feather device. And at noon captives died and were slain [as sacrifices] . . . At this time all came together from all parts; none remained or did otherwise. Verily, everyone - men, women, children - cut their ears and drew blood. It was said: "Thus was the sun nourished" (Sahagún 1950-1969, IV: 6).

Sahagún's description of the first movable feast, as found in the "Breve Compendio" (Oliger 1942: 62) and in Chapter 19 of Book II (Sahagún 1950-1969, II: 35), reads as follows:

The first movable feast was celebrated in honor of the sun, in the sign which was named *ce ocelotl*, in the fourth house which is named *nauí ollin*. On this feast they offered, to the image of the sun, quail, and the offered incense. And at noon they slew captives before it in honor of the sun. On this same day, all drew blood from their ears - children and those who were grown - in honor of the sun, and they offered it that blood.

A similar correspondence between the Nahuatl text in Book IV and the remaining movable feasts can be demonstrated.

A careful reading of the Nahuatl text of Book IV reveals that some of the thirteen-day periods of the *tonalpohualli* contain no rituals assigned to a specific deity, only the good and evil qualities of the days. This is the case for One Crocodile, One Lizard, One Motion, One Vulture, One Rabbit (Table I). It may also be the case for One Serpent, a period of festivity for the merchants but without mention of a deity (Sahagún 1950-1969, IV: 59).

In his final drafting of the movable feasts, Sahagún deleted three of the original seventeen (One House, One Wind and One Eagle). He added the birth and marriage rituals, without assigning them to definite days in the *tonalpohualli*, to arrive at his total of sixteen movable feasts.

With the exception of the rituals at time of birth and marriage, the movable feasts commemorate the birthdays of specific deities or some important deed or power associated with them. *Nauí Ollin* was the name of the fifth sun and commemorated the day upon which it would be destroyed by earthquake (Caso 1959: 93; 1958: 33). *Chicome Xochitl* was the male counterpart of the goddess *Xochiquetzal* and, according to Selser, the same as *Xochipilli* (1902-1923, I:

429). Ce Mazatl, Ce Quiauitl, Ce Ozomatli, Ce Calli, Ce Quauhtli were calendrical names for the Ciuapipiltin or the Ciuateteo (4) (Caso 1959: 82-95). Sahagún mentioned five images of the Ciuapipiltin (1950-1969, I: 6). Selser noted that the thirteen-day tonalpohualli periods, Ce Mazatl, Ce Quiauitl, Ce Ozomatli, Ce Calli and Ce Quauhtli were assigned to the west, the direction of women (ciuatlampa) and corresponded to the times when the Ciuateteo, representatives of women who died in childbirth (mociauauetzque), descended to earth (1902-1923, II: 843). Ome Tochtli was one of the pulque gods. Ce Xochitl has been cited as the calendrical name for the goddess Centeotl and the god Xochipilli (Caso 1959: 95). Ce Ehecatl and Ce Acatl are familiar names for Quetzalcoatl. No deity is mentioned as being associated with Nauhecatl (Nauí Ehecatl) - only the activities of criminals and merchants. Ce Miquiztli, Ce Tecpatl, Ce Itzcuintli, Ce Atl (5) were calendrical names for Tezcatlipoca, Huitziluhuitl, Xiuhtecuhtli and Chalchiuhtlicue, respectively (Caso 1959: 84, 87, 88, 93).

The fact that Sahagún deleted three movable feasts from his original list of seventeen (Ce Calli, Ce Ehecatl, Ce Quauhtli) leads one to suspect that his list of sixteen feasts was incomplete; that there were additional feasts related to other deities. Caso suggests that each of the 260 different day names of the tonalpohualli was associated with some deity or attribute thereof (1959: 79). Nicholson suggests a long list of movable feasts (1971, X: 435). Even limiting oneself to the Nahuatl text of Book IV, which Sahagún studied, other feasts and deities can be added. The day Chicome Coatl (Seven Serpent) was dedicated to the goddess of the same name. The day Chiconauí Acatl (Nine Reed) was also a name for the goddess Tlazolteotl, and the day was dedicated to her (Caso 1959: 92).

While the movable feasts seem to be accommodated within the framework of the tonalpohualli, Sahagún, Serna, and Boturini chose to list them as separate. Since they were dedicated to specific deities they frequently came in conflict with the eighteen ritual months of the annual calendar. Sahagún wrote (1950-1969, II: 41): These movable feasts, in some years, displace the feasts of the calendar, as also happeneth in our calendar. Serna and Boturini both record that the god Tezcatlipoca became enraged because, during his fixed ritual month, the movable feast of Huitzilopochtli was accorded preference. This conflict led to a decree that important movable feasts would justify the postponement of fixed rituals (Serna 1953: 172 f.; Boturini 1746: 154 f.).

The sixteen movable feasts, although apparently an incomplete list, seem to have merited a separate listing. There is no Nahuatl term to identify them. Sahagún utilized the term "Fiestas móviles" because of the analogy with the Christian calendar. He discussed them separately for two possible reasons. First, the rituals in honor of the deities varied somewhat from the primary function of the tonalpohualli - the determining of the fate of the individual. Of the tonalpohualli he wrote: This count was used to foretell the circumstances and events of life which those born [on given day signs] would have (Sahagún 1950-1969, IV: 145). Secondly, with the exception of Tezcatlipoca, Huitzil-

opochtli and Xiuhtecutli, none of the deities venerated in the movable feasts were included in the eighteen fixed ritual months. And, furthermore, including the three exceptions mentioned, none of the deities played a major role in the annual agricultural cycle which is a substantive part of the fixed ritual months.

NOTES

- (1) Serna lists them as "fiestas movibles . . . fixas y de tabla" (1953: 172).
- (2) The text as cited is labeled Book V by Sahagún. In a subsequent alteration it became Book IV as it appears in the Florentine Codex.
- (3) For the Nahuatl text of the first and second movable feasts see Fig. 1.
- (4) Ciuapiltin and Cuateteo are synonymous names (Sahagún 1956, I: 91).
- (5) Ce Atl is incorrectly recorded as Ce Acatl in the "Breve Compendio" and the Florentine Codex. It is Ce Atl in the Tlatelolco MS.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1: Nahuatl text of the first and second movable feasts (Manuscrito de Tlatelolco).

TABLE I
MOVABLE FEASTS

13 day Periods	Tlatelolco MS	Breve Compendio Florentine Codex	Deities
1 Crocodile (no rituals)			
1 Ocelot	-- 1. Naolin (Four Motion) 2. Chicome Xochitl (Seven Flower)	1. Naolin 2. Chicome Xochitl	Nauí Ollin (Fifth Sun) Chicome Xochitl (Chicome Xochitl)
1 Deer	3. Ce Mazatl (One Deer) 4. Ome Tochtli (Two Rabbit)	3. Ce Mazatl 4. Ome Tochtli	Ce Mazatl (Ciuapipiltin) Ome Tochtli
1 Flower	5. Ce Xochitl (One Flower)	5. Ce Xochitl	Ce Xochitl (Centeotl?) (Xochipilli?)
1 Reed	6. Ce Acatl (One Reed)	6. Ce Acatl	Ce Acatl (Quetzalcoatl)
1 Death	7. Ce Miquiztli (One Death)	7. Ce Miquiztli	Ce Miquiztli (Tezcatlipoca)
1 Rain	8. Ce Quiauitl (One Rain) 9. Nauhecatl (Four Wind)	8. Ce Quiauitl 9. Nauhecatl	Ce Quiauitl (Ciuapipiltin) ?
1 Grass	-- 10. Ome Acatl (Two Reed)	10. Ome Acatl	Ome Acatl (Tezcatlipoca)
1 Serpent (No rituals)?			
1 Flint	11. Ce Tecpatl (One Flint)	11. Ce Tecpatl	Ce Tecpatl (Huitzilopochtli)
1 Monkey	12. Ce Ozomatli (One Monkey)	12. Ce Ozomatli	Ce Ozomatli (Ciuapipiltin)
1 Lizard (No rituals)			
1 Motion (No rituals)			
1 Dog	13. Ce Itzcuintli (One Dog)	13. Ce Itzcuintli	Ce Itzcuintli (Xiuhtecuhtli)

TABLE I
MOVABLE FEASTS

13 day Periods	Tlatelolco MS	Breve Compendio Florentine Codex	Deities
1 House	14. Ce Calli (One House)		Ce Calli (Cuateteo)
1 Vulture (No rituals)			
1 Water	15. Ce Atl (One Water)	14. Ce Atl (Ce Acatl ?)	Ce Atl (Chalchiuhtlicue)
1 Wind	16. Ce Ehecatl (One Wind)		Ce Ehecatl (Quetzalcoatl)
1 Eagle	17. Ce Quauhtli (One Eagle)		Ce Quauhtli (Cuateteo)
1 Rabbit (No rituals)			

