ETHNOHISTORIC CLUES: OCUILTECO PLACE-_NAMES

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Toponyms, or place-names, can tell us about the ethnohistory of a geographical region. Place-names from Ocuiteco, an Otopamean language spoken in Central Mexico, are analyzed structurally and examined for clues to the role this ethnic group may have played historically.

INTRODUCTION

Often a place-name will tell us what the place it names is like; for example, the Rocky Mountains. Many toponyms are descriptive: Sunnyvale, Cloverdale, Sleepy Hollow, Ocean View, Woodland, Fairfield, Terra Linda, (which means 'pretty land'), Whispering Pines, or Pebble Beach.

Place-names may reveal religious concepts, such as the toponyms in honor of saints, like San Francisco, Santa Monica, Santa Cruz or St. Helena. Or they may also reflect a worldview, for example, Trinity or Sacramento 'the holy sacrament of Christian teaching', Sacred Mountains, or Mount Diablo 'Devil mountain'. In southern Mexico, Metzabok lake is named for the Lacandon rain god. It is the largest of three interconnected lakes. The other two are named for their mythological owners, Ts'ib-a-t-nah 'the house painter' or 'the painter of houses', and k'ak' 'God of Fire'. Other place-names may refer to or narrate an historical event (Emigrant Gap, Goldfield, Mill Valley, Sutter Creek or Fort Ross, Drake's Bay, Sioux Falls). Some place-names combine more than one of these characteristics: descriptive, a religious concept, worldview, an historical event.

HOW DO DIFFERENT PLACES GET THEIR NAMES?

Geographers, adventurers or travelers, and neighboring peoples have all given names to different places. Probably the first names were created through contact by different groups of peoples or tribes, to refer to their allies or enemies, "those who live by the river", "the peoples of the dark cave or the high mountains". Place-names were a way to identify different groups of people by referring to their place of residence.

At times geographical features such as rivers, creeks or streams, mountains, or ravines, etc. which do have names in local Indian languages may appear on maps without specific names, because they are not considered prominent or notable enough to bear an officially-recognized name. Often the names used are those given to a place by the dominant group or culture. Local Indian names may be known and used only regionally. This is the case for the Ocuiteco place-names in the Municipality of Ocuilan.
OCUILTECO PLACE-NAMEs

Little has been written about Ocuitlteco in general, but two articles have dealt with place-names (Weitlaner 1939, Schumann 1975). R.J. Weitlaner (1939) published a list of Ocuitltemo place-names which he had collected (8 names), as well as several names collected by R. Schuller (5 names) and F. Pimentel (3 names):

Mexico
(W) pandujnáti
(S) pintuj váti
(P) bindujati

Guadalupe
(S) mašijóz

Malinalco
(S) nyump hu

Ocuila
(W) webaš
(S) bewaš
(P) bavaš

Tenancingo
(W) htušó
(P) tūdšó

Huitzilac
(W) ndalindüú
(S) dašündü

San Juan Atzingo
(W) punhil

Cerro Cempoala
(W) blundamhú

Toto
(W) plithá

Toluca
(W) žindijóží

Ocuitltemo place names were also mentioned more recently by Otto Schumann (1975). He compares the area covered by Ocuitltemo and Matlatzinca names with place-names from the Otomi dialect of Tilapa. I translated and paraphrased his main points:

Ocuitltemo has place-names for several towns or cities in the State of Morelos, and in the State of Mexico; but only in the Malinalco and Tenancingo region, and between San Juan Atzingo and Santiago Tianquiltepenco.

Matlatzinca has place-names for places in the Valley of Toluca, near or at the foothills of the Nevado, and as far away as Mexicaltzingo and Zinacantepec. Names reach as far as Valle de Bravo to the northwest, and Tejupilco to the south.

Otomi names are found for places in the Valley of Toluca near Santiago Tianquiltepeno, and in the mountains near Tilapa. Place-names in this dialect of Otomi reach Acuzulco, and as far south as Chalma.
PRESENT-DAY LOCATION OF OCUILTECO, MATLATZINCA, AND OTOMI

The Ocuiltecos live in the municipality of Ocuilan in the State of Mexico, in the four communities listed on the map (Santa Lucía, Colonia Gustavo Baz, San Juan Atzingo, and El Toto). At the time of the Spanish conquest several different ethnic groups lived in the Valley of Toluca. Seventy to eighty years earlier, at the time of the Aztec expansion and conquest, there were probably Matlatzinca and Otomies, as well as Ocuiltecos, in this region. Based on archaeological evidence and prehispanic geographical patterns, some scholars believe that the Matlatzinca-Ocuitleco group came from Guerrero in the VII century. Present-day Matlatzinca are located only in San Francisco Oxtotilpan, and are not found in Ocuilan. Tilapa Otomí is virtually extinct. There were a few Otomí speakers in Tilapa in the mid-1970s.

SPANISH AND NAHUATL INFLUENCE IN PLACE-NAMEs

Ocuitleco place-names that are adaptations from Spanish or Nahuatl are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Official name</th>
<th>Ocuitleco name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Santiago Tianguistengo</td>
<td>p-santiagu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Chalma</td>
<td>p-santwariu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Santa Marta</td>
<td>p-ši-nmaalta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Santana</td>
<td>p-ši-ndana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Santa Lucia</td>
<td>p-ši-nlusia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Mexicapa</td>
<td>meškapa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. San Lorenzo</td>
<td>p-ši-liyesu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Tilapa</td>
<td>Tilaapa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Mirasol</td>
<td>mirasol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Joquitzingo</td>
<td>p-ši-kitsinko/ŋgu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. San Bartolo</td>
<td>san bartolo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These "loans" are pronounced according to the Ocuitleco intonational pattern. The p- prefix is a locative marker, ši- is equivalent to the Spanish santo/a or 'saint' in English. According to two native speakers, San Bartolo used to be called  şuča 'place of onions'.

SOCIOCULTURAL AND HISTORICAL INFORMATION REVEALED BY PLACE-NAMEs

Trade and commercial relations between different groups are reflected in place-names. The Tilapa Otomí and the Ocuitleca usually go to the market at Santiago Tianguistengo, and occasionally to Toluca. The Matlatzinca usually do their buying, bartering and selling in Tequisquiapan and in Temascaltepec. But their commercial visits to Toluca are becoming much more frequent.

Place names also indicate relationships maintained with other towns for religious purposes. The Ocuitleca used to make pilgrimages to the state of Morelos (to Mazatepec, the alcancia or 'santito' is taken to Tepalcingo the third Friday in March,
etc.). Both Ocuitlēca and Otomi from Tilapa make pilgrimages to Tenancingo and to Chalma on Friday the fifth. Matlatzinca, Ocuitlēca and Otomi still make the pilgrimage to the Virgin of Guadalupe Shrine in Mexico City. (Schumann 1975)

These three groups share the same name for Mexico City (see below). Some ethnohistorical inferences may be made based on place-names:

These three groups have toponyms for areas (colonies) that were towns in the Valley of Mexico at the time of the Conquest; like Tacuba, Tacubaya, Coyoacan, Xochimilco, etc. This could suggest that Otopames occupied the Valley of Mexico before the Aztecs, and the Mexicas expelled them from the Valley. Place-names denote a continuous relationship of some kind between the groups and the places that they have names for. During the Colonial period, we know that they had to come to Mexico City to take care of legal matters in Tacuba and Tacubaya. But we do not have information explaining a continuous relationship with other places that are located in areas far away from each other. (Schumann 1975, and my own research).

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF OCUILTECO PLACE-NAMEs
Ocuitlēca place-names consist of one or more roots and one or more prefixes. Currently the following place names are known but are no longer used:

1. Mexico, mopi-ntu-hwati (locative-diminutive-box, coffin). Another possible interpretation for ntu is 'stone'. In other words, 'place of little coffin' or 'coffin between the rocks'. Ocuitlēca speakers say that it means, mopi- 'stony ground', ntu- 'lagoon', hw 'nopal', and aati 'prickly pear'.

2. Toluca, p-finti-hiisi (locative-?-mountain/peak). According to native speakers, it means 'two mountains'. 'Two' is mnoo. It could be qhill 'dog' and nti 'scorpion', but this is unlikely because native speakers did not agree with this interpretation.

3. Coyoltepec, m-ne-ču-untri (locative-plural-oak seed). 'Place of acorns'.

4. Coatepec, pu-č2i (locative-snake). 'Place of snakes'. Some speakers say that it means '(there) were snakes' or 'little hill in the form of a snake'.

5. Cuernavaca or Morelos. The word Cuernavaca is a folk etymology in Spanish for cuauh-nahuac 'tree-near'. m-nun3aa (locative-tree trunks). 'Place of trees' or 'place of tree trunks'. It was also analyzed by several speakers as '(place where) kindling was sold'.
6. Tenancingo, p-thu-chii (locative-corn husk /possibly corn dough). 'Place of corn-?'.

7. El Toto, p-lithaa (locative-bird). 'Place of birds'.

8. San Juan Atzingo, pu-hnili (locative-town). '(The) town'.

9. Totoltepec, mpee-hiisi-ta (locative?-mountain/hill-turkey). 'Turkey mountain'. Another interpretation is 'Haba (a type of bean) mountain'.

10. Ocuilan, bee-ba?i (locative?-worm?). In Nahuatl, Ocuilan is 'worm place'. Translated into Ocuilteco it would be puyos.

11. Santa Maria, be-ghi (locative-dog). 'Dog-place'. Two interpretations were given: 'place where there were many dogs' and 'place of wasp nest' (panal de avispa).

12. Santa Monica, mpee-nta-puha (locative-water-jaltomate). 'Place of water of the jaltomate'. The jaltomate is like a tomato, but smaller and a green or yellowish color.

13. El Paraíso, m-tyAA-chii (locative-flower-haba). 'Place of haba bean flowers'.

14. El Ahuehuete, mpee-nta-škutii (locative-water-?-pine). mpena translates as 'little lagoon', but speakers translate this place name as 'water is born of this tree' (a spring flows from this tree).

15. Lagunilla, mpee-ntaa (locative-water). 'Lagoon' or 'little lagoon'.

16. Almoloya del Rio, m-nu-ntaa (locative-water). 'Water place'.

17. Huitzilac, mtaa-li-ntyAA (locative-water-is blooming-/flowering). 'Flowering place'.

18. Malinalco, m-nu-mšu (locative-swiss chard?). Although šu is 'quelite', a vegetable like swiss chard, it was suggested that this name means 'place of šumu, the papalo', an edible plant.

19. Llano de la Piedra, pi-ča-ntyši (locative-to eat-new corn). 'Place where tender corn is eaten'.

20. La Magdalena, n-kAp-šik-tvo/ n-kAp-šili-tvo (?-?-bar?of?). ši- frequently means 'covering'. We have been unable to analyze this place name so far.


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22. Lagunas de Zempoala, nateskapa (?). 'In the mountain', or m-tamgee (locative-water-cold). 'Cold water place'.

23. La Pastoria, m-pla-nču (locative-one-?).

24. The smaller of the two Zempoala mountains, pišgi-hunta (locative-mountain-girl). 'Mountain like a girl'.

25. The larger of the two Zempoala mountains, p-lu-hunta-hmu or pyu-nta-hmu (locative-?). Speakers translate this place name as 'the owner (dueño) that has many (mountains)'. It is said that there are 120 peaks at Zempoala.

PRESENT-DAY NAHUATL PLACE-NAMEs

Many of the place names actually used in the "Ocuilteco" region are of Nahua origin, indicating Mexica occupation in prehispanic times. Some examples of these names are Mazatepec 'deer mountain', Metepec 'maguey (century plant) mountain', Tenango 'walled place', Almoloya 'turbulent water', Tenancingo 'little walled city', Santiago Tianguistengo 'on the edge of the market', Coyoltepec 'palm tree mountain', Coyotepec 'coyote mountain', Coatepec 'snake mountain', Joquitzingo 'little mud place', El Toto 'bird', and Malinalco 'twisted grass'.

IN CONCLUSION

Place-names offer interesting information about the whereabouts and historical wanderings of groups of peoples. They can offer an hypothesis or clinch a theory. These facts coupled with archaeological data, codices and other ethnohistorical sources, can be a key to reconstructing an uncertain cultural past.

Here an Otopamean presence for the Valley of Mexico, predating the Aztec conquest, is postulated.

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We are grateful to the University of California, Santa Cruz, Professor William Bright and all his associates and_REED, and the staff of the Linguistic Society of America for all their help and facilities during the American Indian Languages Conferences at these meetings, which made for a most enjoyable week. Greetings to the vendors of American Indian languages.

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PREFACE

The 1991 Hokan-Penutian Languages Workshop was held at the University of California, Santa Cruz, July 1-2, 1991. Because the Linguistic Society of America Summer Institute and the LSA Summer Meeting were also held at UCSC in summer 1991, other Amerindianists also met at UCSC at that time. The Friends of Uto-Aztecan met June 28, 1991; The Society for the Study of the Indigenous Languages of the Americas met June 29-30, 1991; and the Athapascan Linguistics Conference met July 1-2, 1991.

Presenters from all these groups were invited to submit papers for inclusion along with the Hokan-Penutian papers. Some papers from all these groups are included. The papers appear here in the order that they occurred on the programs. All the papers except the last one were given at UCSC in summer 1991. The last paper was given at the 1989 Hokan-Penutian Languages Workshop, but the manuscript has not been available until now.

We are grateful to the University of California, Santa Cruz, Professor William Shipley and all the staff that assisted him, and the staff of the Linguistic Society of America Summer Institute for all the help and facilities offered the Amerindian languages groups at these meetings, which made for a most enjoyable week feasting on the wonders of American Indian languages.

James E. Redden, Editor

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