

## ON NAHUATL WISDOM

The *huehuetlatolli* is the traditional book of rhetoric, moral philosophy and theology of the Nahuas, or Aztecs, the pre-Columbian inhabitants of the Valley of Mexico. Here, we present extracts from Chapter 20, the words with which a lord or noble father admonishes his son so he may live modestly, be respectful and know himself to be well with the gods and men.

*My son, my boy, little man, listen to me; Our Lord commands thee, yea, now with two words I exhort thee, I admonish thee, my son, my child, my necklace, my fine feather, my oldest, my second son, my smallest.<sup>1</sup>*

*Now I think and I say; now I remember the word I am going to make a gift of to thee, my maternity, my paternity, with which I will do my duty, not tomorrow, but the day after tomorrow when Our Lord Tloque Nahuaque hides me, Our Lord whose rigorousness and strength no one understands, nor truly experience on the Earth.*

*Receive, then (my word); listen to it: do not follow Our Lord by half measures, live not in impurity. Ah; that thou shouldst perdure for a very long time. Go very calmly, pay attention; this is a terribly difficult, very dirty place...*

<sup>1</sup> All three terms are probably listed so that whoever uses the speech may choose the appropriate word.

**Note:** *Fragment from Huehuetlatolli, the sixth book of the Florentine Codex, published by the National University of Mexico, Mexico City, 1955, with paleography, Spanish-language version, notes and index by Salvador Días Cintora.* ❧