

## ON NAHUATL WISDOM

The *Huehuetlatolli* was the Aztecs' traditional book of rhetoric, moral philosophy and theology. The following is an extract from verse 71 about the relationship in Aztec beliefs between contact with the Creator and the bestowal of power.

This is how to enter the presence of *Tloque Nahuaque*,<sup>1</sup> how to penetrate His being, and there, He recognizes Thee, He makes Thee worthy, He gives Thee dignity. There, He may give Thee the valor of the eagle, of the tiger; there He holds His audience, there, He meets His friend, who calls Him, who prays to Him, who cares for the staff of the eagle, the staff of the tiger; in his hands, He puts the cup of the eagle, the straw of the eagle.<sup>2</sup>

And thus, he becomes mother, father of the Sun, he gives the sky and the region of the dead nourishment and drink; the eagles and the tigers venerate him, have him as mother, as father, because, in truth, thus spake he, thus did *Tloque Nahuaque* order it. He was not created; he did not make himself.

He may even give him as his due the gift of the staff, scepter and chair, the charge of government; He may charge him with the green water, the golden water, where the tail and the wing are bathed;<sup>3</sup> He may put him at His left, shod him with sandals of obsidian<sup>4</sup> the mother of the gods, the father of the gods, in the navel of the world ... the old god of the nebulous region of the dead, Xiuhtecuhtli.

<sup>1</sup> *Tloque Nahuaque* is the Creator. [Editor's Note.]

<sup>2</sup> Symbolic tube or straw so the eagle, figure of the Sun, may drink the blood of the sacrifice.

<sup>3</sup> The tail and the wing of the mythical beasts, the *maceguales*.

<sup>4</sup> That is, give him a post.