

Julia MADAJCZAK

University of Warsaw

julia@al.uw.edu.pl

THE USAGE OF NAHUATL KINSHIP TERMS IN POLITE SPEECH¹

ABSTRACT Nahuatl kin terms are known to be employed in a vast array of metaphoric meanings, whose cultural point of reference is different than the basis of European metaphors. However, since colonial texts were often written by bilingual natives or Spanish friars, they include both Nahua and Spanish ways of associating meanings. This paper examines the use of several Nahuatl terms for children and grandchildren in speeches and dialogues recorded in colonial written sources. Taking into account both their morphology and contextual occurrences, it suggests that they formed a system, in which particular terms and grammatical forms marked the tone of speech, the amount of reverence and the social distance. It also attempts at separating pre-Hispanic terminology from Nahuatl honorifics used by preachers, illustrating the difference between the two metaphorical systems.

Key words: Nahuatl, kin terms, colonial period, metaphors, honorific speech

Palabras clave: Nahuatl, términos de parentesco, periodo colonial, metáforas, lenguaje honorífico

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INTRODUCTION

Early colonial sources in Nahuatl, a language spoken in the pre-contact Aztec empire and post-contact New Spain, use kinship terms in a variety of ways. Along with their literal meaning, Nahuatl kin terms often appear as metaphors and polite speech is one of the most characteristic contexts in which they can be found. While this kind of terminology has been dealt with by translators and editors of sources ever since Nahuatl texts started to be published, a rise of interest in kin terms dating to 1970's and 1980's resulted in a few works that tackled the problem more deeply. Brant Gardner was the first to note the extensive use of forms of address based on kin terms in traditional speeches, or *huehuetlatolli*, and identified them as metaphors destined to mark relative deference upon various social situations. The attempt to analyze individual terms and draw patterns of their usage was undertaken by Frances Karttunen and James Lockhart on the basis of a set of speeches and dialogues known as The Bancroft Dialogues. Their main proposal that built on the work of Gardner was that the use of kin terms as metaphors was governed by the principle of inversion, where one's superiors were called with the terms for younger kin and vice versa. Another principle formulated at that time by Elena Díaz Rubio, but suggested already by Helga Rammow in 1964, was the rule of reciprocity, applied to the terminology used within families: children call their parents in the same way they are referred to by their mother and father.² This hypothesis was based on a list of the forms of address employed by children of various social classes in regard to their parents, included in Sahaguntine manuscripts. At this point the studies on the use of Nahuatl kin terms in polite speech stopped, leaving many issues unresolved and calling for a bigger sample of material to reevaluate suggestions made on the basis of single, isolated sources.

In an attempt to fill this gap, this paper examines the usage of several kinship terms in honorific speech, with regard to both their grammatical traits and their function in statements. The analysis will concentrate on possible pre-Hispanic usages of the terms. It will be followed by a brief look at Christianity-related contexts to illustrate one manner in which the pre-Hispanic polite forms were adopted and adapted by Nahuatl-speaking Spanish friars. The need for the comparison of the two terminological systems arises from the still growing consciousness of problems with translation between cultures. Particularly the connotations of basic kin terms, as well as the rules of extending them outside the family sphere, have tended to be taken for granted by both Spanish friars and today's scholars. The present paper departs from the assumption that even those terms which are firmly associated with the biological,

² H. Rammow, *Die Verwandtschaftsbezeichnungen im klassischen Aztekischen*, Hamburg 1964 (*Beiträge zur mittelamerikanischen Völkerkunde*, 6); B. Gardner, 'A Structural and Semantic Analysis of Classical Nahuatl Kinship Terminology', *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl*, Vol. 15 (1982); F. Karttunen, J. Lockhart (eds.), *The Art of Nahuatl Speech. The Bancroft Dialogues*, Los Angeles 1987 (*UCLA Latin American Studies*, 65. *Nahuatl Series*, 2); E. Díaz Rubio, 'Acercas de la terminología de parentesco en el náhuatl clásico: Tlacamecayotl', *Revista Española de Antropología Americana*, Vol. 16 (1987).

or “natural” area, are in fact deeply rooted in the cultural background of the people who use them.

The extensive documentation available allows for the reconstruction of the ego-centered kinship terminological system near the time of the Spanish conquest. Kin were classified on the basis of their age relative to ego. Same-generation relatives, such as siblings, were addressed differently based on their age relative to ego. Other generations were also distinguished, with some terms varying according to the sex of the referent.³ From a morphological point of view, Nahuatl kinship terms were well adapted to describe relations. They always bore an inherent possessive prefix which forced the speaker to specify the reference point of the term and speak rather of “your,” “our” or “his brother” than “a brother” in general. This feature was extensively utilized in spheres outside family ties. Kinship terms were abundant in the political, social or religious contexts, metaphorically describing the position of various individuals or supernaturals in relation to ego.

The present analysis is limited to the terms for kin younger than ego who belong to the first and second descending generations (G-1 and G-2 respectively). The material comes from 16 sources, ranging from c. 1550 to c. 1650, originating in Tenochtitlan, Tetzaco, Culhuacan (Valley of Mexico), Cuauhnahuac (Morelos) and Huexotzinco (Puebla). Documents investigated included not only *huehuetlatolli*, but also annals, everyday documents and Christian doctrinal texts, producing a sample size of over 200 attestations of polite forms of address based on kinship terms.

THE PREFIX *NO-*

The following terms of G-1 form the basis for the polite forms of address: *-pil*,⁴ a child (either a son or a daughter, used with a male reference point), *-coneuh* (the counterpart of *-pil* used with a female reference point), *-ichpoch*, a grown daughter, *-telpoch*, a grown son and *-xocoyouh*, the youngest child (either a son or a daughter). G-2 is represented by only one term, *-ixhuiuh*, a grandchild (without gender specification), which, in the biological sphere was likewise extended to collateral kin, i.e. the grandchildren of one’s siblings.⁵ While these nouns, used as terms of reference, whether literally or metaphorically, may combine with any of the possessive prefixes (“my,” “your,” “his/her,” “our,” etc.), in the vocative they are found solely with the 1st person singular possessive prefix *no-*, “my.” Even when a group of people speaks and

³ J. Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest. A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Sixteenth Through Eighteenth Centuries*, Stanford 1992, pp. 73-75.

⁴ Because of the inherent possession of Nahuatl kinship terms, if the reference point is not specified the stem of a word with the space left for an obligatory possessive prefix is used. Nahuatl words or short citations inserted in the text are given in standard orthography and are accompanied by my translation while longer citations which are put in separate paragraphs retain their original orthography and, unless indicated otherwise, the translation is provided by the editors of the cited source.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

the use of a pronoun in plural (“our”) is to be expected, the “my” form is always employed, as in the following examples:

- *in tetaoan qujtoa: Veh nopilboâtztizine, quen vel ameoantin in oamopan muchihuh, in tlein ie muchihuaz*
Their fathers said: “Alas, O my beloved children! How can what is about to come to pass have befallen you?”⁶
- *Tlacatle, tlatoanie nopiltztintzine cihuapille ticnepechtequilia in teucyotl in tlato-cayotl, ticpachoa in amomatzin in amocxitzin*
Oh lord, oh ruler, oh my nobleman, oh lady, we bow down to your lordship and rulership, we kiss your hands and feet.⁷
- *njman ie ic qujnonotza in vevetque, qujtlapaloo, quellaquaoa: qujlvia. Noch-puchtze ca njcan timoietztica*
Thereupon the old men addressed her, greeted her, animated her. They said to her: “O my daughter, thou art here.”⁸
- *auh in oacico tequjpan titlanti, njman ic hiciuhca calactiuetzi ipan in motecuçuma qujlhuja. Totecujoe notelpotzine*
And when the victory messengers had come to arrive, then they quickly entered into the presence of Moctezuma and said to him: “O our lord, O my grown son.”⁹
- *Dos uiejos principales saludan à unos Cantores: Anmotolinia noxocoyohuane, oan-quiiyohuique*
Two elderly noblemen greet some singers: You are suffering (standing here waiting in the cold?), oh my youngest ones; greetings.¹⁰
- *yn Mexica. quilhuique co tihuallaque tlacatle noxhuiuhztine tlahtohuanie*
The Mexica said to him: we have come [before you], O lord, O my grandson, O ruler.¹¹

The only term I have not been able to find with a plural reference point is *noconet-zin* and it will be separately discussed below. In the case of all the others, the 1st person singular possessive prefix becomes frozen to the stem – a process which has al-

⁶ Bernardino de Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex. General History of the Things of New Spain*, trans. by C.E. Dibble, A.J.O. Anderson, pt. 13. Book 12: *The Conquest of Mexico*, Santa Fe 1975, p. 25 (*Monographs of the School of American Research*, 14). Dibble and Anderson rendered the word *nopilboâtztizine* as “O my beloved sons!”

⁷ F. Karttunen J. Lockhart (eds.), *The Art...*, pp. 118-119.

⁸ Bernardino de Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex...*, pt. 7. Book 6: *Rhetoric and Moral Philosophy*, Santa Fe 1969, p. 130.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pt. 9. Book 8, *Kings and Lords*, Santa Fe 1954, p. 72. Dibble and Anderson rendered the word *notelpotzine* as “O my youth!”

¹⁰ F. Karttunen, J. Lockhart (eds.), *The Art...*, pp. 162-163.

¹¹ D.F. de San Antón Muñón Chimalpahin Cuauhtlehuanitzin, H. de Alvarado Tezozomoc, ‘Mexican History or Chronicle’ in *Codex Chimalpahin*, trans. by S. Schroeder, A.J.O. Anderson, Vol. 1, Norman 1997, pp. 114-115 (*Civilization of the American Indian Series*, 225). Schroeder and Anderson rendered the word *noxhuiuhztine* as “O our grandson!”

ready been observed by Frances Karttunen and James Lockhart¹² in the case of the form *nopiltzintzin(e)*, discussed further here. Since the possessive prefix essentially becomes a part of the stem, it no longer fulfills its original role: it does not correspond to the reference point. In consequence, the pronoun “my” can, if convenient, be omitted in translation of honorifics similar to those from the citations listed above. Karttunen and Lockhart point to the fact that the form *nopiltzintzine* is glossed in the dictionary of fray Alonso de Molina as “a señor. vel. o señor. vel. señor. [dize el que habla con persona de calidad]” or “to a lord or sir! or lord [says he who speaks to a person of noble status]” and not “my lord.” By the same token, Molina glosses *nopiltze*, literally “o my child!,” as “ola, hao, oys. para llamar a alguno,” or “hey, hello, listen! to call someone.”¹³

Another implication of the possessive prefix *no* – being frozen to a noun stem is that such forms actually cease to be kinship terms since they no longer describe relations. Obviously, they can still be used among relatives, e.g. in the first citation above or in many others in book 6 of the *Florentine Codex*.¹⁴ Likewise, Horacio Carochi cites the words of a father who welcomes his son:

- *manican tihuitz noxocoyohue, ca onimitz poloca, onimitzmiccatocaca, ximocalaqui ven en buen hora hijo mio, que te auia perdido, y tenido por muerto, entra.*¹⁵

Here, *noxocoyohue* (“o my youngest child!”) refers to an actual son of the speaker but there are plenty of examples when exactly the same vocative form is used among non-relatives,¹⁶ so one must determine from the context if a real parent-child bond is involved in a given situation. Probably, the original terms of address for kin have been extended to other people who, based on particular criteria, could have been classified together with those kin. This change has further been emphasized by removing the original function of a possessive prefix, thereby transforming kin terms into honorifics.

RELATIVE DEFERENCE

The honorifics discussed here can be divided into two groups: those which acquire a special meaning only in vocative form (the form of address) and those which serve as both polite forms of address and titles or status indicators. The former are based on the terms: *-pil*, *-ichpoch*, *-telpoch*, *-xocoyohue* and *-ixhuiuh*; the latter are the particular form based on *-pil*, *nopiltzintzin(e)*, and the terms based on *-coneuh*. The reconstruction of

¹² F. Karttunen, J. Lockhart (eds.), *The Art...*, p. 40.

¹³ A. de Molina, *Vocabulario en lengua castellana y mexicana y mexicana y castellana*, Vol. 2, México 1977, p. 73v (*Biblioteca Porrúa*, 44); F. Karttunen, J. Lockhart (eds.), *The Art...*, p. 40.

¹⁴ Cf.: Bernardino de Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex...*, pt. 7. Book 6, pp. 87, 93, 98, 105 etc.

¹⁵ H. Carochi, *Grammar of the Mexican Language. With an Explanation of its Adverbs*, trans. by J. Lockhart, Stanford 2001, p. 298.

¹⁶ In the case of *noxocoyohue* these are e.g.: a wedding guest addressing his forespeaker in: F. Karttunen, J. Lockhart (eds.), *The Art...*, p. 114 or a guest who came with congratulations addressing a newborn in Bernardino de Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex...*, pt. 7. Book 6, p. 192. For other forms or terms see below.

their possible pre-Hispanic connotations draws from the sources that may best reflect the pre-Hispanic tradition, such as *huehuetlatolli* or early mundane documents.

Polite forms of address based on the term *-pil* are the most widespread in written sources. The above mentioned gloss *nopiltze* in Molina's dictionary ("hey, hello, listen!") suggests that they were of a quite general nature. Indeed, they can be found in a number of contexts, used by and with reference to people of various social positions. In the *Primeros Memoriales* the high dignitaries who admonished people during special gatherings begin their speech as follows:

- *nican n amonoltitoqz nopilhoane y ye tixquich y ye timuchi otizenquĩçaco in titecutli, in tachcauhli in titequiva in ticalpixqui in titelpuchtli, auh in tipilli in titlapalivi yn titlamacazqui in titelpuchtli*

Here you are, my sons; all of you have come forth together, you the lords, you the constables, you the valiant warriors, you the majordomos, you the youths, and you the noblemen, you the marriageable youths, you the priests, you the youths.¹⁷

In the *Florentine Codex* a father whose wife had just delivered a baby is customarily greeted *nopiltze telpochtli*, or o child, o youth! The newly elected ruler admonishes his subjects using *nopilhuane* ("o my children!") in reference to brave warriors. A high dignitary uses this term when admonishing the inhabitants of an *altepetl*. In the *Crónica Mexicayotl* a leader and god-carrier Quauhtlequetzqui addresses all the Mexica in this way.¹⁸ Finally, the passage from the *Primeros Memoriales* explicitly states that commoners could also have been called *nopilhuane*:

- *in tiçitl niman quicenteca in macevalti in oqcencaltilli, nimā ie q'nonotza quimilvia nican amonoltitoqz nopilhoane*

The soothsayer assembled the commoners together; he brought them into one house. Then he addressed them; he said: "Here you are seated, my children."¹⁹

All the cited examples make use of the forms *nopiltze* and *nopilhuane*. The latter does not bear any reverential particle; the former has the vocative ending *-tze* which, according to Carochi, implies less respect and tenderness than the ending *-tzine*.²⁰ A certain difference in usage between these forms and the reverential *nopiltzine/nopilhuantzitzine* ("o child/children!") can be detected. *Nopiltze/nopilhuane* is usually not accompanied by any other honorifics or titles and, as the examples above demonstrate, they tend to be used by people of higher status than their interlocutors. On the other hand, the reverential forms seem to stress the importance of a person addressed. They often form part of much more elaborate strings of honorifics than their "common" versions, e.g.: *nopilhuantzitzine, totecuiyohuane* ("o my children, o our lords!"), or *no-*

¹⁷ Bernardino de Sahagún, *Primeros Memoriales*, trans. by T.D. Sullivan, H.B. Nicholson, Norman 1997, p. 232.

¹⁸ Idem, *The Florentine Codex*..., pt. 7. Book 6, pp. 70, 82, 195; D.F. de San Antón Muñón Chimalpahin Cuauhtlehuanitzin, H. de Alvarado Tezozomoc, 'Mexican...', pp. 102-104.

¹⁹ Bernardino de Sahagún, *Primeros*..., p. 216.

²⁰ H. Carochi, *Grammar*..., pp. 42-44.

*pilhuantzitzin totecuiyohuan, tlaçotitlaca, noxhuihtzitzinhuan*²¹ (“o my children, o our lords, o precious people, o my grandchildren!”). Thus, while the forms of address based on *-pil* were quite versatile, the choice of a particular form of the term depended on the amount of reverence that needed to be expressed.

The same principle can be seen in operation among the polite forms of address based on the term *-ixhuiuh* (one’s grandchild), *-ichpoch* (one’s grown daughter) and *-telpoch* (one’s grown son). The forms *noxhuihtze* and *noxhuihuane* (“o my grandchild!” and “o my grandchildren!”) are used, e.g. by a noblewoman in reference to her actual grandsons or by a high dignitary who instructs a newly installed ruler²² – in the latter case the speaker is of a lesser status than the referent, but the social distance between them is rather small. *Notelpochtze* (“o my grown son!”) is used within a family circle or by teachers in reference to their pupils.²³ A ruler addresses his daughter *nochpochtze* (“o my grown daughter!”) and the same form of address serves an elder speaker who instructs a bride as to her future obligations.²⁴

On the other hand, *noxhuihtzine* and *noxhuihuantzitzine* (“o my grandchild!” and “o my grandchildren!”) are often paired with other honorifics and reflect a much greater gap between a speaker and an addressee, e.g. the Mexica address their ruler: *noxhuihtzine tlatonie* (“o grandson, o ruler!”) and to a ruler of Colhuacan they say: *tlatcatle noxhuihtzine tlatonie* (“o lord, o grandson, o ruler!”). The messengers address the emperor: *totecuiyoe notelpochtzine* (“o our lord, o grown son!”). Interestingly, the reverential form of *-telpoch* and *-ichpoch* is likewise used by a midwife when she refers to a newborn. Noblewomen greet each other: *notecuiyocihuatl nochpochtcatzin* (“o my lady, o my daughter!”).²⁵

Generally speaking, the difference in usage between reverential and non-reverential forms is not very sharp. There are exceptions to the principle sketched here, e.g. in the Bancroft Dialogues where a wedding guest speaks to a governor: *tlatcatle tlatonie notelpochtze*²⁶ (“o lord, o ruler, o my grown son!”), using a less respectful form than would be expected. Here it must be stressed, however, that the governor belongs to the colonial reality and this may be the precise reason for the distortion). In most of the cases, however, a vocative ending matches either the general tone of the speech (showing deference or not) or the social distance (great or small) between interlocutors.

²¹ Bernardino de Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex...*, pt. 7. Book 6, pp. 154, 192.

²² F. Karttunen, J. Lockhart (eds.), *The Art...*, pp. 142-144. The noblewoman uses the female vocative *noxhuihuan*, omitting the final *-e*. Bernardino de Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex...*, pt. 7. Book 6, p. 51.

²³ Bernardino de Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex...*, pt. 7. Book 6, pp. 105, 116, 215; F. Karttunen, J. Lockhart (eds.), *The Art...*, p. 158.

²⁴ Bernardino de Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex...*, pt. 7. Book 6, pp. 93-94, 98; F. Karttunen, J. Lockhart (eds.), *The Art...*, p. 110.

²⁵ D.F. de San Antón Muñón Chimalpahin Cuauhtlehuanitzin, H. de Alvarado Tēzozomoc, ‘Mexican...’, pp. 114, 116; Bernardino de Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex...*, pt. 7. Book 6, pp. 167, 176-177, 202; pt. 9. Book 8, p. 72; pt. 13. Book 12, p. 6; idem, *Primeros...*, p. 295. When addressing somebody in a formal way, women sometimes used preterit agentives of verbs ending in *-ti* as nouns. H. Carochi, *Grammar...*, p. 311, n. 4.

²⁶ F. Karttunen, J. Lockhart (eds.), *The Art...*, p. 112.

TONE OF DISCOURSE

As I have stated above, the kinship term *-pil* does not specify the gender of the referent; the terms for grown children were employed for this purpose: *-ichpoch* and *-telpoch*. This principle is valid in polite speech as well. E.g. a newborn was welcomed differently by a midwife, depending on its sex:

- *qujlvia. Noxocoiouh, notelpuchtzin, anoço qujlvia: nochpuchtzin: ma itech ximax-iti in monan, in mota, in chalchiuhitli icue, in chalchiuhltatonac*

She said to it: “My youngest one, my beloved youth,” or she said, “My beloved maiden, approach thy mother, thy father, Chalchiuitl icue, Chalchiuhltatonac!”²⁷

By the same token, the speeches of parents or other relatives addressed specifically to boys make extensive use of the *-telpoch*-based forms of address while those designed for girls often contain forms based on *-ichpoch*.²⁸ Since both terms are, similarly to *-pil*, found in a variety of contexts and do not seem to be particularly attached to any set social situation, their main function seems to be stressing the gender of a referent. Thus, while *nopiltze/nopiltzine* can be understood as “hey, listen!/may you kindly listen!,” *nochpochtze/nochpochtzine* and *notelpochtze/notelpochtzine* reflect something as “o (revered) woman!” and “o (revered) man!” respectively.

The polite forms of address based on *-ixhuiuh* are definitely more “specialized” than those discussed previously. In the material I have gathered, they refer only to people of high social classes and the most common context for their usage is greetings:

- *Auh yn Mexica nima ye quitlatlauhtia yn tlacatl. quilhua = noxhuiuhztzine tlahtohuanie / oticmihiyohuilti oticmociyahuilti.*

And the Mexica then importuned the lord. They said to him: “My grandson, ruler, you are most welcome.”

- *auh yn oacic yn oncan tīcaapan in yehuatl yn achitometl. quilhua yn Mexica ynic ye quihualnamiqui. oticmihiyohuilti. noxhuiuhztzine tlacatl tlahtohuanie. cocoliztli timitztocuitilizque yn timocolhuan. yn timomacehualhuan.*

And when Achitometl reached Tīcaapan, the Mexica said to him when they met him: “Greetings, my grandson, lord ruler. We your grandfathers, your subjects, [do not wish to] make you ill [with our importunities].”²⁹

In the Bancroft Dialogues there are several examples for greeting noble boys: *tla ximocalaquitiuhian noxhuiuhztzitzinhuane* (“do come in, o grandchildren!”), *xicalaquican noxhuihuane* (“come in, o grandchildren!”), *tla iz anmohuicatzé noxocoyohuane noxhuihuane* (“do come here, o youngest children, o grandchildren!”).³⁰

²⁷ Bernardino de Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex...*, pt. 7. Book 6, p. 176.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94, 98, 105, 116, 215.

²⁹ D.F. de San Antón Muñón Chimalpahin Cuauhtlehuanitzin, H. de Alvarado Tezozomoc, ‘Mexican...’, pp. 96-97, 116-117.

³⁰ F. Karttunen, J. Lockhart (eds.), *The Art...*, pp. 138, 140.

The greatest difference in usage between the vocatives based on the terms for children and those based on *-ixhuiuh* is seen through comparison of the contexts in which the non-reverential forms appear. Such terms as *nopiltze*, *nochpochtze* or *notelpochtze* are often found in admonitions, instructions or orders instead of greetings.³¹ *Noxhuiuh* and *noxhuihuane* are rarely used in such contexts and if it does happen, they are paired with *nopiltze* and *nopilhuane* respectively.³² Thus, it seems that the *-ixhuiuh*-based vocatives generally convey more politeness than the vocatives based on the terms for children. Given their association with nobility, they can be rendered as “o, lord(s)!”

The last of the terms discussed here is *-xocoyouh* (one’s youngest child) which, in the sample data, has no reverential particles and in the sources appears only as *noxocoyohue* and *noxocoyohuane*. This form of address is sometimes used in admonitions, but again, as in the case of *noxhuiuh* etc., not commonly. Speakers who use the vocatives based on *-xocoyouh* most often express gratitude towards their interlocutor, concern over his well-being, or joy upon seeing him, e.g.:

- *Ohua noxocoyohuane oannechmocnelilique, auh oanquimocnelilique in nomachtzin*
Ah, youngest ones, I thank you on my behalf and on behalf of my nephew here.
- *O, noxocoyohue, oticmocnelili in tlacatl in toxhuiuh**tzin; auh otiquimicneli in iz monoltitoque in tenanhuan in tetahuan in tlacazcaltique in tlacahuapauhque, auh in tehuanyolque*
Oh youngest, the lord our grandson (the governor) owes you thanks, and so do the parents present here, the raisers and educators of children, and the relatives.³³

In comparison to the forms of address based on the above discussed terms for children and grandchildren, *noxocoyohue* and *noxocoyohuane* convey much more intimacy and tenderness and can be translated as “o dearest one(s)!”

A speech from the Bancroft Dialogues shows well how various forms of address were applied to the changing tone of discourse. The speaker congratulates a newly married couple, beginning with the affectionate form *noxocoyohuane*. Then he passes to the main part of his speech, which is generally of an educational nature. While admonishing the bride and the groom he addresses them *nopilhuane*,³⁴ but when he directs

³¹ Cf. e.g. a speech on chastity in: Bernardino de Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex*..., pt. 7. Book 6, p. 116; instructions concerning the auction of estate in: S.L. Cline, M. León Portilla (eds.), *The Testaments of Culhuacan*, Los Angeles 1984, p. 42 (*Nahuatl Series*, 1. *Special Studies* (UCLA Latin American Center Publications), 2); orders given by a god-carrier to the Mexica in: D.F. de San Antón Muñón Chimalpahin Cuauhtlehuanitzin, H. de Alvarado Tezozomoc, ‘Mexican...’, pp. 112-114.

³² Cf. e.g.: Bernardino de Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex*..., pt. 7. Book 6, pp. 213-214.

³³ F. Karttunen, J. Lockhart (eds.), *The Art*..., pp. 114-115, 162-165. They rendered *noxocoyohuane* and *noxocoyohue* as “my youngest ones” and “my youngest” respectively. According to my above considerations on the possessive prefix *no-*, I have decided to ignore it in translation.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

his words specifically to the bride, he introduces his admonition with the term *nochpochtze*. Finally, he again adopts a more tender manner of speaking, saying:

- *cocoliztli namechonnocuitiliz, nictequipachoz in amixtzin in amoyollotzin, noxocoyohuane nopilhuane*

I (do not wish to) make you ill (with long talking), I (do not wish to) disturb your spirits, dearest ones.³⁵

Further examples are found in the speeches delivered on the occasion of a child's birth in the *Florentine Codex*.³⁶ The messenger of a ruler greets the child's father (a nobleman) with the highly polite phrase: *noxhuiubhticatzine, tlatcatle, totecue* ("o 'grandson,' o lord, o lord!"). His speech is responded to by an old man, a representative of the family. The messenger replies as if to the entire family, using the more general, though still reverential *nopilhuantzitzine* ("o my children!"). Then the parallel situation among a lower class of people is presented. A guest addresses a newborn tenderly, at the same time specifying its gender by means of terms which do not create much distance: *noxocoyohue notelpochtze anoço nochpochtze* ("o dearest boy or girl!"). During the entire speech he continues to refer to the baby *noxocoyohue* (and once he uses a doublet *noxocoyohue notlaçopiltze* ("o dearest and precious one!"). A speech to a newly delivered woman follows, where the term *nochpochtze* (paired with *cihuapille*, "o lady!") is used throughout, stressing the "female" nature of its content. The speaker then turns to the old members of the family, applying to them the general form *nopilhuane*. Finally, the father of the newborn is addressed and admonished with the phrase *nopiltze telpochtlexole* ("listen, o young man, o page!").

For Brant Gardner, the terms from G-1 and G-2 as used in *huehuetlatolli* mark the social focal point of the discourse.³⁷ However, as I have demonstrated above, their role was even greater, because they stressed the general tone of statements. Arguably, the logic which stood behind the transformation of the kin terms into the polite forms of address was rooted in the kinship terminological system. *-Pil* was a more general term than *-ichpoch*, *-telpoch* and *-xocoyouh* and it also played the most general role of all in polite speech. *-Ichpoch* and *-telpoch* were tightly associated with gender in both spheres. The term *-xocoyouh* is likely to be derived from *tzoco*, or something very small and in Nahuatl smallness was often mixed with affection and deference.³⁸ Finally, in the Nahuatl classification the grandchildren were one generation further from ego than children and they actually included non-lineal relatives. Both factors correspond to the fact that the *-ixhuiuh* vocatives implied greater distance between a speaker and a referent than the polite forms based on terms for children.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 110-111. Karttunen and Lockhart rendered the doublet *noxocoyohuane nopilhuane* as "my youngest ones, my children."

³⁶ Bernardino de Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex*..., pt. 7. Book 6, pp. 189-196.

³⁷ B. Gardner, 'A Structural...', p. 111.

³⁸ F. Karttunen, *An Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl*, Norman 1992, p. 315; F. Karttunen, J. Lockhart (eds.), *The Art*..., pp. 76-77.

NOPILTZINTZIN(E) AND NOCONETZIN

Along with the polite forms of address that have been discussed above, the Nahua used two honorifics based on terms for children: *nopiltzintzin(e)* and *noconetzin*. They differ from the others in that they can be found in either vocative (direct speech) or absolute (indirect speech), e.g.:

- *nopiltzintzine timitztotequipachilhuizque ma xicmocaquiti*
My lord, we [do not wish to] sadden you. Listen.
- *Ca onconcac. obualmotlayhuali yn niccauhztzin ý nopiltzintzin yn tecocoltzin*
I have heard that my younger brother, my lord Tecocoltzin, has been sent as messenger.
- *Noconetzin ye iuh oquimochiuique ye iuh oquimopulhuique tlatcatl motlatzin notecuiyo*
My child, they did this to the lord your uncle, my lord; thus they ruined him.
- *quēn nitlācatl, in tla ōquimomachiti in noconetzin in tlein napan ōmochiuh?*
q serà de mi si mi padre [sic!] sabe lo que me ha sucedido?³⁹

The form *nopiltzintzin(e)* has an unusual reverential ending: it doubles the particle *tzin* (*-tzintzin*), instead of regularly reduplicating it (*-tzitzin*). Since the difference is slight at first glance, this form was often mistaken for the plural of *nopiltzin*.⁴⁰ However, the latter, as can be observed in the examples above, is usually *nopilhuantzitzin*, *-huan* being the plural ending of possessed nouns. *Nopiltzintzin(e)*, on the other hand, not only has an inoperative possessive prefix (like all the previously discussed terms), but it is also invariant as to number – it can have both singular and plural primary referents.⁴¹ The last feature was noticed by Karttunen and Lockhart in the Bancroft Dialogues⁴² and other sources confirm it, e.g.:

- *ca nechonnotz in amocol fran{co} xallacatl niman ye nechilhuia. Nopiltzintzine tla xiualmouica*
Your senior official Francisco Xallacatl called out to me and then said to me: “My nobleman, come.”
- *tla xihualmohuican nopiltzintzinne yn tehuatzin migl yuhcatlatzin yhua yn tehuatzin migl cohuatequitzin nimechnonahuatillia (sic),*
Draw close, my lords, you, Miguel Iuhcatlatzin and you, Miguel Coatequitzin, I instruct you (pl.).⁴³

³⁹ J. de San Antonio, ‘Juan de San Antonio’s Letter’ in *Codex Chimalpabin*, Vol. 2, pp. 218-219, 230-231; P. Ahuachpain et al., ‘Texcoca Accounts of Conquest Episodes’ in *Codex Chimalpabin*, Vol. 2, pp. 188-189; H. Carochi, *Grammar...*, pp. 418-420.

⁴⁰ H. Rammow, *Die Verwandtschaftsbezeichnungen...*, p. 94, n. 28.

⁴¹ At least in vocative. In my sample the absolute form *nopiltzintzin* refers always to males.

⁴² F. Karttunen, J. Lockhart (eds.), *The Art...*, p. 40.

⁴³ J. de San Antonio ‘Juan...’, pp. 234-235; S.L. Cline, M. León Portilla (eds.), *The Testaments...*, pp. 244-245.

As mentioned above, Molina glosses *nopiltzintzine*: “to a lord or sir! or lord.” This title, however, is found likewise in reference to women, e.g. *tlacatle cihuapille nopiltzintzine* (“o lady, o lady, o lady!”).⁴⁴ It seems to be almost identical in meaning with the *-ixhuiuh*-based vocatives, particularly with the most reverential *noxhuiuhztzine/ noxhuihuantzitzine*. Both forms of address are found only in reference to noblemen or noblewomen. They are used in very polite statements and they are accompanied by the same honorifics, such as *tlacatle* (“o lady/lord!”), *tlatoanie* (“o ruler!”) or *totecuiyoe* (“o our lord!”). Sometimes they are even used in reference to the same person, e.g. in the *Florentine Codex*, where a nobleman or merchant exhorts the father of a newborn child:

- *Tlacatle, nopiltzintzine, totecoe, tlaçotzintle, tlaçotitlacatle (...) ixqujchtzin ic njctlapaloe in motecuiotzin in motlatocaiotzin noxviuhhticatzine, tlaçotitlacatle.*

O lord, o lord, o our lord, o precious one, o precious person (...) this is all with which I greet your lordship, your rulership, o lord, o precious person!⁴⁵

The honorifics based on the term *-coneuh* stand out from all the other terms discussed here in that they are quite irregular, as far as both grammatical and contextual matters are concerned. In the vocative they behave similarly to other polite forms of address based on kin terms. I was able to find 14 attestations of *-coneuh*-based vocatives: 12, as expected, have the 1st person singular possessive prefix *no-* and the reverential ending *-tzin* (*noconetzin*). Two, however, bear no possessive prefix and the resulting form is *conetzin*. Perhaps in these examples the possessive prefix was omitted inadvertently, because Horacio Carochi, who copied one of them into his *Arte*, complemented the stem with *no-*. On the other hand, *conetzin* is repeated twice in the same speech, in both cases accompanied with another, “regular” form of address: *nochpochtzin* and *noxocoyouh* respectively.⁴⁶ Such an unusual form is characteristic of Nahuatl personal names, e.g. *Axayacatzin* or *Coanacochtzin*, which, though lack a possessive prefix, at the same time display a non-absolutive ending *-tzin* (instead of the absolutive *-tzintli*).

Both polite forms of address and titles based on *-coneuh* are used only by women⁴⁷ – the pattern which can be perceived as an extension of the usage of this term in the biological sphere. Interestingly, as Karttunen and Lockhart noticed for the Bancroft Dialogues⁴⁸ and as other sources I have analyzed confirm, the honorific *nopiltzintzin(e)* is used solely by male speakers. This fact points to the possibility of these terms being the counterpart of each other in “female” and “male speech.” In the list of terms with which parents from various social classes are addressed by their children, a son of a “principal” or “señor” addresses his parents as *nopiltzintzin(e)* while a daughter of

⁴⁴ F. Karttunen, J. Lockhart (eds.), *The Art...*, pp. 40, 128, 144, 160. Cf. also the forms of address used in reference to noble parents in the ‘Memoriales con Escolios’: Bernardino de Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex...*, pt. 11. Book 10: *The People*, Santa Fe 1961, p. 1, n. 2, p. 2, n. 6.

⁴⁵ Bernardino de Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex...*, pt. 7. Book 6, p. 188. Translation mine.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 99, 102; H. Carochi, *Grammar...*, p. 458.

⁴⁷ Female speakers do not add a vocative ending to a noun’s stem, so in the texts the vocative forms look exactly the same as the absolutive forms.

⁴⁸ F. Karttunen, J. Lockhart (eds.), *The Art...*, p. 40.

the same class refers to them as *noconetzin*.⁴⁹ My sample does not contain any example of *noconetzin* (in the vocative) used explicitly in reference to a commoner – it has to be admitted, though, that the information on lower social classes included in written sources is rather scarce. Moreover, the “female” form of address goes accompanied with the same honorifics as the “male” one described above, e.g.: *noconetzin totecuiyo tlaçotitlacatl* (“o lady, o our lady, o precious person!”).⁵⁰ However, there is another side of the coin, too. Though undoubtedly very polite, the vocative *noconetzin* is used mainly among relatives or people remaining in intimate relations with each other, e.g. a close relative of a newly delivered woman uses it in reference to the midwife, a mother in reference to her daughter, or an aunt in reference to her nephew.⁵¹

The absolute forms of *-coneuh* used as titles of respect present even more problems in interpretation. Firstly, they are not grammatically uniform like *nopiltzintzin(e)* is, since they appear as either reverential (*-conetzin*) or non-reverential (*-coneuh*) forms. E.g., in the Texcoca Accounts doña Marina says, referring to Cortés: *Ca ye mohuica in noconetzin in Capitan* (“for my lord, the Captain, is going”) and subsequently to Tōcpāxochitl, a royal son and Cortés’ ally: *Catli in noconeuh in Tōcpāxochitzin* (“where is my lord Tōcpāxochitzin?”).⁵² In these translations I purposefully took into account the possessive prefix *no-* because, in the case of *-coneuh*-based titles of respect it is undoubtedly operative. In my sample they can likewise be found combined with the 2nd person singular possessive prefix *mo-*, resulting in the form *moconetzin* (“your lord”), used by a mother in reference to her daughter’s father.⁵³ This feature, as well as the lack of plural referents for the prefix *no-* in my material, suggest that the terms based on *-coneuh* had not yet been fully transformed into honorifics at the time of contact. While the morphological traits of the other terms discussed here allow for a clear differentiation between the polite forms of address and actual kin terms in the texts, in the case of *-coneuh* the two spheres can be defined only on the basis of context.

DOCTRINAL NAHUATL

After the conquest some of the polite forms of address discussed here were adopted by Spanish friars for their own purposes. I have traced the usage of these terms through several sources: the Confessionario mayor, written by Molina; the confutation of idolatry included in book 1 of the *Florentine Codex*; Coloquios y doctrina cristiana, of complex authorship, but reviewed by fray Bernardino de Sahagún;⁵⁴ scraps of dialogues in-

⁴⁹ Bernardino de Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex...*, pt. 11. Book 10, p. 1, n. 2, p. 2, n. 6.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pt. 7. Book 6, p. 179.

⁵¹ Ibid.; H. Carochi, *Grammar...*, p. 458; J. de San Antonio ‘Juan...’, pp. 228-230.

⁵² P. Ahuachpain et al., ‘Texcoca...’, pp. 186-188. Both translations mine.

⁵³ Bernardino de Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex...*, pt. 7. Book 6, p. 99; H. Carochi, *Grammar...*, p. 458.

⁵⁴ M. León Portilla, ‘Estudio introductorio’ in Bernardino de Sahagún, *Coloquios y doctrina cristiana*, pal. and ed. M. León Portilla, México 1986, pp. 19-20 (*Facsimiles de lingüística y filología nahuas*, 4).

cluded in some of the testaments of Culhuacan and conversations between natives and priests included in the Bancroft Dialogues. The former three record transformations in the Nahuatl polite speech consciously made by the friars who needed to adapt some forms of address to the new reality they represented. The latter two reflect the usage of those innovations in everyday situations.

Most importantly, the majority of the terms discussed here disappears in the language used by the friars. The only kin term that is left is *-pil*, though excluding the form *nopiltzintzine*.⁵⁵ It is hard to tell if the friars used forms with an inoperative possessive prefix, since in all examples I have gathered a speaker is singular which in any case implies the usage of the prefix *no-*. Various forms of *-pil*: *nopiltze*, *nopilhuane*, *notlaçopiltze*, *notlaçopiltzine* and *notlaçopilhuane* are almost always used by priests in reference to natives. In one case God addresses angels *notlaçopilhuane* ("o my precious children!").⁵⁶

The usage of the particle *tlaço-*, or precious, is prevalent in the work of Molina. The forms with *tlaço-* do appear in pre-Hispanic contexts but they are not very common: of all the sources analyzed here they can be found only in the *buehuetlatolli* of the *Florentine Codex*. They are used by parents or other relatives in reference to their actual children or younger relatives respectively and by midwives or visitors to a newborn in reference to the baby.⁵⁷ Exactly the same contexts can be defined for the forms of address based on *-xocoyouh*, and indeed, the two are quite often juxtaposed, e.g.:

- *Notlaçopiltzin, noxocoioh izcatquj tlatlalilli, machiotl qujtlatl in monan, in mota in Iooaltecutli, in Iooalticitl:*

O precious child, o dearest one, here it is the rule, the example which your mother, your father Yoaltecutli, Yoalticitl, have established.

- *O notlaçopiltze, noxocoiove: maiecuel, ma xonmovica:*

O precious child, O dearest one, come on, go there!⁵⁸

The term *notlaçopil-* as used in book 6 does not create much distance and it is flavored rather with affection than with particular reverence. At the same time the particle *tlaço-* combined with *-pil* has a special significance in the Nahuatl kinship system, where polygamy was practiced among the ruling class. According to Pedro Carrasco, *tlaçopipiltin* were sons of rulers born to wives of high status.⁵⁹ Susan Schroeder states that the absolutive *tlaçopilli* and its possessive *-tlaçopiltzin* were associated with each other as far as their meaning was concerned. She notes that the latter often seems to identify a legitimate son of a ruler and sometimes, though not always, a successor to the throne.⁶⁰ Thus, the affection connoted by *tlaço-* in polite speech may have been undermined by the implication of legitimacy.

⁵⁵ The friars were, nevertheless, familiar with this form as is evident from the dictionary of Molina.

⁵⁶ Bernardino de Sahagún, *Coloquios...*, p. 182.

⁵⁷ Cf. e.g.: idem, *The Florentine Codex...*, pt. 7. Book 6, pp. 215, 169-172, 194.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 171, 215. Both translations mine.

⁵⁹ P. Carrasco, 'Royal Marriages in Ancient Mexico' in H.R. Harvey and H.J. Prem (eds.), *Explorations in Ethnohistory. Indians of Central Mexico in the Sixteenth Century*, Albuquerque 1984, p. 44.

⁶⁰ S. Schroeder, *Chimalpabín y los reinos de Chalco*, trans. by J.F. Zaballa Omaña, Zacatepec 1994, p. 242.

Molina found the forms *notlaçopiltze* and *notlaçopiltzine* appropriate to render the phrase “mi amado hijo!” or “my beloved son!” with which he addresses his reader throughout the Spanish part of his Confessionario. He ignores the peculiarities of the endings *-tze* and *-tzine* which traditionally indicated lesser or greater distance between speakers and uses them interchangeably. The form *notlaçopil-* is removed from the usual context of intimate relations and transferred to the social situation that involved authority on one side (an author of a book, teacher, sage in divine matters, representative of a dominant nation) and submission on the other (a reader, disciple, sinner, representative of conquered people). The particle *tlaço-* is simply a literal rendering of the word “amado,” the whole indigenous social context of the resulting term being removed from the usage. This pattern is followed likewise in Sahagún’s sermon-like confutations of the *Florentine Codex*, though their Spanish version in the *Historia General* lacks the respective forms of address. The term *notlaçopilhuane* used by God with reference to angels in the *Coloquios y doctrina cristiana* is rendered in the Spanish part of the source as “hijos y caualleros míos”.⁶¹

In the sources which record more everyday situations than sermons or doctrinal texts, the particle *tlaço-* used in the contexts described above is absent. The priests address the natives *nopiltze*, *nopiltzine* or *nopilhuane*.⁶² Although we cannot be sure in what manner these forms were actually understood by the Nahua, they were certainly designed by the friars as literal renderings of the term “hijo” which served priests to address worshippers. This is indicated by the fact that in the sources the priests are always responded to with “o my/our father!”⁶³ and not with the traditional honorifics based on the terms *-pil* or *-ixhuiuh*. Unfortunately, the analysis of the usage of the term *-ta*, or father, in direct speech must remain outside the scope of this short paper. However, at least in the material I have gathered, there is a clear difference between *-ta* used in Christian contexts (always singular, with reference to God or priests) and in pre-Hispanic contexts (always plural, with reference to one’s auxiliaries or advisers).

CONCLUSION

Nahuatl honorifics based on kin terms formed a consistent system, whose dynamics over time can be, to some degree, detected in written sources. Metaphoric usages of forms of address of terms for younger kin focused not only on pointing to the addressees as recipients of discourse, but also on marking the general tone of speech and,

⁶¹ Bernardino de Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex...*, pt. 2. Book 1: *The Gods*, Santa Fe 1970, pp. 62-67; idem, *Historia general de las cosas de la Nueva España*, ed. J.C. Temprano, Vol. 1, Madrid 2001, pp. 95-99 (*Cronicas de América (Dastin)*, 23); idem, *Coloquios...*, pp. 94, 182.

⁶² Cf. e.g.: A. de Molina, *Confesionario mayor en la lengua mexicana y castellana (1569)*, México 1984, pp. 20r, 48v-49r (*Facsimiles de linguística y filología nabuas*, 3); S.L. Cline, M. León Portilla (eds.), *The Testaments...*, p. 42.

⁶³ Cf. e.g.: A. de Molina, *Confesionario...*, pp. 16r-v; H. Carochi, *Grammar...*, p. 264; J. de San Antonio ‘Juan...’, p. 220.

implicitly, the attitude of the speaker toward the listener. The most general term, *-pil* (“child”), could have been employed in regard to a person of any social status, apparently fulfilling a function of calling one’s attention to the utterance that followed. Not all of the forms of address were actually reverential, depending on endings attached to the stem. Such a perspective competes with the hypothesis of inversion proposed by Karttunen and Lockhart, though a comparative study of the terms for G+1 and G+2 is necessary to complement the image presented here. It is also an alternative for the “rule” of reciprocity, because a daughter who calls her father *noconetzin* (“my child”) is simply using the female version of the term “my lord,” definitely not employing the term that her father uses in regard to her.⁶⁴

The comparison between pre-Hispanic and Spanish-influenced honorifics in Nahuatl shows that, although they were used within the same language and were based on the same kind of classification system (a kinship system), they were entirely different. From the abundance of honorifics, the friars only chose those terms that best matched the hierarchical nature of their relation to the natives. Their initiative was not without lasting effect. As sources such as the Testaments of Culhuacan or the Bancroft Dialogues demonstrate, by the second half of the 16th century the forms of address based on the Spanish classification system were already being used by the Nahua alongside traditional ones.

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⁶⁴ For a list of forms of address used among kin see: Bernardino de Sahagún, *The Florentine Codex...*, pt. 11. Book 10, p. 1, n. 2, p. 2, n. 6.

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Dr Julia MADAJCZAK is an assistant professor in the Faculty of "Artes Liberales" at the University of Warsaw. She works in an international project "Europe and America in Contact," funded by the European Research Council and focusing on the cross-cultural transfer in Spanish America. She is the author of several articles on Nahuatl kinship terminology and dynastic succession, as well as of an unpublished PhD dissertation on Nahuatl kinship terminology as a system of classification.