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TERRESTRIAL AND CELESTIAL GODS IN MEXICAN ANTIQUITY

Among all the religions of pre-Columbian Mexico, we know the Aztecs the best. Observed and described while their religion was still alive, illustrated by a thousand monuments, bas-reliefs, and illuminated manuscripts, from the 16th century to our own day it has prompted a wealth of commentaries and studies on the part of innumerable indigenous or Spanish chroniclers and by scholars from all over the world. The museums of the world overflow with religious statues and sacred objects, the libraries are full of books dealing with the beliefs, rites, and gods of Mexico. It is no surprise that the Aztec religion, that is, the last indigenous form of religious phenomenon in central Mexico, has fascinated researchers to the point of putting in the shade earlier or peripheral forms of the non-Aztec peoples.

The very abundance of documents available for this late phase acts as a filter between us and the long history of autochthonous

Translated by Martin Faigel.

https://doi.org/10.1177/039219216601405602 Published online by Cambridge University Press

religions. And this all the more so since the Aztec religion with its bloody and dramatic rites, its elaborate theological speculation, its varied and abundant pantheon, the moving poetry of its hymns and the richness of the plastic arts that it inspired, is perfectly suited to capture the attention. The work of a great ethnologist such as Eduard Seler bears witness to this.

Nonetheless, two sources which are certainly not new but whose importance grows with further research have either brought us new data or data previously not understood, as well as points of view which had not been considered before. In the last half-century archaeology has made great progress. It has revealed to us the existence and development of cultures previously labeled "archaic" which we would instead call "preclassic," as well as the high Olmec civilization. Ethnography, in its concern with the description of present-day Indians, each day enriches our vision not only of what they are now but of what their predecessors were like.

Besides the highly-colored design which the Aztec civilization offers us, we can trace here the rise, there the subsiding into the past of a succession of previous civilizations: a panorama without doubt often hazy but one which is gradually growing in preciseness of detail and information. Similarly, beyond the boundaries of the central valley where the Aztec tribes lived out their rise and fall for two centuries, we can discern other autochthonous peoples who were covered up or dominated by them, at the same time contributing to the elaboration of their myths or their rituals.

Thus, research with the goal of not only describing the Aztec religion and analyzing its inner arrangements but of discovering the roots of its various component elements should be carried out in both time and space.

Why such an investigation? Because the study of this religion, together with the society which it reflects, brings to light a series of contradictions and tensions. Far from appearing as a harmonious, static unity, in permanent equilibrium, instead the religious phenomena in Tenochtitlán Mexico at the beginning of the 16th century could well be compared to a crucible or a retort where the substances in fusion acted one against another, in combination or in opposition.

Let us list some of these contradictions, these tensions:

The Aztec tribal god, the "patron" of Tenochtitlán, is the terrible Uitzilopochtli, the sun and war god. Nonetheless, at the summit of the great Teocalli which dominates the imperial capitol from its pointed pyramid, its sanctuary is mixed with that of another god, the old and peaceful Tlaloc, the country god of rain and harvests.

Almost every twenty-day "month" was marked by human sacrifices; and yet Quetzalcoatl, the Plumed Serpent, a highly honored divinity, is incarnated in the distant Toltec past as a wise and pious king-priest who forbade such bloody rites.

Tezcatlipoca, the nocturnal god of the Great Bear, protector of young warriors, has charge of the education of future citizen-soldiers in the *telpochcalli* ("houses of young men"); but the highest form of education, preparing dignitaries and priests, is given in the *calmecac* ("monastery-schools") under the aegis of Quetzalcoatl. The literature of the period leaves no doubt that these two systems of education were absolutely antithetical in many ways. This opposition went so far at times as to reveal itself in open hostility.

Few societies have been as austere in the domain of the sexual life as this one; but, nevertheless, in its pantheon we find enthroned in a favored place the goddess of carnal love, Tlazolteotl.

Pledged to sacred war, the Aztecs believed in the immortality of warriors who fell in combat or in sacrifice—a celestial, solar immortality in the luminous joy of morning and noon. At the same time, they took over the myth of another kind of immortality, that of the god of rains, in an eternal garden ripe with eternal foliage.

The West, home of the setting, disappearing sun, "the falling eagle," is the somber side of the world. But it is also the *ciuatlampa*, "the feminine side," where the matriarchal-goddesses of the earth reign, giving life to the young gods of maize, and through them life to all men.

The facts described above, as well as other, analogous ones, make us surmise that the Aztec religion—a complex, unstable ensemble—was the convergence of diverse traditions which had not yet been synthesized at the moment when Europeans first

saw it. The following observations seek only to draw attention to some of these elements and their origins.

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We know practically nothing about the religion of the preclassic peoples, that is to say, the first farmers who cultivated maize and lived in villages, beginning in the Third Millennium B.C. That they celebrated funeral rites is shown by the tombs where the dead were surrounded with offerings. Their sculpture abounds in anthropomorphic representations, in figurines endowed with highly varied attributes, ornaments, and headdresses. Do some of these objects correspond to their gods? It is impossible to say. At most two types of figurines seem to evoke a representation of the sacred. On the one hand there are female steatopygic statuettes which could bear some relationship to the cult of fertility; and on the other are the bicephalic figurines which, one imagines, reflect a belief in the duality of things, an idea which was to establish itself later and more strongly in Mexico. We also know of a sort of terra cotta mask, one half of which shows a living face and the other part a skeleton. This close connection of life and death must have been familiar not only to the Aztec but to other Indians as well, for example, the Huaxtecs, as demonstrated by a magnificent statue with two faces (one a skeleton) from Chilitujú, now in the Brooklyn Museum.

These few clues obviously do not permit us to reconstruct what might have been the religious thought of these preclassic villagers. On the whole their art contained very few symbols. It is worth noting that the art of northwestern Mexico, which developed directly from them and spread out beyond the Michoacán as far as Nayarit, has the same characteristics. Full of vivacity and vigor, depicting in profusion men, animals, plants, and scenes of daily life, it seems to lack any metaphysical preoccupations, despite its contemporaneity with the great theocratic cultures.

The last two or three centuries before our era show the beginnings of a change in this respect. It is from this epoch that one can date the first representation of a divinity as such, discovered on the central plateau: a statuette whose traits and

symbolic attributes evoke the ancient god of fire as it was to be represented in the course of the following centuries. It is also possible to interpret this statuette as the representation not of the fire-god but of one of the petty gods of the mountains and rain. Whatever it may be, it a very ancient divinity, which is also to be found among the Aztecs.

The final phase of the preclassic era was marked by the strong emergence of religious life. How else are we to explain the building of Cuicuilco, the first pyramid known? Although its technique is still rudimentary, halfway between the tumulus and the pyramid properly speaking, this monument, enclosed by symmetrically arranged tombs and capped by a sanctuary, could not have been built without the coordinated efforts of a large population led by a sacerdotal hierarchy.

This final phase of village culture occurred at the same time as a historic phenomenon of great importance: the beginning and the formative period of the first (to our knowledge) great autochthonous civilization, that of the Olmecs. The Olmec center seems to have been the humid tropical zone along the coast of the Gulf, south of the present state of Veracruz and in the Tabasco, particularly at La Venta. From there, their influence spread as far as the central plateau (Olmec statuette found at Tlatilco), as far as Michoacán (Olmec jade objects in the tombs of El Opeño), and as far as the valley of Oaxaca (bas-reliefs of "the Dancers" of Monte-Albán).

The basic traits of the high Mexican civilization developed with them: urban centers with complexes of pyramids, steles, and carved altars; a chronology and the recording of dates (steles of Tres Zapotes, 31 A.D.; statuette of Tuxtla, 162 A.D.); and finally an overruling religious symbolism which entirely dominated art, bas-reliefs, and carving.

We do not know who the Olmecs were, where they came from, or what language they spoke. Perhaps we should regard them as pre-Mayan, or better still, a hypothesis not excluded by the preceding, as the first or one of the first civilized peoples of the coastal zone, who were later called Totonacs, "those of the warm country." At any rate, what is certain and attested to by their sculpture, their altars, their marvelous jade statuettes, is that their religion was based on the worship of a feline di-

vinity. Sometimes a jaguar, like the very fine jade figurine in the Bliss Collection at Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C., at other times and more frequently a jaguar-man, characterized by a large mouth with thick lips turned down at the corners, it sometimes shows up in the form of an adult, sometimes a child, a baby. The jaguar-men, with resplendent headdresses, carry feline-babies in their arms. In one case the god (or a priest) seems to loom out of the bulk of the altar as from a cavern, with the child it holds.

The cult of the feline had a place in the first rank of importance in Peruvian antiquity, where it inspired the art of Chavín de Huántar, and one can hardly help noticing the resmblance between the feline images of Chavín and the stele discovered in Mexico at Placeres del Oro (Guerrero). There is general agreement that the feline god of Peru symbolized the forces of nature. The distinctive Olmec style is very different from that of Chavín, but it is possible that the cult of the jaguar had the same meaning. In historic times, the jaguar god of Aztec Mexico was known under the name of Tepeyollotli, "the heart of the mountain;" it was a secondary divinity, personifying the depths of the earth and telluric forces.

The little we know about the Olmecs leaves us little to guess at. At most one can say that the feline cult had some connection with the earth. The jaguar-faced baby might have symbolized fertility, the birth of vegetation, the young plants, the young maize. Apart from the Olmecs, representations of children are rare in Mexican art, but a famous Aztec statue shows an earth goddes at the moment of giving birth to the god of maize, and this staple of nourishment is always associated with if not an infant, at least an adolescent, among the Maya as well as the Indians of the central plateau.

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The great classical civilization of Teotihuacán which developed on the high plateau between the third and the eighth centuries A.D. can be considered the most advanced example of a pacific, agricultural theocracy. Its pyramids and temples, its houses, its murals, its refined ceramic work, its art of statuary and masks

in hard stone allow us to retrace the steps of a society based upon the rural masses, organized and led by a priestly aristocracy. No images of war—the ritual scenes depict offerings of pieces of jade, feathers, incense, rubber. There is no trace of human sacrifice.

The recent indigenous sources tell us scarcely anything about the ethnic origin or the language of those who built Teotihuacán. According to the Aztecs the city was built by the gods themselves at the beginning of the world. But the Totonacs of the coastal region had a tradition according to which their ancestors had erected the great pyramids of Teotihuacán. In fact, one can find some striking analogies between that art and the art of the Gulf region: for example, voluted decorative motifs and stylization of the butterfly. The frescoes of Teotihuacán are rich in images of tropical plants and birds unknown on the sub-desert plateau, more than 2000 meters below sea level—cocoa, rubber ("Olmec" means "people of the land of rubber"), the quetzal bird with its magnificent green plumage.

One can surmise that the Teotihuacán civilization was developed by an aristocracy originating in the tropical zone and superimposed on the peasantry of the central plateau. Its religion could have been formed by the combination of concepts and rituals imported from the Warm Lands with the beliefs and traditions of autochthonous farmers.

Hermann Beyer has drawn attention to the obese and plump divinities of terra cotta which one finds both in the coastal region and at Teotihuacán. Do they symbolize abundance, prosperity? They are not without some resemblance to the Olmec babies, themselves chubby, or to the enormous monolithic heads at La Venta, often interpreted as corresponding to a somewhat negroid ethnic type. However, they could simply be a representation of an adipose god.

The jaguar which plays such a prominent role among the Olmecs also appears at Teotihuacán in certain frescoes, often in combination with shellfish, symbols of water and the fecundity of nature.

An onyx plaquette of indisputable Teotihuacán origin which comes from Ixtapaluca (Chalco) represents a goddess whose head is adorned with a crest, the jaw of a fantastic serpent, and who

has a hieroglyphic inscription made up of a number and a sign on the stomach. The number, written with a bar and dots in the manner of the Mayas and the Zapotecs, corresponds to the number seven, and the sign is analogous to the one we know under the name of "eye of the serpent" in the inscriptions at Monte Albán. Evidently this represents the name of the goddess, "Seven-Eye of the Serpent," or perhaps—if the eye is intended to represent the entire creature (as in certain manuscripts the ear symbolizes a dog or a jaguar, the horns, a stag)—"Seven-Serpent." For this is the name of the goddess of agriculture, protectress of maize, the Chicomecoatl of the Aztec period.

The National Museum of Mexico has an enormous monolithic statue in an archaic style which was brought from Teotihuacán by the Mexican archaeologist Leopoldo Batres. In general it is called the "goddess of water," although this title has been quite controversial. Nevertheless, an examination of its ornamentation leads quickly to the thought that this attribution might indeed be correct; for, in effect, the goddess's skirt is bordered with a fringe composed of small scrolls very similar to those which were used in the most recent historic period to write the sign *atl*, "water;" it decorated the dress of the Aztec goddess of rain and sweet water, Chalchiuhtlicue.

The bas-reliefs and the high-relief sculpture which decorated the walls of the pyramidal monument of the "Citadel" at Teotihuacán represent two related divinities: a plumed serpent and a masked god, the eyes surrounded by large circles and the jaw armed with fangs. One recognizes respectively Quetzalcoatl, the plumed serpent, and Tlaloc, the god of rain. But in reality, nothing authorizes us to give them these names, borrowed from the Nahuatl language of which Aztec was a dialect, or still less, to give them, *a priori*, the attributes and functions which distinguished these gods in the late phase.

The bas-reliefs of the "Citadel" show the serpent surrounded by shells; its body is decorated with an undulating motif which evokes a stream of water, while its head emerges from a collar of feathers. It is therefore legitimate to suppose that the plumed serpent here corresponds to the god of water and of luxuriant vegetation. Nothing in the symbolism has anything to do with the astral significance which was later given to Quetzalcoatl.

The serpent with plumes (green, like water) is the abundance of plant life, the vegetative force of nature. One finds another echo of this earth-bound conception of the plumed serpent in a passage in the Aztec hymn *Xipe Totec icuic*: "the plumed serpent has replaced the serpent of fire," that is, "the abundance of nature (due to the first rainfalls) has triumphed over drought." Here the *quetzalcoatl* is opposed to the *xiuhcoatl*, serpent of fire, an attribute of the solar god.

The god of water and rain is shown at Teotihuacán not only by the sculpture described above but by the highly stylized stele known under the name of "The Cross of Teotihuacán" (now in the Musée de l'Homme in Paris) and in the frescoes of Tepantitla. A magnificent group of mural paintings is consecrated to him there. Majestic, the visage masked, the head surmounted by a high crest representing the quetzal bird, he rises above the waters, raining down seed and pieces of jade, the symbols of abundance, upon his faithful. In bright and gay colors another panel depicts the joys of the fortunate welcomed to his paradise: singing (scrolls emerge from their mouths), reclining, playing, bathing, in the shade of tropical trees, they enjoy an eternal freedom from cares which has been granted to them by the god.

When the artist-priests of Teotihuacán wanted to illustrate the Beyond, they did not picture a celestial or astral paradise, nor a somber, cold Hades, but this garden, always green and moist, an idealization of the tropical nature of the Warm Lands that the Aztecs would call "Tlalocan" a thousand years later. But while for the Aztecs Tlalocan was just one of the many possible Beyonds, it seems that at Teotihuacán it was the only one imaginable.

The great theocratic civilizations of the first millenium, Teotihuacán, Monte Albán, the classic Mayas, were not lacking in mutual relations and contacts as is shown by the analogies in their arts, their systems of writing and their computation of time. Certain objects traveled far and without doubt certain ideas as well. In a tomb at Tikal there turned up a ceramic bowl of Teotihuacán origin, decorated with the stylized visage of the rain god. The god that we call by its Nahuatl name of Tlaloc was worshipped by the Maya as Chac and by the Zapotecs of Oaxaca as Cocijo. Among the Mayas he wears a mask with a long nose

and a large jaw bristling with fangs which became one of the most frequently repeated motifs in the decoration of façades at Yucatán. At Oaxaca an image with a similar mask appears on the funerary urns characteristic of Zapotec art. Under various names and under slightly different appearances "Tlaloc" (as we shall call him) was to remain one of the major gods from the central plateau as far as Yucatán for more than a thousand years. Ixtlilxochitl states that he was worshipped by the Giants, that is, by the legendary inhabitants of Mexico in its distant past. And still today, is it not to him that the Indians carry their humble offerings at the summits of the mountains where he is reputed to dwell?

If we compare what we know of the Olmec and the Teotihuacán religions, taking the latter as the typical religion of the classic period, we note that the jaguar-man and the feline-baby have disappeared. The jaguar itself is always present, associated with shells, the symbols of water. As for the obese or plump gods (of fecundity?), they disappeared with the rise of the classic civilization. The fact that they have been discovered only in the form of small figurines and never in frescoes or bas-reliefs may mean that they had already been relegated to a secondary rank.

The plumed serpent, god of rain, the goddesses of vegetation and of water—they dominate the pantheon. Alongside them one sees the reappearance of the god of fire, already present during the terminal phase of the preclassic period, recognizable from his visage streaked with lines and the incense-burner on his head. The divinity whom the Aztecs a thousand years later called Ueueteotl, the "Old God" *par excellence*, is found in the late phase of Olmec civilization (Cerro de las Mesas) and among the Zapotecs of Oaxaca. It is the god of the domestic hearth, of the center of the house and the center of the world, thus the fifth spatial direction, by opposition to the four cardinal points. There is nothing to show an astral quality to his personality.

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The great cleavage between the theocratic classic civilizations and their successors occurred between the seventh and eighth

centuries, depending upon the region. For reasons which cannot be gone into here, the classic cities ceased to have a function as ceremonial centers, artistic creation died, and the priestly oligarchies lost their power and disappeared. For many centuries these cities had dominated the countryside and organized daily life. Their disappearance re-established the conditions of pre-classic existence. The social unit was the village. Without doubt religion returned to a group of simple rituals, essentially agrarian, like those which we can still see today among the non-Christianized Mayas, the Lacandón of Chiapas.

Perhaps it was during this period of transition and return to rudimentary culture that the myth of the primordial divine couple began to crystallize. The Otomi, made up of hardy, traditionalist farmers who probably already occupied the central plateau during the period of Teotihuacán held on to their particular religion until the Spanish conquest. If they accepted non-Otomi divinities borrowed from the neighbors to whom they were subject, they remained faithful to the worship of the primordial Father and Mother.

The primordial Father was a fire god, the Aztec Ueueteotl. It is significant that the Aztecs worshipped this god under the name of Otontecuhtli, "Otomi lord." His feast was celebrated during the tenth month of the ritual year, *Xocotl uetwi*, "falling Xocotl": an effigy of the god (who was also called Xocotl, the name of the god of the Mazahua tribe, close relatives of the Otomi) was hoisted to the top of a sort of greased pole from which it was allowed to fall. As for the primordial Mother, she was a terrestrial goddess, the divinity of the nourishment-giving earth. In her honor the Otomi celebrated the feast of Anthaxmê, "the cake of white maize," that is, of new maize, the harbinger of the harvest. On this regard we should remember the Pames. another tribe of the Otomi family, who accompanied the reaping with the rite of the "virgin field." Before it took place, no one was allowed to touch the ears of corn.

It is interesting to note that this earth goddess was also a moon goddess. This is a constant trait of Mexican earth goddesses, including those of the Aztecs. The Otomi term *Tzinânâ*, "Venerable Mother," is still used today to designate the moon as well as the Virgin of Guadeloupe, the modern

avatar of the Aztec Tonantzin of Tepeyaca, goddess of both the earth and the moon.

The Mazahua, who speak a dialect very close to Otomi and are their neighbors on the high plateau of Toluca, were known in pre-Columbian antiquity for the fertility rite which their women celebrated. Carrying rattles whose noise symbolized and called for rain, they danced to make the soil fecund. This is an attribute characteristic of the goddess-mothers in the Aztec pantheon. The hymn of Ciuacoatl says that in the divine field (*teomilco*) the goddess leans on an agricultural tool, carrying a rattle (*chicauaztli*). It also says that in her hand she has a broom of grass with which she sweeps the soil to prepare the way for the young gods of vegetation. This idea was not unknown to the Otomi, who celebrated the rite of *Ambaxi* ("sweeping") with the same intention. And as for the Mazahua women, thirty years ago I saw them dancing with rattles at Atlacomulco as they did centuries earlier.

The mythic theme of the ancient primordial couple is found again among the Aztecs. Ometecuhtli and Omeciuatl, the Lord and Lady of Duality, reign at the top of the world but they do not actually govern. They have been eclipsed by the colorful crowd of younger gods. But the Indians of Nicaragua, a Nahuatl tribe which left Mexico between the tenth and eleventh centuries, preserved a much clearer idea of these divine personalities. Oviedo writes that when Father Bobadilla questioned these Indians at Teomega, he understood them to reply that everything, universe and men, had been created by the primordial couple.

One might be tempted to identify the couple "Primordial Father and Mother" or "Fire-Earth" with the couple "Sun-Earth" so often mentioned in Aztec invocations: *intonan intota tlaltecuhtli tonatiuh*—"our mother and father, the earth and the sun." But this would be to forget that fire, such as it was worshipped from distant antiquity in the form of the Old God, is not the sun. This fire is terrestrial, not celestial.

The seventeenth century Otomi dictionary preserved in the National Library of Mexico mentions a god Muyê who lives in the mountains. Evidently this is the "Lord" (*Hmû*) of the

rain (*yê*), or in other words, "Tlaloc," already met with at Teotihuacán.

If we take the religion of the Otomi and related peoples as representative of the peasant tradition such as it survived after the collapse of the classic civilizations, we note that it is an essentially agrarian religion. The only star which can be counted amidst the numerous deities is the moon, but it is still at this point more related to the earth than to the celestial world. In all times and in all places the phases of the moon have captured the attention of agricultural peoples, who see a connection between the fluctuations of time and the growth of vegetation. Moreover, it seems that among the Otomi and perhaps among other farming Indians a lunar calendar may have preceded the typically Mexican and Mayan one based on the division of the year into 18 months of 20 days each plus 5 extra days.[1]

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It was in the heart of Otomi country, on the site of an Otomi village whose name we know, Mamênhi, that an immigrant people from the North established its capital in 856. The new city was called Tollán, "the place of rushes," or Tula. With its foundation is the first appearance in history of the Uto-Aztecan linguistic family, to which belonged notably the Huichol of Northwestern Mexico and the Nahua, whose area of dispersion covers the center of Mexico from one ocean to the other and extends as far as Salvador and Nicaragua. We know that the Aztecs were only the last of these tribes to penetrate into central Mexico.

The inhabitants of Tula, the Toltecs, thus came from the North, with its immense cactus and mimosa covered steppes where the nomad tribes, hunters and warriors, wandered. These steppes played the role of an inexhaustible reservoir of warlike tribes ready to fall upon the rich central valleys, something like the Germany of antiquity with respect to the Mediterranean basin.

[1] The Mayan word *uinal* which designates the 20 day month appears to be derived from the word *u*, moon.

One can piece together the history of Tula through the veil of legend. It seems to be divided into three phases: a theocratic period (856-947) during which the immigrants more or less adapted to the survivals of the Teotihucán civilization; a time of troubles and civil war (947-999) which ended with the defeat of the "theocratic party," by the liquidation of social and religious structures inherited from the classic age, and the birth of a new civilization based on the astral religion of the Nahua; finally, a phase of apogee, followed by the decline of this civilization until the fall of Tula in 1168 and the suicide of the last Toltec king, Huemac, in 1174, after several years of dispersion.

The traditional tales of Tula take place simultaneously on two planes: that of history and that of myth. It is very difficult to disentangle what belongs to one and what relates to the other. Superimposed on the human drama playing itself out on the earth and overlapping it is the cosmic drama of opposing gods.

The last king-priest of Tula was named Topiltzin Ce Acatl Quetzalcoatl: "our lord, One Reed (date of birth—947), plumed serpent." He reigned over the Toltecs without showing himself in public, meditating in the four palaces which he had built. He was considered a priest. He offered to the gods his own blood, birds, serpents, and butterflies. He invoked the primordial divine couple who, along with the god of rain, dominated the religion. All the traditional sources are insistent on the point that he abhorred and severely forbade human sacrifice. According to the "Annals of Cuauhtitlán," he refused to sacrifice human beings to the "demons" (that is, to the new gods brought in by the immigrants). From this stemmed their anger, the struggle which they engaged in against him, and the disaster which resulted.

The era in which he reigned is described as a golden age: abundant harvests, great quantities of plants grown, riches and treasures of the Toltecs, achievements of art. As at Teotihuacán, plants and birds play a large role in this theocratic Tula, and it is expressly stated that these plants and birds disappeared when Quetzalcoatl had to flee.

The revolutionary phase which ended with the defeat of the Plumed Serpent is presented as the struggle of Tezcatlipoca against Quetzalcoatl, or that of the new gods against the old, of the new tribal society against the priestly aristocracy and its

form of civilization. Tezcatlipoca is the god of the Great Bear, of the sky and the evening winds. He is called Yaotl, "the warrior." A magician, he has recourse to diabolical stratagems and spells which undermine the authority of Quetzalcoatl by disturbing his conscience. He draws the Toltecs into magical ambushes where they succumb *en masse*. He causes division and stirs up and fans the flames of hatred. Finally, the king-priest, vanquished, flees from Tula.

According to certain sources, Quetzalcoatl and his entourage (he had with him pages and dwarfs, who are the small deities of the mountains, of the rain, and of the wind) spoke a special language which was not Nahuatl. As the new Nahua waves gradually swept into the country, the authority of this governing class (surviving from Teotihuacán?) became more and more precarious. Tezcatlipoca symbolizes not only the new astral religion but the northern peoples who brought it with them.

The flight of the Plumed Serpent is interpreted as the overthrow of the theocratic regime, and thus it is, beginning with the year of One Reed, 999, that a new order began to take its place. It seems that human sacrifices began only bit by bit, at least on a large scale: in the year Thirteen Reed, 1115, according to the "Annals of Cuauhtitlán."

The architecture and sculpture of Tula as shown by archaeological exploration bear witness to the extent of the change which took place about the year 1000. Certainly the Toltecs preserved from the heritage of Teotihuacán the pyramid, the bas-relief, the mural painting. But it is an entirely new spiritual panorama which unfolds before our eyes. The main temple is consecrated to a star, the Morning Star. The bas-reliefs are full of scenes of sacrifices. Processions of eagles and jaguars devour human hearts. The caryatids represent warriors adorned with symbols, taut under their weapons which are crowned wi straight plumes. All is dominated by the stars, the cosmic war, the bloody sacrifice. We are indeed far from Teotihuacán's peaceful god of rain and plants who presided over eternal rejoicing in his paradise.

At the same time, Toltec architecture reflects the habits and needs of a society with a new structure. Huge hypostyle halls at Tula and in the Maya-Toltec city of Chichén Itzá lend themselves

to assemblies of warriors, for it is a numerous military class instead of a priestly oligarchy which holds power. This class put at the head of the city a king who was no longer a priest but rather a warrior.

It would seem logical that with the defeat of Quetzalcoatl he would disappear from religious thought and art. But it was the contrary which took place: the columns of the main sanctuary have the shape of plumed serpents. When the Toltecs emigrated south towards Cholula and to Yucatán, they carried and implanted the cult of the Plumed Serpent which dominated the ritual and artistic life of Chichén Itzá from 1000 to 1200. On the central plateau the myth and worship of Quetzalcoatl passed from the Toltecs to the tribes who came to live in the valley and to the Aztecs themselves.

In fact, Quetzalcoatl was able to survive the defeat of his human double, the historic Quetzalcoatl, king-priest. But it is an entirely new Quetzalcoatl, who has nothing more than name and appearance in common with the god of the classic era. He has become an astral god, the planet Venus. Passing from earth to heaven, he became a warrior and archer like the other astral deities of the Nahua, like Tonomi of the Huichols, god of the Morning Star and of the hunt.

There is no doubt that the Nahuas of Tula, anxious to consolidate their victory, "poured new wine into old bottles." They conceived a syncretism in which the venerated name of Quetzalcoatl was kept, to be remade with completely new ideas. This tendency towards syncretism, towards the synthesis, is to be found throughout the history of post-classic Mexican religion.

There are two versions of the disappearance of Quetzalcoatl. According to one of them, he came to the coast of the Gulf and embarked on a raft of serpents with the destination of the "red and black land," that is, *Tlillan Tlapallan*, the East. The second version tries to provide an explanation for the transformation of Quetzalcoatl into an astral god. It shows him to us building a pyre "along the celestial water," *ilhuica-atenco*, and climbing it to die in self-immolation. While his body burns, multi-colored birds of the tropics fly over the flames, and then his heart rises towards the sky. "And the old men said that his heart had turned into the serpent which appears at dawn. They

said that it appeared when the Plumed Serpent died, that for this reason it is called Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, the lord of the house of dawn." (*Annals of Cuauhtitlán*)

One notes here that the birth of stars through the self-cremation of a god is a favorite theme of the mythic thought of the Nahuas. Sahagún records the legend that the sun and the moon were originally two divinities who lept into an immense brazier from the heights of the pyramids of Teotihuacán.

Once become an astral god, Quetzalcoatl was henceforth surrounded by a rich mythic halo. Morning Star and Evening Star, he disappears in the land of the dead (Mictlan) to revive. As a subterranean god of the shadows he steals the bones of the ancient dead, waters them with his blood and thus creates the men of our world. He "invents" the maize as a gift to his creatures. A "double," Xolotl, accompanies him, a small god with the head of a dog who buries himself in the shadows of the "Nine Hells;" and this is why a dog was interred or burned with the dead.

The god of the planet Venus is an archer, like his Huichol equivalent. Under this aspect of malevolent hunter, he lodges his arrows in certain categories of humans at certain times, for example, the elderly under the sign of One Crocodile, or the young under the sign of One Movement. His arrows attack even the water and the rain under the signs of One Water and One Rain, causing drought. Thus, the Plumed Serpent of the classic period, a bountiful, terrestrial, aquatic, agrarian god became, in one of his forms, the redoubtable deity of drought and famine.

But we are not through yet with the avatars of Quetzalcoatl. Decked with a tricorn headdress, the face covered with a double-beaked mask, he is the god of the wind, Edâhi among the Otomi, Ehecatl among the Nahua. His headdress is typically Huaxtec. As god of the wind his temples are circular (there remains an example at Calixtlahuaca). Since round temples are frequent among the Huaxtecs, this tells us something about this tribe of the Northeast, a branch of the Maya family, and about its role in Toltec civilization. One of the episodes in the drama which sets Quetzalcoatl and the new gods against one another has Tezcatlipoca, disguised as a Huaxtec, as the central character.

Tradition signalizes the introduction at Tula of the Huaxtec worship of the Ixcuinanme, goddesses of sensual love, after the fall of the old system.

The metamorphosis of Quetzalcoatl into the god of the Morning Star offers a striking example of what one might call the "astralization" of the divinities of Mexican antiquity. As carriers of an essentially astral religion, the non-agrarian peoples, hunters and warriors, who came from the North sometimes imposed their own gods, sometimes remodeled those of the already present sedentary, agricultural populations.

There is the same "astralization" of the jaguar. Beginning with the Toltec period, the old Olmec god of the earth was assimilated with the star-filled night sky (flecked like the coat of a cat) and thus with Tezcatlipoca. From this arises the "disguise," *naualli*, the animal double of the god, just as the eagle is the *naualli* of the sun. At Tenochtitlán there were to be two prestigious military orders; those of the eagle knights, soldiers of the sun, and those of the jaguar knights, the combattents of the evening sky; the first used the name of Uitzilopochtli, the second, Tezcatlipoca.

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The term Chichimec (*Chichimeca*—Barbarians) was used in Nahuatl to describe any tribe whose manner of life was based on the hunt and the harvest. That had been the style of life of the tribes who came to inhabit the central plain, including the Aztecs themselves.

The religion of these peoples evidently did not include any agrarian myths or rites. Their divinities were above all hunters and warriors like themselves and were identified with the stars. Tezcatlipoca was the symbol of the starry evening sky and especially of the Great Bear. The Milky Way was personified in Mixcoatl, "Serpent of the Clouds," god of the hunt, with his multiple attributes, the *Centzon Mimixcoa*, the "Four Hundred (innumerable) Serpents of the Clouds," the stars of the northern sky.

In the Aztec period, Mixcoatl figured among the great gods of Mexico. In his honor were celebrated the ceremonies of the

month of Quecholli in the course of which a forge was set up on the mountain of Zacatepec and arrows were made. The "arrow with the barbed shaft," *tziuaquimitl,* and the snare, the "mesh pouch," *matlauacalli,* are the attributes characteristic of Mixcoatl as hunter-god.

Among the religious chants recorded for us by Sahagún, taking down the words of his autochthonous informants, two hymns are signalized as being in *chichimecatlatolli,* "the language of the Barbarians," apparently an archaic and obscure Nahuatl dialect. One is dedicated to Mimixcoa. To the extent that it is translatable, it evokes Mixcoatl "in the land of the barbed plants," *tziuactitla,* that is, in the northern steppes, armed with arrows with barbed shafts and supplied with snares. He chants a magic formula to aid in capturing the game. As for the other hymn, it has to do with the small god Amimitl, god of the hunt for aquatic birds, patron of the *Chichimeca Atlaca* ("Barbarians of the Lagoons"), a sort of specialized Mixcoatl.

Mixcoatl also had a double who was the tribal god of the Nahua of Tlaxcala under the name of Camaxtli.

As for the Aztecs, we know that their tribal divinity was the sun, Uitzilopochtli. His name, "the humming-bird (*uitzilin*) of the left (*opochtli*)," characterizes him as the prototype of the dead warrior revived who was, it was believed, reincarnated in the humming-bird. The world's "left" is the South. Uitzilopochtli is the sun at the zenith, the mid-day sun.

Two homologous mythic cycles have the function of closely relating the astral gods to the theme of the cosmic war. According to the first myth, the Mimixcoa, the constellations of the north, were charged with supplying the sun with its nourishment (the blood of sacrifices), but since they failed in this mission they were exterminated by Mixcoatl. In the other myth, Uitzilopochtli had from his birth hunted down and massacred his brothers, the *Centzon Uitznaua,* the "Four Hundred Southerners," that is, the constellations of the South. If Mixcoatl had arrows to cast, Uitzilopochtli had his magic weapon, the *xiuhcoatl,* "the serpent of turquoise," the symbol of the fiery sun.

And so we have the special divinities of the nomad, warlike peoples: the Great Bear, the Milky Way, the Morning Star,

the Sun. Their pantheon also included a terrestrial goddess, Itzpapalotl, "the butterfly of obsidian," or Coatlicue, "She who wears a skirt of serpents." Itzpapalotl appears more particularly in the mythical accounts of the northern steppes and the Four Hundred Serpents of the Clouds. Coatlicue is the mother of the Four Hundred Northerners and of Uitzilopochtli. There are evidently some terrestrial goddesses, but as would be expected in the ideology of a non-agricultural population, they do not symbolize the fecundity of plant life. They give birth to stars, not to maize. Warlike huntresses like the celestial divinities to whom they give birth, they have names like that of Yaociuatl, "warrior," and according to the words of an Aztec hymn, they "feed on the hearts of deer." The earth for nomad warriors meant the tomb, not the fertile field; in fact they depicted it as the monster Tlaltecuhtli who swallowed the blood and the bodies of the dead in his gaping jaws.

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When Tlaloc was offended by the last Toltec king, Huemac, he took vengeance by inflicting drought and famine on Tula; and when Huemac took refuge at Chapultepec after his flight, the gods of rain announced to him the definitive fall of the Toltecs. It was then that the disconsolate king hanged himself in a cave.

This legend without doubt reflects the antagonism between the imported astral religion and the inherited agrarian religion of the classic era. Despite their apparent triumph, the invading celestial, stellar, and sun gods with their complex myths and rituals of cosmic war and human sacrifice met with resistance from the peasant masses in whose eyes the drought and the famine represented the vengeance of Tlaloc on those who neglected him. The great migrations continued until the beginning of the fourteenth century. As the northern peoples penetrated into the central valleys, they more or less adopted the agrarian ways of life, they established themselves in villages, and finally they built cities. The cultivation of maize acquired an ever greater importance in their existence; and thus the agrarian

myths and rites and the divinities of the soil had their revenge in a manner of speaking.

The Aztecs, the final comers whose rapid development lasted more or less a century before the final catastrophe, were led by the very hegemony they enjoyed to try to synthesize the two rival religious systems. Their religion was essentially a compromise between the conceptions of the warrior-hunter Nahua and those of the sedentary farmers, between northern traditions and the classic heritage.

In studying the succession of 18 holidays celebrated every 20 days in Mexico, one notes only three consecrated to the celestial gods Tezcatlipoca, Mixcoatl, and Uitzilopochtli, as against four for Tlaloc and the gods of rain, four for the divinities of maize and vegetation, two for the old god of fire (one of them to his attributes as "Lord Otomi"), and three for the terrestrial goddesses.[2] In other words, the old gods took an important place in the ritual. But on the other hand their worship was incorporated into a mass of cruel rites in imitation of those of the astral gods, notably human sacrifices to Tlaloc and to the goddesses of vegetation.

The Aztecs worshipped their Uitzilopochtli with a special fervor; they even demanded that subject peoples erect a statue of him in their temples and that they sacrifice human victims to him. Nonetheless, in Mexico itself, the high pyramid of Great Teocalli, inaugurated in 1487 by the emperor Auitzotl, had on its top platform not one sanctuary but two: the red and white temple of Uitzilopochtli and the white and blue one of Tlaloc. The two sanctuaries were equal in size and without doubt were surrounded by equal veneration. Similarly the priestly hierarchy had not one high-priest but two at its head, "equals in condition and honors," the two quequetzalcoa, "the plumed serpents," who carried the respective titles of "the priest of Tlaloc" and "the priest of Our Lord (Uitzilopochtli)."

This curious organization of religion, as well as the fact that the great temple was simultaneously consecrated to two divinities

[2] In addition, there was a celebration in honor of the goddess of salt water, Uixtociuatl, patroness of the salt-makers, and the feast of Teotleco in honor of all the gods.

so different, appears indeed to be the consequence of a deliberate desire for compromise and synthesis. For in the late phase of Mexican religion we find the two fundamental elements in combination, the cult of the sun brought by the warriors from the North, and the agrarian worship of sedentary peasants.

The female divinities could be found under two aspects. Sometimes, as the inexhaustible sources of fecundity they gave birth to the young gods of the maize, gods also of youth, music, games, and song. Other times, clothed with macabre attributes, wearing skeleton masks, warriors crowned with eagle feathers, they symbolized the earth where the sun went to his sepulchre every evening.

The Nahua coming from the North had found in central Mexico the cult of the terrestrial and lunar Primordial Mother. They brought with them a terrestrial warrior goddess, the obsidian butterfly. In addition, the late Toltec civilization had taken over from the Huaxtecs the goddesses of sensual love whom the Aztecs called Tlazolteotl.

The hymn of Teteoinnan, the Mother of the Gods, makes clear that this goddess was none other than the obsidian butterfly: the hymn of Ciuacoatl the Female Serpent combines the two aspects of the terrestrial goddesses. "Painted with the blood of the serpent," her head wreathed in eagle feathers, she is the mother of Mixcoatl, the hunter-warrior god. She sounds the call to war and the sacrifice of captives. But in the same hymn she is seen shaking her magic rattle to call the rain and fertilize the soil.

Atzec sculpture has left us some striking representations of the terrestrial goddess, notably the celebrated Coatlicue in the Museum of Mexico, simultaneously majestic and monstruous with her macabre ornaments of human hearts, eagle talons, and her double serpent head. Another idol from Cozcatlán shows the same goddess armed with claws and masked with a skeleton head. On the other hand, sculpture and manuscripts show the earth and moon goddesses giving birth to the young maize, the gracious Chicomecoatl holding in her hands some ears of corn, Tlazolteotl the Huaxtec, the skillful spinner of cotton, wearing spindles woven through her hair, and the radiant Xochiquetzal with long tufts of feathers, the goddess of fertility and love,

protectress of the young women who beautified, embellished, and adorned the life of the warriors.

The austerity of Mexican society with its Spartan insistence on the military virtues imposed a severe repression of sexual life. It is for that reason all the more unusual that the carnal goddess Tlazolteotl, imported from the Huaxtecs, who had the reputation in Mexico of being given to erotic practices, should have taken on importance for the Axtecs as Tlaelquani, "Eater of Sins." It was to her that those who had committed faults, especially infractions of sexual morality, confessed, and it was she who pardoned them through the absolution granted by her priests.

It should be noted that the earth goddesses were also moon divinities. Their characteristic nose ornament, the *Yacametztli,* the "moon nose" in the form of a crescent, is there as a reminder. The moon was considered the symbol *par excellence* of plant fecundity as well as the female essence of nature. It was represented in the form of a container full of water on which stood out the silhouette of a rabbit (the spots of the lunar disc). The innumerable gods of the harvest, of plenty and of drunkenness were called the *Centzon Totochin,* the "Four Hundred Rabbits:" they were the little local divinities of the moon and the countryside who presided at the feasts where good harvests were celebrated in carousing and drinking a great deal of *ochtli,* the fermented juice of aloe. A priestly seminary in Mexico was consecrated to the worship of these gods under the authority of Ometochtli ("Two-Rabbit"), the name of one of the most important of these deities.

Quetzalcoatl was not one of the gods of honor feted every twenty days. Nonetheless, he was in the ranks of the most important divinities, the equal of Tezcatlipoca and Uitzilopochtli, but he appeared above all as the god of priests. He was the "priest" pre-eminently, just as Tezcatlipoca was the "warrior." Multiform in personality—god of wind, the planet Venus—it was as the Plumed Serpent, inextricably associated with the Toltec golden age, that he was particularly venerated by priests as the inventor of writing and of the ritual calendar. The higher education taught by the priests in the seminary-monasteries included in particular the teaching of hieroglyphic writing, the study of sacred books, of chronology and divination; it was

under the sign of Quetzalcoatl. On the contrary, teaching in the "houses of the young men" in various parts of the city, done by military and lay "teachers of the young men," was under the protection of Tezcatlipoca, one of whose titles, moreover, was *telpochtli*, "young man."

These two systems of education were very different, in fact antagonistic. The first was characterized by its austerity, by the emphasis put on theology, on abnegation and self-control, by the scope (for the time and the place) of the knowledge taught. The second, basically practical and military, sought to develop warlike virtues but gave little importance to intellectual and spiritual values; the young men, eager to imitate the prowess of their masters, all experienced warriors, followed strict training, relaxed by evenings in the "house of songs" where they danced and played the tambour and the flute. The oldest ones had affairs with the courtesans whose gorgeous dress and refined manners have been described by Sahagún.

It was said that they led a dissolute life, that they spoke thoughtlessly, heedlessly, that they were full of conceit: things contrary to the ideal of gravity (in the Roman sense of the word), of measure, of devotion to duty that is shown in the *ueuetlatolli*, "the words of the ancients," the rulebooks for morality and good manners which the Aztec governing class left to us.

The old antagonism of Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl exploded during the month of Atemoztli. The students of the houses of young men and those from the seminary-monasteries formed themselves into rival groups, each trying to invade the places of its adversary, destroying or looting and inflicting practical jokes on any member of the opposing group who could be captured. This was undoubtedly a type of ritualization allowing latent hostilities to show themselves within controlled limits, bringing about a relaxation of tension.

One more example of the internal contradictions of the Mexican religious system and the synthesis by which the Aztecs tried to resolve them is shown in the ideas they held about the Beyond. From the epoch of Teotihuacán, as we have seen, there was a belief in a paradise, a luxuriant garden presided over by the god of rain. This was certainly the image of immortality

held by the ancient agrarian peoples: eternal abundance, sheltered from cares and drought, without struggle, without work.

It is natural that the ideal of warriors should be different. For the Aztecs, warriors dead in combat or on the sacrificial stone became the companions of the Sun. They joined the dazzling, burning, joyous cortege which surrounded it from the East to its zenith. In this Mexican Valhalla, the diversions of these *Quauhteca*, "the people of the Eagle," were simulated combat and war chants. After four years the warrior was reincarnated in the body of a humming-bird.

Women who died in chlidbirth were like warriors fallen in combat or in sacrifice. They were interred with great pomp in the inner court of a temple consecrated to them. It was thought that these women formed a second cortege which accompanied the Sun from the zenith to the West. Turned into divinities (they were called *Ciuateteo*, "divine women"), they lived in the western sky and in the shadows of sunset. They were more or less clearly identified with the *Tzitzimime*, monsters of the Beyond who would appear on the last day of the world, and on the other hand, with the goddess-mothers in their macabre warrior aspect. Their appearance or the lugubrious cries that they were heard to utter in the sky of the setting sun were considered ominous presages.

The Nahua, like many other peoples, located the place of the dead in the region from which they had come, in this case the North, *mictlampa*, "the region of Hell." The Aztecs represented it as an immense, gloomy, cold place. The dead had to undergo difficult tests, resist the blasts of an icy wind, cross the Nine Rivers. Finally they disappeared, swallowed up in nothingness.

To these two concepts of the Beyond, the Aztecs had added a third, adopting that of the paradise of the god of rain, Tlaloc. Those who died from drowning or from one of the maladies whose origin was attributed to Tlaloc (for example dropsy and lung ailments) were considered to have received a sign from the god, who received them in his paradise. When an Indian drowned in the lagoon which surrounded the city, his body was brought on a litter to one of the small temples called "houses of the mist" consecrated to the gods of water and built along

the shore of the lakes, and there he was interred with all the marks of the highest veneration "because, it was said, the Tlaloc gods had sent the spirit of the drowned to the terrestrial paradise."

Thus, by an effort of syncretism the Aztecs were led to make their northern myth of the world after death coexist with the vision of the peasants of central Mexico. If the shadows of Mictlan engulfed the anonymous crowd of ordinary dead, a celestial immortality awaited the warriors, and a terrestrial immortality was promised to the chosen of the old agrarian god.

Another component ought to be mentioned: the influence over the late civilization of the central plateau exercised by the intermediate zone between the valley of Oaxaca and the plain of Cholula. This influence is very clear in Aztec art and no less so in religion. The cult of Venus celebrated by the Mazatecs of Teotitlán had been introduced into Mexico. Manuscripts like the Borgia Codex show that an intense amount of theological speculation developed in this area, and that it was oriented above all to the synthesis of agrarian and astral mythologies. No one can say what results this speculative effort might have produced if the catastrophe of 1521 had not suddenly brought it to an end.

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The above sketch could have been extended to other autochthonous civilizations with the necessary modifications. Examining the Maya, one cannot help but be struck by two phenomena worth interest. The first is that the worship of the god of rain seems much more important at Yucatán than at Peten or at Chiapas; at Palenque the principal temples were dedicated to the Sun and to the Maize, while at Uxmal and the other cities of the Yucatán the mask of Chac is spread over all the monuments with an obsessive frequency.

This difference is perhaps explained by the difference in climate, for the Yucatán is much dryer than the northern regions.

In the second place, there seems to have been a real breach between the agrarian religion of the maize growers and the theological-astronomical speculations of the priests. The priestly knowledge, whose essential spirit can be found in the hiero-

glyphic inscriptions of the great ceremonial centers of the South, was used in the observation of the stars, the computation of time, and on vertiginous calculations relating to periods involving hundreds of millions of years. Without doubt the study of the calendar and the movements of the celestial bodies as well as the determination of the seasons and what agrarian work to undertake originally provided a connection between the thinking of the priests and the problems of the peasants, but this thought had reached an autochthonous level of development which moved it farther and farther away.

It is not impossible that the decline of the Mayan cities and the fall of this civilization around the ninth century had something to do in part with a peasant revolt against the governing class of priests, whose esoteric thought no longer struck a chord in the rural masses.

The Christianized Mayas of our era still observe pre-Columbian rites relative to the *milpa*, the field of maize, in sowing and harvesting. Among the Lacandons, a small non-Christian tribe of Chiapas, there is a pantheon and a ritual where the gods of the stars have relatively little importance with respect to those of rain and of vegetation. As for the god of fire, he is invoked by these Indians mainly as an earth god presiding over the clearing of the jungle by burning.

Limiting ourselves to Mexico proper, with the exclusion of the land of the Mayas, we see first the fundamental role which the tropical, luxuriant eastern zone along the coast of the Gulf played in building up high civilizations. The group of ideas and images relative to rain, to the worship of Tlaloc and the terrestrial paradise, bear the mark of these Warm Lands so different from the dry and cool central plain. It is the same with the ritual game of *tlachtli* which was played with balls of rubber and for the signs of the calendar of divination, such as the crocodile, the monkey, the jaguar, all animals characteristic of the tropical regions. The agriculture based on maize certainly was not born on the high plateau but somewhere between the Gulf of Mexico and Peten. It won over the South and the central East and with it came all its agrarian ideology.

Inversely, it was from the North that the nomad hunter tribes brought their astral religion, indissolubly tied to human sacrifice,

a religion which carries with it the mark of the great desert steppes, burned by the sun in the day, while the limpid night air reveals a sky swarming with innumerable stars. The late civilizations of central Mexico present the sight of vast, highly organized societies, governed and administered with efficiency, gifted with vigorous arts and with an intellectual life of high quality that at the same time devoted an enormous part of their energy to bloody rituals adjudged indispensable to the maintenance of the cosmic order, a paradoxical spectacle to our eyes. When we reflect, for instance, that an institution as singular as the "flowering war" was designed to maintain, in the heart of the peace which the Aztec hegemony had brought about in most of Mexico, the conflicts and combats in order to furnish victims to the stars!

That one had to "feed" the Sun by offering him human blood and hearts, an idea which dominated the entire late Mexican religion, constitutes a relevant historic fact. It is characteristic of the northern peoples and especially those of the Nahuatl family. Although the Classic period Mayas had a cult devoted to the sun, they do not seem to have sacrificed human victims to it. There is no necessary psychological or logical tie between astral worship and bloody sacrifices. The connection between these cults and these rites is a given of historic fact as much as the form of the clothing, the shape of the houses and the structure of the language.

It is remarkable that a religion which demanded so many struggles and imposed so many dangers was upheld so strongly and durably in the civilization which grew out of the contact between an ancient, sedentary people and newly immigrated ones, while important economic, social, and ideological factors weighed against it.

In effect, the indigenous documents of the time show clearly that after the phase of agitation and constant conflict which went on through almost all of the fifteenth century the public wanted calm, order and peace; moral values such as goodness and gentleness were accented. On the other hand, the growing material prosperity, the influx to the capital of goods from all over the country, the growing influence of the shopkeeping bourgeoisie, the taste for luxury and the refinement of daily life

tended to turn the Mexicans of the 1500's away from their nomadic ancestors' ideal of the warrior. Nonetheless, right until the final moment, the altars of Tenochtitlán continued to run with human blood.

The history of the regions of central Mexico provides a striking example of what one might call the fluidity of mythic representations. Different notions, in fact contradictory ones, were associated under names which remained the same while their content was completely changed. At the same time, as a counterpoint to this fluidity, the permanence of certain representations, for example, the old Tlaloc, triumphs over all social and ethnic upsets during the millenia.

All human phenomenon is specific and particular to its time and place. There is no question then of deriving from Mexican events any general laws applicable to other times and other places. But the succession of events in this part of the world offers rich source material for the ethnologist and even the philosopher to reflect on, because it allows us to study, as in a laboratory, the actions and reciprocal reactions of societies which reflect two basic ways of life: nomad hunters and collectors, and sedentary cultivators.

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