

M0006379: Wellcome Historical Medical Museum display: "The Ancient Mexican Creation Myth"

Publication/Creation

12 October 1939

Persistent URL

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Wellcome Collection
183 Euston Road
London NW1 2BE UK
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
E library@wellcomecollection.org
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

THE ANCIENT MEXICAN CREATION MYTH

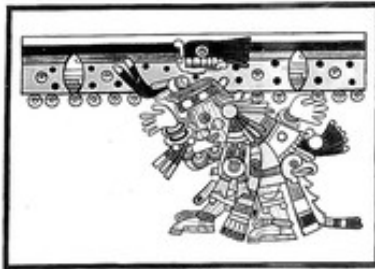
III. THE PRESENT AGE OF THE WORLD

AFTER THE FOUR IMPERFECT PREHISTORIC AGES THE ANCIENT MEXICANS BELIEVED THAT THE PRESENT, MORE PERFECT, WORLD WAS MADE. BUT THEY THOUGHT THAT IT TOO, LIKE THE OTHERS, WAS DOOMED TO DESTRUCTION, AND EFFORTS TO AVERT THIS DISASTER BY SACRIFICIAL RITES WERE THE BASIS OF THEIR RELIGIOUS PRACTICE.

THE RAISING OF THE HEAVENS AND THE ORIGIN OF FIRE

AFTER THE FOURTH AGE OF THE WORLD HEAVEN AND EARTH HAD TO BE SEPARATED BEFORE THE WORLD COULD BEGIN ANEW. QUETZALCOATL AND TEZCATLIPOCA ACCOMPLISHED THIS TOGETHER, CREATING FOUR MEN TO HELP THEM RAISE THE SKY, AND TO STAND SUPPORTING IT AT EACH OF THE FOUR ENDS OF THE EARTH.

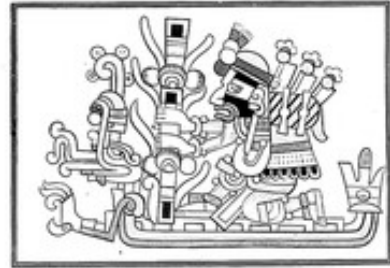
BEFORE THERE WAS A SUN OR MOON, FIRE WAS CREATED TO GIVE LIGHT AND HEAT. TEZCATLIPOCA CHANGED HIMSELF INTO MIXCOATL, THE CLOUD SNAKE, AND OBTAINED FIRE FROM THE FIRE-DRILL FOR THE FIRST TIME.



ONE OF THE FOUR SKY-BEARERS



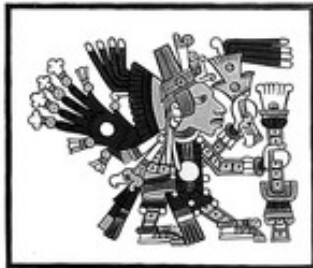
MIXCOATL



A FIRE-DRILL IN USE

THE ORIGIN OF MANKIND AND OF THE MEANS OF LIFE

QUETZALCOATL AND TEZCATLIPOCA AND THREE OTHER PAIRS OF GODS CREATED MEN OUT OF HUMAN BONES FROM THE FORMER AGES AND THE BLOOD OF THE GODS. THEY SENT XOLOTL, THE DOG-GOD, TO THE UNDERWORLD TO BRING BACK HUMAN BONES, WHICH WERE POUNDED AND MIXED WITH BLOOD WHICH THE GODS DREW FROM THEIR OWN BODIES. FROM THIS MIXTURE AROSE A BOY AND GIRL, THE ANCESTORS OF THE PRESENT HUMAN RACE. MAIZE WAS PROVIDED FOR THEIR FOOD BY QUETZALCOATL, WHO, IN THE FORM OF AN ANT, OBTAINED IT FROM THE MAIZE-MOUNTAIN, TONACAPETL.



XOLOTL



QUETZALCOATL DRAWING FERTILISING BLOOD FROM HIMSELF

THE CREATION OF SUN AND MOON

THE HEAVENLY BODIES COULD ONLY BE CREATED WHEN THERE WERE ALREADY HUMAN-BEINGS TO NOURISH THEM WITH THEIR BLOOD. THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS DECREED THAT THE ONE WHO FIRST CAST HIMSELF INTO THE FIRE SHOULD BECOME THE SUN. NANAUATL, THE POCK-MARKED GOD, MADE THE FIRST ATTEMPT. HE WAS FOLLOWED BY TECCIZTECATL, THE MOON-GOD. THESE DIVINITIES ROSE IN THE EAST AS SUN AND MOON AND THE GODS SET THEM IN MOTION BY SACRIFICING THEIR HEARTS.



NANAUATL IN THE FIRE



THE SUN AND MOON IN THE SKY WITH TWO STARS



TECCIZTECATL

THE FIRST YEARS OF THE PRESENT SUN

NANAUATL THUS BECAME THE HISTORICAL SUN, TONATIUH. THIS IS THE ERA OLINTONATIUH, THE EARTHQUAKE SUN, CORRESPONDING TO THE CENTRE, WHOSE SIGN IS NAUI OLIN, FOUR MOVEMENT. ITS FIRST YEARS WERE THE HAPPY PERIOD OF TOLLAN, THE PARADISE OF FLOWERS AND PLEASURE.



TONATIUH THE SUN-GOD



THE EARTHQUAKE SUN



THE EARTHLY PARADISE

THE PRESERVATION OF TONATIUH

THE PRESENT ERA, LIKE THE FOUR PREHISTORIC AGES, WAS ALSO THOUGHT TO BE DESTINED TO PERISH BY ITS PARTICULAR ELEMENT, IN THIS CASE EARTHQUAKE. TO AVERT THIS DISASTER THE SUN HAD TO BE CONSTANTLY NOURISHED BY HUMAN BLOOD. EVERY NIGHT THE PRIESTS DREW BLOOD FOR SACRIFICE FROM THEMSELVES. HUMAN SACRIFICES WERE ALSO PERFORMED, ESPECIALLY EVERY FIFTY-TWO YEARS, WHEN THE DATE NAUI OLIN CAME ROUND.



A PRIEST DRAWING BLOOD FROM HIS EAR



TONATIUH SACRIFICING A MAN