



The Aztec Creation Myth



In the Beginning

In the beginning was the void. Here opposites converge in a supreme manifestation of **The All** which would manifest itself as the dual god, **Ometecuhtli/Omecihuatl**, collectively known as **Ōmeteōtl**. This god was good *and* bad, chaos *and* order, male *and* female. **Ōmeteōtl** had four children.

The gods were **Huizilopochtli** (south), **Quetzalcoatl** (east), **Tezcatlipoca** (west), and **Xipe Totec** (north).

Universal Creation

After 600 years, the sons began to create the universe. They created water, and other gods, and the sea monster **Cipactli**. **Cipactli** was to become the source of the cosmos in a strange way.

As the gods created, **Cipactli** would continue to eat any of their creations that fell into the water. The four gods attacked and destroyed the sea monster, pulling her in four directions.

From this enormous creature the universe was created. All the 13 heavens stretch into her head. The earth was created in the middle, and her tail reaches down to the nine underworlds. This entire body floated in the water of space.

The Four Cycles

1. To complete the world, the great source of energy had to be created - the sun. This is the key to the cycles in the Aztec creation story. But the sun is so powerful, it can't just be created. It can only come into being through the sacrifice of a god. The first god to sacrifice himself was Tezcatlipoca (also known as Black Tezcatlipoca), who leaped into the fire and started the **First Sun**, called "4 Tiger." Tezcatlipoca only managed to become half a sun, however, making this first creation incomplete. This period was inhabited by giants who ate only acorns. A fight began, however, between Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca. In the end, the sun was knocked from the sky, and in anger Tezcatlipoca sent jaguars to destroy the giants. The world lasted 676 years, or 13 52-year cycles, according to the pan-Mesoamerican calendar.
2. The **Second Sun**, or "4-Wind" Sun, was governed by Quetzalcoatl (also known as White Tezcatlipoca). Humans were created as they are now (normal size). They lived on piñon nuts, and for a while things were fine. Tezcatlipoca wanted to be Sun, however, and turned himself into a tiger and threw Quetzalcoatl off his throne. The people became corrupt, and out of revenge Tezcatlipoca turned them into monkeys. Furious, Quetzalcoatl sent a hurricane to blow the monkeys away and the world came to an end through catastrophic hurricanes and floods. The few survivors fled to the tops of the trees. This world also lasted 676 years.
3. The **Third Sun**, or "4-Rain" Sun, was dominated by water; its ruling deity was the rain god Tlaloc, and its people ate seeds that grew in the water. 's Tlaloc personal problems became his downfall. Once again, Tezcatlipoca was the instigator. Tezcatlipoca stole Tlaloc's wife (Xochiquetzal), and Tlaloc was grief-

stricken. An angry Quetzalcoatl made it rain fire and ashes, and the survivors became turkeys, butterflies, or dogs. It lasted just seven cycles—364 years.

4. The **Fourth Sun**, the "4-Water" Sun, was governed by the goddess Chalchiuthlicue, sister and wife of Tlaloc. Here, the people ate maize. Filled with jealousy, Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl struck down the sun. As she fell, the sky opened up and water flooded the earth. A great flood marked the end of this world, and all the people were transformed into fish. Like the first and second suns, the 4-Water Sun lasted for 676 years.

The Creation of Modern Humans

In the darkness between the suns, Quetzalcoatl descended into the underworld to bring up the bones of the dead. They would be used to bring to life the people who are now here. However during his journey he dropped the bones, causing them to shatter which caused the modern race of humans to be various sizes instead of the same size as the races that preceded them.

Creating the Fifth Sun

At the end of the fourth sun, the gods gathered at Teotihuacan to decide who had to sacrifice him/herself for the new world to begin. The god Huehuetéotl—the old fire god—started a sacrificial bonfire, but none of the most important gods wanted to jump into the flames. The rich and proud god Tecuciztecatl—Lord of the Snails—hesitated, and during that hesitation, the humble and poor Nanahuatzin (meaning "full of sores") leaped into the flames and became the new sun.

Tecuciztecatl jumped in after him to become a second sun. However, the gods realized that two suns would overwhelm the world, so they threw a rabbit at Tecuciztecatl and he became the moon—that is why you can still see the rabbit in the moon today. The two celestial bodies were set in motion by Ehecatl, the god of the wind, who fiercely and violently blew the sun into motion.

The Fifth Sun

The **Fifth Sun** (called "4-Movement") is ruled by Tonatiuh, the sun god. This fifth sun is characterized by the day sign Ollin, which means movement. According to Aztec beliefs, this indicated that this world would come to an end through earthquakes, and all the people will be eaten by sky monsters.

The Aztecs considered themselves the People of the Sun, and therefore their duty was to nourish the Sun god through blood offerings and sacrifices. Failure to do this would cause the end of their world and the disappearance of the sun from the sky.

The New Fire Ceremony

At the end of each 52-year cycle, the Aztec priests carried out the New Fire Ceremony, or "binding of the years." The legend of the five suns predicted the end of a calendar cycle, but it was not known which cycle would be the last one. The Aztec people would clean their houses, discarding all household idols, cooking pots, clothing, and mats. During the last five days, fires were extinguished and the people climbed on their roofs to await the fate of the world.

And as they wait...so do we all....