

**The Cosmic Renewal Ritual, the New Fire Ceremony,
and Mythology of the Aztec People.**

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Master's Degrees by Examination and Dissertation

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Abstract

This dissertation will apply Gasper's functionalist theory of life-lease renewal to the Aztec New Fire Ceremony. The Aztec concept of the Fifth Sun, whose preservation is a universal necessity, provides a powerful justification for the presence and hegemony of the migrant Aztec in the Mexican Basin. The Aztec believed they were the chosen people, whose responsibility extended to the protection and maintenance of themselves and the universe. Aztec cosmology established a partial separation between sacred and mundane through the duality of calendars, the *tōnalpōhualli* (sacred), and the *xuihpōhualli* (solar/ agricultural calendar). The *tōnalpōhualli* and *xuihpōhualli* re-synchronised every 52 years, a calendar round, after period of 13 *nemontemi* (vacant and transitional) days, during which time the *Xuihpōhualli* Festival was undertaken, finalised with the New Fire Ceremony. A variant of Gasper's life-lease ritual occurred not annually, but at the end of the calendar round, every 52 years. During the *Xuihpōhualli* Festival, Gasper's three elements of purgation, transitional time and preparatory ritual were combined. The last two stages occur unmodified in the New Fire Ceremony itself; followed subsequently by the process of rebuilding and revivification. Upon the successful completion of the New Fire Ceremony was a form of topocosmic renewal ritual, whereby with the continuance of the Sun, life-lease is secured for the next calendar round. This dissertation argues Graulich's *et. al.* (1981a, 1981b, 1983) previous work is limited with an over reliance on European models of structuralistic contradictory and antagonistic dualism. The Aztec model contrastingly, used ideas of complementary and context-dependent dualism; their rituals echoed concern with cosmic order in the local topocosmos. This metaphysical function was closely connected to a range of intra- and inter-social functions, highlighting the asymmetrical power-relation between the Aztec and fellow inhabitants of the Mexican Basin, undergirded by divine sanction and cosmic necessity. The functionalist approach has wider cross-cultural application than structuralism, confirming that Gaster's theory of topocosmic renewal has validity beyond the range of the Near Eastern societies he studied.

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Chapter One: Theories of Myth

Introduction

Concerns about Eurocentrism and limits to cross-cultural comparison today tend to silence attempts to understand similarities among cultures. While oriented to broadening horizons, such concerns have perversely contributed to the marginalisation of cosmologies, such as that of the Aztecs, in contemporary literature. This dissertation seeks to demonstrate that certain aspects of Gasterian functionalist theory, designed to explain Near Eastern renewal rituals, are also applicable to the Aztecs, with the idea of topocosmos remains relevant in making sense of ritual and myth worldwide.¹ It pursues this goal by bringing Gasper's theory of life-lease renewal and topocosmos into contact with an Aztec ritual, the New Fire Ceremony (*Bundling of the Years*). It also argues that Aztec cosmology can also be considered in broadly functional terms, and that such an approach is more consistent with the available data, than the structuralist model of antagonistic binaries. The dissertation shows that the ceremony largely reflects Gasper's model of life-lease rituals, albeit with a few modifications. It also suggests that Aztec cosmology can be understood as a means of legitimising Aztec migration to, and primacy, hegemony, and predation within, the Mexican Basin, by situating Aztec activities as divinely-sanctioned, cosmologically necessary terms.

Theories of Myth

Despite the Myth of the Suns being relatively widely recorded, the application of myth theory to Aztec cosmogenesis, the Myth of the Suns and accompanying

¹ Theodor H. Gaster, Myth and Story. *Numen*, Vol. 1, Fasc., 3 (Sept., 1954), pp. 184-212 [*Hereafter Gaster 1954*]; Theodor H. Gaster, 1950 *Thespis: Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient Near East*. Henry Schuman, New York [*Hereafter Gaster 1950*].

New Fire Ceremony, a ritual which staved off destruction, is scarce.²

Mythological systems found throughout the world often include an origin cosmology, eschatological and destructive myths, myths of time, eternity, rebirth and renewal.³ Myths differ from other narratives, partly in their repetition over time, Doty (2003) noted that culturally important myths are not told once, but are repeated through generations.⁴ They held such importance to the community or culture that they needed to be in the culture's current (living) memory, other scholars think of myth as a difficult to define entity that exists mainly to bring meaning to human experience.⁵ Eliade (quoted in Carrasco, 1980:303) proposed the idea that primordial myths articulate cosmogenic histories which explain the origin of the cosmos, an idealised utopian era in the mythical past; archaic beliefs are taken to involve a 'continuance of thought with those who enacted important roles' in ancient history, linking the present to the utopian era.⁶ Disasters, according to Campion 1994, create a temporal barrier which defined the present and separated it from the lost past.⁷

Modern scholarship defines four main theories of myth: rational, psychological, structuralism and functional.⁸ A single myth can often be analysed using several

² Wayne Elzey, The Nahua Myth of the Suns: History and Cosmology in Pre-Hispanic Mexican Religions. *Numen*, Vol. 23, Fasc. 2 (Aug., 1976), pp. 114-135 [Hereafter Elzey 1976]; Robert De los Arcos, Los Cinco soles cosmogónicos. *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl*, VII: 1967: Pp. 200; Inga Clendinnen, The Cost of Courage in Aztec Society. *Past & Present*, No. 107 (May, 1985), pp. 44-89 [Hereafter Clendinnen 1985]; Stephen Feuchtwang, (2010) Ritual and Memory. In: (eds) Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*. Fordham University Press. 281-298 [Hereafter Feuchtwang 2010].

³ Harald Haarmann, 2015a Chapter Title: Myth through the ages: Crafting realities in a mythopoeic key In: *Myth as source of knowledge in early western thought: The quest for historiography, science and philosophy in Greek antiquity*. Published by: Harrassowitz Verlag. Pp. 9-23; Robert A Segal, 2015 *Myth: A Very Short Introduction (Second Edition)*. Oxford University Press; Eric Csapo, 2005 *Theories of Mythology*. Blackwell Publishing [Hereafter Csapo 2005]; William G Doty, What's a myth? Nomological, Topological, and Taxonomic Explorations. *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Fall/Winter 2003, Vol. 86, No.3/4 (Fall/Winter 2003), pp. 391-419 [Hereafter Doty 2003].

⁴ Doty, 2003, pp. 403; Cohen 1969, pp. 339.

⁵ De Jong De Josselin 1980 Chapter Title: MYTH AND NON-MYTH. In: (Eds) R. Schefold, J. W. Schoorl, J. Tennekes *Man, Meaning and History: Essays in Honour of H.G. Schulte Nordholt*. Brill. Pp. 109-140 [Hereafter De Josselin 1980]; Ulrich Gaier, 2009 Chapter Title: Myth, Mythology, New Mythology. In: (Eds) Hans Adler, Wulf Koepke *A Companion to the Works of Johann Gottfried Herder*. Boydell & Brewer, Camden House. Pp. 167-188 [Hereafter Gaier 2009]; Carter, Byrum E. The Function of the Myth of the Earthborn in the "Republic". *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 48, No. 8 (May, 1953), pp. 297-302; Percy S Cohen., Theories of Myth. *Man, New Series*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Sep., 1969), pp. 337-353 [Hereafter Cohen 1969]; Csapo 2005, pp. 14; Barash, Jeffrey Andrew MYTH IN HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY AS MYTH: ON THE AMBIVALENCE OF HANSBLUMENBERG'S INTERPRETATION OF ERNST CASSIRER'S THEORY OF MYTH. *History and Theory*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (October 2011), pp. 328-34 [Hereafter Barash 2011]; Segal 2015, pp. 29.

⁶ David Carrasco, Quetzalcoatl's Revenge: Primordium and Application in Aztec Religion. *History of Religions*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (May, 1980), pp. 296-320; Campion, N. (1994) *The Great Year: Astrology, Millenarianism and History in the Western Tradition*. Arkana, Penguin Books, St Ives, England, pp. 7 [Hereafter Campion 1994].

⁷ Campion 1994, pp.7.

⁸ Claude Lévi-Strauss, 1978 *Myth and Meaning: Cracking the Code of Culture*. Routledge and Kegan Paul. University of Toronto Press [Hereafter Lévi-Strauss 1978]; David. G Mandelbaum, , Myths and Myth Maker: Some Anthropological Appraisals of Mythological Studies of Lévi-Strauss. *Ethnology*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Jan., 1987), pp. 31-36 [Hereafter Mandelbaum 1987]; James W Menzies, 2014a Chapter Title: Myth, An Attempt to Define the Indefinable. In: *True Myth: C.S. Lewis and Joseph Campbell on the Veracity of Christianity*. Published by: Lutterworth Press, pp. 22-41 [Hereafter Menzies 2014a]; William Jay Peck, Structure and History in Myth Interpretation. *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur*

of the theories, with the first three in particular overlapping.⁹ Rational myth theory suggests that myths are akin to scientific hypotheses, involving attempts to make sense of everyday events. Aztec cosmology might have rational functions, such as explaining the rise of the sun and moon, the births and deaths of humans, and the cycles of nature, but as nobody had observed the collapse of the universe, the New Fire Ceremony and its elements have little explanatory value. The theory also faces the problem that the founders of the Aztec empire presumably witnessed the sun and moon rising before the ‘creation’ of the Fifth Sun, a new hypothesis was advanced to account for a "new" sun and moon. The Aztec correctly predicted solar eclipses and there is some evidence that the ‘*end of a sun*’ referred to eclipses.¹⁰ The adherence to the rituals of the New Fire Ceremony, however, is not easily explained rationally.

Psychoanalytic theories are founded in psychological approaches to myths, based on the works of the 20th and 21st century psychologists (such as Freud and Jung), who analysed myths in terms of unconscious archetypes or archaic memories connected to early childhood dynamics. Jung’s theory was based on the idea that myths reflect universal human fears and existential questions, often expressed in archetypes (recurring figures or tropes such as the hero, the tyrant, and the mother), which are equally applicable to all cultures due to their roots in the human condition.¹¹ As with rational approaches, it is difficult to find applications

Kulturkunde, Bd. 14 (1968), pp. 148-154 [Hereafter Peck 1968]; Graham Seal, 2011 Chapter Title: MYTH AND HISTORY. In: *Outlaw Heroes in Myth and History*. Published by: Anthem Press. Pp. 49-60; Ernesto. Spinelli, 1989. *The interpreted world: an introduction to phenomenological psychology*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

⁹ Cristiano Grottanelli, Nietzsche and Myth. *History of Religions*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Aug., 1997), pp. 3-20 [Hereafter Grottanelli 1997]; P. M. Heehs, Myth, History, and Theory. *History and Theory*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Feb., 1994), pp. 1-19 [Hereafter Heehs 1994]; James W. Menzies, 2014b Chapter Title: Joseph Campbell and Myth. In: *True Myth: C.S. Lewis and Joseph Campbell on the Veracity of Christianity*. Published by: Lutterworth Press. Pp. 88-141 [Hereafter Menzies 2014b]; Vernon W. Gras, Myth and the Reconciliation of Opposites: Jung and Lévi-Strauss. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Jul. - Sep., 1981), pp. 471-488 [Hereafter Gras 1981]; Willard Gingerich, Three Nahuatl Hymns on the Mother Archetype: An Interpretive Commentary. *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Summer, 1988), pp. 191-244 [Hereafter Gingerich 1988]; Robert A. Segal The Myth-Ritualist Theory of Religion. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Jun., 1980), pp. 173-185 [Hereafter Segal 1980]; David Stewart, 2012 Chapter Title: On defining myth: comparisons of myth theory from an Egyptological viewpoint. In: (Eds) Heba Abd El Gawad, Nathalie Andrews, Maria Correas-Amador, Veronica Tamorri, James Taylor *Current Research in Egyptology 2011: Book Subtitle: Proceedings of the Twelfth Annual Symposium*. Published by: Oxbow Books, pp. 189-199; Barash, 2011, pp. 336.

¹⁰ Vincent H. Malmström, 1997. *Cycles of the Sun, Mysteries of the Moon: The Calendar in Mesoamerican Civilization*. University of Texas Press, Austin; Anthony F. Aveni and Edward E. Calnek ASTRONOMICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN THE AZTEC EXPRESSION OF HISTORY: Eclipse data. Published online by Cambridge University Press: 01 January 1999 pp. 87-98. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0956536199101111>; Timothy Knowlton Seasonal Implications of Maya Eclipse and Rain Iconography in the Dresden Codex. *Journal for the History of Astronomy*. 2003;34(3):291-303. doi:10.1177/002182860303400303.

¹¹ Freilich Morris, P. E. de Josselin de Jong, J. L. Fischer, C. Scott Littleton, Amnon Orent, S. A. Tokarev, John Tu Er-wei and William J. Voigt Myth, Method, and Madness [and Comments and Replies]. *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Jun., 1975), pp. 207-226 [Hereafter Freilich et. al. 1975]; Gaier 2009, pp. 176; Gras 1981, pp. 478; De Josselin De Jong 1980, pp. 111.

of psychological approaches to Aztec cosmology. Gallo 2011 examined human sacrifice in the ancient Mexico, relying on Freud's theories of psychoanalysis, but did not extend the study to Aztec cosmogenesis.¹² Similarly, Gingerich 1988, explored the mother archetype in Nahuatl (Aztec) hymns, but did not extend this study to the Myth of the Suns or the New Fire Ceremony.¹³ Despite these limitations in the present literature, there is no doubt that the Aztec prophetic and eschatological beliefs could be analysed psychologically.¹⁴ However, this will not be pursued here.

Structuralism

Structuralism is the only major approach which has been applied to Aztec cosmogenesis. Its founder, Claude Lévi-Strauss, believed that humans have a divided self, an innate duality spontaneously created by the human mind and human nature, which is defined by binary (antagonistic) opposites.¹⁵ These oppositions constitute the primary elements from which myth is constructed.¹⁶ Structuralism views myth to be structured like a language, and analyses the psychological meanings of the binaries (such as good/bad, light/dark) contained in myths.¹⁷ Levi-Strauss believed that myths should be studied divorced from ritual, in his view the most pure unadulterated renditions indicative of the unconscious human mind, are devoid of cultural and cosmological accessories,

¹² Rubén Gallo, Freud's Mexican Antiquities: Psychoanalysis and Human Sacrifice. *October*, Vol. 135 (Winter 2011), pp. 70-92; [Hereafter Gallo 2011]; David Bidney, The Concept of Myth and the Problem of Psychocultural Evolution. *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 52, No. 1 (Jan. - Mar., 1950), pp. 16-26 [Hereafter Bidney 1950].

¹³ Gingerich 1988, pp. 201; Cohen 1969, pp. 339.

¹⁴ Bidney 1950, pp. 18; Vardesh Channa, and Yun-Hee Choi Contexts of a Myth: A Comparison of Structural and Psychoanalytic Analysis. *Indian Anthropologist*, Vol. 36, No. 1/2, Special issue on Folk Narratives (Jan-Dec 2006), pp. 63-72; Alan Dundes, Projection in Folklore: A Plea for Psychoanalytic Semiotics. *MLN*, Vol. 91, No. 6, *Comparative Literature* (Dec., 1976), pp. 1500-1533.

¹⁵ Claude Lévi-Strauss, The structural study of Myth. *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 68, No. 270, Myth: A Symposium (Oct., -Dec., 1955), pp. 428-444m [Hereafter Lévi-Strauss 1955].

¹⁶ Eric Gould, 1981 Chapter Title: THE STRUCTURAL MODEL: ANTHROPOLOGY AND SEMIOTICS. In *Mythical Intentions in Modern Literature*. Princeton University Press [Hereafter Gould 1981]; Lévi-Strauss 1955, pp. 429; Lévi-Strauss, C. 1969a *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. Beacon Press, Boston. [Hereafter Lévi-Strauss 1969a]; Lévi-Strauss, C. 1969b *The Raw and the Cooked: Introduction to a Science of Mythology*. Vol. 1. Harper Collins, New York; Gary Roth CLAUDE LEVI-STRAUSS IN RETROSPECT. *Dialectical Anthropology*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1993), pp. 31-52 [Hereafter Roth 1993]; Roger Silverstone, Ernst Cassirer and Claude Lévi-Strauss: Two Approaches to the Study of Myth. *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 21e Année, No. 41 (Jan. - Jun., 1976), pp. 25-36 [Hereafter Silverstone 1976]; Wiseman, Boris 2009 Introduction In: (Ed) Wiseman, Boris *The Cambridge Companion to Lévi-Strauss*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK.

¹⁷ Claude Lévi-Strauss, 1963 Structural Analysis in Linguistics and in Anthropology. In *Structural Anthropology*. Anchor Books, Garden City. Pp. 29-53 [Hereafter Lévi-Strauss 1963]; James A Boon. Lévi-Strauss and 'Narrative'. *Man, New Series*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Dec., 1970), pp. 702-703 [Hereafter Boon 1970]; Claude Lévi-Strauss and Didier Eribon 1991 *Conversations with Claude Lévi-Strauss*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago [Hereafter Lévi-Strauss and Eribon 1991]; Lévi-Strauss 1969a, pp. 16.

which only served to clutter the vital meaning and act as a distraction to the real or subliminal focus of interpretation of myth.¹⁸ Conceptualising myth through a musical analogy, Lévi-Strauss attempted to find the “principal tone; the basic principle or necessary component” of myths, a core contribution to their creation; a commonality he felt existed and contributed to an unconscious human creative allegiance.¹⁹ From this literal or textural stage, he hoped to discover the generative cause of mythmaking, a commonality across all cultures or more precisely a creative allegiance across the human mind to excavate a culture's primary binaries.²⁰ The approach takes myth to be primary, and ritual secondary. Mandelbaum summarises the theory as follows:

*“The oppositions are said to represent dilemmas of human existence; the telling of the myths, in the view of Lévi-Strauss, helps to resolve them.”*²¹

In Judaeo-Christian cosmology, binaries of good/evil and heaven/hell play important roles.²² Other cultures, such as the Amazonian Nambikwara, whom Levi-Strauss studied, rely on different root binaries such as raw/cooked.²³ This focus on the basic or essential elements of myths relied on the researcher to identify the base elements, a process which later scholars have criticised as an arbitrary decision.²⁴

Criticisms of Structuralism

Criticisms of Lévi-Strauss's structuralism approach include claims that it is primarily a comparative rather than analytical approach, that the focus on

¹⁸ Robert A. Segal, The Function of "Religion" and "Myth": A Response to Russell McCutcheon. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 73, No. 1 (Mar., 2005), pp. 209-213 [Hereafter Segal 2005]; LL, Thomas, J.Z. Kronenfeld and R.B. Kronenfeld Asdiwal Crumbles: A Critique of Lévi-Strauss Myth Analysis. *American Ethnologist* 1976 3:147-173 [Hereafter Thomas Kronenfeld and Kronenfeld 1976]; Lévi-Strauss 1955, pp. 423; Gaster 1954, pp. 189; E. B. Leacock, Structuralism and Dialectics. *Reviews in Anthropology* 1978:5:117-128 [Hereafter Leacock 1978]; Marcel Hénaff, 2009 Lévi-Strauss and the question of symbolism. In: (Ed) Wiseman, Boris *The Cambridge Companion to Lévi-Strauss*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK [Hereafter Hénaff 2009].

¹⁹ Silverstone 1976, pp.27; Roth 1993, pp.34; Gras 1981, pp. 481; Lévi-Strauss 1969a, pp. 56.

²⁰ Lévi-Strauss and Eribon 1991, pp. 35; Roth 1993, pp. 40; Freilich *et.al.* 1975, pp. 223.

²¹ Mandelbaum 1987, pp. 35.

²² Michel, Graulich, Doris Heyden, Ulrich Köhler, Berthold Riese, Jacques Soustelle, Rudolf Van Zantwijk, Charles R. Wicke and Karl A. Wipf. Myths of Paradise Lost in Pre-Hispanic Central Mexico [and Comments and Reply]. *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 24, No. 5 (Dec., 1983), pp. 575-588 [Hereafter Graulich *et. al.* 1983]; Lévi-Strauss 1955, pp. 437; Grottanelli 1997, pp. 13.

²³ Lévi-Strauss 1969b, pp. 52..

²⁴ Roth 1993, pp.34; Gould 1981, pp.9; Gras 1981, pp. 481; Lévi-Strauss 1969a, pp. 56.

linguistic/cognitive binaries reduced myth to a literary discourse, implying (wrongly) that the analyst can completely understand the dramatic elements of a narrative (outside its social context), simply by analysing texts.²⁵ Hutchins 2008 postulated that binary categories are necessarily linked to the social context, cultural practices in turn contributed to the development of myth and are also necessary to the emergence of modernity, reviewing each independently removes the intent one has on the other.²⁶ Clarke, using Malinowski's earlier theory, stated that myth played a psychological, not just a structuralist role and cultural perceptions were lost if myth was divorced from ritual.²⁷

Robbins 1999 proposed that similarities do not necessarily reflect universals of the human mind, other factors cause commonalities particularly when comparing agricultural community's knowledge and interpretation of experiences; she argues one would expect descriptive similarities.²⁸ Critics stated that structuralism was simply comparative in nature and that Lévi-Strauss overextended his theory, 'almost grasping' to demonstrate structuralist analysis.²⁹ Dandes considered

²⁵ Alan Dundes, Binary Opposition in Myth: The Propp/Lévi-Strauss Debate in Retrospect. *Western Folklore*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (Winter, 1997), pp. 39-50 [Hereafter Dundes 1997a]; Frédéric Keck, 2009 The limits of classification: Claude Lévi-Strauss and Mary Douglas. In: (Ed) Wiseman, Boris *The Cambridge Companion to Lévi-Strauss*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK. [Hereafter Keck 2009]; Csapo 2005: pp.61; Vincent Debaene, and Caroline Vial Lévi-Strauss: What Legacy? *Yale French Studies*, No. 123, Rethinking Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009) (2013), pp.14-40 [Hereafter Debaene and Vial 2013]; Eric Schwimmer, 2009 The local and the universal In: (Ed) Wiseman, Boris *The Cambridge Companion to Lévi-Strauss*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK, pp. 52; N. Yalman 1967 "The Raw: The Cooked: Nature: 'Culture'. Observations on Le Cru et le Cuit", in: E.R. Leach (ed.), *The Structural Study of Myth and Totemism*, London: Tavistock. pp. 71-91 [Hereafter Yalman 1967]; Tobin Siebers 1988 Chapter Title: Ethics in the Age of Rousseau: From Lévi-Strauss to Derrida. In: *The Ethics of Criticism*. Cornell University Press. Pp.69-97 [Hereafter Siebers 1988]; Leacock 1978, pp. 119; Gaster 1954, pp. 186; Simon J. Bronner, 2007 Chapter Title: Structuralism and Folklore. In: *Meaning of Folklore: The Analytical Essays of Alan Dundes*. University of Colorado, Utah State University Press. Pp. 123-153 [Hereafter Bronner 2007a]; Robert C. Philen, Reflections on Meaning and Myth. Claude Lévi-Strauss Revisted. *Anthropos*, Bd. 100 H.1. (2005), pp. 221-228; Fiske 1969, pp. 251 [Hereafter Philen 1969]; Dundes 1997a, pp. 45; Keck 2009, pp. 59; Debaene and Vial 2013, pp. 19; Schwimmer 2009, pp. 37; Yalman 1967, pp. 83; Gras 1981, pp. 475.

²⁶ Edwin. Hutchins, The Role of Cultural Practices in the Emergence of Modern Human Intelligence. *Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences*, Vol. 363, No. 1499, *The Sapient Mind: Archaeology Meets Neuroscience* (Jun. 12, 2008), pp. 2011-2019 [Hereafter Hutchins 2008]; E Rhoads, Little Orphan Annie and Lévi-Strauss: The Myth and the Method. *Journal of American Folklore* 1973 86:189-190; Thomas, Kronenfeld and Kronenfeld 1976, pp. 158; Feuchtwang 2010, pp. 288; T. M. Weik, The Archaeology of Ethnogenesis. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 43 (2014), pp. 291-305.

²⁷ Lévi-Strauss 1969b, pp. 45; Kamboucher 2009, pp. 15; Eduardo Viveiros De Castro, 2014 Chapter Title: Becomings of Structuralism In: (Ed) Peter Skafish *Cannibal Metaphysics*. University of Minnesota Press, Univocal Publishing, pp. 65.; Doran, Robert Editor's Preface: Rethinking Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908—2009) *Yale French Studies*, No. 123, Rethinking Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009) (2013), pp.1-5 [Hereafter Doran 2013]; Emile Durkheim, , *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, New York: Collier, 1961, pp. 435; Swain, Joseph Ward. 1915 *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life. Durkheim, Emile. Translated from the French*. George Allen and Unwin Ltd. London.

²⁸ Hutchins 2008, pp. 2015; Peter J. Martin and Alex Dennis 2010 Chapter Title: Introduction: the opposition of structure and agency. In: (Eds) Peter J. Martin, Alex Dennis *Human agents and social structures*. Published by: Manchester University Press; Silverstone 1976, pp. 30; Ivan Strenski Levi-Strauss and the Buddhists. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Jan., 1980), pp. 3-22; Ellen Robbins 1999 The Pleiades, the Flood and the Jewish New Year. In *Ki Baruch Hu*. Pp. 328-344 [Hereafter Robbins 1999].

²⁹ Ronald Schleifer, , Robert Con Davis and Nancy Mergler 1992 Chapter Title: COGNITION AND NARRATION: Binary Structures and the Nature of Meaning. In: (Eds) Schleifer Ronald, Robert Con Davis and Nancy Mergler *Culture and Cognition: The Boundaries of Literary and Scientific Inquiry*. Cornell University Press, pp. 47; Boon 1970, pp. 702; Doran 2013, pp. 4.

unnecessary ‘classification’ acted to ensnare the intellect in unnecessary details, causing confusion and leading to interpretative mishaps³⁰ In a more severe version of the same criticism Moore, Asdiwal and Tate along with Messer argued that the ‘same results’ are gained when a structuralist proponent analysed any non-Western mythology and though binary oppositional elements may be identified within a myth, a structural analysis of all myths may not be valid if the myth is not considered within its social context.³¹ Major criticism relates to what information is used to support structuralism; Dundes 1976 noted an ‘unconscious massaging of cultures’, he questioned data validity, chosen to fit binary and oppositional interpretation of all cultures.³² Structuralism is accused of using a method which automatically affirms its conclusions, maintaining that all myth is the same or has the same objective, regardless of the data (culture).³³

Structuralism, Aztec Cosmogeneis and the Myth of the Suns

Existing studies of Aztec cosmology are divided into those which discuss pan-Mesoamerican mythology, and those focused specifically on the Aztecs. The degree of Aztec cosmological distinctness is debated, but it is clear that they cannot be assimilated to a single pan-Mesoamerican or even a pre-Columbian American tradition. Boone’s 2007 careful comparison of manuscripts and codices (separated culturally, linguistically, stylistically and geographically) led her to note that the Inca, Maya and Aztec cosmological narrative developed from a common source but did not constitute a single cosmology; she considered

³⁰Dundes 1997a, pp. 43; Simon Bronner J. 2007 Chapter Title: The Symbolic Equivalence of Allomotifs: Towards a Method of Analyzing Folktales. In: *Meaning of Folklore: The Analytical Essays of Alan Dundes*. Published by: University Press of Colorado, Utah State University Press; Ellen, Roy 2008 Chapter Title: Anthropological Studies of Classification (1996). In: (Eds) Roy Ellen *The Categorical Impulse: Essays on the Anthropology of Classifying Behavior*. Berghahn Books. Pp. 31-37.

³¹ Dundes 1997a, pp. 48; Simon Clarke, The Origins of Lévi-Strauss’s Structuralism. *Sociology*, Vol.12, No. 3 (September 1978), pp. 405-439 [*Hereafter Clarke 1978*]; Caroline Pennock Dodds, Amanda Power, Globalizing Cosmologies, Past & Present, Volume 238, Issue suppl_13, November 2018, Pages 88–115, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.une.edu.au/10.1093/pastj/gty032> accessed 27 July 2019 ; Bidney 1950, pp. 20; Hans Blumenberg 2010 Chapter Title: Myth and Metaphorics. In: *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*. Cornell University Press. Pp. 77-80 [*Hereafter Blumenberg 2010*]; Abraham Rosman, and Paula Rubel 2009 Structure and exchange. In: (Ed) Wiseman, Boris *The Cambridge Companion to Lévi-Strauss*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK.; Roth 1993, pp. 41; Ron Messer, A Structuralist's View of an Indian Creation Myth. *Anthropologica*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (1989), pp. 195-235 [*Hereafter Messer 1989*]; John H. Moore Asdiwal, Boas, and Henry Tate. A Note on Structuralist Methodology. *Anthropos*, Bd. 70, H. 5./6. (1975), pp. 926-930; M. Rama Rao Mohana On Levi-Strauss : A Rejoinder to Krishnan-Kutty. *Indian Anthropologist*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (1983), pp. 65-71.

³² Philippe Descola, 2009 The two natures of Lévi-Strauss. In: (Ed) Wiseman, Boris *The Cambridge Companion to Lévi-Strauss*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK. [*Hereafter Descola 2009*]; Dundes, 1976, pp. 1521.

³³ Bidney 1950, pp. 18; Blumenberg 2010, pp. 79; Herzfeld, M. Lévi-Strauss on the Nation-State. *Journal of American Folklore* 1985 98:191-208; Descola 2009, pp. 476.

rudimentary themes amongst the different civilisations too universal to dismiss.³⁴ The diffusion and evolution of the Mesoamerican civilisations saw their culturally distinct cosmologies develop, each with large pantheon of gods (as *per* Dr Whelan referencing the Aztecs: “a god for every purpose”), with many gods performing more than one significant role.³⁵ Aztec cosmogenesis, with its innate dualism, would appeal to structuralism proponents, however in contrast with the concept of binary opposition as proposed by Lévi-Strauss, their cosmological duality was context dependant and complimentary rather than antagonistic, or perhaps more clearly different states of being, depending on the circumstances.³⁶

Graulich *et al.* 1981a, 1981b and 1983 proposed a pan-Mesoamerican cosmology (encompassing the Inca, Aztec and Mayan traditions) and made notable attempts using structuralism to examine the cosmogenesis of Mesoamerica, including the Myth of the Suns.³⁷ His analysis ignored ritual and provided many examples of what he considered to be binary oppositional elements, intimating that pan-Mesoamerican mythology was a mimic of Judaeo-Christian dogma.³⁸ He concluded cosmology was structuralistic in nature demonstrated, he argued, by the

³⁴ Boone 2007, loc 2503.

³⁵ M. Whalen, 2016 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9PiWN0nhYqI> accessed 25th February 2020 [*Hereafter Whalen 2016*]; Boone 2007, loc 2503; Douglas T., Peck, The Geographical Origin and Acculturation of Maya Advanced Civilisation in Mesoamerica. *Revista de Historia de América*, No. 130 (Jan. – Jun., 2002), pp. 7-28 [*Hereafter Peck 2002*]; Maffie, James 2014a Chapter Title: Pantheism: Nepantla and Aztec Philosophy. In: *Aztec Philosophy: Understanding a World in Motion*. Published by: University Press of Colorado. Pp. 79-136 [*Hereafter Maffie 2014a*]; Vincent H. Malmström, Geographical Diffusion and Calendrics in Pre-Columbian Mesoamerica. *Geographical Review*, Vol. 82, No. 2 (Apr., 1992), pp. 113-127 [*Hereafter Malmström 1992*]; Susan Milbrath, 1999. *Star Gods of the Maya: Astronomy in Art, Folklore, and Calendars*. Austin, University of Texas Press; Beyer 1908, pp. 420.

³⁶ Michael E. Harkin, 2009 Lévi-Strauss and history In: (Ed) Wiseman, Boris *The Cambridge Companion to Lévi-Strauss*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK; Krishnan-Kutty, G. On Levi-Strauss. *Indian Anthropologist*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (June 1982), pp. 49-55; Marcela Coelho De Souza, 2009 The future of the structure of kinship. In: (Ed) Wiseman, Boris *The Cambridge Companion to Lévi-Strauss*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK; Hage, Per., Frank Harary and Bojka Milicic Hierarchical Opposition. *Oceania*, Vol. 65, No. 4 (Jun., 1995), pp. 347-354; A. De Ruijter, 1982 Chapter Title: LÉVI-STRAUSS AND SYMBOLIC ANTHROPOLOGY In (Eds) *P E De Josselin De Jong and Erik Schwimmer Symbolic Anthropology in the Netherlands*. Brill. Pp. 156-170; Ted L. Scheffler, The Ideology of Binary Opposition: Subject/Object Duality and anthropology. *Dialectical Anthropology*, Vol. 6. No. 2 (December 1981), pp. 165-169; Stuart L. Charmé, 1984 IDENTITY, NARRATIVE, AND MYTH. In: *Meaning and Myth in the Study of Lives: A Sartrean Perspective*. University of Pennsylvania Press. Pp.149-157; Alfredo Lopez Austin, 1988 *The Human Body and Ideology: Concepts of the Ancient Nahuas*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press pp. 118 [*Hereafter Lopez 1988*].

³⁷ Michel., Graulich, Carrasco, Pedro., Coe Michael D., De Durand-Forest Jacqueline, Galinier Jacques., González, Yólotl., Heyden, Doris., Piho, Virve., Kelly, David H., Kolb, Charles C., Reinhold, Manfred., Riese, Berthold., J.D. Stewart and Franz Tichy The Metaphor of the Day in Ancient Mexican Myth and Ritual [and Comments and Reply]. *Current Anthropology*, Vol 22, No. 1 (Feb., 1981a), pp. 45-60 [*Hereafter Graulich et al. 1981a*]; Michel Graulich More on the Day and Ancient Mexican Myth. *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Aug., 1981b), pp. 438-439 [*Hereafter Graulich 1981b*]; Graulich *et al.* 1983, pp. 576; . Thomas Kronenfeld and Kronenfeld 1976, pp. 148.; Eric Schwimmer, 2009 The local and the universal In: (Ed) Wiseman, Boris *The Cambridge Companion to Lévi-Strauss*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK pp. 82; A. Seidenberg The Separation of Sky and Earth at Creation (II). *Folklore*, Vol. 80, No. 3 (Autumn, 1969), pp. 188-196 [*Hereafter Seidenberg 1969*]; Eva Marta Baillie, 2014 Chapter Title: Satan in Story and Myth. In: *Facing the Fiend: Satan as a Literary Character*. Lutterworth Press. Pp. 50-65; Dundes, Alan 1997b Chapter Title: The Flood as Male Myth Of Creation. In: *From Game to War and Other Psychoanalytic Essays on Folklore*. University Press of Kentucky. pp. 78-91; Lévi-Strauss 1955, pp. 436; Lévi-Strauss 1963, 42; Carroll, M. P. Lévi-Strauss' Myth Analysis and Anglophone Social Science. *Pacific Sociological Review* 1978 21:467-486.

³⁸ See Graulich, *et al.* 1981a, 1981b and 1983; Dundes 1997a, pp. 41; Lévi-Strauss 1963, pp. 31; Siebers 1988, pp. 71.

binary opposition (duality) that was prevalent in the cosmogenesis mythology of all three cultures.³⁹ Graulich claimed such similarities demonstrated a universal human mind, to paraphrase Lévi-Strauss, as the product of the “divided human mind and the internal conflict of man”.⁴⁰

Graulich’s is particularly criticised for his selectivity regarding sources, justifying his choice of documents, *Codex Telleriano-Remensis* and *Codex Vaticanus A*, by stating they presented more information than direct sources.⁴¹ Source material on the Aztec available to the researcher for the most part relies on the records of Spanish missionaries, however this leads to the problem that analogies to Judaeo-Christian cosmology may arise from perceptual biases of the Christian friars who wrote these sources.⁴² As early as 1974, researchers had begun to question the validity of utilising manuscripts, such as those by Sahagún, due to the Judaeo-Christian influence in the notations.⁴³ Graulich retorted he was able to define the underlying “pure” cultural statements in the manuscripts, arguing Aztec ideograms could be open to wider misinterpretation as required a cultural knowledge not recorded, to correctly interpret them.⁴⁴

Graulich interprets Aztec dualism through Christian themes, including contrasting concepts as good vs evil (heaven vs hell). Heyden, Köhler, Riese and Soustelle (see Graulich 1981a, 1981b and 1983) were swift in their condemnation of this approach, León-Portilla aired a similar concept to Graulich of resident bound opposites found throughout Aztec philosophy, however rather than antagonistic,

³⁹ Graulich *et.al.* 1981a, 1981b and 1983; Lévi-Strauss 1978, pp. 11.

⁴⁰ Lévi-Strauss 1955, pp. 432; Graulich *et.al.* 1981a, 1981b and 1983; Mandelbaum 1987, pp. 34; Bidney 1950, pp. 17.

⁴¹ Graulich *et.al.* 1983, pp. 575; Miguel León-Portilla, 1974 *The problematics with Sahagún: Certain topics needing investigation*. In (Eds) M S Edmondson *Sixteenth Century Mexico: The Work of Sahagún*. Albuquerque. University of New Mexico Press. [Hereafter León-Portilla 1974]; Menzies 2014a, pp. 6; Menzies 2014b, pp. 89; Messer 1989, pp. 197; *Codex Vaticanus A* (3788, Rios) 1966 (1566-89) *Antigüedades de México basadas en la recopilación de Lord Kingsborough*, vol. 3. Facsimile edition with commentary by J. Corona Núñez. Mexico; Keber, E. 1995 *Codex Telleriano-Remensis: Ritual, Divination, and History in a Pictorial Aztec Manuscript*. Published by University of Texas Press, Austin, 1995.

⁴² Graulich *et.al.* 1983, pp. 575-588; Keber 1995, pp. 74; J. F. Schwaller, 1995 *Codex Telleriano-Remensis: Ritual, Divination, and History in a Pictorial Aztec Manuscript*. University of Texas, Texas.

⁴³ León-Portilla 1974, pp. 35; Damián Baca, *The Chicano Codex: Writing against Historical and Pedagogical Colonization*. *College English*, Vol. 71, No. 6, Special Topic: Writing, Rhetoric, and Latinidad (July 2009), pp. 564-583; Arthur J O Anderson, and Charles E Dibble. 2012 *The Sun, Moon, and Stars, and The Binding of the Years. Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain. Fray Bernardino de Sahagun. Part VIII*. Published by The American School of Research and The University of Utah. Santa Fe, New Mexico [Hereafter Anderson and Dibble 2012].

⁴⁴ Graulich *et.al.* 1983, pp. 575; Menzies 2014a, pp. 6; Messer 1989, pp. 200; Benthall 1993, pp. 18; Dibble, Charles 1974 *The Nahuatlization of Christianity*. In (Eds) M S Edmondson. *Sixteenth Century Mexico: The Work of Sahagún*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico. pp. 225-233.

he described a more complementary and context-dependant dualism.⁴⁵ That is not to say that some of Graulich's binary elements were not valid (such as *sun vs moon, earth vs sky*) in the context of their myths; but his comparative deductions were hotly disputed with suggestions that his personal theoretical perspective over-influenced his readings, and he was selective concerning which basic composing units of cosmology he included in his analysis, choosing those which supported his conclusions.⁴⁶ Cook's 1977 viewed language and myth as intimately entwined; language, myth and ideograms or symbolic schemes are integral for myth interpretation, and that removing one from the other causes a 'disambiguation of meaning', Graulich's interpretation of myths via an unrelated script and language changed, in his view the perception of the myth.⁴⁷ Sartre stated that the underlying symbolic schemes acted to 'characterise thought', if was not utilising *Nahua* literature, then Graulich may misinterpret the underlying context and complexity of the creative thought.⁴⁸ Structuralism and binary opposition as a tool can identify duality within the Aztec mythology however as a theory is not capable of defining and encapsulating the cosmology of the Aztecs as a whole, nor the overriding social adherence to the ritual *tōnalpōhualli* calendar, which was infused into all aspects of Aztec life.⁴⁹

Functionalism

The functionalist approach is perhaps the earliest of the theories, arising in nineteenth-century works, such as those of James Frazer.⁵⁰ In a position almost the reverse of Levi-Strauss's, Frazer famously argued that ritual preceded myth, and that myth was a later evolution designed to explain or justify rituals, Frazer's

⁴⁵ Miguel León-Portilla, 1963 *Aztec Thought and Culture: A study of the ancient Náhuatl Mind*. University of Oklahoma Press. Pp. 36-46 [*Hereafter León-Portilla 1963*]; Graulich *et.al.* 1981a, 1981b and 1983; Miguel León-Portilla, 1971 *Philosophy in ancient Mexico*. In (Eds) GF Ekholm and I Bernal *The Archaeology of Northern Mesoamerica, Pt. 1*. Austin: University of Texas Press [*Hereafter León-Portilla 1971*].

⁴⁶ Dundes 1991, pp. 42; Graulich 1981a, 1981b and 1983 [comments and replies].

⁴⁷ Albert Cook, *Language and Myth*. *boundary 2*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Spring, 1977), pp. 653-678 [*Hereafter Cook 1977*]; Sartre, Jean-Paul 1965 *Symbolic Schemes and Illustrations of Thought*. In: J.P. Sartre *Essays in Existentialism*. Citadel Press, New York. pp. 274-283 [*Hereafter Sartre, 1965*].

⁴⁸ Sarte 1965, pp. 276; Cook 1977, pp. 660.

⁴⁹ B Stross, 'Oppositional Pairing in Mesoamerican Divinity Day Names'. *Anthropological Linguistics*, (1983) 25(2), 211-273; Molly Bassett 2015 *The fate of earthly things: Aztec Gods and God-Bodies*. University of Texas Press, Austin. [*Hereafter Bassett 2015*]; Doran 2013, pp. 1; Clarke 1978, pp. 407.

⁵⁰ James George Sir Frazer 2003 *The Golden Bough: A study of magic and religion*. January, 2003 [EBook #3623] [This file was last updated on March 23, 2003] <https://unglue.it/work/66688/> accessed 17th July 2019 [*Hereafter Frazer 2003*].

functionalism is similar to rationalism. Functionalism makes reference to indirect, social and evolutionary benefits of rituals (for example, enhancing social cohesion or social control) and their contribution to knowledge, history and memory. Rituals are taken to begin as magical practices intended to bring about worldly effects (in the New Fire Ritual, this might mean preventing cataclysms, myths were added later, so as to either explain why the ritual worked or justify its continuation when magical beliefs declined.⁵¹

Gaster 1954 whose approach I adopt in this dissertation was writing contemporaneously with Levi-Strauss.⁵² He disagreed with the theory of structuralism and in direct contrast to structuralism, stated ritual is an essential ingredient of myth, they intimately coexisted, and in his view ritual could not be separated from myth, or myth from ritual.⁵³ He dismissed the concept of the divided human mind, and saw the search for a common creative intent as an unproductive activity, believing that it would not be found.⁵⁴ All myths, continued Gaster, serve a *distinctly functional purpose* to create community bonding, shared experiences, group belonging and placed individual behaviour within the context of their responsibility to the group; myths described realities or provided a narrative that for those for whom the myth was valid, presenting a culturally specific reality.⁵⁵ Ritual, he argued further, could be performed without an accompanying myth, but of cardinal importance was that at some stage they were concurrent.⁵⁶

Heehs 1994 in stated that myth is often history and that theory of myth may confuse the interpretation of a particular history, whilst Hooke's 1939 view was that myth, ritual and history were entwined entities, and that one could not be completely understood without the contribution of the other.⁵⁷ Haarmann and James linked myth with oral traditions, as a functioning part in cultural development not as a definable and distinct entity and must instead be studied

⁵¹ Frazer 2003, pp. 54.

⁵² Gaster 1954, pp. 186.

⁵³ Gaster 1954, pp. 187; Theodor, H. Gaster 1950, pp. 3; Segal, Robert Alan (Ed) 1998 *Gaster, Theodor. H. "Thespis."* In *The Myth and Ritual Theory : An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 307-12 [*Hereafter Segal 1998*]; Gaster 1950, pp 189.

⁵⁴ Gaster 1954, pp. 115.

⁵⁵ Gaster 1950, pp. 3; Freilich *et.al.* 1975, pp. 210; Feuchtwang 2010, pp. 286; Gaster 1954, pp. 193.

⁵⁶ Gaster 1954, pp. 129.

⁵⁷ Heehs 1994, pp. 14; Hooke S. H. Myth, Ritual and History. *Folklore*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (Jun., 1939), pp. 137-147.

from a cultural perspective.⁵⁸ Gaster went further, stating that mythology *is* history; whether or not it is “*real*”, it is validated if believed by those who claim that cultural heritage.⁵⁹

Gaster argued that all cultures have similarities, as there is only so many ways to describe the indescribable, or what they are unable to explain to themselves, he proposed that all myths were a presentation of the *actual*, in terms of the *ideal*, and co-exist with ritual providing, in essence, differing views of the same cultural expression.⁶⁰ Accordingly Gaster believed the relationship between myth and ritual to be mutually beneficial and symbiotic, with each being almost meaningless without the other.⁶¹ For example, the *tōnalpōhualli* validated the New Fire Ceremony ritual, its associated gods and the Aztec eschatological beliefs; and in turn the calendar promoted rituals, keeping myths relevant to the community, which then continued to enact the rituals. If ritual was isolated from the *tōnalpōhualli* and not placed in its social context essentially each element becomes meaningless.

Gaster studied ancient Near East societies, where ritual was mostly concerned with harvest or annual rituals, suggesting that rituals, drama and myths converge to create topocosmic renewal, a renewal of a *life-lease*, the continuance of life for another period.⁶² He suggested that each culture, developed its own topocosm, encompassing and ordering their physical world, relating seasonal changes, geographical features, animal and human life to the inhabitant’s experience.⁶³ Gaster observed a commonality amongst different cultures, noting significant milestones, such as a new year, or seasonal patterns as he termed them, were prepared for with a script of penance and piety, generally followed by celebrations when the milestone was passed.⁶⁴ Outside of universal religions, myths and rituals are related to a *topocosmos*, a world order and cosmic/divine order related

⁵⁸ Haarmann 2015b, pp. 29; E. O. James The Nature and Function of Myth. *Folklore*, Vol. 68, No. 4 (Dec., 1957), pp. 474-482 [Hereafter James 1957]; Jeffrey M. Perl, 1984 Chapter Title: Myth. In: *The Tradition of Return: The Implicit History of Modern Literature*. Published by: Princeton University Press., pp. 221-255 [Hereafter Perl 1984].

⁵⁹ Gaster 1954, pp. 193; Menzies 2014a, pp. 23.

⁶⁰ Gaster 1954, pp. 210.

⁶¹ Gaster 1950, pp. 196.

⁶² Gaster 1950, pp. 5 & 6.

⁶³ Gaster 1950, pp. 6.

⁶⁴ Gaster 1950, pp. 7.

intimately to the lived everyday experience of a group of people living in a particular location (*topos*). This is similar to the contemporary ideas of indigenous/local knowledge and indigenous cosmovisions, which similarly emphasise the importance of situatedness, relationality, process, and practicality.

Drama worked to guide and consolidate the pre-ritual festivals, and when the ritual was successfully completed, anxiety and fear of failure passed, the culture then celebrated the extension of their life-lease.⁶⁵ Ritual enactment, Gaster concluded, anchored the psyche, refining and defining the perception of time, ensuring regeneration, revitalisation and continuance.⁶⁶ The use of myth, ritual and drama ensured topocosmic renewal, the need for renewal and rebirth, revivification lead to the continuance of the life-lease.⁶⁷ These practices play a necessary and essential role to consolidate a sense of place, of ownership and belonging of a culture within their natural world.⁶⁸ The resultant safety of the topocosm, society, and individual, Gaster concluded was a universal characteristic amongst cultures; how each conducts it depends on their unique cosmology.⁶⁹

In the age of the Fifth Sun, all objects were connected through cosmic motion and recycled cosmic energy.⁷⁰ The Myth of the Suns and the accompanying New Fire Ceremony serve as the re-enactment of gods' sacrifices to create the Fifth Sun.⁷¹ Elzey examined the role on the Myth of Suns in the relation to Aztec eschatological and prophetic religion, determining the Aztec myths as a functional mechanism for social cohesion, serving to stabilise society, he was joined in this view by Alexander and Galinier.⁷² The Aztec incorporated ritual sacrifice in their devotions, Doty's marker that a myth had entered the religious realm was when necessity for sacrifice occurred, and Henderson identified a commonality in myths

⁶⁵ Gaster 1950, p.14.

⁶⁶ Gaster 1950, pp. 49.

⁶⁷ Gaster 1950:pp.3, 21; Gaster 1954, pp. 187; Segal 1998, pp. 310.

⁶⁸ Gaster 1950, pp. 6; Gaster 1954, pp. 189.

⁶⁹ Gaster 1950, pp. 40.

⁷⁰ Read 1994: pp. 43.

⁷¹ Aleksandar Bošković, In the Age of the Fifth Sun: Jacques Soustelle's Studies of Aztec Religion. *Anthropos*, Bd. 87, H. 4./6. (1992), pp. 533-537 [Hereafter Bošković 1992]; Malmström 1997, pp. 14; Kay A Read, Sun and Earth Rulers: What the Eyes Cannot See in Mesoamerica. *History of Religions*, Vol. 34, No. 4, Representations of Rulers (May, 1995), pp.351-384 [Hereafter Read 1995].

⁷² Elzey 1976; Elzey 1974, pp. 54; Carrie Alexander, 2006 *Myth, tradition, and the Chichimec migrations: An analysis of how the northern migrants adapted to and influenced central Mexican culture*. California State University, Dominguez Hills, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1435678 pp. 19 [Hereafter Alexander 2006]; Galinier 2004, pp. 665; Hooke 1939, pp. 138; James 1957, pp. 475; Jindo 2005, pp. 413; Menzies 2014a, pp. 29; Segal 2005, pp. 210; Gaster 1950:pp. 9.

in which dying and resurrecting gods occurred, in that all required an element of sacrifice, piety and penance.⁷³ The Aztec, to conduct their rituals properly and successfully were dependant on their eschatological and prophetic cosmogenesis, they may have been unique in their commitment to extend the literal *universal* life-lease.⁷⁴

Functionalist approaches (though not necessarily Gasper's specific theories) appear frequently in the scholarly literature, but there is little in the later literature concerning topocosmic renewal rituals in the context of cosmogenesis. Vail 1997 reviewed the Aztec Calendar in the context of renewal ritual/cycles of the sun, but did not examine the ritual in the context of global similarities to other topocosmic renewal myths.⁷⁵ The focus is generally on the function's conferred advantages for an entire society (in its internal functioning). In the Aztec case, functions directed towards other societies as well as functions beneficial for particular powerful groups within Aztec society were equally important. This type of function is more associated with conflict theories, such as Marxism than it is with functionalism. Given the lack of conflict-theoretical works on cosmogenesis myths, I have included this type of function in the remit of functionalism.⁷⁶ These arguments are broadly similar to, and sometimes influenced by, Gaster's theories.

Aztec cosmogenesis and origin legends were part of a complicated and dynamic religion, encompassing and including everything in their universe. Each contributory component of the myth and ritual reinforced the Aztec's cosmological and religious life, leading ultimately to the protection of the universe from the dark, chaotic void of transitional time.⁷⁷ The successful completion of the New Fire Ceremony by the Aztecs is a form of topocosmic renewal, a renewal of the "*life-lease*", granting continuance of the sun for the next calendar round.

⁷³ Doty 2003, pp. 404; Henderson 1990, pp. 16.

⁷⁴ Broda 1991, pp. 79; Kay Read, Sacred Commoners: The Motion of Cosmic Powers in Mexica Rulership. *History of Religions*, Vol., 34, No. 1 (Aug., 1994), pp. 39-69 [Hereafter Read 1994].

⁷⁵ Anthony Aveni, 2016 Chapter Title: Ancient Galactic Wisdom and 2012 Mayanism . In: *Apocalyptic Anxiety: Religion, Science, and America's Obsession with the End of the World*. University Press of Colorado, pp. 187-206 [Hereafter Aveni 2016]; Vail, Gabrielle Reviewed work(s): Cycles of the Sun, Mysteries of the Moon: The Calendar in Mesoamerican Civilization by Vincent H. Malmström. *Australian Archaeology*, No. 45 (Dec., 1997), pp. 72 [Hereafter Vail 1997].

⁷⁶ Doty 2003, pp. 404; Henderson 1990, pp. 24; Segal 1980, pp. 178.

⁷⁷ Campion 2012, pp. 56; Peck 1968, pp. 151.

Methodology

This is a literature based research project, relying on recent academic literature as well as primary sources such as the *Codex Borbonicus*, *Codex Borgia*, *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain*, Fray Bernardino de Sahagun and *Popol Vuh*.⁷⁸ Aztec comogenesis and origin legends were beset with concepts of duality and this has encouraged structuralist readings; the application of structuralism encouraged Graulich to appropriate Aztec and Mesoamerican culture into his Judaeo-Christian worldview, ignoring the role of the local topocosmos. More contemporary sources will be accessed to clarify Aztec cosmogenesis, origin legends, calendarics, and modern myth theory.⁷⁹

The method will involve a close cross-reading of the specificities of Aztec ritual with Gaster's view of renewal rituals, to test the extent to which the Aztec case fits into (and thus confirms) Gaster's model. The importance of topocosmos and cosmic energy in a Gastarian account of Aztec ritual may even contribute to emphasising the importance of situated local cosmologies, even though Gastarian theory is aspirationally universalist. Since there are no extant Aztec, the dangers of epistemic violence to present humans is minimal, the interpretivist objection to comparison is noted, but the counter-objection that interpretivism leads simply to lists of single cases also carries some force. There is much to be said for continuing to test comparative approaches in particular cases, which will demonstrate exactly which of the general [of Gaster's topocosm and life-lease renewal rituals] claims are in fact generalisable.

⁷⁸ Dennis Tedlock, 1996. *Popul Vuh: The Definitive Edition of the Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life and The Glories of Gods and Kings*. Touchstone. New York. [Hereafter Tedlock 1996]; Diaz, Gisele and Allan Rodgers. 1993 *The Codex Borgia: A Full-Color Restoration of the Ancient Mexican Manuscript*. Dover Publications Inc. New York [Hereafter Diaz and Rodgers 1993]. Anderson and Dibble 2012, Book VIII, pp. 25.

⁷⁹ For example, but not limited to: Randall, C. Jiménez, and Richard B. Gräeber. *The Aztec Calendar Handbook*. 2006. Historical Science Publishing, Saratoga. Pp. 29-30 [Hereafter Jiménez and Gräeber 2006]; Marco A. Almazán, The Aztec States-Society: Roots of Civil Society and Social Capital *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 565, Civil Society and Democratization (Sep., 1999), pp. 162-175 [Hereafter Almazán 1999]; Gaster 1950; Nikolaus Bach, Enlightenment from Afar. The Structural Analogy of Myth and Music According to Claude Lévi-Strauss. *Acta Musicologica*, [Vol.] 73, [Fasc.] 1 (2001), pp. 1-20 [Hereafter Bach 2001]; Frances F. Berdan, 1982 *The Aztecs of the Central Mexico: An Imperial Society*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York. Pp. 121-136 [Hereafter Berdan 1982]; Willard C. Booth Dramatic Aspects of Aztec Rituals. *Educational Theatre Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 4, *Special International Theatre Issue* (Dec., 1966), pp. 421-428 [Hereafter Booth 1966].

The choice was made to rely on archival sources, as there are no extant Aztecs with whom to conduct interviews or ethnography, and the descendants of Aztecs no longer practice the rituals in question in the form to be studied (though they may have influenced later practices). There are general difficulties with relying on colonial sources, but the lack of primary Aztec materials renders this necessary. Comparative research methods have recently come into disfavour due to factors regarding the uniqueness of each culture and concerns about power/knowledge relations involved in the activities of western researchers in non-western contexts. However, I do not believe that attempting to understand a culture in its own terms is an objectionable form of power/knowledge; rather it creates understanding and tolerance.

To appreciate the way in which the Xuihpōhualli Festival and New Fire Ceremony relate to Gaster's concept of topocosm, an understanding of Aztec cosmogenesis, origin legends, and accompanying calendarics is needed.⁸⁰ This discussion will begin with cosmogenesis and origin legends. Followed by an explanation of the Aztec calendar systems; outlining their intimate relationship to myth, ritual, time (transitional time) and importantly the Xuihpōhualli Festival and New Fire Ceremony.

⁸⁰ See Gaster 1950 *Thespis*.

Chapter Two: The Aztec Cosmivision

The Aztec culture is as fascinating as it is complex. They called themselves the Mexica and were members of the Nahuatl, a large language and tribal group, who spoke Nahuatl.⁸¹ According to ethno-historical sources, the migration of the Aztecs from their caves at Chicomoztoc (Place of the Seven Caves) and Aztlán (The Land of the White Heron) into the Mexican Basin in 1100 CE occurred in waves, creating variations in their origin legends.⁸² The pattern of moving and settling continued for an estimated 200 years, during which the Aztec became skilled militarists and successful hunters.⁸³

Guided by their god Huitzilōpōchtli they believed their migration to be divinely inspired, he advised they would see him as an eagle, on a cactus eating a snake, where they were to settle; after receiving the divine sign, they settled on the edge of the marshy Lake Texcoco.⁸⁴ The Aztecs learnt to farm the marshlands, creating a highly sophisticated irrigation and cropping system. The Aztec's founded the cities of Tenochtitlan (their capital) and Tlateloloco in 1345 CE.⁸⁵ In 1428 CE the Aztec established the Triple Alliance between the cities of

⁸¹ Elzey 1976, pp. 114; Miguel León-Portilla, 1992 *The Aztec Image of Self and Society: An Introduction to Nahua Culture*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press [Hereafter León-Portilla 1992]; Alexander 2006, pp. 18; Charlotte M Gradie, . Discovering the Chichimecas. *The Americas*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (Jul., 1994), pp. 67-88.

⁸² Vaillant 1938, pp. 539; Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, 1991 Chapter Title: Notes on the Oldest Sculpture of El Templo. In: (Eds) David Carrasco *Aztec Ceremonial Landscapes*. University Press of Colorado. pp. 3-8 [Hereafter Moctezuma 1991]; Michael E Smith, The Aztlán Migrations of the Nahuatl Chronicles: Myth or History? *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (Summer, 1984), pp. 153-186 [Hereafter Smith 1984]; Anthony Aveni, 2008 *People and the Sky: Our ancestor and the Cosmos*. Thames and Hudson [Hereafter Aveni 2008]; A. F. Aveni Tropical Archeoastronomy. *Science, New Series*, Vol. 213, No. 4504 (Jul. 10, 1981), pp. 161-171; Elizabeth H Boone., Incarnations of the Aztec Supernatural: The Image of Huitzilōpōchtli in Mexico and Europe. *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 79, No. 2 (1989), pp. i-iv+1-107 [Hereafter Boone 1989]; Herman Beyer, The Symbolic Meaning of the Dog in Ancient Mexico. *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Jul. - Sep., 1908), pp. 419-422 [Hereafter Beyer 1908]; Carolyn E. Boyd, Shamanic Journeys into the Otherworld of the Archaic Chichimec. *Latin American Antiquity*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Jun., 1996), pp. 152-164 [Hereafter Boyd 1996]; Emily Umberger 2014 Chapter Title: Tezcatlipoca and Huitzilōpōchtli: Political Dimensions of Aztec Deities. In: (Eds) Elizabeth Baquedano *Tezcatlipoca: Trickster and Supreme Deity*. Published by: University Press of Colorado. Pp. 83-112 [Hereafter Umberger 2014].

⁸³ Smith 1984, pp. 15; Carrasco and Pharo 2016, pp. 243; David Carrasco, Cosmic Jaws: We Eat the Gods and the Gods Eat Us. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 63, No. 3, Thematic Issue on "Religion and Food" (Autumn, 1995), pp. 429-463 [Hereafter Carrasco 1995a].

⁸⁴ Smith 2005, pp. 29; Almazán 1999, pp. 67; Cowgirl 1997, pp. 136.

⁸⁵ A.P Maudslay, A note on the position and extent of the great temple enclosure of Tenochtitlan. *Proceedings of the 18th International Congress on Americanists*, 1912 Pp. 173-175. London [Hereafter Maudslay 1912]; David Carrasco Templo mayor: The Aztec vision of place. *Religion* Volume 11, 1981 - Issue 3, pp. 275-297 Published online: 23 Feb 2011 [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0048-721X\(81\)80031-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0048-721X(81)80031-0) accessed 11th October 2019 [Hereafter Carrasco1981b]; Charlton 1975, pp. 232; Carrasco and Pharo 2016, pp. 283; : Townsend 1979, pp. 37; George L Cowgill. State and Society at Teotihuacán, Mexico. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 26 (1997), pp. 129-161 [Hereafter Cowgill 1997]; R. H Barlow. Some Remarks on the Term "Aztec Empire". *The Americas*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Jan., 1945), pp. 345-349; Michael D Coe, 1994 *Mexico: From the Olmecs to the Aztecs (4th Edition)*. Thames and Hudson, London. Pp. 172-183 [Hereafter Coe 1994].

Tenochtitlan, Texcoco and Tlhalacopan, creating a powerful military and economic bloc.⁸⁶

They quickly established hegemonic rule in the Valley of Mexico, and beyond, with taxes paid as tributes (crops, raw materials, refined goods) supporting the city of Tenochtitlan; the development of their marketplace saw their economic power consolidated, with goods traded from all corners of the empire.

At the time of their arrival, in the Valley of Mexico, Teotihuacán, built by the Toltec civilisation, had been abandoned for centuries.⁸⁷ The Aztec adopted the Toltec god Quetzalcóatl (*Feathered Serpent*) and established Teotihuacán as the City of the Gods, where the current universe was created.⁸⁸ As interlopers into the Mexican Basin their relatively late arrival may have violated the established topocosmic order; the Aztec gained much needed social and political credibility through this elaborate mythology, Quetzalcóatl was credited with guiding Aztec society during their settlement phase, creating stability.⁸⁹ Cosmic history was divided into a series of periods known as "Suns" (*Ollin*, roughly ages or universes), at the time of European contact, the Aztecs believed they inhabited the Fifth Sun (*Nahui-Ollin*). The Aztec gods sacrificed themselves at Teotihuacán to create the current Aztec universe, the Fifth Sun. In contrast to modern views of time (linear and finite) the Aztec view of ritual time was cyclical, repetitive,

⁸⁶ Carrasco and Pharo 2016, pp. 243.

⁸⁷ George C Vaillant. A Correlation of Archaeological and Historical Sequences in the Valley of Mexico. *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 40, No. 4, Part 1 (Oct. - Dec., 1938), pp.535-573 [*Hereafter Vaillant 1938*]; Christine D., White, Michael W. Spence, Fred J. Longstaffe, Hilary Stuart-Williams and Kimberley R. Law Geographic Identities of the Sacrificial Victims from the Feathered Serpent Pyramid, Teotihuacán: Implications for the Nature of State Power. *Latin American Antiquity*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Jun., 2002), pp. 217-236 [*Hereafter White et.al. 2002*]; Robert Chadwick, 1971 Native pre-Aztec history of Central Mexico. In (Eds) GF Ekholm and I Bernal *The Archaeology of Northern Mesoamerica*, Pt. 2. Austin: University of Texas Press [*Hereafter Chadwick 1971*]; Thomas H Charlton., From Teotihuacán to Tenochtitlan: The Early Period Revisited. *American Antiquity*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (Apr., 1975), pp. 231-235 [*Hereafter Charlton 1975*]; Coe 1994, pp. 173.

⁸⁸ Smith, 1984, pp.157; Saburo Sugiyama, Burials dedicated to the Old Temple of Quetzalcoatl at Teotihuacan, Mexico *American Antiquity*, Jan 1989, Vol.54(1), pp.85-106 [*Hereafter Sugiyama 1989*]; Carrasco 1980, pp. 299.

⁸⁹ Michael E Smith., New World Complex Societies: Recent Economic, Social, and Political Studies. *Journal of Archaeological Research*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (March 1993), pp. 5-41[*Hereafter Smith 1993*]; Eulogio Guzmán, 2016 Chapter Title: Making Landfall: Anchoring Authority in the Public and Private Political Sphere of the Basin of Mexico. In: (Eds) Jessica Joyce Christie, Jelena Bogdanović, Eulogio Guzmán *Political Landscapes of Capital Cities*. University Press of Colorado, pp. 249-285 [*Hereafter Guzmán 2016*]; Charlton 1975, pp. 233; Donald Kurtz V. Strategies of Legitimation and the Aztec State. *Ethnology*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Oct., 1984), pp. 301-314 [*Hereafter Kurtz 1984*]; Almazán 1999, pp. 163; Suzanne, Preston. Blier African Creation Myths as Political Strategy. *African Arts*, Vol. 37, No. 1, Explorations of Origins (Spring, 2004), pp. 38-45+94 [*Hereafter Blier 2004*]; Greenhouse 1996, pp. 145; Berdan 1982, pp. 58; Carrasco 1980, pp. 299; David Carrasco, Give Me Some Skin: The Charisma of the Aztec Warrior. *History of Religions*, Vol. 35, No. 1, Mesoamerican Religions. A Special Issue on the Occasion of the Seventeenth International Congress of the History of Religions, Mexico City, August 5-12, 1995 (Aug., 1995), pp. 1-26 [*Hereafter Carrasco 1995b*]; Gordon Brotherston, Reviewed Work(s): The Myth of Quetzalcoatl by Enrique Florescano. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (Nov., 2001), pp. 881-888 [*Hereafter Brotherston 2001*].

infinite and ruptural, each Sun was separated by periods of transitional timelessness, a void outside time, and cataclysmic destruction at fixed intervals.⁹⁰

The Myth of the Suns provided the Aztec with a structural paradigm, in which cosmogenesis, time and space existed as conceptually interchangeable entities or were intimately interrelated. Pre-history was punctuated with the battles and disagreements of the brother gods, which were thus situated within the same chronology as worldly history.⁹¹ The Aztec cyclical view of history (where previous events could be repeated but under changed conditions) were their worldview believed that change creates or influences further change, was aided by their calendars which cycled and resynchronised, resetting to their beginnings.⁹² Ezley 1976 described the Fifth Sun as an accumulation of the previous four Suns, a synthesis believed to result in the more perfect form, since the Fifth Sun was functionally perfect, there was no provision for the Sixth Sun.⁹³ The Aztec considered their creation to be with that of the Fifth Sun, that they themselves were the chosen people, like the Fifth Sun the most perfect form, they were soldiers and warriors of the sun.

Although they believed themselves to be in a sense at the end of history, the Aztecs did not see this situation as stable; they believed that the current universe could suffer the cataclysmic destruction experienced by the previous four universes.⁹⁴ The chronology of Suns provided structure to time, measured and elucidated by human battles, floods, earthquakes and other significant events. As shown above, however, the cyclical process was considered to be completed as the Fifth Sun, a synthesised universe could collapse, but could not be transcended.

⁹⁰ Elzey 1976, pp. 116; Campion 2012, pp. 57; G. Mesenfeldt, 2014 *Aztecs and Astronomy* Lecture Transcript <https://museums.victoria.com.au/audio/aztecs-lecture-series/> accessed 25th June 2019; Elizabeth Hill Boone, 2007 *Cycles of Time and Meaning in the Mexican Books of Fate* (Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long Series in Latin American and Latino Art and Culture). University of Texas Press. Texas [Hereafter Boone 2007]; Franke J Neumann. The Experience of Time in Nahuatl Religion. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (Jun., 1976), pp. 255-263 [Hereafter Neumann 1976]; Nicholas Campion, 2012 Chapter 6: South and Central America: Salvation and Sacrifice. In: *Astrology and Cosmology in the World's Religions*. 9New York University Press. New York, London, pp. 54-68 [Hereafter Campion 2012].

⁹¹ Elzey 1976, pp.123; Gordon Brotherston Reviewed Work(s): Time, History and Belief in Aztec and Colonial Mexico by Ross Hassig. *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Jan., 2002), pp. 133-134 [Hereafter Brotherston 2002];

⁹² Carrasco 1980, pp. 312; Elzey 1976, pp. 119; Read 1994, pp. 41; Vail 1997, pp. 52; Wayne Elzey, 1974 THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE AGES OF THE WORLD: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF COSMIC CYCLES AMONG THE AZTECS. *The University of Chicago, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing*, 1974. T-25270 [Hereafter Elzey 1974].

⁹³ Elzey 1976, pp. 117.

⁹⁴ Read 1994, pp. 46; Graulich *et.al.* 1983, pp. 278; John M Ingham, Human Sacrifice at Tenochtitlan. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Jul., 1984), pp. 379-400 [Hereafter Ingham 1984].

This opened space for rituals to be used in a quasi-magical way, to ward off the malevolence of gods, instead attracting their benevolence. Cosmic energy from the creator being Ōmetecōtl flowed through everything; energy/motion was imbibed in the world around the Aztec, continuously recycled through the universe.⁹⁵ It was their duty and responsibility to collaborate with the gods, to sustain the Sun by maintaining the universal flow of cosmic energy.⁹⁶

Although associated with cosmic order, deities were not given the idealised moral traits found in monotheist religions. The gods, in the minds of Aztecs, were malevolent, belligerent and capable of punitive acts towards one another, and for that matter any inhabitants of the universe; at other times the gods could be magnanimous and helpful.⁹⁷ The tōnalpōhualli calendar served to connect Aztec cosmology temporally to time and space, establishing its similarities to indigenous and classical cosmologies, rather than universalist religions.⁹⁸ The tōnalpōhualli was, according to scholars, designed to structure and manage the necessary rituals, devotions and reciprocal sacrifices to the gods, with each month was devoted to a particular deity or deities.⁹⁹ Sacrifices, including human sacrifices, were an act of reciprocity; blood, heart and water were precious as the cosmic spark resided in all, sacrifices cycled cosmic energy.¹⁰⁰ The manifest purpose of these rituals was to avoid a return to darkness, the time between Suns.¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ Maffie James J2014c *Aztec Philosophy: Understanding a World in Motion*. Book Chapter: *Teotl as Olin*. Pp. 185-260. University Press of Colorado. Colorado [Hereafter Maffie 2014c].

⁹⁶ Elzey 1976:pp.124; Ingham, 1984, pp. 380.

⁹⁷ Alfredo López Austin, Myth, Belief, Narration, Image: Reflections on Mesoamerican Mythology. *Journal of the Southwest*, Vol. 46, No. 4, New World Edens (Winter, 2004), pp.601-620 pp. 615 [Hereafter Austin 2004]; Whalen 2016.

⁹⁸ D Carrasco and LK Pharo The Aztec Temporal Universe Groniek, 2016 - ugp.rug.nl 32526-Artikel Tekst-39910-1-10-20190110 accessed 23rd March 2020 [Hereafter Carrasco and Pharo 2016]; Neumann 1976, pp. 256; Kay Almere Read, 1998 *Time and Sacrifice in the Aztec Cosmos*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington. pp. 25-48 [Hereafter Read 1998]; Carrasco 1980, pp. 301.

⁹⁹ Barbara Tedlock, , 1992 *Time and the Highland Maya*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. pp. 52. [Hereafter Tedlock 1992].

¹⁰⁰ Johanna Broda, 1991 Chapter Title: The Sacred Landscape of Aztec Calendar Festivals: Myth, Nature, and Society. In (Eds) David Carrasco *Aztec Ceremonial Landscapes*. University Press of Colorado. Pp. 74-120 [Hereafter Broda 1991]; Arnold, Philip P. 1991 Chapter Title: Eating Landscape: Human Sacrifice and Sustenance in Aztec Mexico. In. (EDs) David Carrasco *Aztec Ceremonial Landscapes*. University Press of Colorado. Pp. 119-232 [Hereafter Arnold 1991]; Graulich Michel Aztec Human Sacrifice as Expiation. *History of Religions*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (May, 2000), pp. 352-371 [Hereafter Graulich 2000].; Ross Hassig,. 2001 *Time, history, and belief in Aztec and Colonial Mexico*. University of Texas Press, Austin. [Hereafter Hassig 2001]; Farris 1987, pp. 566.

¹⁰¹ Anthony Aveni Circling the Square: How the Conquest Altered the Shape of Time in Mesoamerica. *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, New Series*, Vol. 102, No. 5(2012), pp. i, iii-v, vii, ix, xi-xiii, 1, 3-9, 11-17, 19-55, 57, 59-69, 71, 73-85, 87-89, 91, 93-101, 103-109, 111, 113-116 [Hereafter Aveni 2012b]; Hassig 2001, pp. 28; David H Kelley,. Calendar Animals and Deities. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Autumn, 1960), pp. 317-337pp. 319; Donald M Bahr,. Temptation and Glory in One Pima and Two Aztec Mythologies. *Journal of the Southwest*, Vol. 46, No. 4, *New World Edens* (Winter, 2004), pp.705-761, pp. 732; Campion 2012, pp. 68; Elizabeth M Brumfiel,. Review: Aztec Religion and Warfare: Past and Present Perspectives. Reviewed Work(s): The Aztecs: People of the Sun. by Alfonso Caso and Lowell Dunham; Smoke and Mist: Mesoamerican Studies in Memory of Thelma D. Sullivan. by J. Kathryn Josser and Karen Dakin; The Human Body and Ideology: Concepts of the Ancient Nahuas. by Alfredo Lopez Austin, Thelma Ortiz de Montellano and Bernard Ortiz de Montellano; The Great Temple of the Aztecs: Treasures of Tenochtitlan.

The two Aztec calendars roughly followed a sacred/profane dichotomy, separating the religious/magical and mundane aspects of life. Time was regulated by these two calendars, which operated independently but came into synchrony after 18720 days or 52 years, subsequently returning to their beginnings.¹⁰² I have previously suggested that the Aztec view of ritual time is cyclical and ruptural; the xuihpōhualli calendar roughly tracked the solar year and was used for the more mundane and practical things, like the everyday time and agriculture, was linear, though recurring.¹⁰³ This discontinuity only became a cosmological problem when the two cycles coincided, leading to intervals in which normal time broke down; the nemontemi days (*useless, unlucky, redundant, vague or transitional* days) filled these intervals before re-synchronization occurred. At this point, a ‘calendar round’ was complete; the calendars effectively rebooted, rotating back to their respective first days, on the eve of this event, the New Fire Ceremony took place.¹⁰⁴ Most Aztec individuals, in all likelihood, experienced the New fire Ceremony once a lifetime, the ritual is not exclusively Aztec, there are over 20 variants of the myth recorded.¹⁰⁵

The New Fire ceremony conducted on the eve of the re-synchronising, paid homage to the original sacrifices the gods made for the creation of this

by Eduardo Matos Moctezuma and Doris Heyden; *The Great Temple of Tenochtitlan: Center and Periphery in the Aztec World*. by Johanna Broda, David Carrasco and Eduardo Matos Moctezuma; *The Aztec Templo Mayor: A Symposium at Dumbarton Oaks*, 8th and 9th October 1983. By Elizabeth Hill Boone; *Aztec Warfare: Imperial Expansion and Political Control*. by Ross Hassig; *Los Despotas Armados: Un Espectro de la Guerra Prehispanica*. by Jose Lameiras. *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (1990), pp. 248-259.

¹⁰² Carrasco 1971, pp. 30; Alfonso Caso, *The Aztec Calendar Stone*. *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Jul. - Sep., 1934), p. 487; Frederick S Dellenbaugh, *The Aztec Calendar Stone*. *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Oct. - Dec., 1933), pp. 791-792 [*Hereafter Dellenbaugh 1933*]; Cecelia F Klein, *The Identity of the Central Deity on the Aztec Calendar Stone*. *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Mar., 1976), pp. 1-12 [*Hereafter Klein 1976*]; Boone 2007, loc 2530; Jiménez and Gräeber 2006, pp. 20; Hassig 2001, pp. 181; Carrasco 1971, pp. 58; Nicholas J Saunders. *Predators of Culture: Jaguar Symbolism and Mesoamerican Elites*. *World Archaeology*, Vol. 26, No. 1, Archaeology of Pilgrimage (Jun., 1994), pp. 104-117 [*Hereafter Saunders 1994*]; J. Alden Mason, *Remarks on the Aztec Calendar System*. *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Apr. - Jun., 1916), pp. 296-299.

¹⁰³ Brotherston 2002, pp. 134; N. M. Farris, *Remembering the Future, Anticipating the Past: History, Time, and Cosmology among the Maya of Yucatan*. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Jul., 1987), pp. 566-593 [*Hereafter Farris 1987*]; Mary Miller, and Karl Taube. 2017 *An Illustrated Dictionary of The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya*. Thames and Hudson, London. pp. 191 [*Hereafter Miller and Taube 2017*]; Jiménez and Gräeber 2006, pp. 26; Hassig 2001, pp. 28; R. David Drucker, *The Mexican ("Aztec") and Western Yucatec (Landa) Maya 365-Day Calendars: A Perpetual Relation*. *American Antiquity*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (Oct., 1987), pp. 816-819.

¹⁰⁴ Guilhem Oliver, 2006 Chapter Title: *The Sacred Bundles and Coronation of the Aztec King in Mexico-Tenochtitlan*. In: (Eds) Julia Guernsey and F. Kent Reilly III *Sacred Bundles: Ritual Acts of Wrapping and Binding in Mesoamerica*. Boundary End Archaeology Research Centre. Barnardville, North Carolina, pp. 199-225 [*Hereafter Oliver 2006*]; Read 1998, pp. 32; Anderson and Dibble. 2012; George MacCurdy, *Grant An Aztec "Calendar Stone" in Yale University Museum*. *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Oct. - Dec., 1910), pp. 481-496 [*Hereafter MacCurdy 1910*]; Malmström 1997, pp. 35.

¹⁰⁵ David. Carrasco, *Star Gatherers and Wobbling Suns: Astral Symbolism in the Aztec Tradition*. *History in Religion*. Kkk, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Feb. 1987) pp. 279-294 [*Hereafter Carrasco 1987*]; Elzey 1976, pp. 118; David Carrasco, 2012 *The Aztecs: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, New York [*Hereafter Carrasco 2012*]; Carrasco 1971, pp. 35; Carrasco, 1980, pp. 301.

universe.¹⁰⁶ The gods, having ‘died’, now resided in Mictlán the underworld, in constant conflict with each other; Mictlán it appears, stands outside the universal constructs, as is preserved with the successive destruction of Suns. Using their astronomical knowledge to achieve perfect timing, Aztec priests removed the heart from their sacrificial human, with the victim’s cosmic energy offered to the gods.¹⁰⁷ A fire was then lit in the victim’s chest, and distributed throughout the valley of Mexico.¹⁰⁸ Only on the successful lighting of the fire at the Templo Mayor, would the universe be safe for another calendar round.¹⁰⁹

Aztec cosmology was reflected and interwoven with all aspects of their daily and ritual life, their gods took part in every aspect of their existence, imbibed as it were, into every decision, celebration, human, animal and even inanimate objects, assigning each a purposeful place in their universe.¹¹⁰ Supernaturally scripted ritual events structured their historical chronicles, scheduled by the ritual calendar, the *tōnalpōhualli*.¹¹¹ Existing literature suggests that their eschatological and prophetic beliefs reinforced for the Aztec that they were the chosen people; it was their responsibility to maintain the sacred rituals to avoid the destruction of the universe.¹¹² According to functionalist scholars, the

¹⁰⁶ A. Caso, 1958. *The Aztecs: People of the Sun*. Norman: University of Oklahoma [Hereafter Caso 1958]; Carrasco 1995a, pp. 12.

¹⁰⁷ Gregory M. Severin, The Paris Codex: Decoding an Astronomical Ephemeris. *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 71, No. 5 (1981), pp. 1-101 [Hereafter Severin 1981]; John. F Schwaller., 2019 *The Fifteenth Month: Aztec History in the Rituals of Panquetzaliztli*. University of Oklahoma Press. Norman [Hereafter Schwaller 2019]; Susan. Milbrath, 2005 Astronomical Deities in Ancient Mesoamerica. *Handbook of Archaeoastronomy and Ethnoastronomy*. Editor Clive L.N. Ruggles. Springer Reference, New York. pp 683-694 [Hereafter Milbrath 2005]; Susan .Milbrath, 2007 Astronomical Cycles in the Imagery of Codex Borgia 29-46. In (Eds) Clive Ruggles and Gary Urton) *Skywatching in the Ancient World: New Perspectives in Cultural Astronomy*. pp. 157-208. Boulder: University of Colorado Press [Hereafter Milbrath 2007]; Adele M. Fiske, Death: Myth and Ritual. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Sep., 1969) pp. 249-265 [Hereafter Fiske 1969]; Broda 1991, pp. 76; Arnold 1991, pp.121; Read 1994, pp. 43; Graulich *et.al.* 1983, pp. 576; Ingham, 1984, pp. 380.

¹⁰⁸ Schwaller 2019, pp. 172; Nicholas P. Dunning, and Eric Weaver 2015 Chapter Title: Final Thoughts: Space, Place, Ritual, and Identity in Ancient Mesoamerica. In (Eds) Cynthia Kristan-Graham, Laura M. Amrhein *Memory Traces: Analyzing Sacred Space at Five Mesoamerican Sites*. University Press of Colorado, pp. 203-218 [Hereafter Dunning and Weaver 2015]; Franke J. Neumann, Paper: A Sacred Material in Aztec Ritual. *History of Religions*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Nov., 1973), pp. 149-159 [Hereafter Neumann 1973]; J. M Lévi, Myth and History Reconsidered: Archaeological Implications of Tzotzil-Maya Mythology. *American Antiquity*, Vol. 53, No 3 (Jul. 1988). Pp. 605-619 [Hereafter Lévi 1988]; Jongsoo Lee, The Colonial Legacy in Ernesto Cardenal's Poetry: Images of Quetzalcoatl, Nezahualcoyotl, and the Aztecs. *Hispania*, Vol. 87, No. 1 (Mar., 2004), pp. 22-31; Jiménez and Gräeber 2006, pp. 29; Ingham 1984, pp. 390.

¹⁰⁹ Graulich *et.al.* 1981a, pp. 46; Severin 1981, pp. 54; Elzey 1976, pp. 120; Michael Harner, The Ecological Basis for Aztec Sacrifice. *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 4, No. 1, Human Ecology (Feb., 1977), pp. 117-135 [Hereafter Harner 1977]; Elson, Christina E and Michael E Smith. Archaeological Deposits from the Aztec New First Ceremony. *Ancient Mesoamerica*, 12 (2001), 157-174 [Hereafter Elson and Smith 2001].

¹¹⁰ Alexander von Humboldt first coined the term Aztec in 1813 CE; Peck 2002, pp. 10; Stanley Brandes, Iconography in Mexico's Day of the Dead: Origins and Meaning. *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (Spring, 1998), pp. 181-218 [Hereafter Brandes 1998]; Pedro Carrasco, 1971 The Peoples of Central Mexico and their historical traditions. In (Eds) GF Ekholm and I Bernal *The Archaeology of Northern Mesoamerica*, Pt. 2. Austin: University of Texas Press [Hereafter Carrasco 1971].

¹¹¹ Elzey 1976, pp. 117.

¹¹² Job Y Jindo., On Myth and History in Prophetic and Apocalyptic Eschatology. *Vetus Testamentum*, Vol. 55, Fasc. 3 (Jul., 2005), pp. 412-415 [Hereafter Jindo 2005]; Brotherston, Gordon Reviewed Work(s): The Natural History of the Soul in Ancient Mexico by Jill Leslie. McKeever Furst *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (Spring, 1997), pp. 417-41.

complicated Aztec cosmogenesis myths and origin legends provided a framework for social identification, political cooperation and legitimisation; they helped to place time and space in the temporal, worldly construct, bringing the gods as it were, to the physical world.¹¹³ This concept led to beliefs of divinely supported primacy, used to justify their hegemonic rule and empire building.

Aztec cosmology was reflected and interwoven with all aspects of their daily and ritual life, their gods took part in every aspect of their existence, imbibed as it were, into every decision, celebration, human, animal and even inanimate objects, assigning each a purposeful place in their universe.¹¹⁴ Supernaturally scripted ritual events structured their historical chronicles, scheduled by the ritual calendar, the *tōnalpōhualli*.¹¹⁵ Existing literature suggests that their eschatological and prophetic beliefs reinforced for the Aztec that they were the chosen people; it was their responsibility to maintain the sacred rituals to avoid the destruction of the universe.¹¹⁶ According to functionalist scholars, the complicated Aztec cosmogenesis myths and origin legends provided a framework for social identification, political cooperation and legitimisation; they helped to place time and space in the temporal, worldly construct, bringing the gods as it were, to the physical world.¹¹⁷ This concept led to beliefs of divinely supported primacy, used to justify their hegemonic rule and empire building.

Believing they were cosmologically connected to the creation of the Fifth Sun provided the Aztec with divine providence, their cosmovision served to explain their existence, their primacy and right of rule, as well as their obligation to maintain the gods, giving leave to conduct the necessary rituals (sacrifice also

¹¹³ Brotherston 2002, pp. 133; Carol J. Greenhouse, 1996 Chapter Title: Time and Sovereignty in Aztec Mexico. In: *A Moment's Notice: Time Politics across Culture*. Published by: Cornell University Press. pp. 144-174 [Hereafter Greenhouse 1996].

¹¹⁴ Alexander von Humboldt first coined the term Aztec in 1813 CE Peck 2002, pp. 10; Stanley Brandes, Iconography in Mexico's Day of the Dead: Origins and Meaning. *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (Spring, 1998), pp. 181-218 [Hereafter Brandes 1998]; Pedro Carrasco, 1971 The Peoples of Central Mexico and their historical traditions. In (Eds) GF Ekholm and I Bernal *The Archaeology of Northern Mesoamerica*, Pt. 2. Austin: University of Texas Press [Hereafter Carrasco 1971].

¹¹⁵ Elzey 1976, pp. 117.

¹¹⁶ Job Y Jindo, On Myth and History in Prophetic and Apocalyptic Eschatology. *Vetus Testamentum*, Vol. 55, Fasc. 3 (Jul., 2005), pp. 412-415 [Hereafter Jindo 2005]; Nicholas Campion, (1994) *The Great Year: Astrology, Millenarianism and History in the Western Tradition*. Arkana, Penguin Books, St Ives, England [Hereafter Campion 1994]; Brotherston, Gordon Reviewed Work(s): The Natural History of the Soul in Ancient Mexico by Jill Leslie. McKeever Furst *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (Spring, 1997), pp. 417-41.

¹¹⁷ Brotherston 2002, pp. 133; Carol J. Greenhouse, 1996 Chapter Title: Time and Sovereignty in Aztec Mexico. In: *A Moment's Notice: Time Politics across Culture*. Published by: Cornell University Press. pp. 144-174 [Hereafter Greenhouse 1996].

played a socio-political role). Their responsibility was to maintain the Sun and avoid a cataclysmic and final destruction of the universe; it follows that destruction of the Aztec, by proxy, with no one to continue the necessary rituals, would also lead to the destruction of the universe. The fear of absolute universal destruction was powerfully reinforced by their cosmovision, and could go part way to explaining their rapid and hostile rise of the Aztec as rulers in the Mexican Basin.

Chapter Three: Aztec Cosmogenesis and Origin Legends

To appreciate the ritual and cosmological importance of The New Fire Ceremony, its relationship to the Aztec calendar and place human sacrifice in context, a broader appreciation of Aztec cosmology and origin legends is required.¹¹⁸ Aztec cosmology and origin legends have distinct lineages but are intimately entwined with many shared Gods, having multiple roles and authority.¹¹⁹

Aztec Cosmogenesis

According to the Aztec narrative, at the beginning of everything, there was only the androgynous creator being(s) Ōmetecōtl (Ōmetecuhtli-Ōmecihuatl), who occupied Ōmeyōcan the highest level of the cosmos, the 13th heaven.¹²⁰ Humans occupied the terrestrial plane and beneath the terrestrial plane there were nine levels of the underworld.¹²¹ Carrasco's (1980) linguistic explanation helps this conceptualisation: Ōmetecuhtli-Ōmecihuatl the deity was, more correctly, Ōmetecutli and Ōme-cihuatl, a single being representing all aspects.¹²² The being(s) were known by many names "*Lord and Lady of Duality*", "*Father and Mother of the Gods*", "*Lord and Lady of the Near and the Close*", and the "*Father and Mother of us all*", or and perhaps the most explanatory "*the being of everything*".¹²³ Schwaller (2019) states Ōmetecōtl's different titles, expressed either their *duality or functionality* (role) in the Aztec mythology.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ Carlos Arnold Vento, Aztec myths and Cosmology: Historical-Religious Misinterpretation and Bias. *Wicazo Sa Review*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Spring, 1995), pp. 1-23 [Hereafter Vento 1995]; Elzey 1976, pp. 115; Wayne Elzey, A Hill on a Land Surrounded by Water: An Aztec Story of Origin and Destiny. *History of Religions*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Nov., 1991), pp. 105-149 [Hereafter Elzey 1991]; Franke J. Neumann The Dragon and the Dog: Two Symbols of Time in Nahuatl Religion. *Numen*, Vol. 22, Fasc. 1 (Apr., 1975), pp. 1-23 [Hereafter Neumann 1975]; Neumann 1976, pp. 256; Emily Umberger, The Structure of Aztec History. *Archaeoastronomy Bulletin* (IV) 1984:4:10-18 [Hereafter Umberger 1984]; Neumann 1973, pp. 154.

¹¹⁹ Graulich *et.al.* 1983, pp. 575; Vento 1995, pp.17; Maffie 2014a, pp. 83.

¹²⁰ Elzey 1976, pp. 119; López Alfredo Austin, Myth, Belief, Narration, Image: Reflections on Mesoamerican Mythology. *Journal of the Southwest*, Vol. 46, No. 4, New World Edens (Winter, 2004), pp.601-620 Pp. 615 [Hereafter Austin 2004];

¹²¹ Vento 199, pp.10; Elzey 1976, pp. 129.

¹²² Carrasco 1980, pp. 297; Camilla Townsend, 2019 *Fifth Sun: A New History of the Aztecs*. Oxford University Press, Oxford. [Hereafter Townsend 2019].

¹²³ Elzey 1976, pp. 129; Estrada 2003, pp.13.

¹²⁴ Schwaller 2019, pp.27.

After a time, Ōmetecōtl, birthed four ‘sons’/brother gods, perhaps best described as four *cosmic forces*.¹²⁵ The sons were named Quetzalcōatl (*Feathered Serpent*), Huítzilōpōchtli, Tlatlauhqui Tezcatlipoca (*Tecatlipoca or Smoking Mirror*) and Yayauhqui Tezcatlipoca (Xipe-Totec or alternatively the sun god *Tonathiuh*).¹²⁶ The Myth of the Suns recounts after 600 years the four brother gods gathered, deciding they would create a Sun (era/ universe), with one of them assuming the role of the sun (ruler).¹²⁷ Bierhorst’s 1992 translation of *Chimalpopoca Legend of the Sun*, details the existence of four previous suns, each destroyed in a cataclysmic event and its inhabitants either destroyed or turned into lower life forms, each sun was named after its mode of destruction.¹²⁸ Tezcatlipoca often illustrated with a mirror attached to his foot or his breast through which he could ‘see and know all the deeds and thoughts of man’, ruled the First Sun, Ocelotonatiuh (*Ocelot Tonatiuh*) 4-Jaguar, which lasted 676 years: “people where eaten by jaguars on its destruction”.¹²⁹ Each brother god fought for the privilege of becoming the dominate sun, the victorious brother god set about creating the next universe, installing themselves as the sun.¹³⁰

Quetzalcoatl is an ancient god, adopted from the earlier inhabitants of Teotihuacan, where mention dates from the 3rd century BCE, he was often portrayed in the form of a serpent, covered in Quetzal feathers.¹³¹ As demonstrated on the *Piedra de sol*, the Sun Stone (Figure One) recovered from the

¹²⁵ Almazán 1999, pp. 163; Burr. C. Brundage, 1985 *The Jade Steps: A Ritual Life of the Aztec*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, pp. 38 [Hereafter Brundage 1985].

¹²⁶ Elzey 1976, pp. 118; Campion 2012, pp. 58; Spence 1907, pp. 18.

¹²⁷ Elzey 1976, pp. 118; Carrasco 1980, pp. 315.

¹²⁸ Elzey 1976, pp.119; Bošković 1992, pp. 536.

¹²⁹ Michael E. Smith, 2014 Chapter Title: The Archaeology of Tezcatlipoca. In: (Eds) Elizabeth Baquedano *Tezcatlipoca: Trickster and Supreme Deity*. Published by: University Press of Colorado. Pp. 7-39 [Hereafter Smith 2014]; Ellsworth Byron Hamann, Review: Archaeologies of Nahuatl and Zapotec Religion Reviewed Work(s): Tezcatlipoca: Trickster and Supreme Deity by ELIZABETH BAQUEDANO; Ancient Zapotec Religion: An Ethnohistorical and Archaeological Perspective by MICHAEL E. SMITH. *Latin American Antiquity*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (December 2015), pp. 572-574 [Hereafter Hamann 2015]; Emily Umberger 2014 Chapter Title: Tezcatlipoca and Huítzilōpōchtli: Political Dimensions of Aztec Deities. In: (Eds) Elizabeth Baquedano *Tezcatlipoca: Trickster and Supreme Deity*. Published by: University Press of Colorado. pp. 83-112 [Hereafter Umberger 2014]; Elzey 1976, pp. 118; Carrasco 1987, pp. 289; Bierhorst 1992:75:13. Bierhorst 1992:76:6.

¹³⁰ Elzey 1976, pp. 118; Barat Ellman, 2013 Chapter Title: Two Worldviews: Creation—Destruction—Re-Creation In: *Memory and Covenant: The Role of Israel's and God's Memory in Sustaining the Deuteronomic and Priestly Covenants*. Augsburg Fortress, Publishers. pp.33-47 [Hereafter Ellman 2013]; Townsend 2019: pp. 36; Frances Berdan, Reviewed Work(s): History and Mythology of the Aztecs: The Codex Chimalpopoca by John Bierhorst; Codex Chimalpopoca: The Text in Nahuatl by John Bierhorst; Book of the Fourth World: Reading the Native Americans through Their Literature by Gordon Brotherston; The Flayed God: The Mesoamerican Mythological Tradition: Sacred Texts and Images from Pre-Columbian Mexico and Central America by Roberta H. Markman and Peter T. Markman. *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (Winter, 1996), pp. 201-204 [Hereafter Berdan 1996].

¹³¹ White *et.al.* 2002, pp. 228; Elzey 1976, pp. 117; Saburo Sugiyama, *Burials dedicated to the Old Temple of Quetzalcoatl at Teotihuacan, Mexico* *American Antiquity*, Jan 1989, Vol.54(1), pp.85-106 [Hereafter Sugiyama 1989]; Maarten Jansen, and Pérez Aurora Gabina Jiménez 2007 Chapter Title: The Mat and the THRONE: In: *Encounter with the Plumed Serpent: Drama and Power in the Heart*. University Press of Colorado. pp. 1-32 [Hereafter Jansen and Jiménez 2007]; Neumann 1973, pp 152; Henderson, 1990, pp. 178.

Templo Mayor site at Tenochtitlan in 1790, Quetzalcoatl is positioned with his head in the underworld and his tail in the cosmic heavens.¹³² Snake iconology was associated with protection, rebirth and resurrection, as the god of knowledge Quetzalcoatl was credited with the concept of education and in some mythic versions, the creation of the Aztec calendars.¹³³ As Quetzalcoatl-Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, Quetzalcoatl is identified with Venus, another association death, rebirth and resurrection, and as *Quetzalcóatl*-Ehécatl he was the god of wind, who gave motion to the sun and moon to birth the Fifth Sun.¹³⁴ Quetzalcóatl's courage, moral fortitude and tenacity were traits expected of Aztec citizens.¹³⁵

Quetzalcóatl fought with Tezcatlipoca, after defeating him he destroyed the First Sun and won the right to rule the Second Sun, 4-Wind, which lasted for 364 years: "*people in this sun, were blown away*".¹³⁶ The Third Sun, 4-Rain [of Fire] was ruled by Tlaloc (god of rain, water, agriculture and war/warriors) and existed for 312 years: "*the sun burned their houses*".¹³⁷ And the Fourth Sun: 4-Water, lasting 676 years, and was ruled by the second wife of Tlaloc, Chalchiuhtlicue. The Fourth Sun destroyed by water: "*there was water for 52 years and the people died by drowning*".¹³⁸ A universal flood destroyed everything and caused the collapse of the "*skies to earth*"; survivors were changed into fish and plunged into darkness.¹³⁹

Many origin stories have moral messages, the Myth of the Suns works towards a 'restored utopic', where collective deaths, traumatic upheavals and world cleansing is followed by rebirth and renewal.¹⁴⁰ Transitional time (the void between universes) occurred after the complete destruction of a universe; and only

¹³² Jansen and Jiménez 2007, pp. 25; Elzey 1976, pp. 117.

¹³³ Duran 2013, pp. 22; Austin 2004, pp. 611; Jansen and Jiménez 2007, pp. 25.

¹³⁴ Inga Clendinnen, The Cost of Courage in Aztec Society. *Past & Present*, No. 107 (May, 1985), pp. 44-89 [Hereafter Clendinnen 1985]; Sara E Cohen. How the Aztecs Appraised Montezuma. *The History Teacher*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Mar., 1972), pp. 21-30 [Hereafter Cohen 1972]; Cochrane 2015, pp. 32; Graulich et.al. 1983, pp. 571.

¹³⁵ Sugiyama 1989, pp. 92; Michael Mathiowetz, Polly Schaafsma, Jeremy Coltman and Karl Taube The Darts of Dawn: The Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli Venus Complex in the Iconography of Mesoamerica and the American Southwest. *Journal of the Southwest*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (Spring 2015), pp. 1-102 [Hereafter Mathiowetz et.al. 2015]; Milbrath 2005, pp. 684; Milbrath 1989, pp. 5; Milbrath 200, pp. 163.

¹³⁶ Elzey 1976, pp. 118; Carrasco 1987, pp. 282; Beirhorst 1992:75:16; Smith 2014, pp. 10.

¹³⁷ Elzey 1976, pp. 118; Carrasco 1987, pp. 282; Beirhorst 1992:75:25.

¹³⁸ Beirhorst 1992: 75:35 & 39.

¹³⁹ Beirhorst 1992:75:43; Elzey 1976, pp. 118; Bošković, 1992, pp. 535.

¹⁴⁰ Campion 1994, pp. 7.

after complete destruction could creativity thrive. For the Aztec, the Myth of the Suns justified their migration, hegemonic rule and empire-building as divinely prescribed. As the chosen people, the Aztec felt cosmologically righteous in bringing destruction, subjugation and then order (or their culture) to their fellow inhabitants of the Mexican Valley. Mirroring transitioning gods, as they took the respective role of the sun for each universe, the suggestion of the impermanence of regimes; but in this case, reflecting a shift in the cosmic order rather than a deviation from it.

4-Ollin the Fifth Sun

Beirhorst (1992) designates the current universe as *4-Ollin*, 4-Movement/motion, the Fifth Sun; motion is ascribed to the continual process of cosmic movement and transformation, though some interpret this to mean this universe will be destroyed by severe violent motion.¹⁴¹ Teotihuacán is located in the centre of the Mexican Basin, was built by the Toltecs around 1550 BCE and was abandoned centuries prior to the arrival of the Aztecs.¹⁴² Although it was not originally an Aztec city, it was easily appended to Aztec cosmogenic accounts, naming it as the City of the Gods.¹⁴³ This established inherent topocosmic meaning to Teotihuacán, linking it to the Aztec deities before their migration, establishing an Aztec claim as residents in sites close to their gods' historic city. Subsequently, Teotihuacán features in the cosmological myths of the Aztecs, providing visual and physical proof of the Aztecs' philosophical reality. By ritualising the site (and not simply in myths and narratives) they provided their religion with cosmological legitimacy.¹⁴⁴

Quetzalcóatl, and Tezcatlipoca, in the spectre of sibling rivalry have many disputes and subsequent reconciliations, but together they are credited with the

¹⁴¹ Maffie 2014c, pp. 222; Brundage 1979, pp. 14; Hassig 2001, pp. 27; Taube 1993, pp. 34; Read 1994, pp.4; Beirhorst 1992:77:27.

¹⁴² Vaillant 1983, pp. 560.

¹⁴³ Sugiyama 1993, pp. 107.

¹⁴⁴ Carrasco 1980, pp. 298.

creation of the universe and earth.¹⁴⁵ They sacrificed some minor gods at Teotihuacán to create the sun and moon, and birthed the Fifth Sun, Huítzilōpōchtli, as son of Ōmetecōtl rules.¹⁴⁶ Read 1994 recounts the minor God Narāhuātzin (who was humble and deformed), sacrificed himself, in the fire built by Quetzalcóatl and Tezcatlipoca (and sometimes Huítzilōpōchtli) at Teotihuacán.¹⁴⁷ Tecusiztecātl, described as a vain God (who first took part, and then lost his nerve) was shamed by the Narāhuātzin's bravery, and eventually followed him into the fire; this caused the creation of the sun and the moon, which shone too much light for the world.¹⁴⁸ In some versions, Tecusiztecātl was subsequently beaten with a rabbit (*hence the rabbit can be found on the moon*) and his brightness dimmed so that he did not outshine the sun.¹⁴⁹

Catastrophically, once created neither the sun nor the moon had motion (cosmic motion is an important concept, to have no motion is be metaphorically dead).¹⁵⁰ The gods sacrificed themselves to solve the problem, making corn, maguey (agave), and a salamander; Quetzalcóatl as *Quetzalcóatl-Ehécatl*, blew gently providing motion to the sun and moon, birthing the Fifth Sun.¹⁵¹ Other versions provide a more extensive interchange between the brother and minor Gods, whose cooperation was needed to create the sun, or recount that Quetzalcóatl threw his son into the fire to create the sun and Tláloc sacrificed his son to give rise to the moon.¹⁵² These myths may serve to sanction the sacrifice of children, codifying the sacrifice as a noble death mimicking the death of the god's children. Yet

¹⁴⁵ Cynthia Kristan-Graham, 2015 Chapter Title: Building Memories at Tula: Sacred Landscapes and Architectural Veneration. In: (Eds) Cynthia Kristan-Graham, Laura M. *American Memory Traces: Analyzing Sacred Space at Five Mesoamerican Sites*. Published by: University Press of Colorado. pp. 81-130 [*Hereafter Kristan-Graham 2015*]; Read 1986, pp.114; Bierhorst 1992:76:22; Elzey 1976, pp. 118.

¹⁴⁶ Bierhorst 1992,78:12.; Elzey 1976, pp. 118; Umberger 1984, pp. 14.

¹⁴⁷ Charlton 1975, pp. 234.

¹⁴⁸ Read 199, pp. 47; Sugiyama 1993, pp. 105; White *et.al.* 2002, pp. 221; Deborah L. Nichols, Teotihuacán. *Journal of Archaeological Research*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (March 2016), pp. 1-74 [*Hereafter Nichols 2016*]; Michael E. Smith, The Teotihuacán Anomaly: The Historical Trajectory of Urban Design in Ancient Central Mexico. *Open Archaeology* 2017; 3:175-193 [*Hereafter Smith 2017*]; Garraty, Christopher P. Aztec Teotihuacán: Political Processes at a Postclassic and Early Colonial City-State in the Basin of Mexico. *Latin American Antiquity*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Dec., 2006), pp. 363-387; James, W. Dow, Astronomical Orientations at Teotihuacán: A Case Study in Astro-Archaeology. *American Antiquity*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (July, 1967), pp. 326-334 [*Hereafter Dow 1967*].

¹⁴⁹ Read 1994, pp. 47; López Alfredo Austin, 1996 *The Rabbit on the face of the Moon: Mythology in the Mesoamerican tradition*. Translated by Bernard R Ortiz de Montellano and Thelma Ortiz de Montellano. University of Utah Press. Salt Lake City.

¹⁵⁰ Read 1994, pp. 102; Maffie 2014c, pp.193; Cochrane 2015, pp. 34.

¹⁵¹ Elzey 1976, pp.118; Read 1994, pp. 111.

¹⁵² Elzey 1976, pp. 118; Peck 2002, pp. 18; Anthony F. Aveni 2012 Chapter Title: NICK AT NIGHT: COSMIC ASPECTS OF TOPILTZIN-QUETZALCOATL. In: (Eds) MATTHEW A. BOXT, BRIAN DERVIN DILLON *Fanning the Sacred Flame: Mesoamerican Studies in Honor of H. B. Nicholson*. Published by: University Press of Colorado. pp. 327-331[*Hereafter Aveni 2012*]; Brotherston 2001, pp. 883; Townsend 2019, pp. 15; Brundage 1979, pp. 3; Bošković 1992, pp. 534; Brumfiel 1990, pp. 258.

another myth credits Huítzilōpōchtli (as son of Cōātlīcue) who threw the head of his dead sister Coyolxāuhqui, into the sky to make the moon; and Cōātlīcue in some myths gave birth to the moon, the stars and the Cenxtron Huitznahua (who became associated with the Orion nebula).¹⁵³ Having created the universe, the gods then made the days, months and created the ritual *tōnalpōhualli* and agricultural *xuihpōhualli* calendars.¹⁵⁴

The Myth of the Suns provides abundant warnings concerning natural disasters, the fall of civilisations and cultures, with a strong counter message of cooperation and sacrifice, required to create and rebuild. Each sun grew progressively more advanced, until the creation of the most perfect sun, the Fifth Sun. The Aztec considered themselves to be cosmologically connected to the birth of the Fifth Sun, this validated their religious superiority which they maintained through sacrifices, providing divine support for their dominance in the Mexican Basin.

Courage, cooperation and sacrifice

Of the two remaining brothers, Yayauhqui Tezcatlipoca (alternatively the sun god *Tonathiuh*) did not rule a sun. Associated with him are mothers who died in childbirth and warriors who died in battle, as a reward and recognition of their sacrifices, went to serve him after spending four years in Mictlān, (governed by Mictlāntecuhli and his wife Mictlāncihuatl) the underworld.¹⁵⁵ Mictlān it seems was conceived as overlapping with the Aztec's lived topocosmos, as existing in real physical space, in a world of complimentary opposites, it is arguably the flip-side of the physical topocosmos, with which it must cooperate. Vento 1995 describes Mictlān for the Aztec as another form of existence, simply another layer of the cosmos, 'underworld/hell' he contends is a Spanish Catholic conceptualisation.¹⁵⁶ The deceased soul traversed the nine levels of Mictlān eventually coming to on the lowest level, the distribution of places to reside in the

¹⁵³ Graulich *et.al.* 1983, pp. 579; Milbrath 2005, pp. 685.

¹⁵⁴ Jiménez and Gräber 2006, pp. 29; Dow 1967, pp. 330; Aveni 2012, pp. 882; John S Henderson, Arthur G. Fitchett and Vincent H. Malmström. Origin of the 260-Day Cycle in Mesoamerica. *Science, New Series*, Vol. 185, No. 4150 (Aug., 9, 1974), pp. 542-543.

¹⁵⁵ Elzey 1976, pp. 121; Spence 1907, pp. 22; Harmann 2015, pp.573.

¹⁵⁶ Vento 1995, pp.10.

afterlife, served a social function and provided supernatural incentives, to assume your role well during life.¹⁵⁷ Despite the superficial similarities to Christian cosmology, the different destinations did not necessarily have the same moralised connotations. As the ancestors emerged from caves, the Aztec considered them sacred and to act as passages to Mictlān.¹⁵⁸ Mictlān, it appears, survives the destruction of the universes, in many myths the gods reside there, often described in battle or conflict with each other.

Mictlāntecuhli had kept the bones of the inhabitants of the previous four suns, confronting Mictlāntecuhli, Quetzalcóatl informs that he will be taking the bones forever:

*“Then he takes the precious bones. The male bones are in one pile, the female bones are in another pile. Then Quetzalcóatl takes them, wraps them up, and comes carrying them off”.*¹⁵⁹

Quetzalcóatl dipped the bones in his blood and made humans.¹⁶⁰ In some renditions, at the destruction of the Fourth Sun (4-Water) Tezcatlipoca hid two individuals in a Cypress tree where they survived.¹⁶¹ A different version maintains that Cipāctonal, (Cipāctli) “a large fish like alligator” residing in the primordial waters was ordered to spin thread and weave; causing the birth of *macehuals* (people) who were *instructed not to be idle* (must worship the gods).¹⁶² Professions often associated with females (including medicine, caring, healing) were said to be the gifts that the gods bestowed to Cipāctonal, who subsequently shared her knowledge with woman, cosmologically condoning Aztec division of labour, gender roles and societal hierarchical.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁷ Vento 199, pp.10; Elzey 1976, pp 129.

¹⁵⁸ Lévi 1988, pp. 607; Kristan-Graham 2015, pp.82; Miguel León-Portilla, 1961 *Mythology of Ancient Mexico*. In: (Eds) Samuel Noah Kramer *Mythologies of the Ancient World*. Garden City, New York, Doubleday and Company Inc., pp. 445-72; Carrasco and Pharo 2016, pp. 243.

¹⁵⁹ Beirhorst 1992:76:39.; Elzey 1976, pp. 129; Vento 199, pp. 10; Chadwick 1971, pp 54; Beirhorst 1992:76:22; Anderson and Dibble 1978, Book III.

¹⁶⁰ Graulich *et.al.* 1983, pp. 579; Chadwick 1971, pp.74.

¹⁶¹ Beirhorst 1992:75:42; Graulich *et.al.* 1983, pp.579.

¹⁶² Read 1986, pp. 116; Graulich *et.al.* 1983, pp. 576.

¹⁶³ Saburo Sugiyama *Worldview Materialized in Teotihuacán, Mexico*. *Latin American Antiquity*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Jun., 1993), pp. 103-129 [*Hereafter Sugiyama 1993*]; Read 1986: pp.117; Sharisse D.McCafferty, Geoffrey G. McCafferty, Elizabeth M. Brumfiel, Clemency Coggins, Cathy Lynne Costin, Laura M. Finsten, Joan M. Gero, Cecelia F. Klein, Jill Leslie McKeever-Furst, John Paddock, Lynn Stephen *Engendering Tomb 7 at Monte Alban: Respinning an Old Yarn* [and Comments and Reply] *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (Apr., 1994), pp. 143-166; White *et.al.* 2002, pp. 218; June Nash, *Gendered Deities and the Survival of Culture*. *History of Religions*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (May, 1997) pp. 333-356 [*Hereafter Nash 1997*].

Huítzilōpōchtli

Huítzilōpōchtli, the remaining brother god, in the role as the Aztec main deity led them south from Chicomoztoc and Aztlán to the Mexican Basin.¹⁶⁴

Huítzilōpōchtli was simultaneously god, deity, and cosmic force (son of Ōmetecōtl) and the unbidden son of Cōātlīcue. Dr Annabeth Headricks contends that Huítzilōpōchtli exemplified the characteristics of an Aztec ideal king, at Temple Mayor a pyramid was devoted as his temple, the second pyramid was dedicated to Tlaloc the Rain God, associated with both warfare and agriculture.¹⁶⁵ Aztec rulers were negotiated politically, bestowed by royal blood, and somewhat sanctioned by gods.¹⁶⁶ In many respects, the symbiotic relationship between the population and their leaders was bridged by the presence of the gods.¹⁶⁷ The ruler's decisions had political and cosmological outcomes; their responsibility extended beyond the immediate community and included maintenance of the universe.¹⁶⁸ A ruler's failure to enact their responsibilities would see the universe return to darkness and chaos.¹⁶⁹ If the ruler was not favourable to the gods, the gods would abandon them and the people would rebel, providing a justification for revolt in certain occasions.¹⁷⁰

It is also clear that a successful leader, even if successful by dint of good fortune, was very unlikely to be overthrown, and a leader who suppressed an attempted revolt might also gain the legitimacy of apparent divine endorsement. On the other hand, leaders whose actions went against the interests of the entire society or were ineffectual would be removed (improving the society's overall effectiveness) and others could be metaphorically sacrificed to appease the emotions arising from bad harvests or disasters. With revolt occurring *within* the Aztec cosmological worldview, social order was largely preserved. This seems dysfunctional, but it introduced socially useful mechanisms of holding leaders accountable and keeping them to the Aztec path. It also managed inevitable social

¹⁶⁴ Maffie 2014a, pp.87; Cohen 1972, pp. 23; Elzey 1976, pp. 118.

¹⁶⁵ Annabeth Headricks, 2013 Fighting for Water: War and Agriculture in Mesoamerica. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWGXWkFXuIQ> accessed 19th November 2019.

¹⁶⁶ Carrasco 1987, pp 285.

¹⁶⁷ Read 1994, pp. 43.

¹⁶⁸ Taube 1993, pp. 37; Charles P. Bowditch, The Lords of the Night and the Tonalamatl of the Codex Borbonicus. *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Jan., 1900), pp. 145-154; Saunders 1994, pp. 111.

¹⁶⁹ Read, 1994, pp. 60; Almazán 1999, 168; Maffie 2014b, pp. 524.

¹⁷⁰ Read 1994, pp. 54; Segal 2005, pp. 210; Spinelli 1989, pp. 15; Greenhouse 1996, pp. 147.

unrest by channelling it into cycles of dynastic transition which preserved the wider social structure.

Cōātlīcue Earth Goddess

Quetzalcóatl and Tezcatilpoca transformed into serpents and wrapped around body of Cōātlīcue (Tlaltéotl) the earth goddess, who they tore in two to create the earth and sky.¹⁷¹ She was a giver and provider of food and nourishment (of the earth) but in return required continual replenishment, with hearts and blood.¹⁷² It was understood that everything in the Fifth Sun was alive, connected and needed nourishment, the cosmic spark (concentrated in human hearts and blood) transferred to her through sacrifice. Sacrifices therefore became the proxy for the redistribution of cosmic energy, and a sign of respect and worship of the gods.¹⁷³ Carrasco 1995 neatly summarises this symbiotic relationships in the phase “*we eat the gods and the gods eat us*”.¹⁷⁴ Cōātlīcue was also Huítzilōpōchtli mother; he was born after she experienced a supernatural pregnancy.¹⁷⁵ Cōātlīcue roles in this capacity included governance, agriculture and in some renditions she and her son Huítzilōpōchtli, share the mantel as the god of war.¹⁷⁶

Huítzilōpōchtli's sister, Coyolxāuhqui “*She who has bells on her cheeks*”, along with her brothers, the *Cenztrón Huitznahua*, became indignant at Cōātlīcue's

¹⁷¹ Graulich *et.al.* 1983, pp. 579; Boone 1999, pp.192; Hall 1978, pp. 137; Seidenberg 1969, pp. 189; Elizabeth H Boone, „THE “COATLICUES” AT THE TEMPLO MAYOR. *Ancient Mesoamerica*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Fall 1999), pp. 189-206 [Hereafter Boone 1999]; Nash 1997, pp. 335; Hall 1978, pp. 137; Moctezuma 1991, pp. 5; Ann De León, Coatlicue or How to Write the Dismembered Body. *MLN*, Vol. 125, No. 2, HISPANIC ISSUE (MARCH 2010), pp. 259-286 [Hereafter De León 2010]; Richard Townsend, 1979 State and Cosmos in the art of Tenochtitlan. *Dumbarton Oaks Studies in Pre-Columbian Art and Archaeology*. pp. 35-38 [Hereafter Townsend 1979]; Aveni Anthony and Sharon L Gibbs On the Orientation of Precolumbian buildings in Central Mexico. *American Antiquity*, Vol. 41 No. 4 (Oct., 1976), pp. 510-517 [Hereafter Aveni and Gibbs 1976]; Elizabeth Hill Boone, (1987). “Templo Mayor Research, 1521–1978”. *The Aztec Templo Mayor: A Symposium at Dumbarton Oaks, 8th and 9th October 1983*. Washington, D.C: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection. pp. 19–30 [Hereafter Boone 1987]; J. D. Carrasco Broda, , and E. Matos Moctezuma 1987 *The Great Temple of Tenochtitlan: Centre and Periphery in the Aztec World*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Introduction [Hereafter Broda *et.al.* 1987]; Nash 1997, pp. 356.

¹⁷² Graulich *et.al.* 1983, pp 578; Read 1994, pp. 43; Ingham 1984, pp. 381.

¹⁷³ Moctezuma 1991, pp 7.

¹⁷⁴ Ingham 1984, pp. 387; David Carrasco, Cosmic Jaws: We Eat the Gods and the Gods Eat Us. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 63, No. 3, Thematic Issue on “Religion and Food” (Autumn, 1995), pp. 429-463 [Hereafter Carrasco 1995].

¹⁷⁵ Moctezuma 1991, pp. 4; Carrasco 1995, pp. 297; Boone 1989, pp. 103; Umberger 2014, pp. 85; Matos Eduardo Moctezuma, The Great Temple of Tenochtitlán. *Scientific American*, Vol. 251, No. 2 (August 1984), pp. 80-89 [Hereafter Moctezuma 1984]; Carter 1953, pp. 301; Scott O'Mack, Yacateuctli and Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl: Earth-Divers in Aztec Central Mexico. *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Winter, 1991), pp. 1-33.

¹⁷⁶ Moctezuma 1991, pp. 4.

‘unchaste pregnancy’ they conspired to murder their mother.¹⁷⁷ Huítzilōpōchtli learnt of the plot to kill Cōātlīcue, defended his mother by killing many of his warrior brothers, the survivors he threw into the sky to become stars.¹⁷⁸ He then beheaded his sister, Coyolxāuhqui, tossing her head into the sky where it became the moon (so that his mother would see her daughter every night).¹⁷⁹ These myths highlight the positives of fidelity, loyalty (to family and state) and absolute punishment of those disloyal.

Aztec Origin Legend

The migration of the Aztec’s into the Mexican basin in 1100 CE occurred in waves as a number of tribal groups moved south.¹⁸⁰ Their narrative provides a myth of resilience and fortitude. On leaving the caves, Huítzilōpōchtli renamed the tribe *Mexica*, a new identity to coincide with their new social status, and provided gifts of a bow, an arrow and a net; with these three tools the Aztec could protect and feed themselves.¹⁸¹ Eventually the group arrived at Coatepetl (*Serpent Mountain*) where they built a settlement orientated to the cardinal points, said to be the recreation of Aztlán.¹⁸² Huítzilōpōchtli advised the priests, Coatepetl was not their final resting place, hostilities erupted, in what appears to be a socio-political coup; he overthrew Coyolxāuhqui whose sect wanted to stay at Coatepetl.¹⁸³

One of the important functions of this myth was inter- rather than intragroup, the Aztecs, as new immigrants to the Mexican basin, initially had limited cultural or political legitimacy in the eyes of the more established communities.¹⁸⁴ A moral message, such as encouraging endurance, or preferring hard work for the gods

¹⁷⁷ Moctezuma 1984, pp. 83; Graulich *et.al.* 1983, pp. 579; Milbrath 2005, pp. 685.

¹⁷⁸ De León 201, pp. 262.

¹⁷⁹ Michael Mathiowetz, Polly Schaafsma, Jeremy Coltman and Karl Taube The Darts of Dawn: The Tlahuizcalpantecuhli Venus Complex in the Iconography of Mesoamerica and the American Southwest. *Journal of the Southwest*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (Spring 2015), pp. 1-102 [Hereafter Mathiowetz *et.al.* 2015]; Vincent H. Malmström, 1997. *Cycles of the Sun, Mysteries of the Moon: The Calendar in Mesoamerican Civilization*. University of Texas Press, Austin. pp.15; Vail, Gabrielle Reviewed work(s): Cycles of the Sun, Mysteries of the Moon: The Calendar in Mesoamerican Civilization by Vincent H. Malmström. *Australian Archaeology*, No. 45 (Dec., 1997), p. 72.

¹⁸⁰ Vaillant 1938, pp. 539.

¹⁸¹ Smith 1984, pp. 155; Carrasco 2012, pp. 33; Headrick 2013.

¹⁸² Smith, 1984, pp. 70.

¹⁸³ Smith 1984, pp.170; Vento 1995, pp. 20; Elzey 1991, pp.145; Taube 1993, pp.45.

¹⁸⁴ Carrasco 1987, pp. 283; Garraty 2006, pp. 365; Kurtz 1984, pp. 309.

over self-interested comfort, may be contained in this story. It is possible that the Aztecs' population density and technological level necessitated more intensive labour than in surrounding societies, leading to a functional need to justify a work-ethic both inside and outside Aztec society. Huítzilōpōchtli's followers resumed their journey and continued south; during this period the Aztec became skilled militarists and successful hunters.¹⁸⁵ After seeing the symbolic eagle (representing Huítzilōpōchtli) the Aztec settled in the Mexican Basin, on the edge of the marshy Lake Texcoco.¹⁸⁶

The Aztec learnt to farm the marshlands, creating a sophisticated irrigation and cropping system; after some 200 years they founded the city of Tenochtitlán and Tlateloloco in 1345 CE.¹⁸⁷ Tenochtitlán, in the Aztec topocosmic vision, was of the centre of the empire and cosmos.¹⁸⁸ Templo Mayor located in the centre of Tenochtitlan, was the cosmological *axis mundi*, the centre of the physical and cosmological universes.¹⁸⁹ The quadriform layout of Tenochtitlán was structured on a horizontal plane, with roads orientated to the cardinal points, connected the terrestrial plane with the 13 levels of the upper cosmos and nine levels of the underworld, with the temple itself acting as the vertical access to the upper cosmos.¹⁹⁰ Templo Mayor was topped with two pyramid temples which dominated the precinct: one dedicated to Huítzilōpōchtli as the god of war, the second dedicated to Tlólāc, as the god of rain and agriculture.¹⁹¹ Dr. Annabeth Headrick 2013 questioned this interpretation by whose reinterpreting Tlólāc as the

¹⁸⁵ Elzey 1991, pp. 106; Smith 1984, pp. 15; Vento 1995, pp. 15; Patricia Rieff Anawalt, and Frances F. Berdan The Codex Mendoza. *Scientific American*, Vol. 266, No. 6 (JUNE 1992), pp. 70-79 [Hereafter Anawalt and Berdan 1992]; Carrasco 1995, pp. 12; Carrasco and Pharo 2016, pp. 243; Carrasco 2012, pp. 33; Headrick 2013.

¹⁸⁶ Smith 2005, pp. 29; Almazán 1999, pp. 67; Cowgirl 1997, pp. 149; Carrasco and Pharo 2016, pp. 283; Townsend 1979, pp. 37.

¹⁸⁷ A.P Maudslay, A note on the position and extent of the great temple enclosure of Tenochtitlan. *Proceedings of the 18th International Congress on Americanists*, 1912 pp. 173-175. London; David Carrasco Templo mayor: The Aztec vision of place. *Religion* Volume 11, 1981 - Issue 3. pp. 275-297 Published online: 23 Feb 2011. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0048-721X\(81\)80031-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0048-721X(81)80031-0) accessed 11th October 2019; Charlton 1975, pp. 232.

¹⁸⁸ Nash 1997, pp. 355.

¹⁸⁹ Debra Nagao, Reviewed Work(s): The Great Temple of Tenochtitlan: Center and Periphery in the Aztec World by Johanna Broda, David Carrasco and Eduardo Matos Moctezuma. *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Winter, 1990), pp. 97-99; Broda *et.al.* 1987, Introduction; Carrasco 1981b, pp. 278; Carrasco and Pharo 2016, pp.243; Maudslay 1912, pp. 173; Carrasco 1995, pp. 435; Campion 2012, pp. 56; Boone 1987, pp. 21.

¹⁹⁰ David Leeming, and Lemming Margaret. 1994. *A Dictionary of Creation Myths*. Oxford United Kingdom 1994; Hale 1888, pp. 178; Aveni Anthony, EE Calnek and Horst Hartung Myth, Environment, and the Orientation of the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan. *American Antiquity*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (Apr., 1988), pp. 287-309.

¹⁹¹ Carrasco 1981b, pp. 278; Carrasco and Pharo 2016, pp.243.

God of rain, agriculture and *war*; somewhat removing the responsibility from Huítzilōpōchtli.¹⁹²

Aztec sacred history is believed to be a combination of myth and historical memories, the origin legends unite the earth goddess Cōātlīcue, Huítzilōpōchtli and Coyolxāuhqui with the birth of Aztec as a people, their cosmogenesis and creation of the Fifth Sun, whilst providing political collateral in the Mexican Basin.¹⁹³ By ritualising Teotihuacán and invoking direct kinship ties to Quetzalcóatl, they provided visual and physical proof of the Aztecs' philosophical reality, their religion gained cosmological legitimacy.¹⁹⁴ Quetzalcóatl was credited with the creation of the *tōnalpōhualli*, providing structure to life through the ritual which imparts a sense of their own goodness and importance (in maintaining the cosmic order) and a sense of power over an otherwise unpredictable world. This subsequently provided further theoretical dogma; justifying the power of priests within society, the cycle of wars and the social need for human sacrifices, validating the Aztec in their role as the chosen people and enchant the local topocosm with universal meaning. Although on a cosmological level, sacrifices were conceived as a means of symbolic exchange with the gods, it no doubt also served as a socio-political tool for control over the populations they dominated.¹⁹⁵

This differs from the structuralist view because of the requirement of symbolic exchange between the dual entities; these concepts provided the ethical and moral framework for how the Aztecs were to live their lives. Carrasco and Pharo contend that the *tōnalpōhualli* placed the Aztec cosmology in a temporal, spatial and practical realm.¹⁹⁶ In addition to meeting their philosophical requirements with respect to the gods, it also ensured that the cosmic spark was shared, and maintained the universe (or more realistically, the topocosmos).

¹⁹² Dr. Annabeth Headrick 2013 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWGXWkFXulQ> accessed 12 November 2019 [Hereafter Headrick 2013]

¹⁹³ Nash 1997, pp. 355.

¹⁹⁴ Carrasco 1980, pp. 298; Carrasco 1987, pp. 287; Garraty 2006, pp. 371; David Carrasco, 2000 Chapter Title: Other Tollans. In: *Quetzalcoatl and the Irony of Empire: Myths and Prophecies in the Aztec Tradition, Revised Edition*. University Press of Colorado. pp.104-147.

¹⁹⁵ Carrasco 2012, pp. 17.

¹⁹⁶ Carrasco and Pharo 2016, pp. 243.

The idea that one's own topocosmos is not simply local, but the centre of the cosmos, is found in a number of cosmologies, and justifies an attitude of superiority towards other cultures. In the Aztec worldview, the fall of Tenochtitlán or a deviation from the Aztec path would bring about, not simply the end of the Aztec society, but the end of the world. The destruction of the universe was a dreaded violent, destructive, cataclysmic event, from which nothing survives, there was nothing to be gained from revising or overthrowing the established order; revolt was warded off with a cosmic analogue of mutually assured destruction.

Chapter Four: The Intimate Relationship of the Aztec Calendars and the New Fire Ceremony

The Fifth Sun, *4-Ollin*, this current universe, is imbued with movement; everything is linked by the cosmic spark, the cosmic energy in the state of continuous transformation, endlessly recycled throughout the cosmos.¹⁹⁷ All things (animate and inanimate), had the ability to change or effect change with its motion.¹⁹⁸ The Aztec responsibility was to cycle the cosmic energy, through sacrifice they could repay the gods for their sacrifices and gifts bestowed, entering with them into an equal and symbiotic relationship.

The Fifth Sun

For the Aztec to exist, indeed for the universe to exist, the sun stood central in the relationship between time, space and their cosmological beliefs, a symbolic repository of cosmic energy and motion. Caso (1954) stressed the importance and omnipotence of the sun in Aztec culture, their existence was structured around a conceptualised sun: the sun as guardian of the universe, the sun as God, the sun as providing life (a respite from darkness and chaos), and the sun as caretaker of cosmic energy.¹⁹⁹ Fundamentally however, the sun was considered an unreliable and unstable guardian, requiring ongoing maintenance, leaving the Aztec's with sense of cataclysmic instability which could only be avoided if the current sun was maintained, destruction would occur if things '*were out of place*'.²⁰⁰

Instability seems to have been corralled specifically into the threat of cataclysm, as something novel, an orderly functioning of the universe is otherwise assumed. The overall cosmology included a quasi-magical function in which Aztec priests claimed to be uniquely skilled in handling cosmic energy in a manner which produces universally beneficial effects. As the Aztec considered themselves the chosen people, it was their special duty and responsibility to provide sustenance for the sun, rituals for the sun and gods had to be upheld, the Aztec in effect had

¹⁹⁷ Read 1994, pp. 352; Hassig 2001, pp. 39; Graulich *et.al* 1983, pp. 580; Ingham 1984, pp. 382.

¹⁹⁸ Read 1995, pp. 351; Oliver 2006, pp. 203; Greenhouse 1996, pp. 151; Guzmán 2016, pp. 252.

¹⁹⁹ Caso 1958, pp. 74.

²⁰⁰ Carrasco 1987, pp. 283; Read 1994, pp. 46; Campion 1994, pp. 8.

become responsible for the universe.²⁰¹ The *tōnalpōhualli*, monitored and regulated rituals, maintaining equilibrium and stability, ensuring that chaos was kept at bay.²⁰² As previously discussed, if the Fifth Sun met a destructive end the universe would simply fail to exist, a following or Sixth Sun, is not forecast.²⁰³ In addition to the hubris and political significance of the claim of the 'chosen people', for enemies of the Aztec it translated that the destruction of the Aztecs would be far more disastrous than the destruction of any other cultural group, as their demise would affect all peoples.

Ezley suggests that the Myth of the Suns functioned as a structural paradigm relating space and time with the Aztec cosmology; their calendars maintained their prophetic and subsequent ritual activity linked to their eschatological beliefs, and presented as a sequence of divine events, defining the history of the world and indeed the universe.²⁰⁴ At the same time, Aztec life took place within a structured temporality, very different from modern linear time which offered a high degree of stability. León-Portilla (1963) suggests that the Aztec view of time did not differentiate between time and space; ritual time existed as a concept of a cyclic collective, with an interchangeable plasticity, in perpetual motion.²⁰⁵ This ethos of high stakes and urgency discouraged complacent acceptance of cosmic realities and encouraged instead a kind of vigilance or intolerance.²⁰⁶ The Myth of the Suns cleverly justifies shifts in cosmic power, which led to the rise of the Aztecs; at the same time preventing the use of such past shifts, to justify future shifts *away* from the Aztec hegemony.

Strategically the Aztec rulers no doubt used their cosmogenesis mythology and the practice of sacrifice to consolidate their socio-political power and dominance in the Mexican basin. The spectacular nature of Aztec sacrifice should not detract from the more mundane aspects of their religion and everyday life. We know

²⁰¹ Carrasco 1987, pp. 284; Krupp 1991, pp. 245; Read 1994, pp. 42; Arnold 1991, pp.120; Jindo 2005, pp. 414; Graulich 2000, pp. 357.

²⁰² Arnold 1991, pp. 198; Philen 2005, pp. 225; Schwaller 2019, pp. 19; Booth 1966, pp.423; Neumann 1975, pp.21; Jiménez and Gräber 2006, pp. 28-29.

²⁰³ Jindo, 2005, pp. 414; Elzey 1976, pp. 119. Carrasco and Pharo 2016, pp. 243.

²⁰⁴ Elzey 1976, pp. 118.

²⁰⁵ León-Portilla 1963, pp. 38; Brundage 1985, pp. 61; Hassig 2001, pp. 27; Marco A. Almazán, The Aztec States-Society: Roots of Civil Society and Social Capital *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 565, Civil Society and Democratization (Sep., 1999), pp. 162-175..

²⁰⁶ Campion 1994, pp. 8.

much about these due to the calendar stone, recovered from the Main Plaza of Mexico City, in 1790. The calendar stone (alternatively Sun Stone or *Piedra del Sol*, in Spanish) was buried face down in front of the Templo Mayor (Figure One). Using ideograms carved into the face, the Aztecs have concisely stored cosmological, ritual and agricultural information, displaying the complexity of Aztec creation cosmology and demonstrates their ritual, cyclic *tōnalpōhualli* and practical, linear *xuihpōhualli* calendars²⁰⁷ Centrally, the iconographs of the four previous suns (moving counter-clockwise) are named by their method of destruction, the central character, it has been argued, is a representation of the Aztec sun god, Tonatiuh or maybe Huítzilōpōchtli taking the form of the sun god Tonatiuh.²⁰⁸ Sacrifices were required to maintain the sun's vitality; it provided the mechanism by which the cosmic energy was exchanged between humans and the gods. It was a way in which the Aztec thanked for the gifts they had provided (water, food, life) and created a symbiotic rather than dependant relationship with the gods. In their cosmology, sacrifice is a constant necessity, but the question of *who* is sacrificed remains open.²⁰⁹ Functionally, sacrifice served purposes mainly in relation to outsiders and this serves the interests of a dominant power who are able to select among possible targets whilst justifying its predations (which doubtless were not solely oriented to sacrifice) as cosmic necessities.

Girard's concept of 'scapegoating' is applicable, sacrifice held more than one social function; social order and bonding were created with sacrifice.²¹⁰ Increased social bonding relieved intra-community violence, reduced the population of some groups within and outside the empire whilst preserving others; and it may have had a warning function in relation to social deviance. To citizens, it may also provide a concrete interest in supporting wars to provide captives for sacrifice, as an alternative to sacrificing Aztec commoners. To foreigners, human sacrifice was no doubt a visceral reminder of what may happen if the Aztecs' wishes (for tribute) were not met; human sacrifice was one way to achieve both religious and

²⁰⁷ Miller and Taube 2017, pp. 191; Jiménez and Gräeber 2006, pp.26.

²⁰⁸ Brundage 1979, pp. 534.

²⁰⁹ Ingham 1984, pp. 382.

²¹⁰ Rene Girard 1986 *The Scapegoat*. Baltimore. John Hopkins University Press, pp. 73.

political goals.²¹¹ The chosen people and priests, predictably, did not bear the main burden of the sacrifices.

Quetzalcóatl's Calendars

Quetzalcóatl, as Topiltzin Quetzalcóatl, was the god of knowledge, and in some myths he is credited with the creation of the 260-day ritual *tōnalpōhualli* calendar and the 360-day agricultural solar/ linear *xuihpōhualli* calendar.²¹² The *tōnalpōhualli* kept account of the ritual days, influenced daily activities, monthly festivals, and intimately maintained a connection between the Aztec and their Gods, as an active relationship aimed at the avoidance of chaos.²¹³ The *tōnalpōhualli* consisted of 13 of twenty uniquely named days, it was not synchronised with the solar calendar, is a numerically based calendar, not related to the lunar cycle.²¹⁴ Noted to reoccurring throughout Aztec cosmology, mythology and demonstrated in their calendars, are the numbers four, nine, 13, 20, 52, 104 and 260, their exact meaning remains unknown. Campion observes Mayan and Aztec astrology to be '*intricate, cosmic and highly codified, with reverence to the sun, the supreme deity and the ruler of time and mathematically precise*'. He continues: "*that the sun astrology reflects the basic four-ness structure of time and space, and that the repeated cosmology's [recreation of the universe] incorporates a dialectical relationship between chaos and order*".²¹⁵

The importance of astrology to the Aztecs was probably substantial. Both Dow and Šprajc make compelling arguments that the calendar was inherited from the Toltecs from Teotihuacán.²¹⁶ Šprajc in agreement with Dow, makes a case for

²¹¹ Ingham 1984, pp. 379; Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, *Archaeology & Symbolism in Aztec Mexico: The Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan*. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 53, No. 4, *75th Anniversary Meeting of the American Academy of Religion* (Dec., 1985), pp. 797-813 [*Hereafter Moctezuma 1985*]; Blier 2004, pp. 38; Gallo 2011, pp. 75; Kurtz 1984, pp. 364; Graulich 2000, pp. 34.

²¹² Duran 2013, pp. 12; Austin 2004, pp. 611; Jansen and Jiménez 2007, pp. 25.

²¹³ Hassig 2001, pp. 28; Kelley 1960, pp. 319; Bahr 2004, pp. 732; Brumfiel 1990, pp. 252.

²¹⁴ Henderson, Fitchett and Malmström 1974, pp. 443; Miller and Taube 2017, pp. 48; Díaz and Rodgers, 1993, Loc 336; Hassig 2001, pp. 28; Jiménez and Gräeber 2006, pp. 29; Read 1995, pp. 360; Schwaller 2019, pp. 19; León-Portilla 1971, 52; Díaz and Rodgers 1993, pp. Loc. 3245; Jiménez and Gräeber 2006, pp. 30.

²¹⁵ Campion 2012, pp. 54; J. Eric S Thompson, Reviewed Work(s): "The Four Directions of Time. An Account of Page One of Codex Fejervary Mayer." Museum of Navajo Ceremonial Art by C. A. BURLAND. *B.B.A.A. Boletín Bibliográfico de Antropología Americana*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (ENERO-DICIEMBRE 1950), pp. 62-63; Ingham 1984, pp. 379.

²¹⁶ Šprajc 2000, pp. 403; Šprajc 2015, pp. 25; Dellenbaugh 1933, pp.791; Jiménez and Gräeber 2006, pp. 28-29; Brundage 1979, pp. 25; Carrasco, 1995, pp. 432; Gerald K Gresseth, The Myth of Alcyone. *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, Vol. 95(1964), pp. 88-98.

the length of the 260 day calendar mimicking the long axis of the Pyramid of the Sun, at Teotihuacán, which he noted faces The Pleiades, on its helical rising.²¹⁷ Šprajc invites further speculation stating that the layout of Teotihuacán allows functional astronomy to be conducted, where sunrises and sunsets could be observed, turning the Pyramid of the Sun an observational calendar.²¹⁸

Each day had a *tōnalpōuhque*, a codified day symbol, identified by unique associations with deities and other supernatural beings.²¹⁹ Some days were considered more auspicious, lucky, unlucky or neutral, than others for particular endeavours; individual fate was elucidated by diviners, the *tōnalpōuhqui*, who calculated the associated fate/soul (*tōnalli*).²²⁰ People could be born on certain days believed to be fated to die violent deaths or to become rulers or chieftains, fate, fortunately, was not predestined, there was room to improve one's *tōnalli* if it was unfavourable.²²¹ Brotherston contends the Nine Lords of the Night “*are counted as nine moons of 29 nights, they dispense fate in threes: good, bad or indifferent*”.²²² To compliment the nine Lords of the Night, there are the 13 Lords of the Day who contribute to the fate of the day number. Boone believed the 13 Lords of the Day were associated with the 13 heavens, and were additional cosmic forces that influenced the fate of a day.²²³ Such systems, which resemble attempts at scientific prediction, can be explained rationalistically, but also involve an attempt to obtain psychological security by positing human influence or foreknowledge over otherwise random factors.

Used to organise agricultural life, the *xuihpōhualli*, roughly solar calendar of 360 days, was made up of 18 months each of 20 days, with each year designated one of four rotating year titles: House, Rabbit, Reed and Flint Knife.²²⁴ At the end of each 18 month cycle, the *xuihpōhualli* had five unnamed intercalary, epagomenal

²¹⁷ Aveni 2008, pp. 28; Anthony 2008, pp. 165; Aveni 1981, pp. 165; Dow 1967, pp. 329; Nicholson 1971, pp. 420;

Sugiyama 1993, pp. 115; Šprajc 2000, pp. 411.

²¹⁸ Ivan Šprajc, Astronomical Alignments at Teotihuacán, Mexico. *Latin American Antiquity*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Dec., 2000), pp. 403-415 [Hereafter Šprajc 2000].

²¹⁹ Saunders 1994, pp. 110.

²²⁰ Jiménez and Gräber 2006, pp. 20; Hassig 2001, pp. 181.

²²¹ Jiménez and Gräber 2006, pp. 20; Hassig 2001, pp. 181; Malmström 1997, pp. 35.

²²² Gordon Brotherston 1996 Painted Books from Mexico: Codices in UK Collections and the World They Represent. British Museum Publishers Ltd London, UK, pp. 15.

²²³ Boone 2007, Loc. 2962.

²²⁴ Schwaller 2019, pp. 19; Hassig 2001, pp. 24; Victoria R Bricker, The Origin of the Maya Solar Calendar. *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Feb., 1982), pp. 101-103; Jiménez and Gräber 2006, pp. 29-30; Aveni 2016, pp. 189; Klein 1976, pp. 8; Malmström 1997, pp. 54; Oliver 2006, pp. 200.

days. The *tōnalpōhualli* and *xuihpōhualli* calendars ran concurrently, but independently of each other.²²⁵ The calendar duality thus seems more susceptible to rationalist than functionalist explanations, although the separation of the two calendars has social importance in relation to the timing of the potential cataclysms. The two calendars ingeniously re-synched or reset after 18920 days or 52 years.²²⁶ To recalibrate the ritual and solar calendars after a rotation of 52 years, 13 epagomenal (*nemontemi*) days were observed, these days did not formally belong to any of the months; though some authors contend they were a shortened unnamed month.²²⁷

Figure One: Aztec Calendar Stone at the *Museo Nacional de Antropología*



©Caswell 10th October 2013

The Aztec sun stone is a late post-classic Mexica sculpture housed in the National Anthropology Museum in Mexico City. The centre demonstrates Aztec cosmology, the four preceding Suns and the current Fifth Sun, and their methods of destruction.

Carrasco and Pharo state the Aztec calendars, the *tōnalpōhualli* and the *xuihpōhualli* placed the Aztec cosmology in a temporal, spatial and practical realm, meeting their philosophical requirements with respect to the gods by scheduling ritual that ensured cosmic spark was shared, and maintaining their

²²⁵ Jiménez and Gräeber 2006, pp. 30; Carrasco 1971, pp. 58.

²²⁶ Oliver 2006, pp. 10; Read 1998, pp. 32.

²²⁷ Miller and Taube 2017 pp. 87; Anderson and Dibble. 2012, Book VIII, pp 29; Hassig 2001, pp. 29 & 35; G. Wiesenfeldt, 2014 Aztecs and Astronomy. Lecture Transcript. <https://museums victoria.com.au/audio/aztecs-lecture-series/aztecs-and-astronomy/> accessed 17th June 2019 [Hereafter Wiesenfeldt 2014]; Jiménez and Gräeber 2006, pp. 31.

world, indeed the universe.²²⁸ These concepts provide the ethical and moral framework for how the Aztec were to live their lives; dominated by the *tōnalpōhualli* that ensured all the gods were worshipped and maintained appropriately. The destruction of the universe was a dreaded violent, cataclysmic event, from which nothing survives which required its own ritual to ensure the continuance of the universe, this ritual the New Fire Ceremony occurred on the eve of the calendar resynchronisation.

The Xiuhmōlpilli Festival and New Fire Ceremony

The nemontemi days signalled the beginning of the Xiuhmōlpilli Festival, in preparation for the New Fire Ceremony, a ‘termination ritual’ which finalises the ‘Aztec century’, when the gods were honoured and shown respect for their sacrifice whilst creating the Fifth Sun.²²⁹ Both *Codex Borbonicus* (Sheet 34) and the *Florentine Codex* recorded the ceremony, ceremony is also mentioned by the Quiché Mayan book of creation mythology, the *Popul Vuh*, (translation: ‘*Book of Council or Community*’) credited to the 18th century Dominican friar, Francisco Ximénez.²³⁰ The New Fire Ceremony took place on the eve of the new century, and if conducted successfully, the life-lease secured and leading to topocosmic renewal, and (in their minds) continuance of the universe, it was followed by relief and celebration that another calendar round was assured and cataclysm avoided.²³¹

The end of a calendar round was met with fear, apocalyptic anxiety and trepidation, for it was at this time the Aztec’s would be judged on their respect for the gods.²³² The Xiuhmōlpilli Festival was conducted in the nemontemi days preceding the resynchronisation, providing a period for ritual penance and sacrifice.²³³ During the Xiuhmōlpilli Festival, all ceremonial fires in the central Mexican Basin were extinguished, household pots and implements were broken,

²²⁸ Carrasco and Pharo 2016: pp 243.

²²⁹ Graulich *et.al* 1981b, pp. 47; Miller and Taube 2017, pp. 98.

²³⁰ Miller, Mary Ellen Central Mexican Myth in the Popol Vuh. *Mexicon* 1980 11(4):60-63; Tedlock 1996, pp. 65.

²³¹ Jiménez and Gräeber 2006, pp. 29; Jiménez and Gräeber 2006, pp 29.

²³² Aveni 2016, pp. 188; Ezley 1976, pp. 118; Leon-Portilla 1961, pp. 448; Robbins 1999, pp. 329.

²³³ Hassig 2001, pp. 36; Jiménez and Gräeber 2006, pp. 29; Read 1998, pp. 58; Anderson and Dibble 2012, Book VIII, pp. 27.

old clothing thrown out and houses cleaned of old and broken goods, all which are replaced, and renewed at the start the new century.²³⁴ Pregnant woman and children were secured in granaries to protect the gods from them, or on some accounts to protect them. All the population, including royalty, performed some form of penance, often in the form of small cuts to their ears (releasing small quantities of blood, and thus cosmic energy). Twig bundles composed of 52 twigs, called “xiuhmōlipilli bundles”, were prepared, these would be ceremonially burnt on the eve of the New Fire Ceremony.²³⁵ It was considered a cosmic necessity to take part and included all members of the community.²³⁶

The hill due east of Templo Mayor, in Tenochtitlán, named Huixachtepetl or Huixachtitlan, but now known as *Cerro de la Estrella*, was where the sacrifice took place, coordinated with the helical rising of The Pleiades (tianquiztli, Rattlesnake or Marketplace).²³⁷ The process itself has a liminal, almost carnivalesque feel, with the gods manifesting in the form of humans, accompanying the priest, were the *ixiptlahua*, representing the major deities of Aztec mythology and cosmology.²³⁸ The creator gods Quetzalcōatl (Feathered Serpent - God of Wisdom), Tlatlahqui Tezcatlipoca (Smoking Mirror - God of Providence), Yayauhqui Tezcatlipoca [Xipe-Totec] and Huítzilōpōchtli were all represented.²³⁹ At this time, the divine and human worlds were at their closest, the boundary between them fades and Aztec beliefs are strengthened by the gods being actualised in practice. The victim for sacrifice was chosen with care, preference on this occasion was to sacrifice a high born male warrior, who was free of physical blemishes and with a name that contained the word *xihuitl*.²⁴⁰

As The Pleiades rose over Mount Huixachtitlan, and the central star Alcyone reached its zenith, the priest removed the sacrificial victim's heart in concert with the helical rising of The Pleiades at midnight and kindled a fire in their chest

²³⁴ Miller and Taube 2017, pp. 88; Jiménez and Gräeber 2006, pp. 29; Schwaller 2019, pp. 174.

²³⁵ Miller and Taube 2017, pp. 85.

²³⁶ Schwaller 2019, pp. 176; Read 1994: pp. 43.

²³⁷ Gralulich *et.al.* 1981a; Severin 1981, pp. 69; Elson and Smith 2001, pp. 162; Iwaniszewski 1994, pp. 165.

²³⁸ Schwaller 2019, pp. 174; Carrasco 1987, pp. 285; Dunning and Weaver 2015, pp. 214.

²³⁹ Schwaller 2019, pp. 174; Carrasco 1987, pp. 285.

²⁴⁰ Anderson and Dibble 2012, Book VIII, pp. 26; Isaac Barry L. Aztec Warfare: Goals and Battlefield Comportment. *Ethnology*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Apr., 1983), pp. 121-131.

cavity.²⁴¹ The ceremony's completion required two accomplishments: offering the heart to the gods, and carefully lighting a fire in the victim's, now empty chest cavity. From the first fire, small fires were lit and then distributed throughout the Mexican Basin, the most important subsequent act being the relighting of the flame at the Temple of Huitzilōpōchtli on the Templo Mayor.²⁴² If successful (as it always was), the priests would declare that another life-lease had been granted.²⁴³

In retrospect, the granting of another life-lease seems predetermined: accomplishment of two simple tasks and the absence of the cataclysm were enough to lift the burden of fear. The *Codex Tudela* emphasizes that Xiuhmōlpilli Festival and New Fire Ceremony were a wide spread, not all individuals would have been able to observe the rising of The Pleiades over Mount Huixachtlan, people nevertheless they took part and observed the ritual in other ways.²⁴⁴ The combination of penance, casting-out, and renewal suggests a guilt-reparation cycle, in which guilt and fear were induced so as to then be expiated. Such relief, which in practice always occurred, served various social functions: as well as providing satisfaction following a period in which existential dread was activated, it retrospectively legitimised the social order as well as the Aztecs' actions and sacrifices of the previous 52 years. Suggesting that these were adequate to appease the gods, or even that these actions have been equal in cosmic energy generation to the gods' acts in creating and renewing the universe. The Aztec calendars allowed orderly management of both ritual and everyday activity, drawing their gods and goddesses into everyday life and placing their cosmology in a temporal, special and practice realm.²⁴⁵ The tōnalpōhualli provided order, and linked present rituals to past rituals, in a cyclic ongoing manner. As the Aztec believed they were the chosen people, whose responsibility was to collaborate with the gods to maintain order, it was in essence their duty to ensure the sun (universe) continued to exist, that their life-lease and toposcomic

²⁴¹ Schwaller 2019, pp. 174; Severin 1981, pp. 9 & 57; Frederic Hicks, "Flowery War" in Aztec History. *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Feb., 1979), pp. 87-92. [Hereafter Hicks 1979]. *The concept of flowery war is one where Aztec warriors unfairly armed, would fight and defeat warriors contributed to them by the tribes subject to their hegemonic rule. The warriors were then prepared for sacrifice, possibly reducing disruptive violence for the acquisition of victims and as a methodology to pay tribute.* Harner 1977, pp. 118.

²⁴² Severin 1981, pp. 69; Schwaller 2019, pp. 174; Schwaller 2019, pp. 174; Dunning and Weaver 2015, pp. 211.

²⁴³ Jiménez and Gräber 2006, pp. 29; Schwaller 2019, pp. 181.

²⁴⁴ Graulich *et al.* 1983, pp. 578; Schwaller 2019, pp. 174; Severin 1981, pp. 69.

²⁴⁵ Campion 1994, pp. 49; Carrasco 1987, pp. 284; Carrasco and Pharo 2016, pp. 243.

renewal was granted by the correct observation of ritual and sacrifice.²⁴⁶ The resynchronisation of the *tōnalpōhualli* and *xiuhmōlipilli*, preceded by the *nemontemi* days (transitional days) ensured all stages of toposcomic renewal could be attended, to secure a renewed life-lease for the next calendar round. Bernardino de Sāhūgun noted the tradition of The New Fire Ceremony ended with the Spanish conquest of Mexico in 1519-1521 CE.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁶ Campion 2012, pp. 61; León-Portilla 1963, pp. 38; Ingham 1984, pp. 379; Saunders, Nicholas J. A Dark Light: Reflections on Obsidian in Mesoamerica. *World Archaeology*, Vol. 33, No. 2, Archaeology and Aesthetics (Oct., 2001), pp. 220-236; Booth 1966, pp. 425; Brotherston 2002, pp. 137; Hassig 2001, pp. 29; Douglas, Mary 1970 *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*. New York: Random House pp. 58-75.

²⁴⁷ Anderson and Dibble 2012, Book VIII, pp. 29; Dibble, Charles 1974, pp. 228; Dunning, and Weaver 2015, pp. 212; Sahagún (1550-1590) recorded a detailed account of ceremonies attending the close of a calendar round. This account is best summarized according to chapters in Sahagún manuscript: Bk. 7, Ch. 9-All fires were put out; idols were cast into water; the priests bored new fire on the chest of a well-born sacrificial victim at midnight, and fed the fire with the heart of the victim; Mary Pohl, Ritual Continuity and Transformation in Mesoamerica: The Ancient Maya Cosh Ritual. *American Antiquity*, 1981 Vol 46, No. 3, pp 513-529; Aveni 2012, pp. 71; Severin 1981, pp. 69.

Chapter Five: Topocosmic Renewal Through Ritual

Topocosm

In *Thespis* Gaster (1950) outlined his thoughts concerning seasonal rituals, in his view, seasonal rituals were conducted to renew the topocosm.²⁴⁸ Gaster was a functionalist, in a world whereby people had little or no control over events, the seasonal ritual is a fundamental human requisite, rituals, he maintained, were accompanied by myths. The interpretation of myth and ritual together created drama, and drama evolved from the enactment of the seasonal rituals, myth was intimately tied to the corresponding ritual.²⁴⁹ Gaster's theory draws on that of Frazer, who considered rituals to be worldwide patterns of behaviour that developed independently in all cultures.²⁵⁰ He examined myths and rituals from the ancient Near East, demonstrating a commonality of seasonal rituals, and a seasonal pattern to myths, describing many cultures undertook to refresh, renew and celebrate the passing of time, renewing periodically or annually as he terms it “*our lease on life*”, was also conducted to secure the prosperity of the community for the coming period.²⁵¹ Life-lease was not a given, but something which Gaster felt people inevitably earned, as nothing was guaranteed to continue from one year to the next.²⁵² Rituals also have important social functions, recognisable to people who do not share the underlying cosmology, seasonal rituals created communal bonding, social cohesion, demonstrated piety and community suffering justifying celebration, once the life-lease was renewed.

At the manifest level of supernatural activity, the origin of life-lease rituals lies in the attempt to control the unpredictable element of human experience.²⁵³

According to Campion, the purpose of ritual “*was to appease nature, to prevent worldly destruction, in essence to make the world safe*”.²⁵⁴ The New Year, in

²⁴⁸ See Gaster 1950, *Thespis*.

²⁴⁹ Gaster 1950, pp. 3; Gaster 1954, pp. 187.

²⁵⁰ Frazer 2003, pp. 55.

²⁵¹ Gaster 1950, pp. 4; Hooke 1939, pp. 88.

²⁵² Gaster 1950, pp. 9.

²⁵³ Hooke 1939, pp. 84.

²⁵⁴ Campion 1994, pp. 33.

most cultures, is a time when the cosmos is in jeopardy, cultic activities contribute to the victory of securing the New Year.²⁵⁵ In the ancient Near East, the cultures which Gaster studied New Year festivals exhibited "fundamental acting", depicting and attempting to affect the process by which nature is born again, and maintain order over chaos, the struggle ensured the triumph of life over death, but not without suffering and penance.²⁵⁶ It was an opportunity for the individual and the community to demonstrate worthiness (piety), to give thanks and formally mark the passing of one life-lease and the beginning of another.²⁵⁷ The Aztecs were not among the cultures studied by Gaster, and the New Fire Ritual thus serves as an important test for the wider applicability of his ideas.

In general there are two stages of myth, the time before and the time after creation.²⁵⁸ The time before creation is usually portrayed as chaotic and dark, or at least uninhabitable for humans. In myths of cosmogenesis, the post-creation universe emerges as a light out of the darkness, the pattern of creation, destruction and recreation is one that reinforces the need to secure the New Year, as destruction could come again.²⁵⁹ Rather than being primary, binaries arise from this process: two things that are initially undifferentiated are separated becoming distinct entities.²⁶⁰ Renewal of the cosmos has the character of the first creation; the ritual thus becomes a re-enactment of the creation epic.²⁶¹ The ritual pattern generally suggests a recall or re-enactment of the original situation, out of which the civilisation or the community and its gods came into existence.²⁶²

Gaster suggests that seasonal rituals followed uniform patterns with two clear dimensions: *Kenósis* an emptying period of piety, penance and preparation, and *Plérósis* a filling up, a revitalization, a commencement of a new life-lease.²⁶³ During *Kenósis* the community is in a suspended state, with one life-lease

²⁵⁵ Engell 1943, pp. 137.

²⁵⁶ Engnell 1943, pp. 137.

²⁵⁷ Gaster 1950, pp. 6; Murray 2006, pp. 123.

²⁵⁸ Robert Murray, 2006 *The Cosmic Covenant: Biblical Themes of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation*. Gorgias Press. pp. 97 [Hereafter Murray 2006].

²⁵⁹ Barat Ellman, 2013 Chapter Title: Two Worldviews: Creation—Destruction—Re-Creation In: *Memory and Covenant: The Role of Israel's and God's Memory in Sustaining the Deuteronomic and Priestly Covenants*. Augsburg Fortress, Publishers. pp.33-47.

²⁶⁰ Murray 2006, pp. 121.

²⁶¹ Ivan Engnell, 1943 *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East* Almqvist & Wiksells, Egypt., pp. 138 [Hereafter Engnell 1943]; Murray 2006, pp. 131.

²⁶² Hooke 1939, pp. 90.

²⁶³ Gaster 1950, pp. 6.

exhausted but another not yet granted.²⁶⁴ The seasonal pattern began with rites of mortification (as a state of suspended animation) when one lease of life has closed, but the next has not yet been secured.²⁶⁵ During the second stage, purgation, the community begins to rid itself of all things noxious, contagious both physical and moral, they being to prepare themselves and usually their abodes to greet the New Year.²⁶⁶ Purgation was followed by invigoration, whereby the community worked together, to bring about the New Year, the new life lease, through the enactment of myth.²⁶⁷ The victory of life is assured, often by sacrifices and other rites, then community celebrations, feasts and in some cases mass copulations take place.²⁶⁸ Anxiety, fear and dread felt by the community is relived once the ritual is concluded and a new life- lease secured.²⁶⁹

The Xuihpōhualli Festival and New Fire Ceremony described in the last two chapters fits well with Gaspar's theory of topocosmos, but the latter are both temporally less frequent and cosmologically more important. Conceptually, the end of the calendar round and the beginning of the new was the period in which their life-lease was renewed; the New Fire Ceremony was the mechanism by which the Aztecs renewed their life-lease. For the Aztec this had greater implications than the New Year ceremonies recorded by Gaster, in their version of the ritual, they were not only responsible for their own people, but for the survival of the universe, which depended on the exact execution of their ritual.²⁷⁰ The binding of the years needed to be completed with respect and reverence, or it would be the destruction of everything.²⁷¹ The extension of their own life-lease, if granted to continue for another 52 years (another calendar round) extended to the universe.²⁷² In the Aztec cosmology there was no facility for the Sixth Sun, so the finality of destruction if the New Fire Ceremony was not conducted properly was complete.²⁷³ As the Aztecs did not have a concept of death being final (the

²⁶⁴ Gaster 1950, pp. 5

²⁶⁵ Gaster 1950, pp. 6.

²⁶⁶ Gaster 1950, pp. 7.

²⁶⁷ Gaster 1950, pp. 7.

²⁶⁸ Engnell 1943, pp. 138.

²⁶⁹ Gaster 1950, pp. 7.

²⁷⁰ Elzey 1976: pp. 117; Schwaller 2019, pp.8; Read 1986, pp. 117; Ingham 1984, pp. 383.

²⁷¹ Ingham 1984, pp. 382; Booth 1966, pp. 425; Brotherston 2002, pp. 137; Hassig 2001, pp. 29.

²⁷² Anderson and Dibble 2012, Book VIII, pp. 25; Pohl 1981, pp. 518; Aveni 2012, pp. 71; Severin 1981, pp. 69.

²⁷³ Jindo 2005, pp. 414; Elzey 1976:pp. 119. Carrasco and Pharo 2016, pp. 243.

next existence occurred in Mictlān) the finality of the concept of the end of the universe would have been frightening.

Seasonal Pattern

The function of myth is to bring out, in an articulated way, the significance of temporality and duration, which cultures preserve as a punctual ritual program.²⁷⁴ Seasonal myths are implicit, that is taken for granted, or explicit in that they correspond to seasonal acts.²⁷⁵ There is however an inherent understanding by the cultural group of what is needed for the successful completion of the ritual and all are expected to take part; it is a community concern. Traditions are handed down but are subject to cultural changes, Gaster observes that over time, new conceptions of life-lease emerge and the need for a seasonal ritual may fade, but aspects of the tradition have nevertheless stayed with civilisations in their literatures and customs.²⁷⁶ Gaster's analysis portrays the king or high noble in the Near East as a god's proxy, in Aztec culture the same role was played by the priests.²⁷⁷ In Gaster's identified five stages of a typical seasonal ceremony: a series of public rites, followed by a "vacant or transitional period" (conceptualised as outside the normal calendar or timekeeping), the removal of all things (objects that may infect, be noxious, threaten or impact on the new life-lease), the ritual, and then celebration (with relief).²⁷⁸ The New Fire Ritual broadly follows these stages, except that the transitional period (nemontemi) coincides with the public rites (Xiuhmōlipilli Festival) and the removal of polluting things (fires, broken objects, pregnant women).

Gaster's theory was applied to many cultures around the world, but not to the Aztecs or Mesoamerican cultures, however each step of the Aztec ceremony reflects his theory of topocosmic renewal. It thus seems to be a simplified form of Gaster's model, consisting of a first stage of rites-vacancy-removal, the ritual

²⁷⁴ Gaster 1950, pp. 49.

²⁷⁵ Gaster 1950, pp. 51.

²⁷⁶ Gaster 1950, pp. 49.

²⁷⁷ Gaster 1950, pp. 62.

²⁷⁸ Gaster, 1950, pp. 34; Engnell 1943, pp. 138; Miller and Taube 2017, Pp. 98.

itself, and the celebration. This suggests that Gaster may be right about a commonality amongst humans (rather than cultures, which are quite unique to one another, with different cultures sharing a need to recognise, respect, sacrifice and celebrate a continuing life-lease within a community structure. Thus recognising and controlling anxiety about the reliance of human society on unpredictable natural or cosmic forces with unpredictable outcomes. The longevity of the Aztec New Fire Ceremony may well have been due to their ritual calendar, which consolidated adherence to their religious beliefs.

Drama

In Gaster's theory, myth is the spoken part of ritual, a dramatic representation of death and resuscitation, Drama evolves from ritual.²⁷⁹ The plot of a seasonal myth will be the same as the seasonal ritual; hence Gaster considered them together, to be the parents of drama.²⁸⁰ Rebirth narratives often have a special connection with the sun and light, and fire rituals play a prominent part – a replication of the light or fire of creation, the rising and setting of the sun, and the cycles of spring and winter.²⁸¹

Many of the Near East rituals make different uses of fire, and the Aztec version is noticeable for its fusion of the fire theme with the Aztec theme of human sacrifice. During the New Fire Ceremony, the Aztecs symbolically lit a fire in the empty chest of their sacrificial victim, imbibing it with cosmic spark, and then distributed it throughout their empire.²⁸² Since all fires had previously been extinguished, this dramatically represented a replacement of the old fire by the new, and its renewal for the coming period.

²⁷⁹ Gaster 1950, pp. 3

²⁸⁰ Gaster 1950, pp. 6.

²⁸¹ Engnell 1943, pp. 137

²⁸² Carrasco 1987, pp. 284.

Kenósis

Rites of Mortification

Rites of Mortification are a state of suspended animation, when one lease of life has closed, but the next has not yet being secured.²⁸³ The theme of vacant or transitional time appears twice in Aztec cosmology: in the five days at the end of each year, and the 13 nemontemi days at the end of each calendar round. The nemontemi days observed before the New Fire Ceremony, were epagomenal days, where time which does not count, not residing in this temporal universe. During this period the Aztec people began the Xiuhmōlippli Festival in preparation for the New Fire Ceremony, the vacant or transitional time-period thus exists, but it coincides with the periods of ritual and purgation.

Purgation and penance

During purgation the community begins to rid itself of all things which are considered noxious and contagious, whether physical or moral. They began to prepare themselves and usually their houses, towns and cities to greet the New Year.²⁸⁴ During the nemontemi days, the Aztec people broke some of their household goods, threw out their clothing and put the hearth fire out; the fire at Templo Mayor was also extinguished.²⁸⁵ The old fires were considered to be connected to the old life-lease, so their continuation is presumably inauspicious or polluting, children and pregnant woman were moved to granaries (again presumably because they are impure), and ears were cut with thorns, to bleed both as a penance and to offer blood to the gods. Blood contained the cosmic spark of life, so shedding one's blood was an important form of sacrifice. The Aztec cleaned their houses, and prepared xiuhmōlippli bundles for ritual burning. The act of discarding objects, quarantining and bleeding, seem to serve simultaneously the functions of purgation/penance and preparatory ritual, the first and third of Gaster's stages. As they take place during the nemonteni days the first three stages are contracted into one.

²⁸³ Gaster 1950, pp. 6; Ezley 1976, pp. 118; Leon-Portilla 1961, pp. 448.

²⁸⁴ Gaster 1950, pp. 7; Graulich *et.al.* 1983, pp 560; Elzey 1976, pp. 119.

²⁸⁵ Miller and Taube 2017 pp. 88; Jiménez and Gräeber 2006, pp. 29; Schwaller 2019, pp. 174.

Invigoration

During invigoration the community *works to bring about* the New Year, the new life-lease, through the enactment of myth.²⁸⁶ Invigoration by ritual is also found in Aztec culture, the priests travel with their entourage, accompanied by other priests or lords dressed as the creator Gods, beginning their journey at Tenochtitlán walking to Mount Huixachtlan, taking their sacrificial victim with them.²⁸⁷ During this period there is an emotional shift, the community had finalised their penance and purgation, and met to find a view of the ceremony, or at least look in the direction where it took place.²⁸⁸ Each step of the ceremony was tightly choreographed, and no doubt practiced, the nominated moment signalled by the head priest; the heart was removed from the sacrifice, and offered to the gods.²⁸⁹

Plērósis

Relief, Celebration and Jubilation

The New Fire Ritual would be followed by an outpouring of energy and new projects. There is also a ritual aspect, consistent with Gaster's model, though again in abbreviated form. The sacrifice proper, in which the heart and blood are given to the gods, is followed by lighting a fire in the sacrifice's chest, the hope of new light (in the form of fire) was fulfilled with the lighting of the fire in the chest of the victim. This fire was taken to relight the fire at Templo Mayor, and once the temple fires were relit, it was distributed throughout the empire.²⁹⁰ The ceremony was not a success until this was completed, symbolising the rebirth of the sun for another calendar round, the triumph of light over darkness, order over chaos. Celebrations would then begin, houses were restocked with implements and new clothes, feasts took place and pregnant woman and children were released from the granaries; all-round relief was felt.

²⁸⁶ Gaster 1950, pp. 7.

²⁸⁷ Hicks 1979, pp. 89; Severin 1981, pp. 9.

²⁸⁸ Anderson and Dibble 2012, Book VIII pp. 25; Gralulich *et.al.* 1981a; Severin 1981, pp. 69; Elson and Smith 2001, pp. 162; Iwaniszewski 1994, pp. 165.

²⁸⁹ Schwaller 2019, pp. 174; Moctezuma 1985, pp. 798.

²⁹⁰ Jiménez and Gräeber 2006, pp. 29; Schwaller 2019, pp. 181; Severin 1981, pp. 57.

Topocosmic Renewal Through Ritual

For the Aztecs, the well being of the living required a properly conducted sacrifice, for they held a proxy responsibility for the well being of themselves as well as the universe. This took place within their topocosm (for example, at their symbolic centre of the universe), though its significance was considered universal. If their life-lease was not extended, if they have not pleased and nourished the gods, the universe would experience complete destruction.²⁹¹

The stages of seasonal pattern posited by Gaster can be identified in the New Fire Ceremony. Their *Kenósis* is recognisable by their rites of mortification, purgation and penance, where they prepare the community for the New Fire Ceremony. Their myth is explicit in asserting that the ritual of the New Fire Ceremony corresponds to the end of the calendar round. In Aztec cosmogenesis the *nemontemi* are equivalent to the transitional time of chaos and destruction, in contrast with the ordered time of the calendar. During invigoration, the priests travel to the ceremonial mount and conduct the ritual with perfect timing, watching carefully for the rise of The Pleiades, and the positioning of Alcyone.

Plērōsis, the filling, occurs after the fire is lit in the sacrificed victim's chest and distributed, first to the Templo Mayor and then throughout the empire (symbolically reflecting the lines of cosmic power). They release the woman and children from their imprisonment and begin to celebrate with feasts; they restock their houses, relight their hearths, and with relief start the next calendar round. Gaspar's theory of topocosm uniquely explains the Aztec commitment to ensure the rites and rituals associated with the end of the calendar round, were implemented exactly.

²⁹¹ Hooke 1939, pp. 90.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

*“The tribal god on the other hand, personifies or epitomizes the “essence” of that community conceived as an ideal, transcendental entity of which the living generation is but the present phase.”*²⁹²

Theodor Gaster

This research applied Theodor Gasper's functionalist theory of toposcomic renewal or life-lease renewal rituals, termed seasonal rituals, to the Aztec New Fire Ceremony. Aztec cosmic history was divided into a series of periods known as "Suns" (Ollin, ages or universes). The Myth of the Suns accounts for the creation of the Sun and describing the time between each Sun as a transitional void, outside normal time. At the time of European contact, the Aztecs believed they inhabited the Fifth Sun (4-Ollin motion/movement), it was considered the summation of the four suns which preceded it, all of which were destroyed cataclysmically. The prophetic and eschatological beliefs of the Aztec made no provision for the Sixth Sun.

I reviewed Aztec cosmovision in Chapter Two, the Aztec adopted the Toltec god Quetzalcóatl (*Feathered Serpent*) to gain socio-political legitimisation with neighbouring tribes in the Mexican Basin. The Aztec appropriated Teotihuacán naming it the City of the Gods, the location where the Fifth Sun was created.²⁹³ Cosmic energy was seeded by the creator being, Ōmetecōtl, throughout the universe and was a specific principle of the Fifth Sun, and a universally important aspect of the Aztec philosophy. Redistribution of cosmic energy was achieved with sacrifices, considered by the Aztec to be an act of reciprocity with the gods. Believing they were cosmologically connected to the creation of Fifth Sun provided them with divine providence, a myth which served their religious and socio-political needs. In Chapter Three Aztec comogenesis and their origin legends were explored. A complex and interwoven cosmogenesis is created by the complementary duality of Aztec deities and the adoption of characteristics to

²⁹² Gaster 1950, pp. 188

²⁹³ Smith, 1984, pp. 157; Saburo Sugiyama, Burials dedicated to the Old Temple of Quetzalcoatl at Teotihuacan, Mexico *American Antiquity*, Jan 1989, Vol.54(1), pp.85-106; Carrasco 1980, pp. 299.

match the role they assumed. The god Huítzilōpōchtli featured in both as a son of the creator being and the Aztec hero deity. A functional message is gained from the many myths, with concepts of fidelity, morality, loyalty, humility, and sacrifice with honour as reoccurring themes. Their cosmogoneis and origin legends function to reinforce the presence and primacy of the Aztecs as a product of *divinely inspired* migration, this primacy also involved the idea of empire building, as well as providing sources of meaning and justification of the everyday practices and hierarchies of Aztec life.

In Chapter Four the New Fire Ceremony and its relationship to the Aztec sacred *tōnalpōhualli* calendar was discussed. Partial separation between the sacred and mundane was established through the duality of the two Aztec calendars, used simultaneously but rotating independently. The Two calendars re-synchronised every 52 years, at the completion of a ‘calendar round’, taking place during the 13 *nemontemi* days (outside of normal time) the *Xuihpōhualli* Festival, preceded The New Fire Ceremony. The ceremony was considered a success when the fire, first ignited in the victim’s chest, at Templo Mayor was relit. Celebrations began, the gods had been honoured and a new calendar round had been secured.

In Chapter Five, Gaster’s theory of topocosmic renewal outlines the mechanisms that humans undertake to mark, what he termed, the seasonal pattern of ritual to renew their “life-lease”.²⁹⁴ Continuing life was not taken for granted, not given by the gods without reciprocity, in the Aztec case many sacrifices. The Aztec combined Gaster's first three elements of *Kenósis* (preparatory ritual, mortification and vacant days) including elements such as discarding household goods, fasting, ululation, personal sacrifice and other practices of mourning and grieving. The last two stages occur unmodified in the New Fire Ceremony itself; followed subsequently by the process of rebuilding and revivification. When a continuing life was assured, completed with rites and a sacrifice, *Plērósis* occurs, the community celebrates.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁴ See Gaster, 1950 *Thespis*.

²⁹⁵ Engnell 1943, pp. 138.

Modern scholarship defines four main theories of myth: rational, psychological, functional and structuralism.²⁹⁶ Rational and psychological approaches to Aztec cosmology and origin legends are rare; as mentioned Gallo 2011 examined human sacrifice in the ancient Mexico, relying on Freud's version of psychoanalysis, but did not extend the study to Aztec cosmogenesis.²⁹⁷ In relation to the Aztec, Gingerich 1988 has explored the mother archetype in Nahuatl hymns, but did not extend this study to the Myth of the Suns or the New Fire Ceremony.²⁹⁸

Claude Lévi-Strauss founded structuralism, proposing that humans have a divided self, an innate duality spontaneously created by the human mind and human nature, which is defined by binary (antagonistic) opposites.²⁹⁹ These oppositions constitute the primary elements from which myth is constructed.³⁰⁰ Cultural and cosmological accessories, such as ritual, in Levi-Strauss's view only served to clutter the vital meaning and act as a diversion to the real or subliminal focus of interpretation of myth.³⁰¹ Structuralism is the only major approach which has been applied to Aztec cosmogenesis.

Graulich *et al.* 1981a, 1981b and 1983, made notable attempts using structuralism to examine the cosmogenesis of Mesoamerica, including the Myth of the Suns.³⁰² He proposed that a pan-Mesoamerican (encompassing the Inca, Aztec and Mayan traditions) cosmology was structuralistic in nature, demonstrated, he argued, by the binary opposition (duality) that was prevalent in the cosmogenesis mythology of all three cultures.³⁰³ In his research, Graulich ignored ritual, and listed many examples of what he considered to be binary oppositional elements, as proof that pan-Mesoamerican mythology was a mimic of Judaeo-Christian dogma.³⁰⁴ To explain such similarities, Graulich claimed a universal basis for myth-creation,

²⁹⁶ Lévi-Strauss 1978, pp. 24; David. G. Mandelbaum 1987, pp. 34; Menzies 2014a, pp. 28; Peck 1968, pp. 152; Seal 2011, pp. 57.

²⁹⁷ Gallo 2011, pp. 78; Bidney 1950, pp. 18.

²⁹⁸ Gingerich 1988, pp. 201; Cohen 1969, pp. 339.

²⁹⁹ Lévi-Strauss 1955, pp. 439.

³⁰⁰ Gould 1981, pp. 159; Lévi-Strauss 1955, pp. 429; Lévi-Strauss 1969a, pp. 46; Lévi-Strauss 1969b, pp. 78; Roth 1993, pp. 38; Silverstone *et al.* 1976, pp. 26; Wiseman 2009, Introduction.

³⁰¹ Segal 2005, pp. 211; Thomas Kronenfeld and Kronenfeld 1976, pp. 149; Lévi-Strauss 1955, pp. 423; Gaster 1954, pp. 189; Leacock 1978, pp. 119; Hénaff 2009, pp. 5.

³⁰² Graulich *et al.* 1981a; Graulich *et al.* 1981b; Graulich *et al.* 1983; Thomas Kronenfeld and Kronenfeld 1976, pp. 148; Schwimmer, 2009, pp. 82; Seidenberg 1969, pp. 188-196; Baillie 2014, pp. 53; Dundes 1997b, 79; Lévi-Strauss 1955, pp. 436; Lévi-Strauss 1963, 42; Carroll 1978, pp. 475.

³⁰³ Graulich 1981a, 1981b and 1983; Lévi-Strauss 1978, pp. 11.

³⁰⁴ See Graulich, *et al.* 1981a, *et al.* 1981b and *et al.* 1983; Dundes 1997a, pp. 41; Lévi-Strauss 1963, pp. 31; Siebers 1988, pp. 71.

myth as in Levi-Strauss, seen as the product of the divided human mind and the internal conflict of man.³⁰⁵ Garulich was criticised for the use of codexes, which have been considered to provide a jaundiced Judeo-Christian view point.³⁰⁶

Contemporaneously to Lévi-Strauss' structuralism, Gaster's put forward his functional theory of topocosm as outlined in *Thespis*, fitting well with the New Fire Ceremony.³⁰⁷ Gaster's theory draws on that of Frazer, who considered rituals to be worldwide patterns of behaviour that developed independently in all cultures.³⁰⁸ Gaster examined myths and rituals from the ancient Near East, demonstrating a commonality of seasonal rituals, and a seasonal pattern to myths.³⁰⁹ He described many cultures which undertook to refresh, renew and celebrate the passing of time, renewing periodically or annually as he terms it "*our lease on life (life-lease)*".³¹⁰ In his view, seasonal rituals were conducted to renew the topocosm, the 'entire complex' of a given location, with all things within that location conceived as living organisms, this renewal allowed the continuation of the life-lease for the next set period.³¹¹ The Aztec were not among the cultures studied by Gaster, and the New Fire Ritual thus served as an important test for the wider applicability of his ideas.

Seasonal rituals, Gaster wrote, created communal bonding, social cohesion, demonstrated piety and community suffering, and justified celebration once the life-lease was renewed, and followed uniform patterns with two clear dimensions *Kenósis* and *Plērōsis*.³¹² *Kenósis*: an emptying period of piety, penance and preparation, the community is in a suspended state, with one life-lease exhausted but another not yet granted; followed by *Plērōsis*: a filling up, a revitalisation whereby the community worked together, to bring about the New Year, the new life lease, through the enactment of myth.³¹³

³⁰⁵ Lévi-Strauss 1955, pp. 432; Graulich 1981a, 1981b and 1983; Mandelbaum 1987, pp. 34; Bidney 1950, pp. 17.

³⁰⁶ Graulich 1983, pp. 585.

³⁰⁷ Gaster 1950.

³⁰⁸ Frazer 2003, pp. 55.

³⁰⁹ Gaster 1950, pp. 4.

³¹⁰ Gaster 1950, pp. 4.

³¹¹ See Gaster 1950, *Thespis*.

³¹² Hooke 1939, pp. 88.

³¹³ Gaster 1950, pp. 5-7.

Regarding themselves as the chosen people who shared a mutual obligation with the gods to maintain and sustain the universe, the Aztec took their responsibility for the preservation of the Fifth Sun, to be a universal necessity. Continuing life was not taken for granted, not given by the gods without reciprocity, in the Aztec case many sacrifices. During the nemontemi period, the Xuihpōhualli Festival was completed; this is the context in which a temporally and structurally reduced variant of Gaster's life-lease ritual was conducted. The Aztec combined Gaster's first three elements of preparatory ritual and mortification during the Xuihpōhualli Festival. When continuing life is assured, completed with rites and a sacrifice, then community celebrations and feasts took place.³¹⁴

For the Aztecs, their rituals echoed concern with cosmic order in the local topocosmos, the well being of the living required a properly conducted sacrifice, for they held a proxy responsibility for the well being of themselves as well as the universe. This took place within their topocosm (for example, at their symbolic centre of their universe) though its significance was considered by the Aztec to be truly universal. If their life-lease was not extended, if they had not pleased and nourished the gods, the universe would experience complete and terminal destruction; and as this was the most perfect form of universe, the Aztec cosmovision made no provision for a Sixth Sun.³¹⁵ Aztec myth and ritual formed a continuous whole, giving meaning to life and warding off fear, and perhaps guilt, about the end of the ordered universe. Anxiety, fear and dread felt by the community is relived when the ritual is concluded and a new life-lease secured.³¹⁶

My research suggests that Graulich's *et. al.* previous work 1981a, 1981b, 1983, had an over reliance on European models of contradictory and antagonistic dualism (binary oppositional elements).³¹⁷ The application of structuralism dimmed the nuances of the Aztec model of complementary and context-dependent dualism found throughout their cosmology. Structuralism has been accused of selecting subject matter than condones its theoretical perspective, and indeed a major criticism of this myth theory is the investigator nominates attributes

³¹⁴ Engnell 1943, pp. 138.

³¹⁵ Hooke 1939, pp. 90.

³¹⁶ Gaster 1950, pp. 7.

³¹⁷ See Graulich *et.al.* 1981a, 1981b, 1983.

considered to demonstrate binary opposition within a given culture, thereby selecting elements which they consider important, from outside the culture's context. And due to superficial similarities with Christian cosmology, Graulich's *et.al.* 1981a, 1981b and 1983 misinterprets the intent of Aztec cosmology with its inherent flexibility of roles of complementary and context-dependent dualism, whereby gods and goddesses can demonstrate binary [*antagonistic*] opposition and binary complementary elements, without the loss of credence to the role in which they are placed. Graulich *et.al.* 1981a, 1981b and 1983 has been widely criticised mistaking complementary dualism with antagonistic binaries, leading him to interpret Aztec cosmological beliefs as a mimic of Judaeo-Christian genesis mythology. His western viewpoint led him to conclude scenarios such as the earth goddess being torn into two, as carnal rape rather than a metaphor of a change of holism to a complementary dualism, reflected throughout Aztec cosmology.

A further example, of Graulich's *et.al.* 1981a, 1981b and 1983 lean towards a Judaeo-Christian viewpoint is emphasised by his reinforcement of the conceptualisation of Mictlān, the underworld, as the agonist to heaven - a hell. Vento 1995, describes Mictlān as simply another layer of the cosmos, he argues that the translation of Mictlān as 'underworld/hell' is a Spanish Catholic conceptualisation, for the Aztecs, it was merely another form of existence.³¹⁸ Structuralism could be considered a tool to highlight binary elements in Aztec cosmology however as a theory it is not suited to cross culture analysis beyond the identification of binary or associated dualisms.

Gaster's studies focussed on New Year rituals, though the Aztec New Fire Ceremony occurred less frequently, and held the responsibility for universal salvation; the seasonal patterns of behaviour, and seasonal ritual, along with the revitalisation of the Aztec topocosm are easily identified. Gaster's theory draws on that of Frazer, who considered rituals to be worldwide patterns of behaviour that developed independently in all cultures. In contrast to Graulich *et.al* 1981a, 1981b and 1983, Gaster's theory of topocosmic renewal, when applied to the

³¹⁸ Vento 1995, pp.10.

Aztec cosmovision and New Fire Ceremony is able to provide a better explanation for the longevity of Myth of the Suns and its relevance to the Aztec topocosmic renewal.³¹⁹

In summary, the specifics of Aztec cosmology are better explained with functionalist myth theory of topocosmic renewal than structuralism. Functionalist myth theory can be applied without corruption of the complementary dualism found in Aztec cosmology. Therefore, it can be said that the functionalist approach has wider cross-cultural application than structuralism, confirming that Gaster's theory of topocosmic renewal has validity beyond the range of the Near Eastern societies he studied.

³¹⁹ See Graulich *et.al.* 1981a, 1981b, 1983; Gaster 1950.

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Appendix One: Dissertation Proposal

Faculty of Humanities

MA Dissertation Approval Form

Student Name	Gabrielle Caswell
Degree Scheme	MA CULTURAL ASTRONOMY AND ASTROLOGY
Module code	AHAN 7025
Start date (This will be after you have completed your 6 th module)	18/02/2019
Completion Date (The date when your MA registration ends)	28/09/2020

I have **completed** Part 1 of my degree.
 *Please delete as appropriate.

Please read the ‘Guide to filling out your proposal’ at the end of this form.

Title of Dissertation: <i>The cosmic renewal ritual, The New Fire Ceremony, and mythology of the Aztec people.</i>
Aims: To apply Gaster’s theory of <i>topocosm</i> to the cosmic renewal rituals and mythology of the Aztec people during the New Fire Ceremony.³²⁰
Academic Rational:

³²⁰ Gaster Theodor. H "Thespis." In *The Myth and Ritual Theory : An Anthology* , edited by Robert Alan Segal, 307-12. Malden, Mass. ; Oxford: Blackwell, 1998. p.308 [*Hereafter Gaster 1998*].

The Aztec people conduct The New Fire Ceremony finalizing the *Xiuhmolipilli Festival*, on dates derived from the Aztec ritual calendar, called the *tonalpohualli*, which is constructed of 260 days, and is a separate calendar entity that interlocks with the solar calendar of 365 days.³²¹ It is not unusual for cultures, for example, the ethnoastronomy of ancient Mesopotamia and Sumerian civilisations, to dovetail their rituals with practical calendar timings, for activities such as farming and encouraging the coming of the rains.³²²

The *tonalpohualli* is a repeating calendar cycle of 20 day names, and 13 day numbers, that are used in an overlapping fashion, for 13 months, to complete the 260 day rotation of the *tonalpohualli* calendar.³²³ The 20 day names have specific associations with supernatural patrons, some considered more auspicious than others.³²⁴ Both calendars (ritual and solar) re-sync every 52 years.³²⁵ This 52 year cycle is considered an Aztec century, at which time the *Xiuhmolipilli Festival* and New Fire Ceremony are conducted to honor the Gods; if conducted successfully leads to the continuance of the Aztec way of life and (in their minds) the universe.³²⁶

To recalibrate the calendars' after a rotation of 52 years, 13 'unlucky days' are observed³²⁷. As such the *Xiuhmolipilli Festival* begins 13 days before the New Fire Ceremony, all fires are extinguished and household pots and implements broken, to be replaced and renewed at the start the new century.³²⁸ Bundles of twigs, made up of 52 twigs, called "*xiuhmolipilli bundles*" are prepared, and are ceremonially burnt on the eve of the New Fire Ceremony.³²⁹ Some authors have also related the *Xiuhmolipilli* festival to also honor *Ilamatecuhtli*, an aged woman who is portrayed as Goddess of the Earth, Death and the Milky Way, anthropologists have referred to the ritual as a 'termination ritual' to finalise the 'Aztec century'.³³⁰ It is thought, as the Aztec conquered territory inhabited by the Quiché Maya, that they adopted or morphed the Maya creation mythology to compliment their own creation stories, leading to striking similarities between these two cultures creation and rebirth mythologies.³³¹ The New Fire Festival is mentioned in the Quiché Mayan book of

³²¹ Miller, Mary and Karl Taube. 2017 *An Illustrated Dictionary of The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya*. Thames and Hudson, London. pp. 191 [Hereafter Miller and Taube 2017];

³²² Rogers, J. H. Origins of the ancient constellations: I. The Mesopotamian traditions. *Journal of the British Astronomical Association*, 1998 vol.108, no.1, p.9-28 [Hereafter Rogers 1998a]; Laouli, A. The Greek Myth of Pleiades in the Archaeology of Natural Disasters. Decoding, Dating and Environmental Interpretation. *Mediterranean Archaeology and Archaeometry*, 2006 Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 5-22; Oxby 1999 pp. 59; Pingree, David., "From Alexandria to Baghdad to Byzantium: The Transmission of Astrology," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 8 (2001), pp.3-21.

³²³ Miller and Taube 2017 pp. 48; Díaz, Gisele and Allan Rodgers. 1993 *The Codex Borgia: A Full-Color Restoration of the Ancient Mexican Manuscript*. Dover Publications Inc. New York [Hereafter Díaz and Rodgers 1993] Loc336.

³²⁴ Díaz and Rodgers 1993 loc. 3245.

³²⁵ Jiménez, Randall, C. and Richard B. Gräeber. *The Aztec Calendar Handbook*. 2006. Historical Science Publishing, Saratoga. pp. 29-30 [Hereafter Jiménez and Gräeber 2006].

³²⁶ Jiménez and Gräeber 2006 , pp. 29.

³²⁷ Miller and Taube 2017 pp. 87; Elson, Christina E and Michael E Smith. Archaeological Deposits from the Aztec New Fire Ceremony. *Ancient Mesoamerica*, 12 (2001), 157-174.

³²⁸ Miller and Taube 2017 pp. 88; Jiménez and Gräeber 2006, pp. 29.

³²⁹ Miller and Taube 2017, pp. 85.

³³⁰ Miller and Taube 2017, pp. 98, pp. 191.

³³¹ Milbrath, Susan. 1989 A Seasonal Calendar with Venus Period in codex Borgia 29-46". In (Eds) David Carrasco) *Imagination of Matter: Religion and Ecology in Mesoamerican Traditions*. Bar International Series 515. Oxford: British Archaeological Reports.; Milbrath, Susan. Astronomical Deities in Ancient Mesoamerica. *Handbook of Archaeoastronomy and Ethnoastronomy*. Editor Clive L.N. Ruggles. Springer Reference, New York. pp 683-694; Tedlock, Dennis 1996. *Popul Vuh: The Definitive Edition of the Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life and The Glories of Gods and Kings*. Touchstone. New York.

creation mythology, the *Popul Vuh*, (translated: '*Book of Council or Community*'), credited to the 18th century Dominican friar, Francisco Ximénez.³³²

Integral to the Aztec The New Fire ceremony, is the relative positioning of rising Pleiades constellation, at midnight, after a cycle of 52 on the eve of the Aztec new century.³³³ The *Xiuhmolipilli Festival* is considered complete by the Aztec's when finalized with the New Fire Ceremony, when The Pleiades, rises and the central star Alcyone, is deemed to be in the central position above Mount Huixachtlan in central Mexico. The Codex Tudela emphasizes that the New Fire Ceremony was a wide spread festival and ritual and that not all individuals would have been able to observe the rising of The Pleiades over Mount Huixachtlan.³³⁴

Gurlich (1981a, 1981b and 1983), examined creation mythology of the Maya and Aztec and briefly reviewed the New Fire Ceremony.³³⁵ His review was critiqued, relying heavily on Lévi-Strauss Structuralism and binary oppositional theory, divorcing ritual from myth. Lévi-Strauss theory of structuralism suggested polar opposites exist to form a balance of reasoning, referring to the "divided mind", where a balance was sort. An example of binary oppositional elements include *good vs evil*, in a Western-Judaeo-Christian sense.³³⁶ Graulich (1981a, 1981b and 1983) was found to have reviewed Mesoamerican cosmology and mythology, from a Western-Judaeo-Christian perspective.

However, Theodor Gaster (1998 stated): '*Seasonal rituals are functional in character. Their purpose is periodically to revive the topocosm, that is, the entire complex of any given locality and conceived as a living organism. But this topocosm possesses both a punctual and a durative aspects, representing, not only the actual and present community, but also that ideal and continuous entity of which the latter is but the current manifestation. Accordingly, seasonal rituals are accompanied myths which are designed to present the purely functional acts in terms of ideal and durative situations. The interpretation of the myth and ritual creates drama.*'³³⁷

Myth theory encompasses four recognised domains: structural, rational, functional and psychological.³³⁸ The Aztec tradition of relighting the sacred fire occurs (in times past) with a sacrificial victim whose heart is removed and the new fire started within the chest cavity, signifying the arrival of the new Aztec century. This act mimicking, is reminiscent of the birth, or re-birth, of the new sun (universe/age), in Aztec mythology. I will discuss the *Xiuhmolipilli Festival*,

³³² Clayton 2018, Introduction.

³³³ Graulich Michel, Pedro Carrasco, Michael D. Coe, Jacqueline De Durand-Forest, Jacques Galinier, Yólotl González, Doris Heyden, Virve Piho, David H. Kelley, Charles C. Kolb, Manfred Reinhold, Berthold Riese, J. D. Stewart and Franz Tichy The Metaphor of the Day in Ancient Mexican Myth and Ritual [and Comments and Reply]. *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Feb., 1981), pp. 45-60.

³³⁴ Graulich Michel, Doris Heyden, Ulrich Köhler, Berthold Riese, Jacques Soustelle, Rudolf Van Zantwijk, Charles R. Wicke and Karl A. Wipf. Myths of Paradise Lost in Pre-Hispanic Central Mexico [and Comments and Reply]. *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 24, No. 5 (Dec., 1983), pp. 575-588; Códice Tudela 1980 *Códice Tudela, José Tudela de la Orden. 2 vols. Ediciones Cultural Hispanica Madrid.*

³³⁵ Graulich 1981, pp. 53.

³³⁶ Graulich 1983 pp 560.

³³⁷ See Gaster 1998

³³⁸ Segal, Robert A., 2015 *Myth: A Very Short Introduction (Second Edition)*. Oxford University Press; Csapo, Eric 2005 *Theories of Mythology*. Blackwell Publishing.

cumulating in the New Fire Ceremony as a functional myth in the context of Gaster's theory of <i>topocosm</i> . ³³⁹
To which module/s of the MA does your topic related? AHAN 7010 MA Cultural Astronomy and Astrology Dissertation
What papers have you completed in the MA which are relevant to this dissertation topic? List the module and the title of the paper/s. AHAN 7003 History of Astrology
Methodology. The intended methodology will be a literature based research; concerning the application of myth theory to the Binding of the Years/New Fire Ceremony, a ritual that is conducted according to the Aztec ceremonial/ritual calendar every 52 years. Literature will be sourced using such academic databases as JSTOR, review of myth theory, its application to this particular myth, primary sources to include such sources as <i>Codex Borbonicus</i>, <i>Codex Borgia</i> and <i>Popol Vuh</i>.³⁴⁰
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³³⁹ Cartwright 2016 ; Jiménez and Gräeber 2006, pg. 29; Matt Clayton. 2018 *Aztec Mythology: Captivating Aztec Myths of Gods, Goddess and Legendary Creatures*. Captivating History.; Captivating History. 2017 *Aztec: A Captivating Guide to Aztec History and the Triple Alliance of Tenochtitlan, Tetzaco, and Tlacopan*; Milbrath, Susan 1999. *Star Gods of the Maya: Astronomy in Art, Folklore, and Calendars*. Austin, University of Texas Press.; Milbrath, Susan. 2007 *Astronomical Cycles in the Imagery of Codex Borgia* 29-46. In (eds) Clive Ruggles and Gary Urton) *Skywatching in the Ancient World: New Perspectives in Cultural Astronomy*. Pp. 157-208. Boulder: University of Colorado Press.

³⁴⁰ Jiménez and Gräeber 2006; Tedlock 1996; Diaz, and Rodgers 1993

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Time Schedule:

An outline of a likely timetable to completion.

Third Semester 2020

Proposed Supervisor:

Dr N Campion

Please indicate whether ethical approval for project is needed – **NO**

(This will only be relevant if you are undertaking qualitative research)

Please indicate whether sufficient resources are available for the project –
YES

The above topic, proposal, and supervisor have been agreed:

Signed : Programme
Coordinator

Date:.....

Please return this draft form to your dissertation supervisor. When completed then send Dr Bernadette Brady email: b.brady@uwtsd.ac.uk

Guide to Filling out your proposal

Please complete the form and submit it your designated supervisor for feedback. It may also be circulated for comment to other members of the MA staff with relevant expertise.

Upon acceptance by your supervisor then please send it to the Dissertation Module tutor, Dr Bernadette Brady, email: b.brady@tsd.ac.uk Once received it will be checked by Dr Nicholas Campion and the Dissertation Tutor and you, and your supervisor will receive notice back of either the proposal's acceptance or a request for clarification.

This is not a final, unchanging proposal, but is intended for discussion as part of the first stage of your research, to clarify your ideas and make sure your proposed research is realistic.

You may insert footnotes in the text as these will both let us know you are on the right track, but also assist your preparations.

Aim of the Research Project:

What would you like to research? Outline the purpose of your research project and consider its possible contribution to the academic understanding of your subject matter. What questions would you most like your research to answer? As a guide allow 50 – 150 words for this section.

Abstract

All academic dissertations include an abstract. In practice this is difficult to complete until the dissertation is complete.

However, in this section consider the academic rationale for your research. What is the background to your research? What wider problem in scholarship or knowledge are you addressing? What is the relevance of your work to wider areas of scholarship and previous work in the field? You can include relevant references. Allow no more than 200 words for this section.

Short Introductory Bibliography 1. Secondary Sources

What are the main scholarly works (secondary sources) which would underpin your research question? You need about ten academic books or articles. Please give full citations. If they are especially important, mention them in your abstract. If you are doing qualitative research please include some references on methodology, as you would have encountered in the Research methods module, for example on interview technique or questionnaire design.

Short Introductory Bibliography: 2. Primary sources

This is vital for text-based research. What are the principal primary sources and/or materials you would use in your research? Please give full citations. Remember, primary sources are the original documents, texts or artefacts which you are researching. If these are books or articles, give full citations. If your research is text-based, aim to include about ten. If they are especially important, mention them in your abstract. If your research is into Sacred Geography or Archaeoastronomy, or if you are undertaking qualitative research, the primary text sources may be limited or non-existent. Your primary source may be landscape, sky or people.

Methodology:

How are you going to research your topic? Outline your research methodology: for example, library based or fieldwork (interviews, questionnaires or participant observation), and historical, sociological, anthropological. Include relevant references. If you are conducting qualitative research, such as interviews of questionnaires, please say something about your proposed target group, and how you plan to proceed.

Support your chosen methodology with references.