

After all should
It is appropriate that our list of objects begin
with a flint knife. What appears to our eyes as
a single stone artifact, literally has a universe
of associations. In fact an entire book could and
perhaps should some day be written on the
subject.

There is a very telling myth concerning the
origin of the flint knife, ^{and} "Kapatl" in a nutshell, that
offers a host of insights. In the beginning this myth
describes only an earth promulgated by a night
sky of ~~nothing~~ ^{nothing but} darkness. There existed no human
being, no sun, no moon, no host of ^{stars} gods.
The sky, of course, was itself represented by a divine couple
Citlallatonac and his wife or consort Citlalinacue
"Goddess of the starry skirt." Some scholars think
she represented the Milky Way, others a particular
constellation or star. Still others believe she
represented the entire night sky - of the heavens
above and of the underworld. I believe that for
purposes of myth and ritual she was worshipped
in all these manifestations. In the following
origin myth she almost certainly represents
the North Star for the North in the mesoamerican
mind always represented the direction of beginning
and ending.

Of the fifth era
Our myth describes how the goddess of the
skirt of stars acquired her starry apparel.
In the very beginning as darkness itself and
"northness" (here northness is a quality, and not
a direction), she conceived a flint knife
in her dark womb which fell to earth
as a meteor. It struck the earth in the
north at Chicomoztoc the seven caves which eventually
gave birth to the Aztec people. From the opening

cliff emerged the gods. One myth reports that Xulticacalli the first god was first to emerge which seems appropriate because of his centrality and the fact that he was often thought of as the oldest god - as Huehue Teotl (Older God) that Xolotl was first to spring forth from the cliff. It was Xolotl a manifestation or disguise of Quetzalcoatl, who ^{later} descended into the realm of the dead to retrieve the bones of the dead to create a new race of human beings.

The central message of this myth is that the world of gods and men and new life began with the sacrificed knife. The knife in the night sky, its descent to cleanse the earth to create another world to give life to men and gods and their essential manifestation, as stars become a model for the act of human sacrifice as a source of life. Further parallels could be found in the penetration that took place in the sexual act and even the tilling of the earth, the act of planting a seed with the digging stick.

As a "child" of the night sky, the sacrificed knife was made of star stuff. In fact it was certainly thought of as a starry deity and was often depicted with eyes and quinnoborous teeth. Flint knives are frequently shown in Scripture depicting the night sky along with symbols of veins and the extended eyes of meteor.

The flint knife was one of the 20 day signs of the Aztec Calendar. It was usually associated with beginning. To witness the date one Flint was the birthday of

in the year 1 Tecpatl
the god Huehilotzotli. It was the date
that the Aztecs left their native homeland
in the north and began their long
migration to the Valley of Mexico. In
the Aztec mind the symbol ~~was~~ ^{was} need represented
the East, ~~the~~ ^{the} North, the West, ~~the~~ ^{the} South.
The North was represented by
by the Tecpatl, the flint knife. On earth the
knife was thought to be the child of the
holiest form of the earth goddess - Coatlicue,
whose temple was in the northern of the
Sacred precinct.

onomatopoeia
The particular shape of the ^{gray} Tecpatl intentionally
resembled a seed, especially ground nuts.
The ground was often thought of as a symbol
for the womb of the earth goddess. ^{We know that} ~~for her~~
temple she was offered food only in ground
bowl. - When making petitions for rain
the people danced which rattles of dried
gourds. The sounds of the rattling seeds
symbolizing the hunger and thirst of
the exhausted earth.

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