

Any A detailed discussion of the origins and meanings of Apter Art and symbolism must be reserved for another time, hopefully in our forthcoming book *The One Reed Glass*.

I am going to mention several objects from our personal collection of Apter art to give the reader at least a glimpse into what Apter art is all about. Many of the principles I shall discuss are true for all pre-Columbian cultures as well. ^{I apologize for not including the extensive records that has been my obsession.}

Although there are, of course, many exceptions one of the most notable qualities of Apter Art, especially sculpture in stone, is its basic simplicity of form. Form is conveyed in large masses that ^{are} rather bulky in character. On close inspection however one soon discovers that such forms are skillfully rendered and different to imitate.

^{VB} Along with their tendency to simplify forms the Apter artist liked to add such elements as hair, ^{further} jewelry, and other symbolic accoutrements in intricate detail. (Isomorphism)

In the holistic, spirit filled world of the Apter in which everything, even stone, possessed life, objects of similar shapes often shared the same magical properties. For example: The Snake was a creature of complex symbolic associations. At its most basic, the Snake symbolized the vitality of the life force. The essence of life itself. Anything that the Snake like shared in the same magical qualities. Thus the life force was seen in rivers which snaked through valleys. The undulating coil, even arteries with their streams of live green blood were thought of as serpentine. Roads could be seen in the same way. Even fighting

Snake
See 8

and the tales of comets and meteors were celestial serpents charged with the fiery force of life.

Butterfly

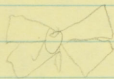
Another ^{interesting} example is the sacrificial knife blade of flint called Tezpatl. The Tezpatl was itself a god born out of the womb of the Goddess of the night sky Citlalichue. At birth it fell out of the night sky and when it struck the earth created a cleft ^{in the north at the corner} from which according to one myth the gods emerged. In a

another myth it was the originating place of the Aztec people. ^{which spirit became gods.} The knife, then, was all about beginnings. Aztec sacrificial knife blades have a peculiar shape all their own. They resemble the seeds of gourds. Seeds begin life when planted in the earth. In the act of sacrifice the knife cleaves the chest of the sacrificial victim to release the victim's life force to the universe.

Gourds, by the way, resembled a womb in the Aztec mind, a magical source of life. Thus the gourd particularly symbolized the womb of the earth, especially the earth goddess Citlacoatl.

Another interesting symbol is the butterfly.

Red Veil



This flickering wings of yellow butterflies resembled the bright flames of sacred fire. At first the insects' wings resembled knotted bows. In Aztec art knotted bows are more closely related to fire than to anything else. Butterflies eventually came to symbolize the souls of the dead who were released to the heavens through cremating fire. Flames also resembled certain flowers, designs on pottery and elsewhere came to be closely associated with fire and the fire god who Aztecs often addressed

Become