

word "road," so that a "Star Cloud Road" could be translated as a "Mixcoatl."

To give the lives of his nomadic settlers a new fullness he fathered through the woman known as Chimalma "Shield Hand" the man who became deified as Quetzalcoatl or merged with an older god so that the two become one in the cultural memory. Thus it was Quetzalcoatl who was worshipped as the archetype of the priest, the bringer of culture. As the ancient god it was he who stole corn from Tlalocan and gave it to his people. And also as ancient god he descended into the underworld and gathered the bones of mankind who had died in the previous aeon, watered them with his own blood and made a new man for the final aeon, the age of the fifth sun. And it was Quetzalcoatl, who eventually sought out the bones of his murdered father Mixcoatl, gathered them and buried them at Culhuacan at the Hill of the Stars where every fifty-two years the New Fire was kindled at Mixcoatl's temple and disbursed throughout the land.

Whether as man or as god, Quetzalcoatl eventually fell from grace, and in shame he decided to leave Mexico by the eastern sea to do penance, vowing to return one day to claim his throne again. The year of his predicted return, in the cycles of time was to be the year of his birth, the year One Reed which just happened to fall in the Christian calendar on the year 1519, the very time that Cortes landed in force on the eastern shores of Mexico, the direction of Quetzalcoatl's predicted reappearance.

It is important to remember that in the Aztec mind, in their magical sense of a world inhabited at every level by the spiritual, the veil that separated the human from the divine was often transparent and permeable. The gods could ritually enter and become one with certain human beings and vice versa. During his coronation, Moctezuma himself underwent a symbolic death and rebirth and was reborn as not only a living representative of Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl as well but was at times seen as the living embodiment of these gods. The religious traditions of the Aztecs have shown us that Mixcoatl, Huitzilopochtli, Quetzalcoatl and others were most likely living historical personages at one time who were eventually deified or whose myths became inextricably bound with the mythic cycles of earlier gods. This must be understood if one is to comprehend Moctezuma's dilemma concerning the Spanish invaders who at times were all too human and at other times capable of truly superhuman displays of cleverness and strength.