

south america, gods, quetzal

The Whorl list — 2 messages, 1 voices, 28 Mar 2001

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Daniel Barradas — 28 Mar 2001, 15:06

Hi I'm new to this list and I've recently finished reading OBW. I was intrigued about the name of Patera Quetzal and it's obvious relation with south america, Quetzal is the name of a south american bird and it also reminded me of the Toltec god Quetzalcoatl. So I read the article about pre-columbian religion in the Encarta online enciclopedia. Here are some quotes that I found interesting, make your own interpretations:

"Because the boundaries between the worlds of nature, human society, and the supernatural were not sharply defined, pre-Columbian religious leaders were essentially shamans, people who were believed to be capable of moving back and forth between the earthly and supernatural realms. This travel between realms was often associated with hallucinatory trances."

"Just as the heavenly bodies move and replace each other in specific sectors of the sky, a number of major pre-Columbian deities had shifting, overlapping identities. Consequently, individual gods and goddesses are probably best interpreted not as distinct personages, but as fluid and shifting components of complex supernatural powers."

"The cosmic order depended on a reciprocal relationship between humans and the gods, maintained through elaborate ceremonies. Since humans needed favorable treatment from the gods in order to survive, rituals solicited, for example, the help of agricultural deities in order to secure good harvests. However, gods were less clearly differentiated from humans than they are in modern monotheistic religions, and few, if any, pre-Columbian deities were all-knowing or all-powerful. Many gods required human support and could weaken or die if people did not sustain them by means of sacrifices."

"The Mayas believed that the universe had been, and would continue to be, created and destroyed multiple times, and that each such cycle lasted somewhat longer than 5000 years."

"Evidently the Mayas believed that the cycle of creation and destruction would repeat itself forever, with each successive universe being an exact duplicate of the previous one."

"Like the Mayas, the Aztecs believed in multiple creations and destructions of the universe, but with important differences. Most notably, the Aztecs thought they were living in the fifth and final cycle of creation, the so-called Fifth Sun. At the end of this cycle everything would be swallowed by eternal darkness, and there would be no Sixth Sun. The ultimate destruction of the universe could not be prevented, but it could be delayed. The Aztecs saw the sun as a warrior who fought a daily battle across the sky against the forces of darkness. As long as the sun remained strong, he would prevail in combat and the universe would survive. The Aztecs believed they could keep the sun strong by nourishing him with a source of vital energy: human blood, preferably the vigorous blood of warriors captured in battle. To the Aztecs, unceasing warfare and human sacrifice were sacred duties upon which the preservation of the universe depended."

"Quetzalcoatl, Toltec and Aztec god and legendary ruler of Mexico, usually referred to as the Plumed, or Feathered, Serpent, the translation of his Nahuatl name. In the 10th century AD the Toltecs transformed what had been a god of soil fertility, worshiped in Teotihuacán before the 9th century, into a deity associated with the morning and evening star, Venus. The Aztecs later made him a symbol of death and resurrection and a patron of priests. The opposing deity in the dualistic Toltec religion was Tezcatlipoca, the god of the night sky. He was believed to have driven Quetzalcoatl from his capital, Tula, into exile, from which, according to prophecy, Quetzalcoatl, described as light-skinned and bearded, would return in a certain year. Thus, when the Spanish conqueror Hernán Cortés appeared in 1519, the Aztec king, Montezuma II, was easily convinced that Cortés was the returning god."

/daniel

*This is WHORL, for discussion of Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun.

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