

ANAWAK / MEXIKA COSMOLOGY

Copyright Kurly Tlapoyawa 2000

OMETEOTL

“Oh Madre - Padre omnipotente

ya levanta tu voz

ya forma la pareja que contiene

la verdadera religion;

religion que religa la pareja y su fruto

purificada en tu gran fuego de amor.

Purifica este inmenso pantano

en el que el mundo se ahoga!

Verguenza dolorosa de la gemela - flor”

Ome Tecuhtli - Ome Zihuatl

OmeTeotl

Nican Ca!

-Concha Michel

Without a doubt, the most popular misconception (or lie) regarding our people is that we worship several Gods as part of our ceremonies. History books are filled with descriptions of rain gods and sun gods, complete with illustrations depicting bloody rituals of human sacrifice. Actually, nothing could be further from the truth. The absurd idea that our ancestors worshiped Gods in any shape, manner or form is a direct result of the Spaniard's inability to understand the ideas and beliefs of our people. Using common sense, and a realistic interpretation of historical events, we can uncover why so many people continue to believe that our people worship “Gods.”

When white men began to question the purpose of their existence and accept their own mortality, their philosophic pursuits gave birth to various religions. One of these religions came to be known as Christianity, which is a direct offshoot of Judaism. According to Christianity, mankind was created by an all powerful male god, who will pass judgement over humanity based on how closely we obey his laws. Christians are supposed to live out their lives trying to be as “good” as possible so as not to anger their male God and be sent to hell as a result. The primary motivation behind their religion is fear. Kindness just for the sake of being kind is not enough, it is the fear of going to hell if they are unkind that motivates their actions.

Fortunately, our ancestors took a completely different approach as to how they viewed our place in the universe. Using a system of constant observation, experimentation and verification, our ancestors concluded that everything within the known universe is made up of a living energy - an energy capable of giving birth to all living things, as well as causing their destruction. This dual energy permeates the cosmos and can be found in the smallest of atomic particles. In the philosophies of Anawak people, this energy, the creator of all creation, is known as Ometeotl. The word “Ome” translates as “two” or “dual” in our Native language of Nawatl, and “Teotl” translates as “cosmic energy.”

The philosophies and traditions of our people have always been an exact science - never a system of superstitions guided by blind, unprovable faith in some “mystery God” who controls our destiny. This is the

direct result of our ancestor's dedication to observing and understanding natural forces. Our existence, along with the existence of the entire universe, is comprised of dual energy.

On the most basic level, this duality is expressed in our physical make-up. After all, our bodies are all composed of two of the following: Eyes, ears, lips, nostrils, hands, feet, arms, legs, ovaries, testicles, digestive systems, nervous systems, lungs, blood cells, etc. The manner in which we breath is dual (in-out), as is our heart beat. It takes an egg and sperm to create life, and both the man and woman contribute an equal amount of chromosomes (23) to the child. Our physical being is comprised of Protons (+), Electrons (-), and Neutrons (the neutral balance.)

The fact that women are tied into the universe is obvious, as they each have a lunar cycle, a time when their energies are intimately connected to nature. Also, the protons and electrons in our bodies revolve around the nucleus in the same manner as the planets revolve around the sun, proving that our existence is woven into the fabric of the cosmos. This is the reality of Omteotl - everything which created the known universe exists within each and every one of us.

**“Todo lo que ven tus ojos,
las piedras, la hierba, las flores,
las gentes, las montanas, el cielo,
los animales, los rios y las nubes,
todo, todo lo que nos rodea es
y esta formado por partes hombre
y por partes mujer.”**

- Concha Michel

Our spiritual practices are not governed over by the simplistic concept that being good means we go to heaven and being bad sends us to hell. Unlike Christianity, which teaches that we are all born spiritually dead and with “sin,” our ancestors teach us that we are all born in perfect harmony and balance with nature. The choices we make throughout our lifetime affect this balance, usually creating disharmony in our lives. We have an understanding that as humans, we are both good and evil. It is our responsibility as human beings to arrive at and maintain a balance between the two. Why a balance? Because if you are too good, you become a poor judge of character and will be easily taken advantage of, which is not healthy behavior. Likewise, if you are too bad, you become evil and destructive. It is like riding a bike, you must stay balanced or you will fall over to either side. This reality provides the basis of our belief system, one of the aspects of Mexikayotl.

But what about the rain god, the sun god, and all of the various other gods which we supposedly believe in? These are all physical and metaphorical representations of Omteotl - the dual energy which exists in everything. It is this energy which manifests itself as the various forces of nature and other natural elements. Out of respect for these natural forces, and as a way of recognizing their importance to our existence, our ancestors gave each manifestation a name and a symbol to represent it. When white Europeans saw that we had a philosophical expression, as well as physical symbols to represent each of the forces of nature, they chose to call them “Gods.” Without a thorough understanding of our language, the Spaniards mistook the word Teotl as meaning “god,” perhaps because it is similar in pronunciation to the latin word for god “theos.” But belief in “God” is a sign of a primitive people, and our ancestors were hardly primitives.

For example, water molecules are one of the many manifestations of Ometeol. When water molecules in the atmosphere collide and merge, they form rain drops. These rain drops then fall to the earth, penetrating the soil and providing nourishment for all living things while sparking new life into existence. In this aspect, our ancestors called the rain TLALOK, which literally means “liquor of the earth,” or “that which the earth drinks.” Tlalok is the combination of two words, “Tlalli” which is Nawatl for earth, and “Oktli” meaning liquor. This name is not only a beautiful metaphor, but represents a practical reality of nature. Our ancestors were aware of the life giving energies provided by the rain, and chose to venerate this energy by dedicating certain ceremonies to it. When we dance in honor of the rain, we are not “praying to the rain god” as many would like to believe, but we are offering up the energy created by our rhythms and movement to Ometeotl, the greater creative energy. This is done as a sign of respect, in an attempt to give back some of the energy which Tlalok gives us - thus creating harmony with the cosmos.

Another example of the misinterpretation of our culture is the mystery surrounding the return of Ketzalkoatl. First of all, it should be made clear that Ketzalkoatl does NOT translate to “the plumed serpent.” Have you ever seen a serpent with feathers? Of course not, they don’t exist! The word Ketzalkoatl means “beautiful and upstanding serpent.” It comes from two words, “Ketzalli” which means beautiful and upstanding, and “Koatl” meaning serpent. In order to comprehend the meaning behind this metaphorical expression, we must first understand the significance of the serpent in our culture.

In traditional Anawak societies, the serpent was regarded as a symbol of intelligence and wisdom. This was because it possessed an intimate understanding of the earth, and represented the perfect dual nature of our existence. The serpent has two sex organs, gives birth to multiple offspring, and sleeps in a coil, representing the sacred circle of life. The serpent also sheds its skin, which in Anawak culture represents the continuous transformation which all living things undergo through time. Also, the motion of the serpent is viewed as a metaphor for the motion of living energies. The serpent represents our natural essence, and in this aspect, we continue to use the term Koatl, or “cuate” in Xikano Spanish, as an expression of friendship and loyalty.

The term Ketzalkoatl was a title given to men and women who had transcended their humanity and achieved an intimate understanding of the earth - much like the serpent. Ketzalkoatl was NOT a god! Ketzalkoatl was a position held by those who had achieved an enlightened state of being. Perhaps the most famous person to hold the title of Ketzalkoatl was a man named Ze Akatl Topiltzn. But due to the Spaniard’s ignorance, Ketzalkoatl has been mislabelled a “man god” who had promised to one day return. When our ancestors spoke of the return of Ketzalkoatl, they referred to the return of this enlightened way of thinking - the return of a higher level of understanding our reality.

Another excellent example showing the significance of the serpent in our culture is the term “Tonantzin Koatlikwe.” This expression, which literally means “our mother, she who wears a skirt of serpents” is one of our names for the earth. We refer to the earth as Tonantzin “our mother,” because it is from this earth which we are born, it is the earth which provides for us and protects us, and it is back into her loving arms that we will return when our bodies die. The term Koatlikwe “skirt of serpents,” is an expression which represents the living energy which covers the earth’s surface, emanating like a wave of serpents in motion. It is the philosophical expression of Tonantzin Koatlikwe which has been mischaracterized as the “Earth Goddess” by ignorant Europeans.

We can only hope that one day, modern “experts” in OUR history and culture will seek out the truth regarding our spiritual and philosophical traditions. Maybe then, the myth of “gods” among our people will finally be put

to rest. Regardless, it is OUR responsibility to learn the truth and pass it along to our people. We must make sure that our true traditions will survive.