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The Five Suns in Aztec Mythology

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The FIVE SUNS in AZTEC MYTHOLOGY

By DR. CHARLES E. DIBBLE

WE have mentioned Quetzalcoatl as a beneficial god and a founder of industry. His antagonist was Tezcatlipoca—Smoking Mirror. Tezcatlipoca represented the night, the tiger, and he was a patron of sorcerers. He is recognizable from the fact that one of his feet is replaced by a smoking mirror.

According to Aztec mythology, the history of the universe is a series of triumphs of the two contesting gods. Tezcatlipoca was the First Sun. The first inhabitants were giants who did not cultivate the fields but nourished themselves with fruit and roots. Quetzalcoatl hit the sun (Tezcatlipoca) with



—From Borgia Codex.

TEZCATLIPOCA—SMOKING MIRROR

a stick and it fell in the water, converted itself into a tiger and ate all the inhabitants. For the first time the universe was without a sun and people.

Quetzalcoatl then became the sun until the tiger (Tezcatlipoca) struck it. A great wind destroyed all men with the exception of a few who became monkeys or miniature men.

The god of rain (Tlaloc) then became the sun, but Quetzalcoatl caused it to rain fire, and mankind was destroyed for the third time. Some few people became birds and were saved.

Quetzalcoatl then created man and caused the goddess of water (Chalchitlicue) to become the sun. Tezcatlipoca caused a flood which destroyed the sun and man for the fourth time. A few men saved themselves by becoming fish.

At the time of the Spanish conquest the Aztecs were living under the Fifth Sun, which had been made possible by a fifth god throwing himself into the fire to become the sun.

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