

CONTRIBUTI DI PENSIERO SISTEMICO

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MEXICAN PRE COLUMBIAN CIVILISATION

Mexican pre Columbian culture is certainly one of the great six mother civilisations but, with respect to the Indian or Chinese ones, is far less known into Occidental culture.

Pre Columbian culture has a notable richness and complexity that, from theoretical and scientific knowledge, led to applied science, producing important technological applications, among which astronomical observatory and calendar. These were on the same time also expression of human and ethical values, within a general idea of a somehow dualistic Universe, based on the struggle between contraries – light and dark, life and death, male and female – that finally lead to a vision that one may define as theological.

Our partial and segmented knowledge of Mexican Pre Columbian culture tends to converge into a unitarian vision that may, for some reason, be called «systemic».

First of all I'd like to specify that this is not an ethnological study, nor a mythological interpretation, which are different visions, but is rather the analysis of some texts that belong to the philosophy of this culture.

Many people ask me: which are the sources? Certainly we have some written sources, but we also have very important archaeological sources, as the pyramids, the stars that have been sculpted and their interpretation, and finally the oral tradition.

Among the most important sources there are the Codices. These were made on a leaf of a tree called «amape» and were hand painted with a vegetable picture. Their interpretation is based mainly on colours and on the position of painted subjects, as the direction of the head of an animal or of a man's look.

Unfortunately there are few of these written sources left, because most of them were destroyed by conquerors: in only one day they burned more than 400 of them!

There is also another very important problem for the scholars of this matter: most of the left written sources are out of Mexico. In fact we know three Maya Codices left: one is in Germany, one is in Paris' Library and the third one is in Madrid.

By the way, none of them mentions the end of the world and the cataclysm that should have been occurred on the 21st of December 2012 or nearby!

The great majority of the texts that we will consider here was in the Vatican Library. Since most of the texts still in the Vatican Library are not at scholars' disposal, we know very little about them and their content. But the Pope, in the event of

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his visit to Mexico, gave back some of the Aztec Codices that were into the Vatican Library, and these are the ones that we talk about here.

It is very important to note that these texts have the peculiarity of being cryptographic, and therefore some may ask how can they be translated. Few people know that Nahuatl language is still spoken in Mexico, as was for the Maya, and that this language can be studied in our Universities. We also have dictionaries that help to translate this spoken, alive language.

As we study the old Greek philosophy on the old texts in Greek language, so we can study these Codices written in Nahuatl language, which was spoken in the whole Anàhuac civilisation.

What is meant for Anàhuac civilisation? We will see, analyze and explain the meaning of Anàhuac and also explain why I do not like the word «Mesoamerican» that is often used for identifying these cultures.

The main issue of this meeting is to throw light on some common distinctive features of the Anàhuac civilisation, and in particular the way of conceiving and practicing science, philosophy and religion, mainly with respect to the vision of human life.

I say that I do not like the word «Mesoamerican» because it is a totally artificial expression, created very recently, in the XX^o century and precisely in 1943, and by a German. Anàhuac is our autochthonous definition, not «Mesoamerican», and indicates the area comprising Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Belize and the western side of Honduras.

What does it mean Anàhuac? The anahuatechi people had different languages, cultures and religions, but under the same civilisation, with a common story and a common philosophy. Therefore, for example, it is erroneous to talk about Maya civilisation: in effect it is part of the Anàhuac civilisation. The Anàhuac, now called America, is one of the oldest civilisations, like Mesopotamia, Egypt or China.

These are called mother-civilisations because they are the ones with an autonomous origin, and they are each characterized by its own philosophy, religion, Master, aesthetical language and cereal – like maize – as basic food.

Each one of these mother-civilisations had a well-structured thought not only for expounding the world and the life, but also, and fundamentally, to explain the meaning of the existence, both of the individual and of the community.

Each civilisation developed four very important systems: feeding, health, education and social organization. For instance, the conquerors were stunned finding that in all the Mexican children had the right to education. All the children, both male and female, went to school and all were instructed in the art of painting the Codices and learned how to interpret them.

Nowadays education is not assured to all the children in Mexico, as it was in Anàhuac.

The definition «Mexican» is actually erroneous: we can say that we are descendants from one of the oldest civilisations of the world, with a high degree of human development of its entire population.

Anàhuac meant «the Continent», that is the earth surrounded by great waters, and water was everything, also the way for communication and commerce, through boats circulating in the channels.

Different cultures shared within Anàhuac distinctive features, as language, style of life and ideas.

Only very few people from 1520 on had the initiative to study the Anàhuac civilisation. We have been colonised even in our thoughts. Just think that a child of middle school or a young person of secondary school studies the history of his country starting from the period of the arrival of the Spanish people, and this educational choice is very rarely mentioned!

I think that the Pontificia University of Mexico is one of the few that has as mandatory teaching the study of pre-Hispanic philosophy, while generally the study for a degree in philosophy does not mention this period. In few cases, if this period is mentioned, the study is limited to only one part of it, the most important for us.

We must think that the historical time lapse of Anàhuac had, as all great civilisations, a pre-classic period, a classic one, a post-classic one and lastly the one of fall.

The pre-classic one has been the most important, and it was from 1500 a.C. till 200 d.C. Instead the one that is mostly considered is the post-classic one, which was from 850 p.C. till 1521, the year of conquest. It is a time lapse of only 671 years and even less, since the period of time really considered is only from 1325, when the Aztec founded the town of Tenochtitlan, till 1521. The reason why only this very short time lapse is taken into account is related to the very famous practice of human sacrifices in the Aztec culture. The previous periods of great splendour and building of pyramids are quite never mentioned.

All the periods had in common the traditional teaching of the analysis of the Codices.

The Codices were commented through oral tradition, which made up a philosophy of life including both tangible and intangible word, and which established that wisdom that allowed to «Mesoamerican» cultures to evolve together.

From Toltecayol derives the word Toltequidad, which means a style of life, the art of living in balance. We find the symbol of Toltecayol both in the bird represented on stones and in the Codices, and also in the feathers that decorated the paintings, the feathers of the bird symbol of Toltecayol.

Looking at these paintings we may think that the beautiful feathers were reserved to kings: no, they were not for the king, they were for the most wise men. For every recognition was given one feather: as today we give a certificate, so they gave a feather, and who had more feathers on his head was considered the wisest man.

All the cultured Anahuahi were called Tolteca, which means wise and means also artist. We can say that Toltequidad is the inheritance that Mexico left to world.

In fact the civilisation of Anàhuac finds in Toltecayol all the elements necessary to give a meaning to its existence, that is the wisdom for solving the challenges of the matter and of the spirit.

Toltecayol it is not only a source of energy, but it is the source generating the most pure energy of the universe. The spiritual energy can go down to common experience thanks to its consciousness to be at levels beyond the ordinary perception of reality of world and of life.

There was a complex methodology for reaching this supreme objective, and was called «the warrior's way». To reach the Toltequidad had to be done a complex course of studies in the ceremonial centres.

How was intended the concept of wisdom?

Wisdom was the property of someone who had reached both the knowledge of himself and a heart metaphorically hard, hard like a stone. That is, someone who had learned to know himself and to annul his own emotions. If you know yourself enough,

you can win passions and all what prevents you to elevate your spirit. The one who succeeds in combining the matter and the spirit, creates a new element. The wise is therefore the extra ordinary person able to reach the concept of «burned water» (that we will illustrate forward): this superior level was not for everybody.

The school was compulsory until 18 years old, after that, the students that wanted to keep on, were addressed to the sites that we now call archaeological. Obviously at that time they were not archaeological sites, but the places where were hold the dangerous proofs aimed to verify if really one was winning himself.

It was necessary a great effort of discipline and, above all, a strong determination, in order to reach the level where, as a creature that will die in the material world, one would reach the consciousness of reviving and elevating. This effort was called «[...] battle», and was not a real war but a battle against ourselves, fought in the deepest of our being.

This holy battle was fought against our interior enemy, who is the one to be won, who is the strongest of all enemies. In fact, we must be considered the strongest enemy of ourselves.

This war was originally a spiritual symbol and only in the post-classic period became a war among human beings, as it was not before. We can say that at that moment the spiritual meaning of society and of life changed into a material and warlike sense.

Another important philosophical concept is the one of «burned water», that we mentioned before.

The «flowery mountain» is a symbol that we find in several codes: there is the fire and the water, and their union - that is the union of matter and energy, in opposite poles, complementary, in balance - produces a third element: the steam. The steam is the idea of something that towers over and transcends.

The fight between water and fire, that is the fight between matter and spirit, generates the steam, which is at the same time the symbol of the bird, which is like the spirit. The snake is like the matter, and a snake with wings gives us the idea of something that transcends.

In these centres were done many sacrifices in order to overcome physical conditioning and help to win physical pain. These sacrifices were not only for the people: very thought sacrifices were done by someone who reached the position of representing all the people and thus was considered as a king, an eternal priest or doctor. There was a special enclosure in each temple in which these important sacrifices were done.

Also women were educated to bear the pain of childbirth, which assumed for them the meaning of a battle. The women did not go to war, but the woman who was able to win the pain of childbirth was like a celestial warrior, since she was the winner of this special battle.

There was a very notable consideration of the feminine, which is complementary to the masculine, which in turn could not exist without it.

The Mesoamerican civilisation had religion as the most relevant issue, even if also society, government and science were very important, as we said.

The most important divinity was Ometeotl, who was both male and female united. This couple was the creative couple, the master and the mistress of duality, and in the middle of the two there was the death.

The ancient Mexicans asserted the paradox of dualism and unity, that is that also where there are two elements they may be also one: light and dark, life and death, male and female, are living part of the same reality even if they seem antagonist.

The suffix «teotl» was originally translated as «god», but literal translation is «lord two», interpretable as «lord of duality».

The Omeoteotl divinity could be called with different names, and therefore conquerors supposed that was a polytheistic religion, which was not. There was only one god with different names, like we today do with the Madonna, which is always the same even if we invoke the Madonna of Fatima or the Madonna of Lourdes. The Omeoteotl divinity could be called with different names to indicate his feminine or masculine aspect, or as «the one who gives life».

Following the conquerors, arrived the Franciscans, and among them in particular Fra Bernardino of Samagun, who gathered 12 Anahuachi and started to speak with them, to write in their alphabet and to translate all what was said. In such a way he studied the Nahuatl language and the Nahuatl culture, starting to put together the words of the old people, an ensemble of idiomatic phrases that represented a kind of moral philosophy of the Aztec. His study of Aztec religion in the long run grew to an encyclopaedia of 12 volumes relative to Aztec knowledge.

With the same procedure he classified three groups of Nahuatl coming from different towns. He posed questions and compared the answers of the three independent groups, also asking several explanations about the differences. And all this was done in Nahuatl language.

Abstract

Mexican pre Columbian culture is one of the great six mother civilisations but, compared with the Indian or Chinese ones, is far less known in the West. This culture had a notable richness and complexity that, from theoretical and scientific knowledge, led to applied science, producing important technological applications, such as astronomical observatories and calendars. These were at the same time also expression of human and ethical values, within a general idea of a somehow dualistic Universe, based on the struggle between contraries – light and darkness, life and death, male and female – that finally lead to a vision that one may define as theological. Our partial and segmented knowledge of Mexican Pre Columbian culture tends to converge into a unitarian vision that may, for some reason, be called ‘systemic’.

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