

## **Spatial, Temporal, and Symbolic Significance of the Myths Recreated in the Underworld and in the Space of the Citadel in Teotihuacan**

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*The discovery and systematic exploration of the tunnel under the Temple of the Feathered Serpent, as well as the remains of an ancient sanctuary under The Citadel square, have allowed us to recognize the practice of different rituals associated with the shared cosmogony in the Mesoamerican territory.*

*As we have progressed in the investigation, we have gradually been able to identify several elements of the worldview and Mesoamerican religious thought. For almost two and a half centuries the tunnel was used to carry out the rituals that included the descent into the underworld and the staging of the encounter with the lords of the underworld on the ballcourt. It should also be used for the rituals of transmission of power, the funeral ceremonies and the burial of rulers of the early stages.*

*Around 250 of our era, the tunnel was closed and construction began from a great ritual stage prepared to recreate the original sea from which, according to the myth, the sacred mountain emerged, establishing the beginning of time.*

*Different evidences indicate that it was a paradigmatic change in the way of conducting the ritual and the representation of the original myth, derived from the social complexity that Teotihuacan reached. The ritual required new elements and better discursive resources, a stage conceived and constructed to carry out the ritual representations that on specific dates updated the myth of the original creation.*

*In this paper we argue the way in which the Teotihuacan elites materialized symbols that would allow the ideological control of the population, justifying their class position in different ways. Through the ritual staging of the myths alluding to creation, elites obtained social legitimacy under the protection of the Feathered Serpent.*

*El descubrimiento y la exploración sistemática del túnel bajo el Templo de la Serpiente Emplumada, así como de los restos de un antiguo santuario localizado bajo la plaza de La Ciudadela, han permitido reconocer la práctica de diferentes rituales asociados con la cosmogonía compartida en el territorio mesoamericano.*

*Conforme hemos avanzado en la investigación, gradualmente hemos identificado varios elementos de la cosmovisión mesoamericana y el pensamiento religioso. Por al menos dos siglos y medio, el túnel fue utilizado para llevar a cabo rituales que incluían el descenso al inframundo y la celebración del encuentro con los señores del inframundo en la cancha del juego de pelota. El túnel también pudo usarse para realizar los rituales de transmisión del poder, las ceremonias fúnebres y enterramiento de los gobernantes de las primeras fases.*

*Alrededor del 250 de nuestra era, el túnel fue cerrado y comenzó la construcción de un gran escenario de tipo ritual preparado para recrear el mar primigenio del cual, según el mito de la creación original, emergió la montaña, estableciendo el comienzo del tiempo.*

*Diferentes evidencias indican que se trató de un cambio paradigmático en la forma de conducir el ritual y la representación escenificada del mito original, derivado de la complejidad social que alcanzó Teotihuacán. El ritual requería de nuevos elementos y mejores recursos discursivos, de un escenario concebido y construido para llevar a cabo las representaciones rituales que en fechas específicas reactualizaban el mito de la creación original.*

*En este artículo argumentamos sobre la forma en la cual las elites teotihuacanas materializaron los símbolos que servían para mantener el control ideológico de la población, justificando su posición de clase de diferentes maneras. A través de la escenificación de los mitos que aludían a la creación, las elites obtenían legitimidad social bajo la protección de la Serpiente Emplumada.*

## **Introduction**

Teotihuacan was one of the most complex societies that existed during the pre-Hispanic period in the Mesoamerican territory. Its origin and development between 200 BCE and 650 CE, can be understood as the conjunction of a series of economic and social factors that favored its positioning at the center of an extensive network of local, regional and extraterritorial links.

Extending over an area of 23 square kilometers, the city of Teotihuacan was one of the largest and best planned that existed in antiquity worldwide (Millon, 1973). The city is a notable example of urban planning in which large

avenues, streets, and thousands of architectural compounds of all kinds, formed a unit that integrated ceremonial civic compounds. In addition, numerous residential apartments occupied by domestic groups belonging to different social classes, and squares where markets were installed or various religious festivities were held formed an important part of the urban landscape. The entire city was conceived from an orthogonal plane layout defined by large avenues and long streets that maintained the same orientation. The construction of Teotihuacan as a great sanctuary city, constituted an event that marked the development of ancient Mesoamerica, inaugurating an urban way of life

that would transform the world of that time.

The city is made up of more than two thousand architectural compounds, among them stand out the most important large ceremonial civic precincts such as those of the Pyramid of the Moon, the Pyramid of the Sun and the Citadel. Today we know that the city was organized into neighborhoods (Gómez Chávez, 2000), each with elements that formally define it that allow us to understand that the State interfered directly in the public life of all the inhabitants of the city.

The metropolis must have had a production and distribution system for all kinds of goods manufactured in local workshops, although another important portion of products must have been imported, including many of food resources consumed by the population that at some point could have been as high as 200,000 people, a number that far exceeded the valley's capacity to support such a large population. Teotihuacan would maintain strong political and economic relations with far away places, including other cities and states in southeastern Mexico and Central America, where the Maya had developed a complex civilization for centuries.

Teotihuacan's positioning as a great economic power was preceded by other societies from which Teotihuacan would have retaken the essence of a worldview that was built over centuries. Teotihuacan would have been inspired by the essence of this way of seeing and understanding the world and materialized it in a manner never before seen.

The projection of cosmogonic concepts onto architecture and in the spatial arrangement of buildings conjured the myths that justified life, the existence of human groups, regulated social behavior, and integrated advanced astronomical knowledge, achieving an extraordinary materialization of ancient ideas, using them as ideological resources for the control of society. The whole city was a great sanctuary and in different parts ritual scenes with

multiple uses were erected. Religion permeated each and every aspect of daily life. Temples, shrines, and altars were erected in each house, in each compound, in each neighborhood, and even in the streets. The death of an individual was an opportunity to express aspects of the worldview.

### **The Architectural Complex of The Citadel**

The city has three large architectural complexes connected by the Street of the Dead; these elements were an essential part of the urban plan that materializes the worldview and were part of the ritual backdrop that would give meaning to the largest sanctuary of its time (Figure 19.1).

The architectural complex of the Citadel located to the south, possibly marked the physical and symbolic center of the urban complex. Continuing north along the Street of the Dead, the Pyramid of the Sun complex is located to the east; the layout of the great pyramid is truly exceptional, representing the movements of the sun and its association with the two calendar systems used in ancient Mesoamerica. It was projected at the precise point where the solar year is divided into two sections, one of 260 days to the south that corresponds to the number of days on the lunar or sacred calendar and another section to the north of 104 days (52 to the furthest point north + 52 at the point of return and beginning of the 260 cycle) which added to those of the previous cycle correspond to the number of days in the solar calendar ( $260 + 104 = 364$ ). To the north is the architectural complex of the Pyramid of the Moon, establishing the end of the great processional avenue whose length exceeds 4 kilometers.

The architectural complex of the Citadel measures just over 400 meters per side. Four large platforms delimit a huge plaza with an altar, where the Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent stands as the main building. The pyramidal base was originally ornamented by sculptures

**Figure 19.1.**

*View of the Citadel Complex. Photo by J. Gazzola.*



protruding from the body of the pyramid. Despite the various interpretations that exist on the monument, we think that it was a building dedicated to commemorating the beginning of mythical time, the representation of a sacred mountain, the primordial mountain that according to myth emerged from the primeval sea and marked the beginning of the count of the days and the calendar.

Explorations carried out in the 1980s by Cabrera, Cowgill and Sugiyama (1990a, 1990b) at the base and inside the basement through tunnels, led to the discovery of the bodies of hundreds of people who were sacrificed, according to Sugiyama (2005) as an act to consecrate construction.

Our explorations carried out for more than a decade contribute elements to this hypothesis, we argue that there is evidence that the teotihuacanos had conceived and built the Citadel to keep it flooded. In this way, the Feathered Serpent Pyramid would have been seen emerging from the primeval sea in the first days.

The Citadel probably functioned as a great ritual space, where the myth of the original creation had to be represented and re-updated year after year. It must also have been a square where political celebrations and rituals were carried out whereby the rulers of the city and other

places received the divine investiture to govern and were somehow protected by the Feathered Serpent, protective numen and symbol of power structures.

Since 2002 data obtained by the investigations we have carried out in the Citadel, have greatly expanded our knowledge of this architectural complex (Gazzola, 2009, 2017). Some of these excavations reached the oldest levels of occupation, when the settlement was used for agricultural purposes by the first inhabitants of the valley. Several architectural structures of a first sanctuary have been documented. We have also observed the subsequent transformations that the complex had until the collapse of the city. Today we not only have a more complete idea of the process of occupation and transformation of space over several centuries, but also accurate knowledge about the process of development of the urban complex and the management of the elements of the worldview, its materialization, and its integration into the religious thought.

Two important characteristics of the early phases of constructions, are that they differ up to 4° with respect to the orientation, and that were imposed after it was 15° to the east of the north. Another characteristic is that there is no use of volcanic slag (tezontle) as building material. In the first phases, blocks of volcanic tufa (tepetate) and adobes (bricks of ground cooked to the sun) were used. Both characteristics are shared by all the buildings that formed the first sanctuary built at this location and that were in operation during the Tzacualli (1-150 CE) and Miccaotli (150-200 CE) phases. Later these ancient buildings would be destroyed and on their remains the Citadel would be built.

The change in orientation could be the result of a necessary correction that had to be made to connect sunrise and sunset with the city orientation and calendar system; the use of volcanic slag would have represented a technical

innovation that would transform the construction system. These two characteristics have also been seen by Sugiyama in the first substructure of the Pyramid of the Moon. This new information has led us to question and move away from the hypothesis proposed by different authors that the development of the city would have been from north to south and the Citadel would have been built much later. Thanks to our excavations and discoveries, we know that in the Tzacualli phase (1-150 CE), there was already an important sanctuary in this place and that the urban settlement extended to the area where the Citadel would later be built.

### **The Tunnel Under the Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent**

One of the most emblematic buildings that existed not only in Teotihuacan but in Mesoamerica was undoubtedly the Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent (Figure 19.2). Its association with the Sacred Mountain and the planet Venus make it a monument exceptionally rich in meaning.

In 2003, while we were carrying out the conservation work in the Citadel Complex and the Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent, we discovered a tunnel that had been excavated by the teotihuacanos at the beginning of our era. The deep underground conduit is 103 meters long and is located between 13 and 17 meters below the surface.

The systematic investigation of the tunnel under the Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent, as well as the remains of an ancient sanctuary under the Citadel square, show the practice of various rituals associated with Mesoamerican cosmogeny. Over thousands of years, the myth of creation and the Mesoamerican concept of the structure of the cosmos were so recurrent and convincing, that they had an impact on the politics, social relations and many aspects of the daily life of people, communities, and large urban centers.

**Figure 19.2.**

*View of the Feathered Serpent Pyramid.*



As we have made progress on the investigation of the tunnel under the Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent, we propose it could be an important sanctuary. We have gradually been able to identify several elements of the Mesoamerican worldview and religious thought. For almost two and a half centuries the tunnel was used to carry out rituals that included the descent to the underworld and the staging of the encounter with the lords of the underworld in the ballcourt. Like the tunnel of the Pyramid of the Sun, it was also used for the rituals of power-transmission, funeral ceremonies, and the burial of rulers.

From the time of the Olmecs, the rulers were represented in the entrance or inside of the caves, because it is precisely in these spaces that the gifts with which power is exercised, are obtained. It is also in caves where power is transferred and the remains of the rulers were buried. They are the portals of the underworld, residence of the owner of the mountain and of deep waters, place of the great reservoir where the riches and the nutritional seeds are kept, where the secrets of creation that gave rise to humanity are safeguarded and the place where "the ancestral strength of government structures is concentrated" (cf. López Austin and López Lujan, 2009).

The <sup>14</sup>C dating and studies of ceramic materials show that the tunnel was closed around 250 CE, and the construction of a magnificent ritual space prepared to recreate the primeval sea of which, according to myth, the sacred mountain emerged, establishing the beginning of time.

It was a paradigm shift in the way of rituals were conducted and the representation of the original myth, derived from the social complexity that Teotihuacan had reached and the need for better and more power discourse resources.

Due to the large size of the plazas and monuments, we infer that at Teotihuacan the ritual festivities consisted of the participation of much of the local and foreign population who attended the festivities according to the ritual calendar. In fact, after two centuries of being a rural-agricultural society, shortly after the beginning of our era, Teotihuacan ushered in an urban way of life with an ethnic, linguistic, and culturally heterogeneous population.

The state had to look for and secure the mechanisms of control and social integration and had to have strategies for communicating and the transmission of ideas through which elites obtained legitimacy and justified their position as the dominant class. Religion played an important role in all aspects of the life of the great city.

After more than ten years of nearly continuous systematic excavations at the Citadel, we reconstructed the temporal sequence and occupation of space. The findings have allowed us to propose a better proposal for the function and meaning of the Citadel Complex. By defining the chronology of the different levels of occupation we have been able to challenge the ideas that were held about the process of development of the urban setting. In terms of cosmogony, we have established and corroborated the binding relationship between levels, regions, and centers, in what is for us an amazing metaphorical materialization

of the Universe.

As part of a first and important sanctuary, the teotihuacanos built a pyramid-mountain on a long cave excavated to a depth from which the sacred water emanated. This sanctuary was used for nearly 200 years and then destroyed. Finally, they conceived and built a major ritual stage where year after year, when the square was flooded during the rainy season, the ideal conditions were set up to ritually materialize the myth of the original creation. In this scenario, people saw how the Sacred Mountain emerged from the primeval sea, reenacting the myth of the creation of the universe and the beginning of time. In this manner, Teotihuacan elites materialized symbols used in the ideological control of the population, justifying, in different ways, their class position.

#### **Teotihuacan: The Materialization of its Worldview**

The great monuments of the city are a materialization of the way the Universe was conceived (Sugiyama, 1993, 2005). Florescano has pointed that the planning of the cities and the distribution and orientation of their buildings reproduced the quadripartite division of the cosmos, turning the sacred center of the city into a replica of the navel of the world, making each temple and building an indicator of the sun's displacements through the celestial orbit, so that the earthly city had the same axial anchors that underpinned the harmony of the cosmos (1987, pp. 62).

When we explored one of the neighborhoods of the ancient city, we confirmed that in effect the conception of the Universe moved to the realms of everyday life. In each neighborhood, in each compound, in each temple and square, the model of the cosmos, its directions, spaces, its links and its properties are reproduced. In each compound and in each house, there was an altar in the center of the small square, which gave all human activity sacredness. "Every human construction was a replica of the original

foundation of the cosmos" (Florescano, 1987, pp. 17); the rulers imposed on the earthly level the structure and the cosmic order. The mythical past was extracted and placed within the scope of the historical present. In this way, elements of Mesoamerican cosmogony can be found in architecture, ceramic objects, wall painting, and other aesthetic expressions.

The entire city was the ritual setting for great performances. The processions on the Avenue of the Dead and the ceremonies in the great squares, strongly impacted the perceptions of many local people and foreign pilgrims who daily lived the religious experience and the manifestation of the sacred.

Our findings in the sacred cave complement the conceptual program of the Universe devised and built by the ancient teotihuacanos. We have recognized the binding relationship between levels, regions, and directions, in an amazing metaphorical materialization of the structure of the Universe. The teotihuacanos built a pyramid-mountain on a long cave that represented the underworld.

The mythical stories narrated in the written sources (Sahagún, 1956) and those recovered from contemporary indigenous groups, maintain the idea of the importance of the Sacred Mountain as the axis of the world, as the abode of the gods, and burial place of the ancestors and rulers. In other cases, it is seen as a large reservoir of water and refers to the scope of the origins or the communities themselves (cf. López Austin and López Lujan, 2009).

The cave is associated with the mountain, as an entrance to the underworld, a space full of richness and abundance, a great reservoir of nutritious seeds; in the underworld the secret of creation, of the cycle of renewal, of life and death is protected. The underworld is linked to the origin of humanity and its livelihood, as well as to the cult of the ancestors. It is a humid, dark and cold space, associated with fertility and death. The underworld has its own sacred

geography in which there are rivers, lakes, mountains and a celestial vault with stars. As we point out below, the teotihuacanos materialized this imaginary configuration in a surprising way.

### **Tunnel exploration and first results**

The theoretical approach and the formulation of various hypotheses that have guided the process of research and exploration, were developed taking previous studies on the worldview of the ancient Mesoamerican peoples in mind. For nearly nine years, we have been systematically investigating the tunnel under the Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent. At the same time, we have done several field seasons of archaeological research in the plaza of The Citadel.

Under the floor level of the great plaza, we have excavated several compounds contemporary to the tunnel and that together must have been part of a first and important sanctuary. This first sanctuary had to be made up of several structures and architectural compounds distributed around three central elements: a pyramid-mountain, a cave and a huge structure that we assume was a court for the ballgame. The pyramid must have been adorned with friezes depicting snakes moving over water and the upper temple was ornamented with large sculptures of macaws.

In front of this building that Sugiyama (2005) calls Pre-temple of Quetzalcoatl, was located the entrance to the tunnel and in the same direction but further west, a structure of almost 123 meters in length, oriented from north to south that was possibly a court in which the ritual of the ballgame was staged (Figure 19.3). This structure was badly damaged, but in support of our hypothesis, we know the ballgame was associated with the underworld, besides that inside of the tunnel, we located several rubber balls and a yoke fragment.

**Figure 19.3.**

*View of the southeast corner of what we suppose is a ballcourt. Photo S. Gómez.*



The tunnel was excavated about 2,000 years ago and according to  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates, it remained in use for about 200-250 years. The first section of the tunnel includes the entryway that functions as a threshold; this first part is 14 meters from the surface level and corresponds to the path that leads us to the real underworld.

The second section of the tunnel is located almost 70 meters from the entrance, is deeper and in some places it reaches up to 17 meters that would cause it to intentionally remain flooded. In ancient times there was a permanent layer of water created by the high water table.

Access to this section of the tunnel represents a portal, that corresponds to the liminal space that separates and serves as a bridge to enter the most sacred dimension of the cosmos, to the true underworld. To access the sacred space, it is necessary to cross this threshold that is not only deeper and remained flooded, but in terms of meaning, represents for an instant the non-time and the non-space. Crossing this threshold, the last traces of the earthly world are left behind and the access to the sacred space that brought together the vision of the underworld and every structure of the Universe completes the cosmogram.

There are three large chambers facing north, south,

and east at the end of the tunnel. The intersection of the horizontal axes of the three chambers coincides with a surprising accuracy with the vertical axis of the pyramid. The corners of the three chambers make up the four supports of the sky of the underworld and the world.

The vault was covered with mud to darken it and impregnated with pyrite and magnetite powder to represent the stars in the underworld sky. The lower part of the three chambers was sculpted to symbolically represent a miniature mountainous landscape with small valleys and basins where liquid mercury was deposited (Gazzola, in press). This is probably a cosmogram in which the three levels of the Universe are linked through the vertical axis.

During the excavation process we have recovered more than 130,000 different objects and materials, many imported from faraway places mainly the Maya highlands (Gómez Chávez and Gazzola, in press), southern Puebla, northern Mexico or southwest of the United States. The offerings discovered included numerous objects, however it was in the second section of the tunnel that the quality, quantity and variety of artifacts and materials give each deposit a major importance. This space, full of seeds (more than thirty thousand including cocoa, amaranth, beans, corn, nopal, among many others) represent abundance marks this as the true underworld, the place to the west that according to myths, is where the most precious goods are protected.

The offering located at the end of the tunnel consists of thousands of objects accompanying four anthropomorphic sculptures, however originally it must have been five. Two of the sculptures, that of a man and a woman, were located standing, slightly inclined on his back directing his gaze to the vertical axis of the pyramid and the axis mundi. The other two were found at the entrance of the north and south chambers. Only two fragments were recovered from the fifth sculpture because it was destroyed by the



teotihuacanos; it must have been male and much larger than the others.

According to the features (eyes and mouth open) as well as their standing position, carrying on their backs bundles with sacred and magical objects, it is the representation of living beings, of characters that are performing a ritual. The nudity of the male and his size suggest that he is of lower status than women. We emphasize that it is not only the physical nudity or lack of clothing, but rather the symbolic way of representing that the individual does not yet possess the power and esoteric knowledge that will be transmitted to him by the female ancestors who now also safeguard the secret of creation in the underworld (Figure 19.4).

Our interpretation is that the scene represents the ritual transmission of power in the underworld, and alludes to the political-religious events that must have taken place in the presence of very few people.

This cosmogram, as well as the rest of the associated elements, constituted a symbolic complex that materializes the manner in which the underworld was conceived as place of creation, where Tláloc, the only deity represented was the owner of the waters emanating from the depths. We suggest that when the tunnel was in use, the ritual first was staged in the space we proposed was a court for the ballgame and then a few people descended into the underworld, who then ascended to continue ritual performance on the earthly level. In ancient Maya Popol Vuh a reference is made to the ballgame that takes place in the underworld, in which the divine twins face the lords of the underworld who had challenged them to play. In Teotihuacan times the descent to the tunnel and then the ascent to the surface, marked the culmination of the creation and the actualization of the myth of the original creation. The Nahuatl myth tells us to rescue the bones of the ancestors and the corn that were stolen from the underworld referring to the resurgence of the god of corn and the cult of the ancestors.

**Figure 19.4.**

*View in situ of the two green sculptures. Offering 46. Foto S. Gómez.*



### **The Transformation of Space and the Change in the Conduct of the Ritual**

Inside the tunnel we have recovered fragments of a frieze and large sculptures that belonged to an old dismantled pyramid and some of its remains were integrated as fill in the tunnel around 250 CE. This building together with others that have been explored in the area of the great plaza, formed part of a first and important precinct that existed in this place since the first century of CE. The first pyramid was destroyed marking the beginning of a large-scale construction program that reconfigured the space where The Citadel would be built.

Around the middle of the third century CE, the tunnel was closed definitively and the rituals that were carried out in the underworld, would later be performed on the earthly level, in the great plaza, staging the ritual that was previously performed almost in secret, now with the presence of many people. A strategy that created greater legitimacy for the ruling elites.

At the same time the drainage that served during the construction of the Citadel was closed with the offering of a human sacrifice. Around 50 individuals were decapitated

**Figure 19.5.**

*View of the flooded Citadel square. Photo J. Gazzola.*



and dismembered as an offering to the hydraulic system. Without an efficient drainage system, the plaza of the Citadel was obviously flooded during the rainy season. (Figure 19.5)

Diverse lines of evidence allow us to postulate that the change in the manner that rituals were conducted and the representation of the myth of creation corresponded with increasing social complexity. The ritual required new elements and better discursive resources, of a scenario conceived and elaborated to carry out the ritual representations that on specific dates updated the myth of the original creation. Much of the population had to participate, as it would be the only way to ensure that the Universe maintained its pace and course.

The Citadel reproduced on a larger scale and on the earthly plain, the elements that had been arranged in the underworld. The plaza could hold almost 100,000 people who witnessed religious and eventually political rituals. The former must have been ritual stages of mythical passages. The latter should have included the investiture of local and foreign rulers under the protection of the politically legitimizing state and the Feathered Serpent, protective

religious entity of the ruling elites. Even the funeral rituals that were carried out in this place had a political purpose.

The Citadel's construction program began with the gradual destruction of the buildings and included the sacrificial ritual of 260 people who were buried in the Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent, according to Sugiyama (1998), like consecration offerings. We postulate that they were willing to symbolically protect and guard the tomb of a ruler who had been deposited inside the sacred cave, but which for some reason was extracted, and his sculpture destroyed as an iconoclastic act. The burials of hundreds of individuals placed at the base of the building discovered by Cabrera and Sugiyama (Cabrera and Cabrera, 1991, Sugiyama, 1991), maintained a direct relationship with what had been deposited and was protecting in the tunnel.

The construction program of The Citadel took into account the flooding of the large square, enough to form a water mirror. In the middle of that primeval sea represented by the flooding of the plaza every year during the rainy season, the mountain of maintenance was seen emerging from the underworld, marking the beginning of the mythical time (Gómez Chávez, 2017, Gómez Chávez and Gazzola, 2018).

In this way an artificial landscape was built, a scenery that included the primeval sea surrounded by mountains that rise towards the four corners, leaving at the center and west the sacred mountain, which emerged establishing the beginning of mythical time, the counting of the days.

### **Conclusion**

We have seen how the teotihuacanos materialized the way they conceived the three levels of the Universe. They created spaces and elements in which the myths associated with creation were performed. The whole city and its great monuments materialized the conception of the cosmos. In the Citadel, the ritual linked to a passage from the myth

of creation contemplated the descent to the tunnel, the ascent to the pyramid-mountain that existed in this place and a ritual staging on the court of the ballgame.

The rituals for transmission of power, or the funerary rites for rulers were also carried out, and must have been performed in the secrecy of the tunnel and in the presence of a small cadre of people. In the descent into the underworld, the cult of the ancestors included the God of Corn.

Around 250-300 CE, teotihuacano society became more complex and required a great constructive program, in which the first sanctuary turned into the magnificent ritual scene that we know as the Citadel, which was conceived and built to be kept flooded. To reach the moment of the manifestation of the sacred, the theatricalized depiction of the ritual would have required a scenario that allowed to live or experience the ecstasy of religious experience. The construction of this ritual precinct was an exceptional idea conceived to reenact the myth of creation.

The large flooded plaza and the Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent emerging from the primeval sea formed a perfect model of the origin of the Universe. The primeval sea bounded by the mountains on the long platforms would have been an important part of the ritual scenery.

In Maya myths the large lizard vomited so much water that it watered the land. The death of the crocodile is the victory of order over chaos. Flooding is associated with the creation of the new world and the assumption of the rulers to power. According to this Maya myth the annual flooding of the Citadel reenacts the time of the creation of the new world that occurs when the ruler decapitates the crocodile that had caused the flood. With this act the new ruler assumed power and obtained the social legitimacy he required under the protection of the Feathered Serpent, an act through which the new ruler would appear as a heroic being that creates the new world.

Different societies in the American continent share

common ways of building and understanding the Universe. The structure and composition of different myths account for similarities that require us to ask questions that can explain why there are common rhetorical elements and resources about how the world is structured and how different conceptions seem to be shared. For example, despite ethnic, natural, geographical and social diversity, in Mesoamerica the concept of Mountain as a central element of the worldview seems to be a fundamental constant, since it appears not only as the great container, but in its vertical projection, it is the axis of the world that communicates the different levels that are distributed in the horizontal plane, establishing the regions of the cosmos united by the axis mundi.

It is interesting to note that in the Andean region, the mountain also has an important role in their cosmovision. Another element frequently shared in the myths of creation is the aquatic environment, often referred to as the primeval sea, the one from which the Sacred Mountain, the Mountain of the Maintainments, emerged.

Alfredo López Austin, who has worked diligently on the theme of the Mountain as one of the central elements of the Mesoamerican worldview, has pointed out in this regard that "it is surprising that the history shared by these peoples has produced since very early times a common cultural basis, on which diversity developed. This base has been called the hard core of the Mesoamerican tradition" (López Austin, 2008, pp. 20).

One possible explanation for the widespread ideas and beliefs is the correspondence between the development of the productive forces of a society and ideology, that is to say, forms of thought. There is also a direct correspondence between these groups or individuals who hold power and have at their disposal the ideological resources they use for their own benefit. In the early stratified societies, rulers are also priests, who also express themselves as representatives

or even personify divine entities.

Luis Millones (2008), for his part, has pointed out that in “the first four or five thousand years, formulas of understanding of the world were developed, that despite being modified they could imprint on the mind very lasting perception schemes” (pp. 126) ... adding that “There is a common substrate perhaps linked to the continent's first inhabitants, which feeds the belief system synthesized in the sacred books of the two Americas” (pp. 128), but we might even think that this perception schemes could be much older.

Based on the concept of correspondence outlined above, it remains to be understood that the complex forms of thought created by the human mind are also the result of physiological processes that are generated when confronted with a particular environment, as a social response (individual or collective) to material conditions that allow the reproduction of the life and the persistence of the human being. These are undoubtedly complex aspects that may be better understood in collaboration with the disciplines dedicated to study the cognitive systems that are generated in the human brain (individually or as a collective response to an action, circumstance or stimulus), trying to structure an explanation linked to forms of economic and social development.

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