

# The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the  
Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

Founded by EDWARD C. HEGELE

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VOLUME XXXIX (No. 8)

AUGUST, 1925

(No. 831)

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AZTEC STONE OF SACRIFICE SHOWING OBSIDIAN KNIFE WITH HUMAN FEATURES,  
FLANKED BY THE BUTTERFLY SYMBOLS OF THE GODDESS ITZPAPALOTL.  
(In the Peabody Museum)

*Frontispiece to The Open Court.*

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## THE OBSIDIAN RELIGION OF MEXICO

BY LEWIS SPENCE

FEW fields of study can have yielded results so meagre in comparison to the extraordinary amount of research involved as that of Mexican antiquity. Nearly half a century of intensive inquiry has not yet made clear to us the outlines of Mexican history, or successfully disentangled the ravelled skein of Mexican religion. After twenty-five years of isolated labor in the latter department of Isthmian research, the writer is convinced that although the general plan of the Mexican pantheon is slowly becoming apparent, the spirit of the cult which underlies it is still remote from our comprehension.

It is not alone the complex nature of the subject which renders Mexican religion so difficult of apprehension. The mingling of cultures, so apparent to the student at an early stage of his inquiry, scarcely seem to have such sanction from Archaeology and Ethnography as to warrant the conclusion that each of the cults of which the Mexican faith was originally composed was accompanied by a separate material culture. The extremely vague and involved traditions relating to this faith, and handed down by Spanish ecclesiastics and civilized natives, although illuminating enough in some instances, are still much too conflicting to justify complete dependence upon them. The religion of Mexico as known at the Conquest period, was the outcome of later religious and ethical impulses brought to bear upon a simple rain-cult, which, judging from the atmospheric conditions essential to it, must have been indigenous to the country. Although the cults of the several deities still retained some measure of distinctiveness, all had become amalgamated in what was really a national faith. A fully developed pantheon had also been evolved, which mirrored an elaborate social system in

caste, rank and guild, but the mythical material from which this might have been reconstructed in its entirety is only partly available.

What were the original and basic cults which had become coalesced in this national faith, the outward manifestations of which were roughly noted by Cortes and his companions? In my view they were at least three in number—the cult of Quetzalcoatl, which was probably an importation from the Maya civilization in Central America, the religion of Tlaloc, the God of Rain, which I believe to have been in existence in the Valley of Mexico prior to the introduction of the Quetzalcoatl cult there, and the Obsidian Religion of the Nahuatl peoples, who came from the North at some time in the seventh or eighth century A. D., and who for many generations occupied the steppe region to the north of the Valley before descending to the conquest of that area. It is to the consideration of the last of these cults that I wish to confine myself in this paper.

For many years I was aware, in common with most Americanists, that obsidian played a very considerable part in Mexican religion, but it was only when I essayed the grouping of the gods as departmental agencies that it was borne in upon me that it must have possessed a much deeper significance than I had formerly realized. Even then I did not fully comprehend the true importance of my surmises. It had long been known to me that the names of at least three of the Mexican gods contained the word obsidian (*itztli*) and the frequent representation of that mineral in the native paintings had previously aroused an occasional and passing consideration.

But it was only after comparing what I now saw to have been a distinct and separate cult with the many traditions associated with jade in China that the real importance of my theory was at length apparent to me. Employing this valuable analogy to the full, I almost at once found myself overwhelmed with evidence of the former existence of a separate religion in Mexico, radiating from the central idea of the obsidian stone, and developing from its employment as a weapon of the hunt into a religious complex which, in the event, was to find its way into every department of the life of the ancient Mexicans.

Obsidian, a volcanic glass varying considerably in color and texture, is found in extensive deposits in the western half of North America, in Mexico and Central America. To be more precise, the sites at which it is chiefly found are Obsidian Canyon in the Yellowstone National Park, among the mountains of New Mexico, in



Nevada and Arizona, and in the Pacific States. It is, indeed, still worked by certain tribes of Indians in California. In Mexico proper the best known mines are situated in the State of Hidalgo, about twelve miles north of the city of Pachuca, on the mountain known as Sierra de las Navajas, or "The Mountain of the Knives." Holmes, describing a visit to this site, states that the deposits there must have been vigorously worked for centuries, and the remaining debris proves at once how extensive must have been the labors of the early miners who exploited them. He says: "It is well known that the ancient dwelling sites of the general region, including the Valley of Mexico, are strewn with countless knives which have been derived by fracture from faceted cylindrical nuclei, partially exhausted specimens of which are widely distributed, and evidence of the getting out of these nuclei was to be expected on the quarry site. Examination developed the fact that here the rejectage deposits abound in abortive nuclei which were rejected because lacking in some of the qualities necessary to successful flake blade-making. It was requisite that the material should be fine-grained, flawless and uniform in texture; the shape had to be roughly cylindrical, and it was essential that one end should be smoothly squared off, so that the flaking tool would have the proper surface for receiving the stroke or other form of impact for removing the long, slender blades. Of course, the flake knives were not made on the quarry site, as the edges of the blades were so delicate that transportation would have subjected them to injury; therefore the selected nuclei were carried away, and the knives made by expert workmen, whenever and wherever they were required."<sup>1</sup>

Torquemada, a Spanish friar of the sixteenth century, who resided in Mexico and had exceptional opportunities for the observation of native handicrafts, describes the manner in which the Aztecs manufactured obsidian knives from the core. He says: "They had and still have, workmen who made knives of a certain black stone or flint, which is a most wonderful and admirable thing to see them make out of the stone; and the ingenuity which invented this art is much to be praised. They are made and got out of the stone (if one can explain it) in this manner: One of these Indian workmen sits down upon the ground and takes a piece of this black stone, which is like jet, and hard as flint, and is a stone which might be called precious, more beautiful and brilliant than alabaster or jasper, so much so that of it are made tablets and mirrors. The piece they

<sup>1</sup> *Handbook of Aboriginal American Antiquities*, Part I, p. 220.

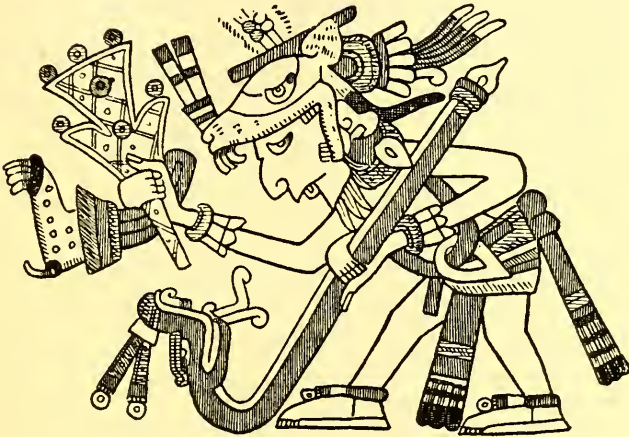
take is about eight inches long, or rather more, and as thick as one's leg or rather less, and cylindrical. They have a stick as large as the shaft of a lance, and three cubits or more in length, and at the end of it they fasten firmly another piece of wood eight inches long, to give more weight to this part, then pressing their naked feet together they hold the stone as with a pair of pincers or the vice of a carpenter's bench. They take the stick (which is cut off smooth at the end) with both hands, and set well home against the edge of the front of the stone, which also is cut smooth in that part; and then they press it against their breast, and with the force of the pressure there flies off a knife, with its point and edge on each side, as neatly as if one were to make them of a turnip with a sharp knife, or of iron in the fire. Then they sharpen it on a stone, using a hone to give it a very fine edge; and in a very short time these workmen will make more than twenty knives in the aforesaid manner. They come out of the same shape as our barbers' lancets, except that they have a rib up the middle and have a slight graceful curve toward the point. They will cut and shave the hair the first time they are used, at the first cut nearly as well as a steel razor, but they lose their edge at the second cut; and so to finish shaving one's beard or hair, one after another has to be used; though indeed they are cheap, and spoiling them is of no consequence. Many Spaniards both regular and secular clergy, have been shaved with them, especially at the beginning of the colonization of these realms, when there was no such abundance as now of the necessary instruments and people who gain their livelihood by practising this occupation. But I conclude by saying that it is an admirable thing to see them made, and no small argument for the capacity of the men who found out such an invention."<sup>2</sup>

It seems probable that the Nahua were acquainted with obsidian before their entrance into Mexico. Dr. G. M. Dawson has made it clear that the coastal tribes of British Columbia engaged in trade with those of the interior along the Frazer River and far to the south. The Bilquila of Dean Inlet have traditions extending to a hoary antiquity that they possessed a trade route by way of the Bella Coola River to the Tinné country, and along this route broken implements and chips of obsidian have been found. Many other routes in British Columbia have likewise yielded obsidian flakes, which, the Tinné Indians stated, had been obtained from a mountain

<sup>2</sup> *Monarquía Indiana*, Book VI.

near the headwaters of the Salmon River.<sup>3</sup> The theory that the Mexican Nahua originally came from British Columbia, a hypothesis which is supported both by their art-forms and mythology, appears, therefore, to receive archaeological support from this circumstance.

If it be granted that the Nahua were acquainted with obsidian and its properties before their entrance into the Valley of Mexico, sufficient time had elapsed for their development of a cult, which, at the era of the Conquest, exhibited traces of a very considerable antiquity. It was, naturally, as a hunting people that they employed weapons of obsidian. The herds of deer on the flesh of which they



(Figure 1)

THE GOD MIXCOATL WEARING HIS DEER-DISGUISE.  
(From *Codex Borgia*.)

chiefly lived roamed the steppes, and proof abounds that the customs of the chase strongly influenced the religious ideas of the early Nahua. Certain of their gods, indeed, appear to have been developed from cervine forms (Fig. 1), for among barbarous races the animal worshipped is often that which provides the tribe with its staple food, or, more correctly, a great eponymous figure of that animal is adored—for example, the Great Deer, who sends the smaller deer to keep the savage in life. In like manner barbarous fisher folk are wont to worship the Great Fish, which sends them

<sup>3</sup> Dawson, "Notes on the Shushwap People of British Columbia," *Proceedings and Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 1891, Vol. IX, Section II, Montreal, 1892.

its progeny or subjects to serve as food. These deer gods or hunting gods in some way connected with the deer—Itzpapalotl, Itzcueye, Mixcoatl, Camaxtli—had also stellar or solar attributes. The deer was slain by the obsidian weapon, which therefore came to be regarded as the magical weapon, that by which food was procured. In the course of time it assumed a sacred significance, the hunting gods themselves came to wield it, and it was thought of as coming from the stars or the heavens where the gods dwelt, in precisely the same manner as flint arrowheads were regarded by the peasantry of Europe as “elf-arrows” or “thunder-stones,” that is, as something supernatural, falling from above.

When the nomadic Nahua adopted an agricultural condition of life, obsidian had doubtless been regarded as sacred for generations. It was by virtue of this magical stone that the nourishment of the gods was maintained by the sacrifice of deer; but when the Nahua came to embrace a more settled existence within an agricultural community where deer must have been more scarce, the nourishment of the gods had necessarily to be maintained by other means. The manner in which this was effected is quite clear. Slaves and war-captives were sacrificed instead of beasts of the chase, and at the sacrifice of Mixcoatl, the greatest of the gods of the nomadic Nahua of the steppes, women were immolated in the place of deer, and after being slain were carried down the steps of the earth-mound where the sacrifice took place, their wrists and ankles tied together in precisely the same way as that in which a deer is trussed by the hunter. The transition from deer-sacrifice to a human holocaust and from the hunting to the agricultural condition is well illustrated by an ancient hymn relating to the goddess Itzpapalotl (Obsidian Butterfly) who was associated with the god Mixcoatl (Fig. 2):

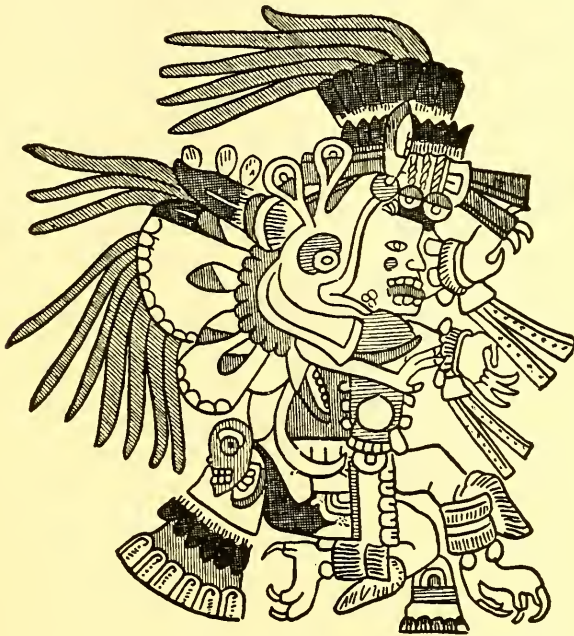
“O she has become a goddess of the melon cactus,  
 Our mother Itzpapalotl, the Obsidian Butterfly.  
 Her food is on the Nine Plains,  
 She was nurtured on the hearts of deer,  
 Our mother, the earth-goddess.”

The inference in these lines seems to be that whereas Itzpapalotl was formerly a goddess of the nomadic Nahua of the steppes, who sacrificed deer to her, she has now become the deity of the melon-cactus patch and an agricultural community. Her first human victim is mentioned by Camargo, who states that the Chichimec, or

wild Nahua, coming to the province of Tepeueuec, *sacrificed a victim to her by shooting him with arrows.*<sup>4</sup>

As regards Itzpapalotl's name, the butterfly in Mexico, as among the Celts, was thought of as a spirit or soul, so that the inference is plain enough. Itzpapalotl is the soul of the obsidian, that is the fetish or animating influence of that mineral.

But the idea most closely identified with obsidian was the great god Tezcatlipoca. His general character is so complex and he



(Figure 2)

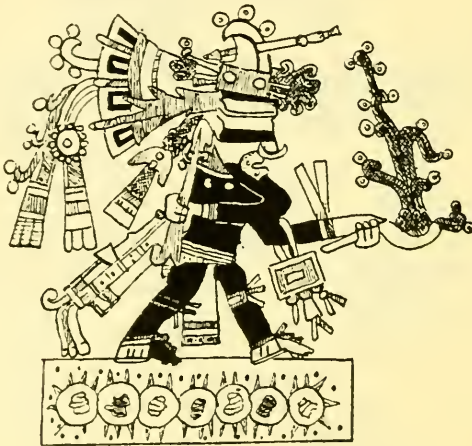
THE GODDESS ITZPAPALOTL (Obsidian Butterfly).  
(From the *Codex Tetleriano-Remensis*, Sheet 18 Verso.)

reached a prominence so great in the Mexican pantheon that it is usual to class him as its chief. Nevertheless, his origin as an obsidian fetish cannot be gainsaid. From a passage in Acosta we are justified in assuming that Tezcatlipoca's idol was of obsidian, and, like the Quiche god Tohil, mentioned in the Central American collection of myths known as the *Popol Vuh*, he wore sandals of obsidian, as is witnessed by one of his representations in the *Codex Borboni-*

<sup>4</sup> *Historia de Tlaxcallan*, Chap. V.

*cus*, where his footgear is painted with the zig-zag line of the obsidian snake.

Tezcatlipoca was unquestionably the god of the *itztli* (obsidian) stone, and Seler has identified him with Itztli, the stone-knife god.<sup>5</sup> In certain codices, too, he is represented as having such a knife in place of a foot, and we know that it was a fairly common practice with the Mexican artists to indicate the name or race of a god or individual by drawing one of his feet in a hieroglyphical manner. I believe, too, that the net-like garment worn at times by this god above his other attire is a symbolical adaptation of the mesh-bag in which Mexican hunters carried flints for use as spear- and arrow-heads.



(Figure 3)

THE GOD ITZTLACOLIUHQUI.

(From the *Codex Caspi*, Sheet 12)

This, as well as the fact that he was the god of the sharp-cutting obsidian from which such weapons were made, caused him to be regarded as patron deity of the wild hunting tribes of the northern steppes, a connection which is eloquent of his once primitive character. But another important link connects Tezcatlipoca with obsidian. Bernal Diaz states that they called this stone *tezcat*. From it mirrors were manufactured for use as divinitory media by the wizards. Sahagun says that in this form it was known as *aitztl* (water obsidian) probably because of the high polish of which it was capable. The name Tezcatlipoca means "Smoking Mirror" or,

<sup>5</sup> *Commentary on the Codex Fejérváry-Mayer*, page 34.

perhaps, just "Obsidian Mirror," and the god was thought of as witnessing the deeds of humanity, good and evil, in this scrying-glass.

The god Itztli is merely a surrogate of Tezcatlipoca in his guise of the obsidian knife of sacrifice, and as such is, of course, representative of the paramount connection of that god with the obsidian cult. Itztli is, indeed, nothing more or less than a personalization of the obsidian knife. His name implies this, and the picture of him in *Code.r Vaticanus B.* (sheet 19), where he is seen looking out of the head of an obsidian knife *naulli* or disguise, affords absolute proof, if more were required of the identification.

Itzlacoliuhqui-Ixquimilli (The Curved Obsidian Knife) (Fig. 3) is also a variant of Tezcatlipoca in his character of the obsidian knife of sacrifice, the god of the stone knife, and therefore of blood, avenging justice, of blinding, of sin, of cold. The obsidian knife was regarded as the instrument of justice, the tool by which the criminal was despatched. In the courts of law the penal judges drew an arrow of obsidian across the manuscript sentence of death to render it absolute.

Mexican tradition makes it very plain that obsidian, because of its blood-procuring properties, came to be regarded as the source of all life, as the very principle of existence. Tonacaciuatl, the creative goddess, gave birth to an obsidian knife, from which sprang sixteen hundred demi-gods who peopled the earth, and the infant which the goddess Ciuacoatl leaves in the cradle in the market-place undergoes transformation into an obsidian knife. As the Aztec manuscripts show, grain is frequently pictured in the form of the obsidian knife of sacrifice. Thus all the elements which make for growth and life were identified with this mineral, even the sun itself being regarded as the obsidian mirror of Tezcatlipoca. The idea that the sun could not exist without human blood was a purely Nahuatl conception arising out of an earlier belief that it must be nourished on the blood and hearts of beasts. The hunter's weapon which supplied the necessary pabulum became in turn the weapon of the warrior who procured victims for the holocaust, and the sacred knife of the priest who offered them up to the deity. Obsidian was thus chiefly the war weapon and the sacrificial weapon, but the traditions relating to it refer to practically all the offices of human art, industry and activity generally.

Lest this hypothesis seem overstrained, analogies may be indicated. That which is initially sacred in a primitive cult frequently comes to have interrelations with the whole environment of its dei-

ties. Thus the worship of the oak by the Druids appears to have conferred an oak-like virtue to the oracular birds which dwelt in its branches, to the soil from which it grew, to the sky above it, to the priests who ministered to it and to the sacred implements they employed. The same may be said of the oak cult of Zeus and the vine cult of Dionysus. Thus in the worship of the gods whose cult was connected with obsidian, well-nigh everything with which it had interrelations came to partake of the nature of obsidian, was, so to speak, "obsidianized"—grain, the earth, the atmosphere, the sun, the stars, the priesthood, blood, and rain.

We have already seen that obsidian was in a measure connected with the origin of human sacrifice, that women came to be substituted for the deer whose hearts were originally offered up to the deer-god. Obsidian also must have its payment for the part it performed in the slaying of the deer, just as the hound must have his umbles. When the Indian hunter of New Mexico kills a deer today, he removes the liver, and taking an image of his prey-god from his pouch, he smears its lips with blood. The Nicaraguan kept his sacred fetish wound up in cotton cloth, and, when he desired to placate it, unrolled its wrappings and smeared the blood of rabbits on its surface. The probabilities are that the early Mexicans treated their obsidian fetishes in like manner. Not only do we find that part of their later ritual ceremony prescribed the painting of the lips of their idols with human blood, and that many of these images were carved from obsidian, but we also find that the gods Itztli and Itzlacoliuhqui are represented, the first in the *Codex Fejérváry-Mayer* (sheet 2) as wrapped in a cotton cloth with a fringed hem, and the second in the *Codex Borgia* as wound up in a bundle like a mummy.

The practice of wrapping up fetish stones is fairly widespread. In the island of Fladdahuan off the west coast of Ireland a stone fetish called Neevougi was formerly kept wrapped up in woolen cloths, and unwound only when a wind was required for the fishermen. It is interesting to note in this connection that Tezcatlipoca was a god of the winds of the four quarters. The mandrake, that strange human-shaped root so frequently employed as a fetish or familiar by mediaeval wizards in Europe, was likewise often so swathed. The practice, I believe, had an early association with or reflection from, the rite of mummification. The mandrake, after being unearthed, was washed in wine, wrapped up in red and white silk, and afterwards rolled in white linen bands. This ritual completed, it was then placed in a box, the "head" alone remaining



uncovered in order that it might reply to such questions as the sorcerer put to it. This is obviously reminiscent of the ritual of embalmment. One of the Mexican gods, Xolotl, took the shape of a double-rooted plant like the mandrake, and when pulled up by the roots, shrieked as that plant is said to do. His symbol, the *ollin*, bears a close resemblance to the mandrake.

The obsidian knife came then to be regarded not only as the sacrificial tool, but also as something possessing "soul," or at least personality and volition of its own. On the hafts of some of these

(Figure 4)

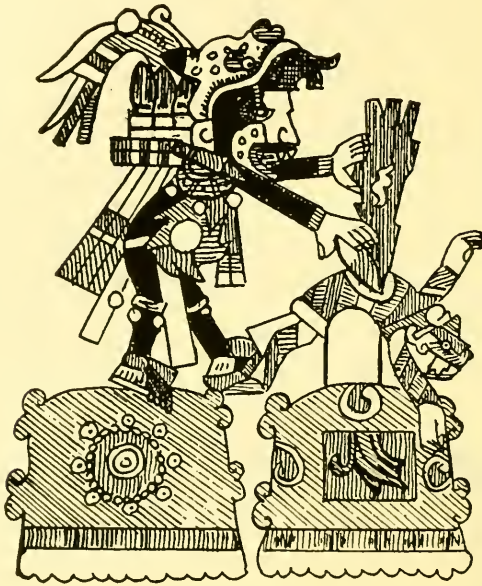
OBSIDIAN KNIFE AS  
HUMAN FACE.ITZTLI, THE GOD OF  
THE OBSIDIAN KNIFE.

(Both from *Codex  
Bologna.*)

knives which have been preserved is the representation of an undoubted fetish or sprite. That it was personalized in the forms of at least two deities has also been demonstrated. Again and again in the Aztec manuscript, it is represented as having a human face, and sometimes even limbs (Fig. 4). It was, indeed, obsidian in the form of the life-drinker. Tezcatlipoca was known by one of his names as "the Night-drinker," "he who has his sport with the people," the insatiable spirit of human sacrifice. Obsidian was also regarded as one and the same with blood and even with rain, the fertilizing essence. Just as the blood of Tawiscara, the god of the Algonquins, fell from the sky in the shape of flint-stones, so obsidian was thought of as the blood or broken flesh of the gods. If it was not actually pabulum or food, like maize or fish, which were regarded as divine flesh by the Mexicans, it was that which gained or acquired pabulum for the people, and so came to be confounded with it.

A proof that the obsidian knife was regarded as a "flesh-eater" or "blood-drinker," or even as blood itself, is to be found in the figure of the Chalchiuhtotolin, "the jewelled fowl," or turkey, which is ruler of the eighteenth day-sign (the *tecpatl* or obsidian knife) in the Mexican calendar. This figure strikingly exhibits the large red wattle and lobe of the American turkey. In most manuscripts it wears Tezcatlipoca's obsidian mirror at the temple, as does the god himself, and in *Codex Borbonicus* it appears as a *naulli* or disguise of the god, having his crown painted with stars and his

*anauatl* or ring of mussel-shell. On sheet 6 of *Codex Fejèrvàry-Mayer*, the bird appears as an image of Tezcatlipoca and is represented along with the signs of mortification and blood-letting, as it also is on sheet 17 of the *Aubin Tonalamatl*. Indeed, it represents the blood-offering connected with the worship of Tezcatlipoca. The turkey-cock's foot, too, is sometimes symbolic of the god. The bird is to be conceived as symbolical of rain, which was believed by the Nahua to be nothing else than the magically altered blood shed in penance or sacrifice. It may be that the red wattles and lobe of the



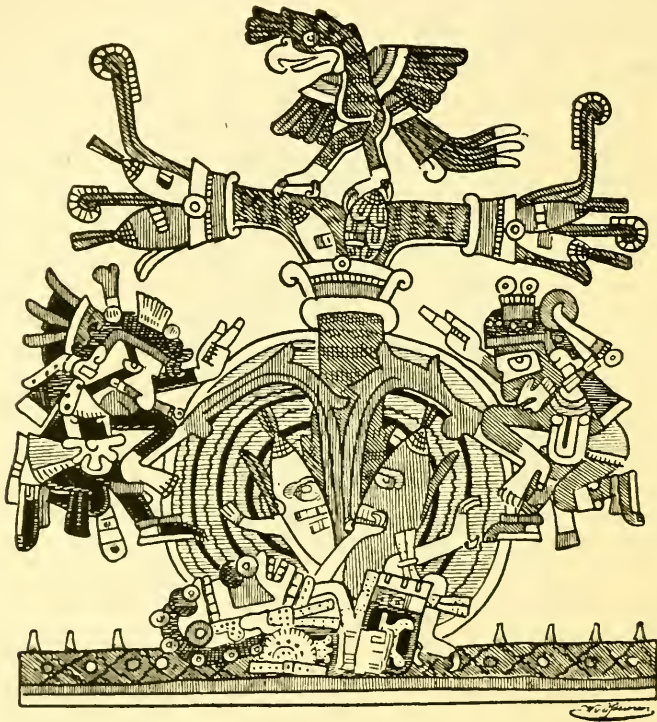
(Figure 5)

PRIEST OPENING THE BREAST OF A VICTIM WITH AN OBSIDIAN KNIFE.  
(From *Codex Nuttall*.)

turkey suggested the idea of blood, and that the shades in his plumage were equally suggestive of water, as we know those in the plumage of the quetzal bird were held to be by the Mexicans. Thus it would come to be regarded as the blood shed by the obsidian knife of sacrifice. It is also obvious that Tezcatlipoca's patronage of slaves, who were strictly regarded as his property, arose out of the idea that those unfortunates, whenever used for the purposes of sacrificial ritual, constituted the "food" of the obsidian knife. (Fig. 5.)

The connection of obsidian with the ritual of war is sufficiently obvious. The *maquahuitl*, or Mexican "sword," was a wooden blade set at the edges with sharp obsidian flakes, but capable of inflicting a severe wound, as the Spanish Conquistadores found to their cost. The obsidian arrow had its divine counterpart in the sacred arrows of the war-god Uitzilopochtli, armed with which Guatemotzin, the last of the Aztec emperors, believed himself invincible. In the ritual of the maize-god Cinteotl are to be found circumstances which reveal the importance of obsidian in military ritual. At the annual festival of his mother, Tlazoteotl, also a deity of maize, his priest set out alone and in a hasty manner, followed at a decent interval by a large body of warriors, to a point on the frontiers of Mexico where a small hut stood, and at this place he left a mask and cap which he had worn at the festival of the goddess, made from the thigh-skin of a sacrificed woman. The cap in question is represented in the Aztec manuscript as serrated, and resembles the cock's comb of the mediæval jester. It was held to symbolize the sharp-cutting knife of sacrifice. The occasion on which it was deposited on the frontier was that on which notice was given to a neighboring tribe, the Tlascalans, that the Aztecs would on such-and-such a date meet them in battle for the mutual purpose of striving for war-captives to be immolated in sacrifice. For the understanding of this strange compact it is necessary to take into consideration the basis on which Nalua theology rested. The Mexicans regarded the sun as the supreme deity, the principal source of subsistence and life, and the heart, the symbol of life, as his especial food. It was supposed that the luminary rejoiced in offerings of blood, and that it constituted the only food that could render him sufficiently vigorous to undertake his daily journey through the heavens and quicken the crops. He had, it was thought, been preceded by other suns, each of which had been quenched by some awful cataclysm of nature. The old suns were dead, and the living sun was no more immortal than they. He must, therefore, be nourished by every possible means if mankind were to continue to exist. Naturally a people holding such a belief would look elsewhere than within their own borders for the means of placating such a deity. This could most suitably be found among the inhabitants of a neighboring tribe. The adjacent source of supply was the little state of Tlascala, the people of which were of cognate origin with the Aztecs, and adhered to a similar belief. A strange and horrid compact was arrived at between them. On a given day in the year their forces met at an appointed spot for the

purpose of engaging in a strife which should furnish both sides with a sufficiency of sacrificial victims. There was little bloodshed in these strange combats, the champions on either side preferring to bring back their captives in such a condition that they would be fit for immolation. From the blood of the captives thus captured and slain by the obsidian knife, the sun was supposed to receive his obsidian character.



(Figure 7)

THE TREE OF THE MIDDLE REGION SHOWING OBSIDIAN KNIVES AT THE ROOTS AND ON THE BRANCHES.

(From the *Codex Fejérváry-Mayer*.)

In Mexican art, as has already been said, obsidian is very frequently depicted. A good example is to be seen on an Aztec stone of sacrifice housed in the Peabody Museum at Yale University (see Frontispiece). On the side of this stone is represented the obsidian knife of sacrifice with a human face, flanked by the butterfly symbols of Itzpapalotl, the whole being symbolical of the taking of the life or soul by the god of Obsidian. In the accompanying illustration of the

Tree of the Middle Region, from the *Code.v Fejèrvàry-Mayer*, its roots can be seen issuing from obsidian knives, while similar instruments decorate its branches or sprout from it as leaves (Fig. 7).

It may, then, be not unreasonable to infer among the early Nahuatl the gradual development of the obsidian stone, first into the fetish and later into the god. The process by which this Nahuatl cult became amalgamated with those of Tlaloc and Quetzalcoatl seems fairly clear. With the cult of Tlaloc, the rain-god, it would fuse easily enough. The salient necessity of the Mexican agriculturist is rain, and when the Nahuatl adopted an agricultural mode of life they would necessarily adopt the cult of Tlaloc as essential to its proper performance. Upon their settlement in the Valley of Mexico it is plain from the terms of certain myths that the Nahuatl did not regard the cult of Quetzalcoatl in any friendly manner. Tezcatlipoca is spoken of as driving him out of the country, and it is probable that to begin with a certain amount of persecution may have been inflicted upon his adherents. But the Nahuatl would undoubtedly come to recognize the value of the calendar system connected with his cult, and it is clear that they did so from the fact that we find included in it certain of their chief gods. The final process of amalgamation probably took place during the eleventh and twelfth centuries A. D., for, as witnessed at the Conquest period, the union of the three great cults of Mexico must have occupied several centuries. Such a duration of time was necessary for the development of a homogeneous and involved symbolism, which was obviously based on a tacit recognition of the unity of the Mexican faith. Initial disparities seem to be indicated principally by ancient traditions, of which perhaps the most notable was that which told of the different heavens of the three original cults, the Tlalocan of the worshippers of Tlaloc, the Tlapallan or oversea paradise of the Quetzalcoatl cult, and the sun-house or Valhalla of the Obsidian religion. A striking proof of the adjustment of the chronologies of the three cults is found in the myths which tell of the existence of several "suns" or ages prior to the historical era, the "rulers" or patrons of which were, according to the most trustworthy sources, Tezcatlipoca, Quetzalcoatl, Tlaloc, and Chalchihuitlicue, goddess of the Tlaloc cult. It is obvious, then, that the early Nahuatl cult of obsidian not only amalgamated with the other faiths cherished by the peoples of the Valley of Mexico, crossing with their theologies as woof crosses with warp, but that no department of Mexican life was at a later stage uninfluenced by ideas which accompanied its ritual acts.