

(*Montezuma: Lord of the Aztecs*, 1973, pp. 23-4) supports the latter claim, the first Toltec ruler taking the name of the god, followed later by eight others who did the same. The Toltecs went into decline in the 13th century as a result of invasions by the Chichimecs who, in turn, were then conquered by the Aztecs. There is only passing mention in early theosophical literature (cf. *IU* I:552) of the Toltecs and their ancient urban center, Tula, which includes impressive pyramidal structures, one of which is dedicated to Quetzalcoatl. The Chichimecs are not mentioned at all.

The Mayan civilization does have several references in theosophical literature and deserves a separate entry along with its principle text *Popul Vuh* or "Council Book," so it will not be detailed here. See MAYAN RELIGION.

The term *Aztec* was applied to the last of the great empires of Mexico by a Spanish historian, Francisco Xavier Clavijero, in the 18th century. The Aztecs called themselves *Mexica* (pronounced "Me-shee-ka") who around 1100-1160 CE migrated into the area of central Mexico from a place they called Aztlán, which gives us the word "Aztec." It is from their name for themselves that the word Mexico (pronounced "Mey-hi-co") is derived. Convention, however, now dictates that we refer to them as Aztecs. Our knowledge of them is based on a few codices written in hieroglyphics, post-conquest copies of lost manuscripts (many of which were burned as "works of the devil" by priests who accompanied the Spanish conquistadores), and a verbal tradition. Unfortunately, there are inconsistencies between these sources so reconstructing their religious beliefs must be considered somewhat tentative. And the post-conquest writings were done by people familiar with the Old Testament, so they often attempted, quite improbably, to connect the Aztecs with one of the lost tribes of Israel (cf. J. Eric S. Thompson, *The Rise and Fall of Mayan Civilization*, 2nd ed. 1966, p. 33, who attributes the claim to an eccentric Englishman, Lord Kingsborough [*Antiquities of Mexico*, 1831]; cf. also Nigel Davies, *The Aztecs: a History*, 1974, p. 9, who quotes a Spanish historian).

The chief deity of the Aztecs was the war god Huitzilopochtli ("Blue [or Southern] Hummingbird"), who is said to have guided them, by communicating in dreams with their priests, during their migration from Aztlán into central Mexico. Huitzilopochtli, who is also a sun god reborn every morning from the womb of his mother the earth goddess Coatlicue ("Serpent-