

The Aztec Gods in Blended-Space: a Cognitive Approach to Ritual Time

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Abstract

By applying diverse approaches to study the Aztec gods, light can be shed on different aspects of their personalities. In this article the cognitive theory of conceptual blending, developed by Fauconnier and Turner, is applied. In this perspective the functioning of the human mind is viewed as being grounded on the constant blending of mental spaces, a process that, in turn, makes new mental spaces emerge. After briefly reviewing the attempts to apply this theory to the ritual domain in general, I consider two types of Aztec rituals, one dedicated to the rain god Tlaloc, and the other to Xochiquetzal, the goddess of seduction. I show the importance of the compression of time in the blending process that condenses three moments: mythical time, ritual time and the immediate future. The capability of the gods to subvert the lineal passage of time and to compress past, present and future stands out as a one of the chief characteristics highlighting the advantages found by applying Blending-Theory.

Keywords

Conceptual-Blending-Theory – Aztec – gods – temporality

The Aztecs who occupied Central Mexico in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (the time of the Spanish Conquest) are known through archaeological evidence and by pictographic documents and Nahuatl-language (Aztec) texts compiled by early missionaries. They are famous for the exuberance and complexity of their rituals organized around the representation of several dozen gods who were identified by their name, as well as by the ornaments encasing their anthropomorphic figure. The gods were represented two-dimensionally

in the pictographic manuscripts and mural paintings, and three-dimensionally in the statuary and by an array of men and women who personified the deities during the rituals, either as priests or priestesses during the ceremonies, or as sacrificial victims.

Reflections upon the nature of the Aztec gods began with Eduard's Seler's first studies of the divinatory manuscripts from Central Mexico (particularly those of the Borgia Group) and were further pursued by numerous scholars in research on pictographic manuscripts. Early approaches centered on identifying the gods by their attributes, i.e., facial paint, body coloring, body suit, and headdress; jewelry: nose ornaments, ear ornaments, pectorals (Boone, 2007: 39–44). Given that the gods' identity resided in their array, composed of a series of signs or symbolic objects adorning a mannequin or an impersonator, most researchers sought to decipher the meaning of their corporal elements (Seler, 1963, Nicholson, 1971, Boone, 1989, Spranz, 1973, Tena, 2009, Mikulska, 2015, to name only a few). A second approach involved the question concerning the conception of god (*teotl*) and embodied deities (*teixiptla*) (Hvidtfeldt, 1958, Bassett, 2015) and their performance during ceremonies and feasts (Nowotny, 1961, DiCesare, 2009). Different approaches shed light on different aspects of the personality of the Aztec gods, and in my own research, I have used both the first (Dehoue, in press) and the second approach (Dehoue, 2016a and 2017b: 73 ff.).

Under each of these two general approaches, researchers have applied diverse methods of analysis. I, for one, have used several methods borrowed from cognitive linguistics. In point of fact, our grasp of the Aztec world depends on the interpretation of texts and images left to us by their descendants. This involves a delicate interpretative process, particularly because we must deal with metaphors, signs and symbols produced in a society very different from our own. Knowledge of the cognitive procedures employed by the Aztecs can provide us with a framework to guide our attempts at deciphering and can help us to avoid over-interpretation.

The branch of cognitive linguistics concerned with the constitution of meaning appears to be highly useful in deciphering ritual, plastic and linguistic acts. What I particularly have in mind is Conceptual Metaphor Theory, worked out in the decades following the publication of Lakoff and Johnson's book (1980). Its basic premise is that metaphor is not simply a stylistic feature of language, but that thought itself is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. This means that one conceptual domain is systematically structured in terms of another. A concrete method of analysis has been derived from Conceptual Metaphor Theory, consisting of the Target domain that represents the domain to be understood, and the Source domain which provides the structure

of understanding. Since this is a cognitive procedure this method can be applied not only to linguistic phenomena, but to material phenomena as well as objects (Tilley, 1999). I, myself, have used it to analyze several Mesoamerican rituals (Dehouve, 2007, 2011, 2013, 2014b, 2015, 2016c and in press).

What I propose in this article is to apply Conceptual Blending-Theory developed by Fauconnier and Turner (2002) to Aztec rituals and gods. Conceptual Blending Theory is a way of envisioning the functioning of the human mind as being grounded on the constant blending of mental spaces causing the emergence of new mental spaces capable of developing in new directions. At first glance, its purpose seems general and abstract, but it is accompanied by a highly precise method for breaking down the blending procedure. This makes it possible to shed light on characteristics of the Aztec gods not readily perceived, particularly their relationship to time. Following a presentation of Blending Theory and its application to the analysis of ritual, this article will examine two cases of Aztec ritual, one dedicated to the rain-god Tlaloc and the other to Xochiquetzal, the goddess of seduction.

Two main issues are raised from my analysis, the first of which is that of cognitive relativity. The word “cognitive” evokes a frame of culture-independent cognition and yet studies on language have revealed cultural variations, mainly in categorization operations (Evans and Green, 2006: 248–283) and conceptual metaphors (Kövecses, 2010: 195–213; Dancygier and Sweetser, 2014: 162–182). A reflection of this type has yet to be conducted regarding Blending-Theory. The second issue involves the specific contribution of Blending-Theory to anthropological research. Whenever anthropologists and archaeologists have resorted to cognitive theories – and, to date they have rarely done so – they have mainly used categorization and conceptual metaphor theories. Accordingly, the aim of this article is to respond to the following question: How the blending approach facilitates an understanding of the material that could not be arrived at by other means using cognitive theorizing on cultural material?

1 Blending-Theory

For Fauconnier and Turner imagination, through a process of multiple and constant “blendings” of mental spaces, is the principal basis of the functioning of the human mind and the construction of meaning. This idea took shape in Fauconnier’s work (1994 and 1997) and for him meaning construction involves two processes: the building of mental spaces and the establishment of mappings between them. Fauconnier defines mental spaces as “partial structures that proliferate when we think and talk, allowing a fine-grained partitioning

of our discourse and knowledge structures" (Fauconnier, 1997: 11). In this same line, Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 40) speak of "small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk, for purposes of local understanding and action".

The essence of the "blending" is to construct a partial match between two input mental spaces and to project selectively from those inputs into a novel "blended" mental space (also called "the blend") which then dynamically develops an emergent structure (Fauconnier and Turner, 2003: 58–59). The input spaces, the generic space, the blended space and their connections constitute the basic diagram of what the authors call a "conceptual integration network". Conceptual integration, also called "blending," is a basic mental operation that works on conceptual arrays to produce conceptual integration networks.

Fauconnier and Turner have applied their method of analysis to a wide range of situations, in fields as different as scientific discovery, humor, advertising and religious rituals. Many of the cases they have studied have become famous in the field of cognitive linguistics. Such is the case of the "Boat race" or "Regatta". A modern catamaran was sailing from San Francisco to Boston in 1993, trying to outpace a clipper that sailed the same course in 1853. A sailing magazine reported the event as if the two boats participated in the same race, which made it possible to compare their speed and show that the catamaran was faster.

The conceptual integration network is constituted by the two input mental spaces – Input 1: the race in 1993; Input 2: the race in 1853 –, partially matched by salient aspects of each event (the voyage, the departure and arrival points, the period and time of travel, the boat, its positions at various times). The two events share a generic space, which connects them and is formed by a schematic frame of sailing from San Francisco to Boston ("boat making an ocean voyage"). Blending consists of partially matching the two inputs and projecting selectively from these two input spaces into a third mental space, the blended space, in which the two boats engage in the race (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002: 63–65, 2003: 58–59).

For a blended space to be constituted recourse to the fundamental procedure of compression is required. In the case of the Boat Race, there is compression of SPACE: the course of the catamaran could be effected some miles distant from the course followed by the clipper. But in the blend, space is compressed so that the two boats follow the same course. A compression of TIME is also involved: the two input spaces relate to events from different periods, but in the blend the two events are viewed as simultaneous (summarized from Fauconnier and Turner, 2003: 58–59 and Evans and Green, 2006: 421).

The authors call the compressed data: "vital relations". Actually, outer-space links are created between the two inputs that match two counterpart elements

or properties in the input spaces, establishing “outer-space relations”. In the process of blending the vital relations are compressed and represented as “inner-space relations” in the blend. In the case of the Regatta, these vital relations are Space and Time. When they become compressed in inner-space relations in the blend, the result is the simultaneity of the events, also called “Uniqueness of event”.

According to the authors, many other vital relations are subject to being compressed beyond time and space (Role-Value, Analogy, Part-Whole, etc.). Here, we will only be concerned with the compressions that involve Time and Cause/Effect, creating the Simultaneity of the event, Uniqueness of the identity (of a thing or a being), and integration of Cause and Effect, which will be crucial in the rituals to be examined below.

2 Blending-Theory and Ritual

A ritual can be approached as the blending of two inputs, one consisting of the ritual representation proper, and the other the real event on which the ritual is supposed to act. A fundamental aspect of ritual is, in fact, its performativity. Since the time of its early development, anthropology has considered that the purpose of ritual is to transform reality since the reason it is performed is so that a group or an individual can ward off evil or achieve prosperity [(Hubert and Mauss [1899], 1968) and Hocart (1936)].

Stated in more modern terms stemming from Austin’s (1962) work on speech arts, one could say that rituals are performative. This idea has been expressed in terms of Blending-Theory as follows:

My very general definition of performativity is that it involves a particular relation of fit between a mental space which is a representation, and the corresponding represented space. If the representation is taken as fitting the represented space, then the relation between the spaces is depictive or representational. [...] If, on the other hand, the represented space is taken as fitting (being causally influenced or changed by) the representation, then the relation is performative. The act of representation, by its performance, constitutes (or performs as a causal agent in) the structure of the represented space.

SWEETSER, 2000: 310

Here we find the terms defined above; the inputs are the mental spaces; input 1 corresponds to the ritual act (a mental space that is a representing space) and

input 2 corresponds to life (it is the mental space that is the space represented). In the blend, the representation and the space represented are merged, resulting in a modification of reality for the ritual actors.

From the Blending-Theory perspective Sweetser (2000: 312 ff) has analyzed an Italian village ritual consisting of carrying a newly born infant up a flight of stairs, so that the child might socially rise in the world later in life. As is the case of many rituals, this one is based on a metaphorical construction and Sweetser includes Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory in her analysis. Certain metaphoric constructions are based on image schema, defined as pre-conceptual structures based on embodied experience. These include such central experiential *gestalts* as UP/DOWN (Johnson, 1987). This is precisely the case of the metaphor that structures the Baby in the Stairs Ritual: STATUS IS UP and then GAINING STATUS IS RISING (Sweetser, 2000: 312). The child being carried up the stairs is the Source domain, and the child rising in his life is the Target domain. The mapping between the two domains is UP/DOWN.

The conceptual integration network diagram is constituted by:

Input 1 is the carrying of the baby upstairs; it is the representing space (in terms of Blending-Theory) and the Source (in terms of Conceptual Metaphor Theory).

Input 2 is the child's life; it is the represented space (in terms of Blending-Theory) and the Target (in terms of Conceptual Metaphor Theory).

The generic space is "some very abstract scalar structure, with a positive and negative pole to the scale".

The blended space is the child's life direction AS going upstairs (Sweetser, 2000: 322).

This ritual uses compression of vital relations of several types. The first is a compression of Time or Structure of the life span of the baby, corresponding to the much shorter whole trip upstairs. Next, there is also a compression of Time because "now" is compressed into "to-morrow" in the blend. And, especially, as we are in a performative context, compression of the Cause (input 1: ritual) into its Effect (input 2: the baby's life).

With regard to this ritual, Fauconnier and Turner (2000: 295–296) conclude:

"The ritual studied by Sweetser is fairly representative of rituals in general and suggests that this fundamental and elaborate human activity, unparalleled in the animal world, makes use of the operation of conceptual blending as its basic instrument of imaginative invention. Its power is to integrate in a single, very brief, concrete event the complicated and

extended causal patterns of a human life. In the blend, reaching the top of the stairs is the desired effect, a successful life. But reaching the top of the stairs is also the ritual cause of the successful life because the ritual is performed to bring about success in life. The blend presents the effect directly as contained in its cause" (Fauconnier and Turner, 2000: 295). "Since the ritual integrates cause and effect, any aspect of the performance can be experienced as simultaneously a cause and its effect in both the blend and the future life".

FAUCONNIER AND TURNER, 2000: 296

The compression of Time and Cause/Effect consequently achieves in the blend the compression into Uniqueness of the structure of two events (carrying the baby upstairs and the child's life) and their Simultaneity. As Sweetser concludes: "in the blended space of the ritual the movement upwards causes the future improvement in social status, because it *constitutes* it" (Sweetser, 2000: 323, my italics).

The same conceptual diagram is thus applied to this ritual and the Boat Race examined above, but with one important difference: in the Boat Race, the simultaneity of the events was depictive as its purpose was to compare the duration of the race of the two boats. In ritual, simultaneity is performative and attained for the purpose of projecting the characteristics of input 1 (ritual performance) onto input 2 (real life). This is why "The integration of cause and effect is often the central motivation of ritual" (Fauconnier and Turner, 2000: 294).

In his book, *A Cognitive Theory of Magic*, Sørensen (2007) uses several cognitive theories, including Blending-Theory, to analyze the rituals encountered by Malinowski (1935) in the Trobriand Islands. One is an agricultural ritual consisting of reciting a spell that describes the action of sweeping the surface of the garden to drive off garden pests and disease harmful to the crops. Similar to Sweetser (see above), Sørensen provides a diagram in which input 1 is the action of sweeping in the domestic space to drive off the dirt and unwanted small objects, while input 2 is the cultivated space where harmful insects proliferate. The blended space constitutes the ritual in which "the mode of interaction is projected from the domestic/social domain of human actions, and the object of the action projected from the domain of the garden" (Sørensen, 2007: 124). By recurring to Conceptual Metaphor Theory, it could likewise be said that input 1 constitutes the source domain (sweeping) projected onto the target domain (garden). We might also include – something which Sørensen does not do – the compression of vital relations, particularly, the compression of Time (because the sweeping time is compressed with the time of the agricultural

season) and the compression of Cause/Effect (since the blend, i.e., the ritual, presents the effect directly as contained in the cause).

So far, Sørensen's analysis is no different from Sweetser's. I point this out because in a previous chapter Sørensen (2007: 79) furnishes the key to the magical efficacy of the spells pronounced by the magicians. He states that, according to Malinowski, there are two myths explaining the origin of the garden magic. According to the first, the ancestors brought magic with them when they first emerged from beneath the earth, and the second, magic was a gift to the first magician from the culture hero Tudava. "Both myths have the common theme that magic is a cultural possession acquired in mythic times. In both cases, there are mappings between a mythic or sacred space and a present or profane space with its magician and spells" (ibidem). The ritual is therefore a blend of the present social space occupied by the magician and the mythic space occupied by the ancestor magician. We can well understand the reasons why Sweetser could not "update" this dimension of the Western Baby in the Stairs Ritual, since it is lacking a dedicated magical specialist and the explanatory myths. In societies where such specialists and myths do exist, such as the Trobriand Islanders or the Aztecs – and the latter are the subject of this article – the mythic dimension is part of ritual efficacy. However, in the examples taken from Malinowski, no specific myth supports the metaphoric sweeping of the garden. It is for this reason that Sørensen introduces this dimension in a special chapter where mythical space (which he calls "sacred space") is involved as an input in the constitution of blended space, i.e., the ritual space of all the rituals performed in the gardens. Among the Aztecs, each ritual is based on its own myth.

The mythical space introduces an important dimension in the analysis of ritual by means of Blending-Theory. We have already seen that the compression of Time and Cause/Effect is an essential aspect in the shaping of the blended space in the ritual framework. If myth is introduced as an input in the shaping of blended space, this means that alongside ritual time and the immediate future, a third time-frame is introduced, that of original times. Compression of time thus takes on an exceptional density, the main topic of the remainder of this article.

3 The Compression of Time in the Body of the Gods

Tlaloc was the Aztec rain god of fertility, mountains, thunder, the rainy season and new vegetation. His ornaments constituted his identity. Consequently, it was possible for the god to be incarnated in a statue or in a human impersonator

who took on his personality by adorning himself in his array (for the notion of *ixiptla* – impersonator – see Hvitdfeld, 1958, Bassett, 2015, Dehouve, 2016a and 2016b).

The personality of a deity was not contained in an adornment as an isolated item, but in the whole array (Boone 2007). This is because Tlaloc had numerous attributes, composed of a headdress, body paint, a mask, necklaces, bracelets and earrings, a short coat and several instruments the god held in his hands. Our knowledge of these items comes from two sources, their representation in statuary and pictographic manuscripts which show the material dimensions of these objects, and Nahuatl texts written in the sixteenth century providing a verbal explanation. We have at our disposal a particularly interesting source in Nahuatl concerning Tlaloc: an authentically pre-Columbian prayer collected by Friar Bernardino de Sahagún in the sixteenth century [FC (*Florentine Codex*, see Sahagún), L. VI: chap. 9: 35–40]. I will now proceed to analyze an object associated with Tlaloc's array for which we have information from material and written sources: the rattle stick or rattle board.

In his prayer, the priest addressed the rain gods, or *tlaloqueh*, saying:

*ma moloni in ayauhchicahuaztli,
ma huihuixahui in ayachcuahuitl.*

May mist rattle board billow,
may cloud rattle boards shake.

FC VI: 39. Translation by Dibble and Anderson

Several images of the mentioned instrument are found among the representations of the god Tlaloc in pictographic manuscripts: *Codex Tudela*, 2002, 16r et 26r, *Codex Magliabechiano*, 1996 34r, 44r, 92r, *Codex Ixtlilxochitl*, 1976, 96v et 101v, in the context of the Atemoztli and Etzalcualiztli annual feasts dedicated to the rain god, as well as in Sahagún 1561 PM 261v y FC, L. I, fig. 4, in the context of a general description of the gods.

The text of the prayer mentions the names of two percussion instruments. The first was *ayauhchicahuaztli*, a word composed of *ayahu[uh]-itl*, “mist, cloud”, and *chicahuaztli*, translated into English as “rattle stick” or “rattle board”, into Spanish as “sonajas” or “maracas”, and into French as “crécelles”, “bâton à sonnailles, bâton-hochet”. The second word was *ayachcuahuitl*, a word not found in the dictionaries which, according to Dibble and Anderson (FC VI: 39), substituted *ayochicahuaztli*, in other words, “mist (or cloud) rattle board”, and, according to Launey (1980: 11, 172, § 54), stemmed from

ayacachcuahuítl, in other words, “rattle stick” [“*bâton de maracas* (ayacachtli, *sorte de grelot fait en général d'une calebasse sèche*)”].

Today we know that *chicahuaztli* was a generic term that designated a percussion instrument of different shapes (for varieties of *chicahuaztli*, see Couvreur, 2011). A *chicahuaztli* in the form of a hollow stick was held by several classes of deities – such as the warrior god Xipe Totec –, but when the word was prefixed by *ayahu*[*uh*], it designated an instrument proper to Tlaloc and the rain gods. In this case, the instrument was painted blue, differing in iconographical terms from the sticks held by the other gods, such as the yellow *chicahuaztli* of Xipe Totec, (PM 250r) and the green *chicahuaztli* of Opochtli, the god of fishermen (PM 263r). As a point of fact, a *chicahuaztli* could have different meanings depending on the god holding it and the ritual context. Here, I am exclusively interested in the *ayauhchicahuaztli* (mist rattle board) and its meaning in the pluvial context.

It should also be mentioned that, according to certain sources, Tlaloc holds another instrument: a serpent-shaped stick painted blue and known in Nahuatl by the terms *oztopilli* (white reed), *tlapetlanilcuahuítl* (lightning stick) or *coatopilli* (serpent stick). This instrument represented lightning and thunder, as the names clearly show. However, I center my attention here only on the mist rattle board.

The instrument was shaken by the priests and impersonators of Tlaloc during the ceremonies and I will show that it represented an auditory metaphor for the sound of falling rain. Generally speaking, objects possessed a metaphoric dimension in Aztec rituals. They belong to the category of Resemblance Metaphors, based on physical resemblance, also called Image Metaphors (Lakoff and Turner, 1989, Grady, 1999, Evans and Green, 2006: 293), in which the mapping is “of the one-shot kind generated by two images brought into correspondence by the superimposition of one image onto the other” (Evans and Green, 2006: 293).

In Aztec ritual, the Image Metaphor frequently manifests itself in an object which consequently constitutes a material or solid metaphor (Tilley, 1999). “Solid metaphor works in the same way as other metaphoric processes by mapping the structure of one domain onto that of another” (ibid., 1999: 268) and the source image is mapped onto a target domain which is also an image. In the world of things, metaphoric aspects of mapping include such elements as color, shape, curvature, material used and technological process (ibidem). It can be added that a metaphoric object is capable of being perceived, not only visually, but also by the other senses (hearing, smell, taste and touch) [Dehouve, 2013b]. All this opens the way to a large number of different mappings, rich in sensorial suggestion.

This theoretical framework enables us to easily understand that the rattle stick is an object which, through auditory mapping, represents one of the typical sounds of the rainy season – the sound of rain striking the ground –, because it is made of a hollow gourd filled with seeds that produces a repetitive rustling sound when shaking. The source domain (rattle stick) is mapped onto the target domain (the rain) through the auditory mapping.

My interest in this instrument in ritual is linked to the notion of performativity: though it is impossible for humans to act directly on rain, they can act on an object metaphorically representing rain. Shaking the rattle stick (the “representation”, according to Sweetser, or the “source domain”, according to Lakoff) makes it possible, in the logic of the ritual, to act on the rain (“represented space” or “target domain”) [see Sweetser, 2000, above]. In the same line of thought, Sørensen (2007: 132) has aptly remarked that “conceptual blending in magical rituals involves the mapping of image-schemata belonging to one manipulative domain onto a less manipulative domain in order to enable the agent to interact with this domain”.

The ritual thus activates two mental spaces, that of the shaken rattle board and that of falling rain. It furthermore reaffirms a third mental space, that of myth. In this regard, among the Aztecs, the kingdom of the god Tlaloc, the Tlalocan, represents the archetypical domain of fertility. Let us recall that the term archetype is applied to an “original or primeval model” (*Larousse Dictionary*, 2017) and in Plato’s philosophy, to the prototype of the realities of the world. This is a notion close to the one enunciated by the informants of Sahagún: “And in Tlalocan there was great wealth, there was [sic] great riches. Never did one suffer. Never did the ears of green maize, the gourds, the squash blossoms, the heads of amaranth, the green chilis, the tomatoes, the green beans, the *tempoalxochitl*, fail” (FC III: 47. Translation by Dibble and Anderson). Tlalocan was conceived of as a chest holding all seeds and plants (López Austin and López Luján, 2009: 323). Described by scholars as the underground paradise of perennial vegetation (López Luján, 2014: 39), Tlalocan represented the archetype of all places and times where fertility reigned.

The Rattle Stick Ritual can be formally analyzed, following the Blending-Theory method:

Input 1: the rattle stick (the representing space or Source) is shaken

Input 2: rain falls (represented space or Target)

Input 3: rain falls in Tlalocan (mythic space)

The generic model is constituted by an actor who performs an action: he makes the rain fall.

The blended space of the ritual is constituted by the rain AS the noise of the rattle stick.

This model is based on the compression of Time. Let us first consider the compression produced between input 1 and input 2. The lapse of time separating the rainy season rituals is compressed into Simultaneity. According to the above-mentioned manuscripts, the Aztec twenty-day months during which the rituals to Tlaloc using this percussion instrument were performed were Atemoztli (9–28 December) and Etzalcualiztli (3 May–11 June) [following a correlation established by Broda (2000), based on texts from Sahagún]. But in Mexico the rainy season begins in May and ends in November. The first ritual was thus five months before the first showers while the second one was carried out nearly the same time the first rains were beginning. The compression of Time was accompanied by the compression of Cause/Effect into Uniqueness, since the ritual as a cause and rain as an effect were condensed in the blend.

This compression of Time and Cause/Effect appears clearly in the invocation of Tlaloc's priest: "May mist rattle board billow, may cloud rattle boards shake". This does not actually refer to the shaking of the instrument during the ritual being performed *at the present moment* but refers to the sound of the rain falling *in the future* when the rainy season begins following the propitiatory ceremony. This clearly appears through the use of the subjunctive which is, par excellence, a tense of performativity. But the priest asking for the rains to come does not request us to listen to the noise of the falling rain but that we "listen to the noise of the rattle stick", which he shook prior to asking for rain. The phrase pronounced by Tlaloc's priest takes the ritual for the natural phenomenon, the cause for the consequence, and the before for the after.

This analysis is supported by information regarding the Nahuatl verbs referring to the shaking of the rattle stick. The verb *moloni* has several meanings – "to flow from the source" (Molina, 1966: 398), "to boil, bubble, foam, shake, spread out" (Wimmer) – and can describe the movement of the clouds and churning of running water. It thus includes two categories of meanings: those referring to a natural phenomenon (to flow from the source, boil, bubble, foam) and those designating a human action (to shake, spread out). The word consequently designates both the shaking of the rattle stick and the spurt-ing out of water and foam. Accordingly, the phrase translated as "May mist rattle board billow" could also be translated as "may it spread out [like clouds and water]".

The verb *huihuixahui*, which stems from *huihuixoa* ("to shake"), was used to describe a heavy rain, as in the phrase: *a ca oipan ompixauh, ca oipan*

huihuixauh: “it rained on it, on it it rained” (FC VI: 4). The verb also has two categories of meaning: one designates the natural phenomenon (to rain hard) and the other a human action (to shake). Accordingly, the phrase translated as “may cloud rattle boards shake” could be translated as “may the rain fall like the cloud rattle boards”. In both cases the same verb simultaneously refers to the action of moving the musical instruments and the natural pluvial phenomena. Each expresses polysemy, whose key is found in the blended space joining the ritual to the rainy season.

It is thus clear that the ritual time (in input 1) and the time of the future phenomenon (in input 2) are compressed in the blend. But this is not the complete picture since another type of time, the timelessness of the myth (input 3) is also a component in this blending. A precise time is not assigned to Tlalocan: it has existed, it exists and it will exist since it refers to the archetypal image of the rainy season and fertility. It draws together in its nature the model of all the rainy seasons, both those past and those to come in the future.

The Rattle Stick Ritual thus consisted in the blending of three mental spaces representing three distinct and compressed temporalities. But this ritual was in no way independent of the rain god. Quite the contrary. It was part of the body of Tlaloc since, as we have seen above, the personality of a deity was contained in the whole of his or her ornaments. This occurs because the Aztec blends analyzed are depicted, not just linguistically but materially and graphically.

The mist rattle stick, object of the present discussion, is not the only instrument lending itself to an analysis in terms of a material metaphor and Blending-Theory. We could pursue this line of evidence by showing that the body of Tlaloc was covered with other objects that represented both the ritual and natural phenomenon desired: the rain drops hitting the ground were represented by drops of liquid rubber scattered over paper, new green vegetation was represented by jade beads and quetzal bird feathers, etc. Due to limits of space, I cannot further develop other examples and thus I will only mention the comment of the author of the *Codex Ixtlilxochitl* (1976: f. 110r) concerning the image of Tlaloc (f. 110v): “... every part of his array signified rain and abundance of crops”.

As the attributes represented on the body of the impersonators in the course of the rituals constituted the essence of the deity, Tlaloc was literally made, not only of material metaphors, but also of blended spaces. Consequently, and due the compression of Time, the deity was an entity made of time compressed between the moment of the ritual and that of the desired event – in regards to the time lived by humans – and the timelessness of the myth – in regards to the time in the Tlalocan.

We are dealing here with a characteristic of the Aztec gods which resides in their representation during the performance of the rituals and their dependence on material metaphors. On other occasions, the deity had a purely mental existence but, as we will see below, a comparable analysis could be applied to him or her.

4 The Compression of Time in Archetypical Actions

The mythical-ritual context of the Aztecs offers another category of construction of the gods as “blended beings” based on the notion of archetypical action. I use this term in a sense different from that of Humphrey and Laidlaw (1994). These authors use the title and expression *The Archetypical Actions of Ritual* within the framework of a general theory of ritual. In their perspective, each rite has an archetype with an existence independent of concrete situations. It follows therefrom a script and rules set in advance by prior stipulation in such a fashion that an archetypical ritual action is imposed on the officiant as an objective reality. Here, I do not use the term “archetypical action” to designate a rite, but an action from daily life in Aztec society.

As a case in point, for the Aztecs, social actions – such as birth, death, war, etc. –, accompanied by ceremonies during which men played the role of the deities who were the first to have performed the action when the world began, could be considered archetypical actions. The procedure was based on the construction of the deities identified by their functions and the multiple mythical narratives that were cause for representing the gods in the ritual.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Father Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón (1892) documented several cases of so-called “idolatrous” practices in the central area of the present-day state of Guerrero in Mexico. His Treatise contains many spells (*conjuros* in Spanish) in Nahuatl, whose purpose was to help people perform daily activities: travel, sow and harvest crops, fish, etc. Although collected a century after the Spanish conquest, these prayers invoke many of the ancient Aztec gods and the myths concerning them. I will take the example of the goddess Xochiquetzal (Flower Quetzal) invoked in several types of rituals performed for different purposes.

In Aztec times Xochiquetzal was the young goddess of fertility, the symbol of sexual attraction and seduction. She was portrayed in several myths concerning sexuality: the goddess had sexual relations with the gods Quetzalcoatl, Tezcatlipoca, Tlaloc and Huitzilopochtli, and was responsible for the creation of flowers by skin being ripped off her genitals (Raby, 1999, Dupey, 2013). In ritual enactment, the goddess was associated with the flower and song

rituals in which the *ahuianime*, or “pleasure girls” danced with the young warriors, recalling Xochiquetzal’s loves with the warrior gods Tezcatlipoca and Huitzilopochtli, and expressing the “fundamental association of love power with war power” (Raby, 1999: 224).

Ruiz de Alarcón’s *Treatise* is of interest in this discussion in that it shows how myths involving Xochiquetzal could be used to transform everyday activities of the Aztecs in archetypical actions. As we will see, despite the variety of cases, the schemata of the production of the blended spaces in which the goddess intervenes is homogeneous and of the same type found in the analysis of the case of the Rattle Stick Ritual performed for Tlaloc.

4.1 *The Seduction Ritual*

A spell cast to “attract and charm” *“atraher y aficionar”*, in other words to seduce a woman (Ruiz de Alarcón, 1892: 181) was presented as the reiteration of the different mythical episodes in which the god Tezcatlipoca seduced Xochiquetzal, provoking the end of an era (*Histoire du Mechique*, 2011: 147–153, 155; *La Leyenda de los Soles*, 2011: 177–181; *Historia de los mexicanos por sus pinturas*, 2011: 27, 29, 37; Muñoz Camargo, 1998: 166; *Codex Telleriano-Remensis*, 1995, plate n^o 3r, 11r, 13r, 22v; *Codex Vaticanus A*, 1996: lám. n^o 24v, 26r, 31v; references cited in Mazzetto, 2014: 138). As is often the case in this type of myths, sexual relations have catastrophic consequences because they involve the breaking of the sexual abstinence of a male god, in this case Tezcatlipoca. Penitence, in fact, was a ritual act of capital importance that included several sequences such as fasting and wakefulness, the most important of which was sexual abstinence (Dehouve, 2014a), and breaking it necessarily had negative effects at the cosmic level. However, in the spell I examine here, I will not take up the issue of this negative aspect: the male is compared with Tezcatlipoca and Xochiquetzal subsequently aids him in his quest and incarnates the person of the woman desired.

Ye noconhuica in nohueltiuh in xochiquetzal [...]
nomatca, nehuatl nitelpochtli, niyaotl, nonitonac, nonitlathuic [...]
¿Ca mach nelli teotl?

I bring [to my aid] my older sister Xochiquetzal [...]

I am in person, I am the Telpochtli [young warrior, name of Tezcatlipoca], I am Yaotl [the combatant], Tonac, Tlathuic [names of Tezcatlipoca] [...]

[The woman I want to seduce] Is she not truly a goddess? (author’s translation).

The conceptual integration network diagram is constituted by:

Input 1: a man recites a spell in which Tezcatlipoca seduces Xochiquetzal (the representing space, in the ritual)

Input 2: a man seduces a woman (the represented space, in real life)

Input 3: Tezcatlipoca seduces Xochiquetzal (the mythic space)

The mental space of the representation or the representing space (input 1) which, in the example of Tlaloc's rattle stick, was constituted by the instrument handled during the course of the ceremony, is composed of the enunciation of the archetypical seduction of Xochiquetzal by the warrior god. Input 2, or represented space, is the one consisting of real life in which men seduce women. Input 3 is constituted by the myth in which Xochiquetzal is seduced by Tezcatlipoca, in which only the positive aspects are retained since the nefarious consequences in terms of the end of the world are excluded.

The generic space refers to an abstract schema in which actors and an action are involved.

The blended space is constituted by the superimposition of the mythical and ritual seduction onto the actual seduction in real life. This operation requires several mappings to be established between inputs 1, 2 and 3. Typically, these mappings will be: actors and action. The actors are Tezcatlipoca in inputs 1 and 3 and the man engaged in the seduction in input 2, Xochiquetzal in inputs 1 and 3 and the woman to be seduced in 2. The action is the seduction. This is what I designate as an "archetypical action" because, as current as this may be in the everyday life of humans, it represents the reenactment of an action performed by the gods at the time of the world's creation. In actuality, "[Xochiquetzal] "was the first woman to sin" (*Codex Telleriano-Remensis*, 1995: fol. 3).

Contrary to the case of Tlaloc's rattle stick, the constitution of the blended space is not achieved here through a material metaphor. But it implies a personification that the application of Blending-Theory suffices to explain with the help of the notion of compression. The seducer becomes Tezcatlipoca through the compression of Time into Uniqueness and Simultaneity. Three moments distant in time are thus compressed: the mythic time (input 3), the reenactment of this moment in the ritual (input 1), and the near future (input 2). It is this compression which gives rise in the blend to a new being, the man-god.

This same network diagram put into play can be found in several rituals with diverse purposes, although all involve the intervention of the seductress Xochiquetzal.

4.2 *A Curing Ritual for a Scorpion Sting*

One of the spells Ruiz de Alarcón (1892: 221) collected was for the purpose of curing a scorpion sting. It was based on a myth found only in the works of Ruiz de Alarcón and his compiler, Jacinto de la Serna (1892). According to the myth, while the god Yappan was engaged in penance, two goddesses became aware that he was trying to turn himself into a scorpion in order to kill whomever he could. They decided to make him break his sexual abstinence to prevent his metamorphosis. To this effect, they sent Xochiquetzal who enveloped him in her blouse. He sinned with her and because he broke his penitence, the scorpion's sting is not always mortal.

When a woman cures a scorpion's sting, she recites a spell, speaking to Yappan as if she were Xochiquetzal and reminding him that she seduced him. The message contained in her words is "remember that you sinned and, for that reason your sting is no longer mortal". It should be mentioned that in the spell, Xochiquetzal appears as the sister of Yappan, but incest is not implied since a husband will habitually address his wife as "sister" (Dehouve, 2016b).

The diagram, which, for reasons of space, I cannot present here, has the same structure as that of the foregoing example. The only change is the direction of the seduction. In the first ritual, it is the god who seduces Xochiquetzal and the man who seduces the woman, while in the healing ritual, it is Xochiquetzal who seduces the god. As we will see shortly, this double direction of the seduction opens the way for varied applications of the archetypal action of seduction, all the more so since the examples I will now examine also intervene in a metaphorical construction.

4.3 *Hunting Rituals*

There were several spells for hunting and fishing. Elsewhere (Dehouve, 2010), I examined one of them, the deer hunt spell, which recurs to a mythic ritual following the same model as the two spells analyzed above. Here I will consider another case, a *conjuro* whose purpose was to attract wild bees (Ruiz de Alarcón, 1892: 160–161). After having found a beehive in the forest, a hunter would take it home; the purpose of the spell was to persuade the bees to come and stay at his house. He would say:

Niquinhuicaz quittatituih nohueltiuh Xochiquetzal

I am going to take you to see my sister Xochiquetzal (author's translation)

Ruiz de Alarcón explains: “To hear the one casting the spell speak of his wife, it seemed as if he were singing the praises of her beauty to the bees to beguile them and make them want to go and live with her” (ibid.: 161).

The diagram is constituted by:

Input 1: The hunter recites a spell in which Xochiquetzal seduces the male gods, in this case, the bees (the representing space, in the ritual).

Input 2: The hunter takes the beehive inside the house where his wife resides (the represented space, in real life).

Input 3: Xochiquetzal seduces the male gods, in this case, the bees (the mythic space).

As in the examples presented above, the generic space refers to an abstract schema in which actors and an action are involved with the same compression of the three moments into Uniqueness and Simultaneity. The difference here is that this case is based on the Metaphor HUNT IS LOVE, in which LOVE is the Source domain and HUNT is the Target domain. Between the two domains, the mappings are: the actors (Xochiquetzal is the hunter’s wife who seduces the prey, the bees, in this case) and the action (predation is a seduction). This metaphoric construction, reported in different parts of the world, has been the subject of a number of papers on Siberia (Hamayon, 1990 and 1998) and Mesoamerica (Braakhuis, 2004 and 2010: 161 ff, Dehouve, 2008, 2010).

4.4 *A Ritual for Protection against Bandits*

Another spell was recited by an Indian from Iguala who wanted to protect himself from bandits when he traveled (Ruiz de Alarcón, 1892: 151–153). He alluded to the relations between the god Tezcatipoca and the goddess Xochiquetzal (to which we have referred above) as well as to the goddess’s relations with Quetzalcoatl. The latter was known for having broken his sexual abstinence in Tollan when Tezcatipoca gave him pulque to drink which inebriated him and made him sin, in other words, fornicate with his sister Quetzalpetlatl, another figure of seduction (*Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, 1975: fol. 5–8). Another document directly links Quetzalcoatl with Xochiquetzal (*Codex Magliabechiano*, 1996: plate 61 v).

In the spell, the traveler presents himself as both Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatipoca and his assailants are compared to women in Xochiquetzal’s retinue. In several phrases characterized by double-entendre, the traveler affirms that the bandits will be as weak as women, armed only with the weaving “stick”. He “will play” with them like Quetzalcoatl played with Xochiquetzal:

the verb “to play” (*ahuiltia*) has the double meaning of “to play sexually” and “to fight”. Since in this fight the traveler is in the role of the male (Quezalcoatl or Tezcatlipoca), he will vanquish his enemies.

Nomatca, nehhuatl ni quetzalcoatl, nimatl, ca nehhuatl niyaotl, nimoqueueloatzin, ahltle ipan nitlamati. [...]

Niquinmahahuiltiz nohueltihuan, nitlacaxillohuan [notlacaxillohuan] [...]

Nehhuatl nitlamacazqui, niyaotl, nimoquehueloatzin, ca ye no iz huitzeh nohueltihuan, notlacaxillohuan, ye quihualhuicah in nohueltiuh in xochiquetzal, quihualhuicah in ihhiyo yez in iichca tlahuitec, in iicpateuh inic nechahahuiltizque.

“I, in person, I am Quetzalcoatl, Matl, Yaotl, Moquehueloatzin [the first two names belong to Quetzalcoatl and the last two to Tezcatlipoca], he who fears nothing [...]

I will play sexually with my elder sisters, my kinswomen [the assailants] [...]

I am *tlamacazqui*, I am Yaotl, I am Moquehueloatzin [names of the two male gods], here come my elder sisters, my kinswomen. They are bringing my elder sister Xochiquetzal. She brings her breath [her anger] which will be made of her weaving stick, her ball of thread, with which she will play with me [the arms with which the assailants will battle will be womanly instruments, in other words, not dangerous for the traveler]” (author’s translation).

The diagram, which, for reasons of space, I cannot present here, has the same structure as that of the foregoing example. But this case recurs to a different metaphoric construction: COMBAT IS LOVE. COMBAT is the Target domain, to be understood through the Source domain LOVE. The mappings between the two domains are: the actors (the bandits are the woman seduced and the man attacked is the seducer) and the action (combat is a sexual relation).

What is striking is the variety of uses made of the myths of Xochiquetzal, the seductress. They were applied to love, curing, hunting and protection rituals. They gave rise to two categories of blended spaces: one which deals directly with seduction and does not include a metaphoric construction (love and curing rituals) and the other which takes LOVE as a Source domain for something else (the HUNT or a COMBAT). Furthermore, as stated above, the double meaning of seduction creates two possibilities: either the male gods take the

initiative – in which case they prevail over Xochiquetzal and the women or men personified by her in the seduction ritual and in the ritual aimed at protection from bandits –; or the goddess Xochiquetzal takes the initiative and it is she who prevails, as in the curing and hunting rituals.

In all the above cases, the deity is a blended being whose person is composed of the compression of several moments far apart in time: the time of the ritual and the immediate future which form part of the experience of humans, and mythical times which is both ancient and timeless.

5 Conclusion

Blending-Theory is a way of considering the functioning of the human mind as being based on the constant blending between mental spaces, which in turn makes new mental spaces emerge. In the analysis of rituals, Blending-Theory makes it possible to explain the mechanism of performativity showing how the represented space (input 1 staged in the ritual act) is projected onto the representing space (input 2 in real life) so as to transform the latter. Blending-Theory is broader than Conceptual Metaphor Theory because it can be applied both to metaphorical and non-metaphorical cases. If the case in point is metaphoric, the two approaches are complementary and the represented space constitutes the Source domain while the representing space the Target domain.

Compared to the Italian ritual studied by Sweetser (2000) and to the garden rituals in the Trobriand Islands studied by Sørensen (2007), the Aztec case stands out because of the conceptual existence of the gods. The Aztec gods were actually the cornerstone of the ritual system, which means that each ceremony necessarily involved one or several deities. The ways the gods were involved in rituals were probably varied and here I have only concerned myself with two types. The first involves the fact that the personality of the gods was contained in their attributes and body ornaments. I chose the example of the rattle stick as an auditory metaphor of rain, held in the hand of the image of the god Tlaloc or his impersonator. In this type, objects representing material metaphors were always involved, in such a way that the blends were materially expressed. The second type, exemplified by the goddess of seduction, Xochiquetzal, concerns the archetypical actions that were performed by the gods at the beginning of time and were reenacted in the rituals so that humans could successfully perform them in real life.

What does Blending-Theory contribute to our analysis that was not previously possible with Conceptual Metaphor Theory? At a general level, this

question was raised by Evans and Green (2006: 435 ff.) who “compare and contrast Blending Theory and Conceptual Metaphor Theory, and argue that as well as providing complementary perspectives, each theory addresses certain phenomena not accounted for by the other theory.” However, among the phenomena especially accounted for by Blending-Theory, the authors fail to mention a fundamental aspect brought to light in this analysis of Aztec data. Blending-Theory, in effect, provides a global insight by reducing complexity to human scale – the scope of human experience –, and achieves this through compression of vital relations. Among these vital relations, the compression of Time was seen to be fundamental.

The two ways in which Aztec gods were involved in the rituals examined above were based on the same sort of compression of Time which condensed three moments: mythical time, ritual time and the immediate future in life. These moments in time were incorporated in the Aztec notion of divinity, in the attributes that cover the body of the gods according to the first type considered, and in the invocation contained in the spell according to the second type. The capacity of the gods to subvert the linear passing of time and to compress past, present and future in their person represents a characteristic that has not been dealt with in previous approaches. Through the gods, mythical space took shape at the heart of the rituals, constituting what I have designated as input 3.

Blending-Theory has thus allowed us to reveal a cognitive procedure at the base of an original aspect, specific to Aztec ritual. This leads us to the issue that I raised in the introduction: To what extent can Blending-Theory, which accounts for a cognitive, and thus a universal procedure, explain extremely different cultural phenomena? The response lies in the phenomenon of conventionalization. When a blend is conventionalized in a certain culture, it is continually reinforced and modified. The Aztec gods represented blends of a highly conventionalized type. One of their essential characteristics was their use of the compression of Time, so that the simple mention or representation of a god would automatically ensure the condensation of several temporal levels.

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Abbreviations

FC: *Florentine Codex*, see Sahagún

PM: *Primeros Memoriales*, see Sahagún

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