

Most of our information on Mesoamerican religions comes from central Mexico, but the mythology of this area has been poorly understood. *Myths of Ancient Mexico* is the first comprehensive examination of these myths. In this innovative book, Michel Graulich summarizes the stories concerning the origin of the cosmos and the legendary histories of the Aztecs and their precursors, the Toltecs. The myths are compared with one another, then with similar material from other Mesoamerican cultures, particularly the *Popol Vuh*, the sacred book of the ancient Quiche Maya. Searching for common elements and underlying structures in the myths, Graulich shows that the principal history told in the origin myths is almost always that of the passage from one era to another, by way of a rupture between the sky and earth as a consequence of a transgression. Banished by the creators to darkness, the creatures return to light following a sacrifice. The same structure is found in the migration myths, in which an expulsion from the land of origin is followed, after wanderings in darkness, by an arrival in a Promised Land similar to the land of origin. The myths form a grand cycle of darkness and light that bears striking resemblances to themes of the Christian tradition. Drawing on extensive research in ancient Mexican source materials and modern ethnographic accounts, Graulich separates myths posing as history from actual historical events and illuminates the long unity of Mesoamerican religious thought. An invaluable resource for scholars of Mesoamerican studies, this book will also be welcomed by readers interested in American Indians or comparative religion.

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