



Huitzilipochtli: Hidden Images of the Aztec Calendar

Charles William Johnson

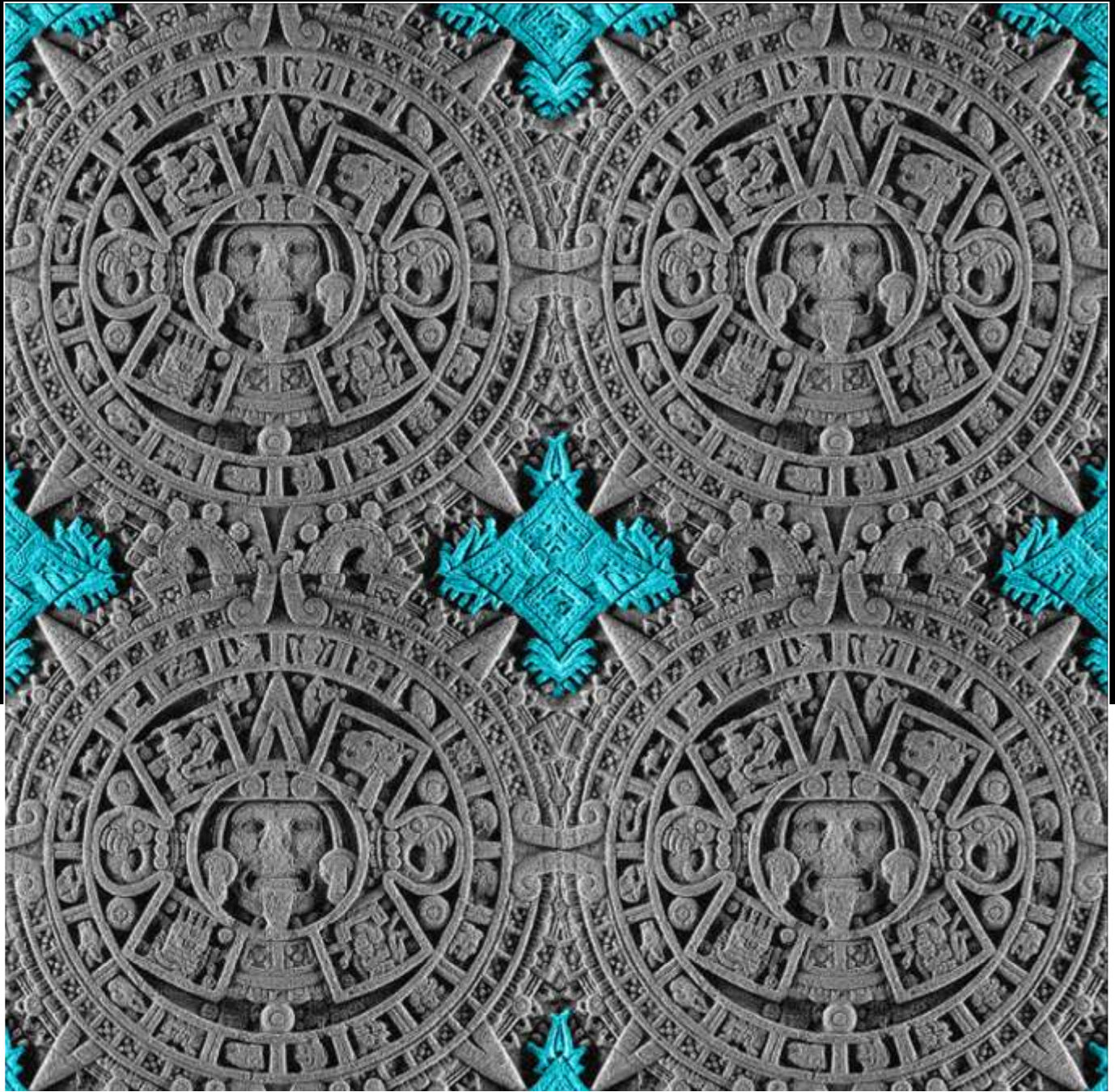
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Huitzilipochtli is the Aztec people's god of the sun and war. *Huitzilin* means hummingbird, and *opochtli* means left, as on the left side: hummingbird from the left, or the South as in direction.

Nearly twenty years ago, I began these studies on the math and geometry in ancient artwork. The very first hidden image that I encountered in my studies was this one of *Huitzilipochtli* in the four combined images of the Aztec Calendar. Since that time, scores of images many times over have been derived from analytical drawings based on the ancient artwork from seven cultures around the world.



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But, before presenting those innumerable hidden images designed into the ancient artwork of the world, it is fitting to offer a more precise vision of Huitzilipochtli and a possible relationship to the Aztec Calendar.

Many authors, such as Elizabeth Boone, state that the Aztec god, Huitzilipochtli was not associated to the calendars of the ancient

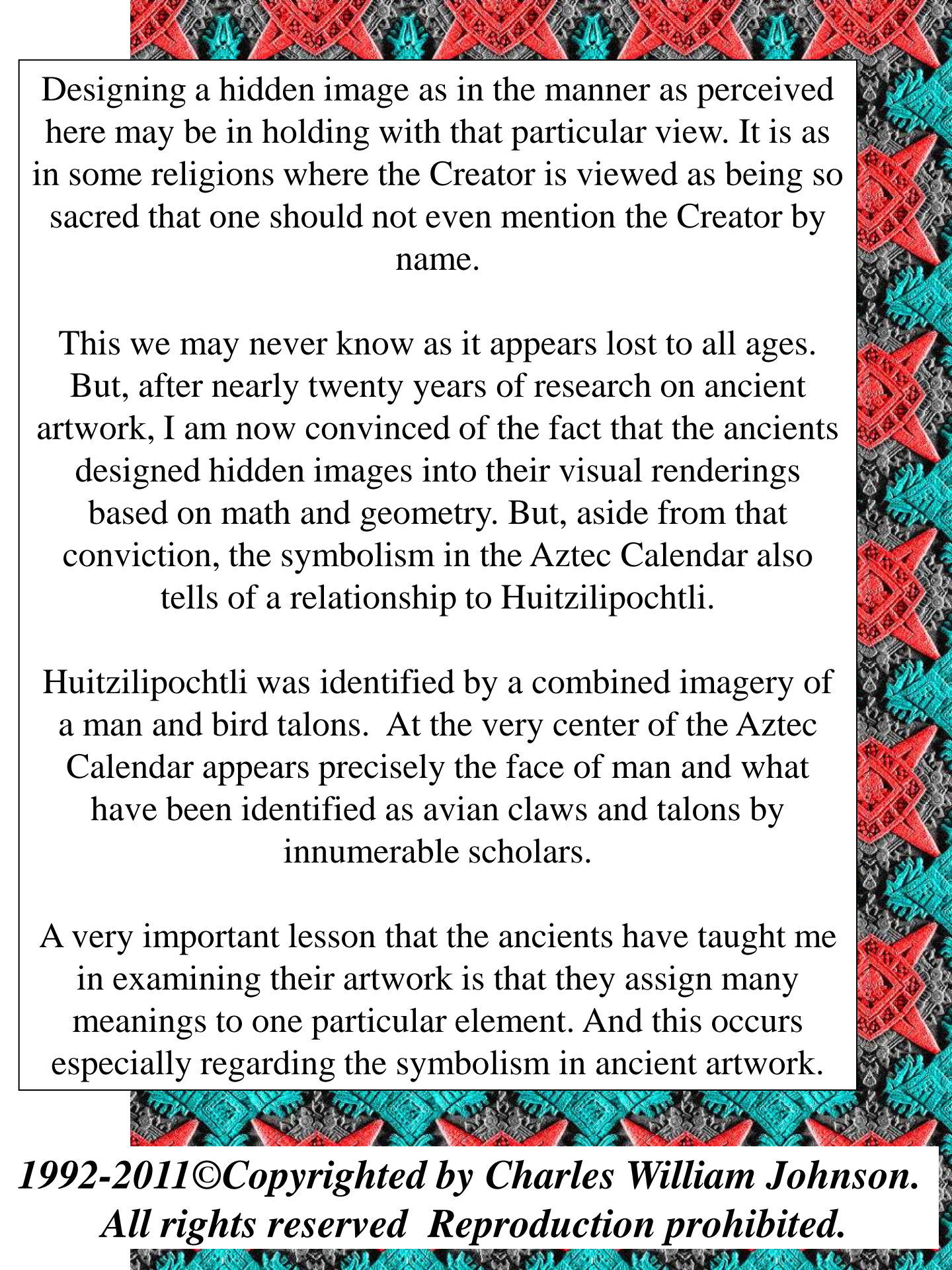
Aztecs. I beg to differ. When one considers the mythology revolving around the figure of Huitzilipochtli, it is possible to envision the Aztec Calendar as being reflexive of his attributes.

Few sculptures or images of Huitzilipochtli have survived, most of them probably being destroyed during the Spanish Conquest. There is the idea, however, that possibly Huitzilipochtli, the most sacred god of the Aztecs was not rendered into artwork or imagery as much as other gods.



Man with Bird talons, Huitzilipochtli, Aztec god of sun and war.

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Designing a hidden image as in the manner as perceived here may be in holding with that particular view. It is as in some religions where the Creator is viewed as being so sacred that one should not even mention the Creator by name.

This we may never know as it appears lost to all ages. But, after nearly twenty years of research on ancient artwork, I am now convinced of the fact that the ancients designed hidden images into their visual renderings based on math and geometry. But, aside from that conviction, the symbolism in the Aztec Calendar also tells of a relationship to Huitzilipochtli.

Huitzilipochtli was identified by a combined imagery of a man and bird talons. At the very center of the Aztec Calendar appears precisely the face of man and what have been identified as avian claws and talons by innumerable scholars.

A very important lesson that the ancients have taught me in examining their artwork is that they assign many meanings to one particular element. And this occurs especially regarding the symbolism in ancient artwork.

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By recognizing the central figure of the Aztec Calendar as possibly an imagery of Huitzilipochtli in this manner, I am not saying that the Aztec Calendar is exclusively about Huitzilipochtli. One thing that I have avoided in my writing is to wage a scholastic war that a particular piece of ancient artwork has a specific, exclusive meaning. My understanding from studying the ancients is that a particular piece of artwork may symbolize many different aspects. It may have many different meanings and often does.

I believe this to be the great wealth of ancient thinking expressed in ancient artwork. When I first began my studies, professor Rubén Bonifaz Nuño asked me whether the central human face in the Aztec Calendar was the Sun or the Moon, which one did I consider it to be?, he asked me. I remember my answer back then, nineteen years ago, and it is still the same answer today. The central human face of the Aztec Calendar may be both, either the Sun or the Moon, it depends upon how it is viewed in relation to the other elements within the calendar itself.

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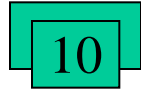
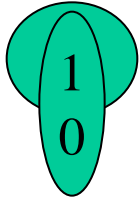
And, one may also add that it may be a representation of the Aztec god Huitzilipochtli as illustrated here. Assigning different meanings to the symbolism in the Aztec ancient art is well known, and many gods are presented in the codices and imagery with shared elements, making it difficult for scholars to decide whether a particular rendering may be one or the another god. At times Quetzalcoatl appears with elements that are proper to Huitzilipochtli, and at other times it appears that Huitzilipochtli has elements belonging to Quetzalcoatl. Debates ensue among scholars then whether a specific rendering is one or the other god as though there is a single answer to such a query.

Much of today's scholarship of the past is based on a particular professor launching a specific thesis of interpretation and doing battle with all other scholars as to a perceived meaning of piece of artwork. It is nearly impossible for scholars today to accept what appears to be the ancient approach to life and art: that one thing can have many meanings, depending upon how it is related to all other things. We are generally taught, and generally teach, that one thing has a single meaning; and then fight about which meaning it is.

In my view, a particular piece of ancient artwork has an infinite array of meanings, depending upon how the viewer situates that piece of artwork within the universe of ancient thought itself.

The design of the Aztec Calendar, in my mind, reflects this very idea, a specific design element in the Aztec Calendar can have multiple, nay, infinite meanings depending on how it is related to the other elements in its design. The design of the Aztec Calendar in my view is open-ended and requires the viewers to assign the meanings. The calendar is not sculpted with a specific meaning for each particular design element forever or for only a single restricted use. Just as the central human face may represent the Sun, the Moon, Huitzilipochtli, Venus and so forth, the other design elements may represent varied meanings: days, weeks, months, years, bundles, cycles [117, 693, 819, 1872000 days], the precession, different years [360, 364, 365, 260 days], and so on.

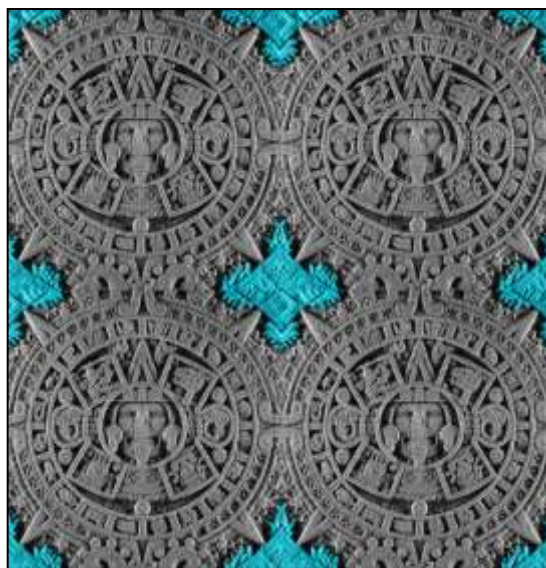
Although the Aztec Calendar appears at first glance to have each design element representative of a given meaning, reflecting a specific task, it would appear that there is a flexibility in meaning for each element. The bundles do not only count the days, time, but also particular things, such as food stuffs, metal, etc. The Aztec Calendar may be employed to reckon time or, to simply count things [space].



Chalchihuitl



There are at least three ways to render the number 10 in ancient Aztec glyphs as shown, according to Boone. The first round figure is easily recognizable on the Aztec Calendar as it occurs many times on the concentric circles. The second figure appears but in slightly modified variations in the four worlds and in the enclosed *13-Acatl* glyph at the top of the calendar's circular border. The third figure appears as the shape of the body/back of the hummingbird in the hidden image illustrated in this study. *Ten may be understood to be fractally unit one.*



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