

A Rabbit in a Pot

(Un conejo dentro de una vasija)

A Mexica Legend

Julieta Fierro Gossman



If you look at the Moon every night, you will see how it changes shape. Sometimes it looks round like a plate and sometimes it looks like a segment of an orange or a smile. The Moon has a night side and a day side, just like the Earth. The phases of the Moon are caused by changes in the light and darkness.

Five hundred years ago, the Mexicas lived in the region now known as Mexico. Their gods represented what they considered important: the rain, the Sun and the Moon. The Mexicas had founded their empire long before the Spaniards arrived in America. They thought that the Moon, which they called Coyolxauhqui, was a god who lived inside a pot and lit up the Earth depending on his position in the pot.

Some parts of the Moon are brighter than others. For the Mexicas the dark areas resembled a rabbit. And what's more, they thought the rabbit lived inside a white pot.

The Mexicas reasoned that if the Moon and the stars are not visible during the day it was because Coyolxauhqui's brother, Huitzilopochtli, the rising Sun, killed them every dawn.

The Moon was so important for the Mexicas that the word "Mexico" means "belly button of the Moon" in Nahuatl, their native language. The present inhabitants of Mexico, who have emerged from the mixture of the Spanish and Mexica cultures, still admire the Moon for its beauty. If you carefully observe the dark regions of the Moon, you can see the rabbit.

Phases of the Moon

In the course of a month, the Moon changes shape as it revolves around the Earth because the Sun shines on different portions of its surface. We can use a ball to show how the Sun illuminates the Moon and how the illuminated part changes. In the same way as the Moon is in the sky, hold the ball with one hand and stretch your arm out. When we see the entire sphere clearly, it is because we see the entire surface illuminated by the Sun. When we see only half of the sphere, we only see half of the surface illuminated by the Sun.

Rosa M^a Ros

