ICON #20 – TLALOC, The God of Storms
TLALOC

TLALOC (tla-loc), as the God of Storms, rain, lightning, thunder, and general weather, was responsible for both floods and droughts. He was a deity in ancient Teotihuacan and revered by the Maya as Chac. A beneficent god of fertility, vegetation, and sustenance, he is associated with springs and caves, and his worship involved child sacrifice. Tlaloc ruled over the Third Sun (Four Rain) and the Eighth Heaven Tlalocan. At Teotihuacan, his goddess-wife, possibly Xochiquetzal, was abducted by Tezcatlipoca, and in a rage, Tlaloc destroyed the Third Sun in a rain of volcanic fire. During the Fourth Sun (Four Water), its ruler Chalchiuhtlicue was his consort. The 9th lord of the night and 8th lord of the day, Tlaloc is also patron of the 13-day week One Rain in the ceremonial calendar and of several 20-day months in the solar agricultural calendar.

SOURCES

The codices are crawling with images of Tlaloc. This icon’s central figure is based on a stylistically consistent series in Codex Vaticanus, the first image below with the heron headdress being another. The upper corner vignettes reflect a similar series in Codex Borgia, as in the third image. Both codices contain many examples in other poses with identical goggle eyes and fangs as in the second and fourth examples.

Images from other codices display these same standard features, often including the lightning serpent. (Except in several instances with these features in Codex Nuttall, Tlaloc is rarely depicted in the historical codices.) The circular vignettes (for the months Atlcualco and Atemoztli) were modelled on Codex Rios; the first image below is its symbol for the month Etzalqualiztli, and the third is from Codex Telleriano-Remensis for another Tlaloc-dedicated month Huey Panchtli. To include the deep history of Tlaloc, the lower register of his icon is based on a mural of his paradise (Tlalocan) from ancestral Teotihuacan, and at top center is a mask of the ancient Mayan storm-god Chac drawn from a temple façade as shown in the last example.