



# The Aztec

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- **Main Idea (Objective):**



- The **Aztec** moved into the Valley of Mexico, where they created an empire based on conquest and war.

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# The Aztec

- **Lecture Focus (Essential Question):**



- Why do you think some countries try to conquer other countries? Lets look at why the Aztec civilization conquered their neighbors and built an empire.

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# The Aztec

- The Warlike Aztec nomads who arrived in the Valley of Mexico around 1250 C.E. were anything but welcomed!



- The Toltec King wanted to rid his people of the Aztec and formulated a plan to destroy them.

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# The Aztec

- The Toltec King granted the Nomadic Aztec people a patch of land to live on, however, the land was inhabited by deadly serpents.



- The Toltec King figured these serpents would terminate the Aztec people.

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# The Aztec

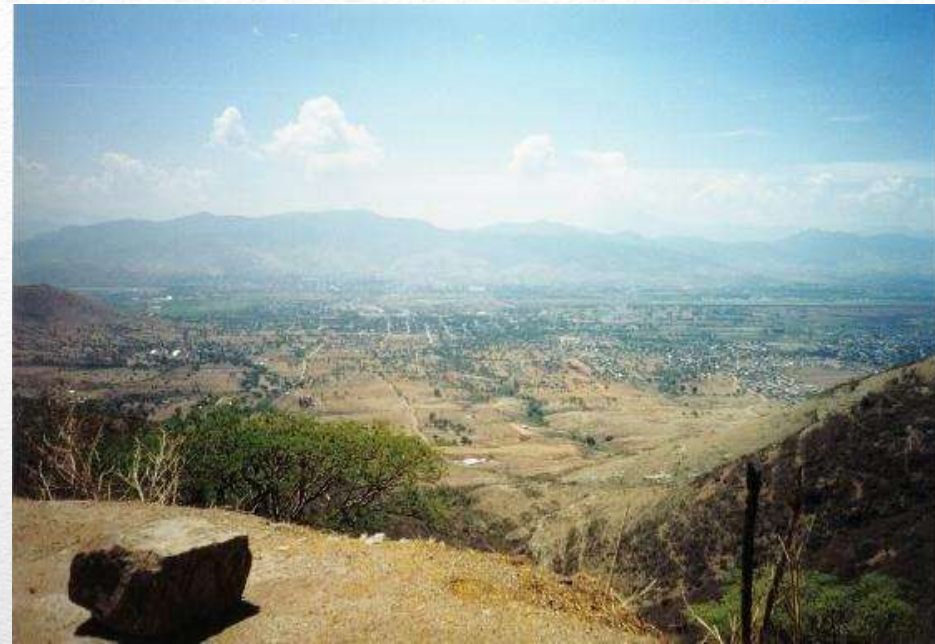


- Instead, the Aztec feasted on roasted snakes and eventually created an incredible kingdom.

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# The Aztec

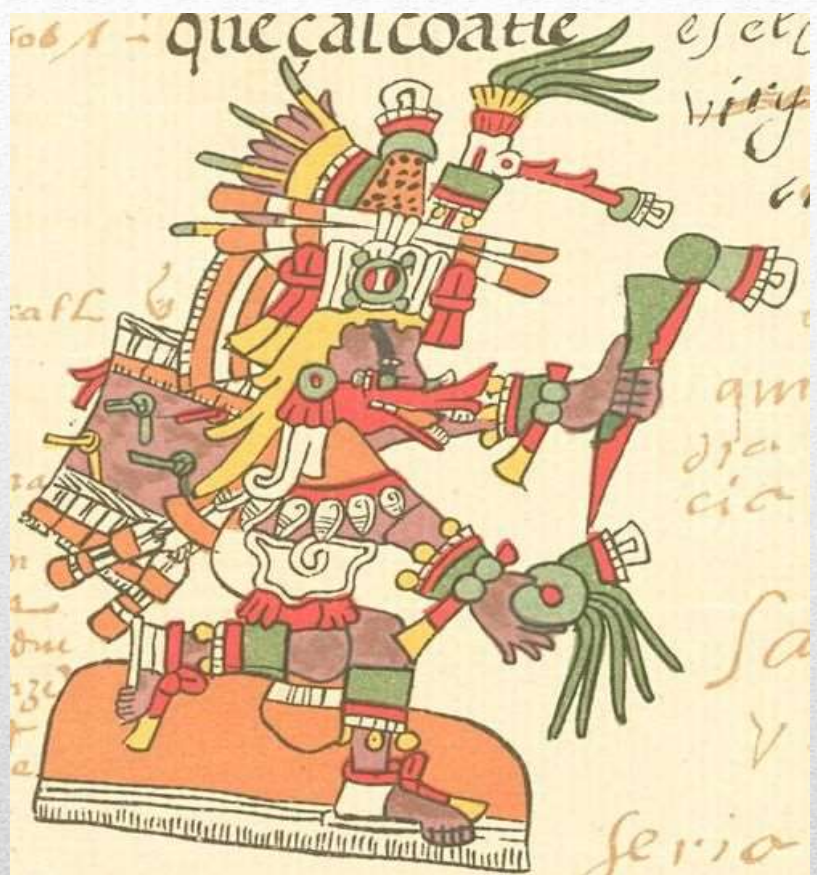
- The Aztec clearly knew how to survive.
- According to their own legends, the Aztec originated from a place called Aztlan, somewhere in north or northwest Mexico.
  - At that time the Aztecs (**also referred as the Mexica**) were a small, nomadic, collection of tribal peoples living on the margins of Mesoamerica.
- They had wandered the lands of Mexico as nomads for hundreds of years in search of a home that they believed would be given to them by their sun god.



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# The Aztec Government

- The Aztec sun god was a feathered serpent called **Quetzalcoatl**.



How To Pronounce Quetzalcoatl.p4

- **Quetzalcoatl** was one of the major deities of the Aztec, Toltec's, and other Middle American peoples and is the creator sky god and wise lawmaker...he is represented as a feathery serpent.

# The Aztec Government



- **Quetzalcoatl** organized the original cosmos and participated in the creation and destruction of various world periods.



- **Quetzalcoatl** ruled the fifth world cycle and created the humans of that cycle...the story goes that he descended to Mictlan, the underworld, and gathered the bones of the human beings of the previous ages.

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## The Aztec Government

- Upon his return, he sprinkled his own blood upon these bones and fashioned the humans of the new era.



- He is also a god of the wind as well as a water god and fertility god.

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# The Aztec Government



- The Aztec later made him a symbol of death and resurrection and a patron of priests.

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# The Aztec Government



- According to legend, the Aztec would find their home with the help of **Quetzalcoatl** and will know this new home when they see an eagle “scream and spread its wings, and eat ... a serpent.”

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## The Aztec Government

- In 1325 C.E., they took shelter on a soggy, swampy island in **Lake Texcoco**.



- There an eagle greeted them from its perch on a prickly pear cactus.

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# The Aztec Government

- The eagle then tore apart a snake dangling from its beak.



- The Aztec believed that they had found their home after seeing the prophecy come true.

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# The Aztec Government

- Priest, speaking for the gods, told the Aztec what to do next: build a great city.



- Workers labored day and night, digging soil from lake Texcoco's bottom to build bridges to the mainland.

# The Aztec Government



- The Aztec people also build floating gardens, piling soil on rafts anchored at the bottom of the lake.

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## The Aztec Government





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# The Aztec Government

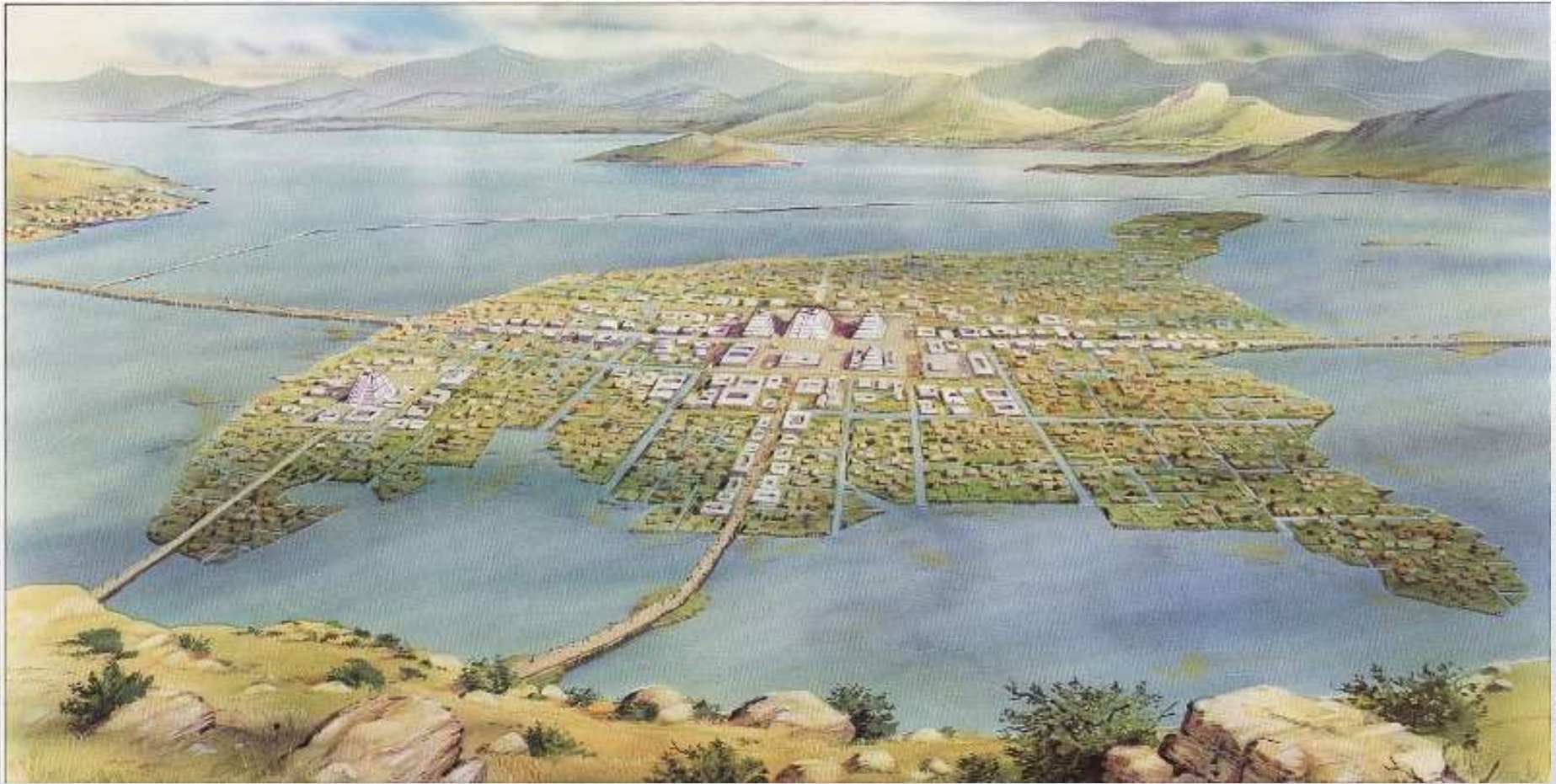
- The Aztec called their new city **Tenochtitlan**, which means “place of the prickly pear cactus.”



- **Tenochtitlan** became the capital city of the Aztec civilization and is now the metropolis of Mexico City.

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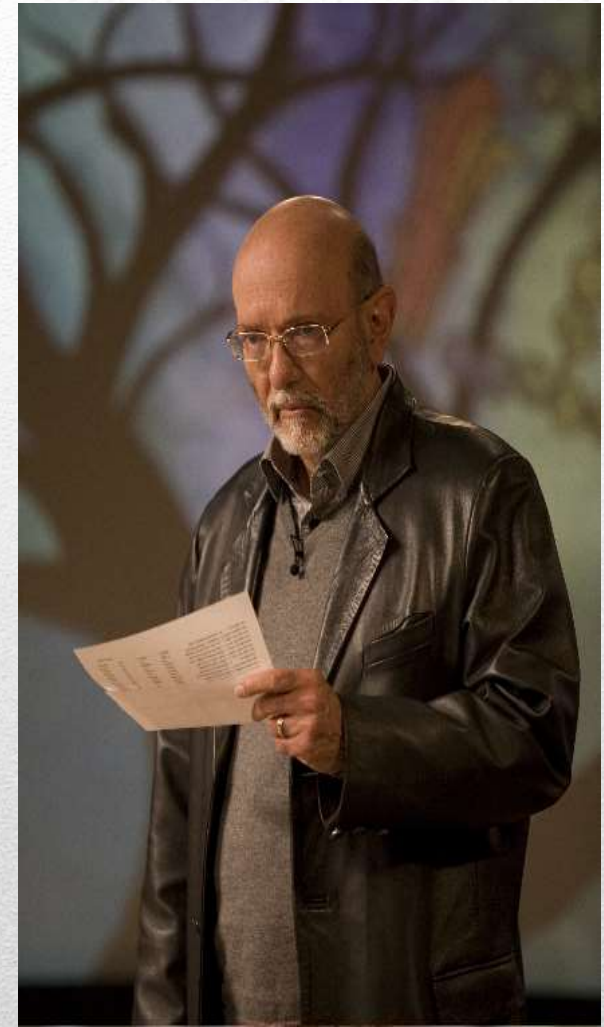
# The Aztec Government



- The original city expanded throughout Lake Texcoco and when **The Spanish Explorers** arrived at Tenochtitlan in 1521 they found it the largest, most populous and most powerful capital in Mesoamerica, covering an area of about 12 square kilometers and with a population of between 150,000 and 225,000 people.

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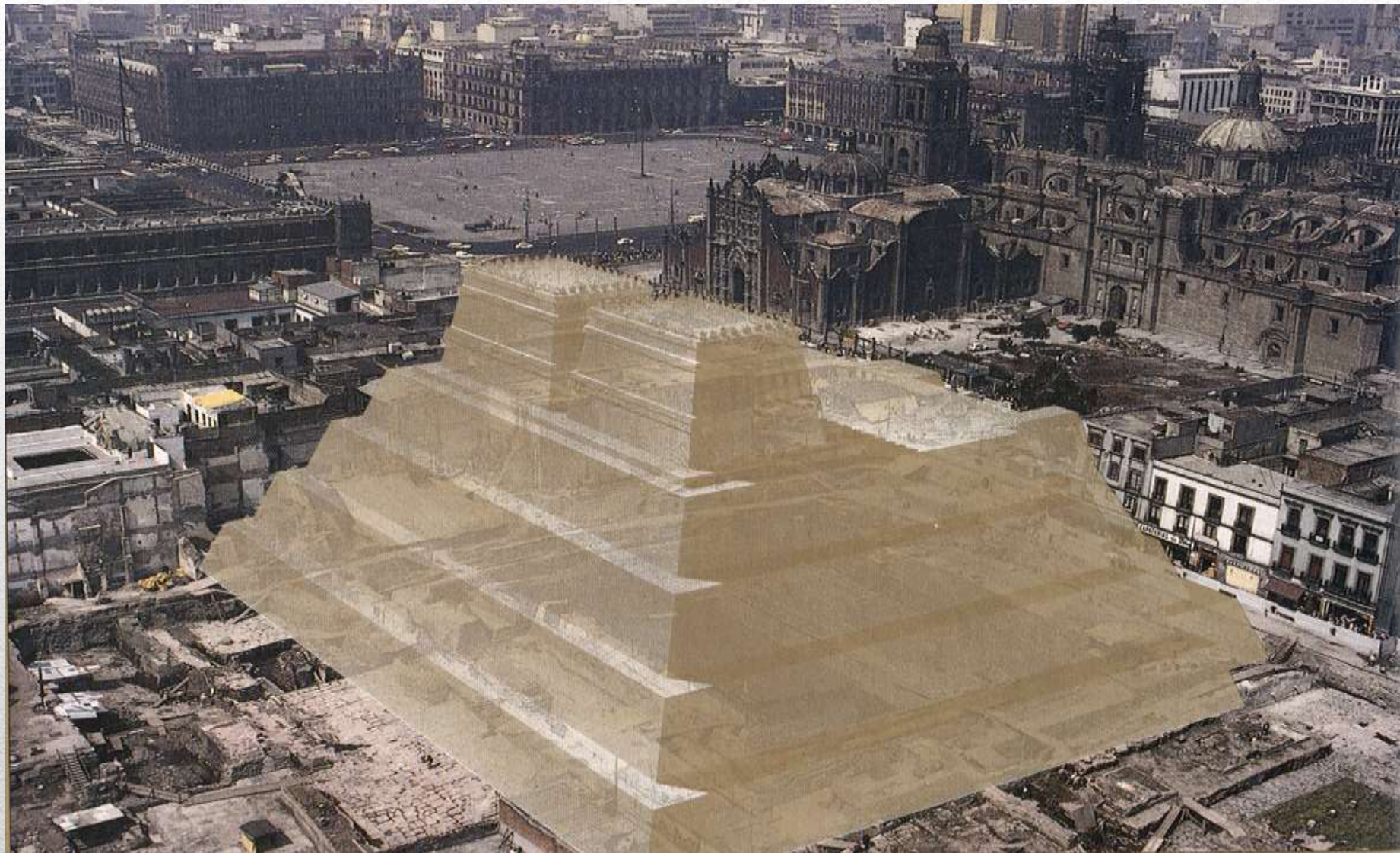
## The Aztec Government



- The only parts of Tenochtitlan that survived in the modern Mexico City is the ruins of the **Templo Mayor**, excavated beginning in the 1970s by **Matos Moctezuma**.

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# The Aztec Government



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# The Aztec Government

- The **Templo Mayor**, or “**Great Temple**” stands in the heart of Mexico City.



- This was the main temple of the Aztec Civilization and stood within an enclosed area known as the **Sacred Precinct**.

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## The Aztec Government



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# The Aztec Government

- In 1978 electric company workers uncovered a monolith depicting **Coyolxauqui**, the Aztec moon goddess.



- Following this discovery, the Mexico City government gave permission for a full city block to be torn down and excavated, resulting in the **Templo Mayor** archaeological site and museum.

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# The Aztec Government



- At its time of glory, the **Templo Mayor** was a pyramid with two temples at the top dedicated to **Huitzilopochtli**, the god of war, and **Tlaloc**, the rain god.



- The Temple and the area around it, known today as the **Temple Precinct**, were the center of Aztec religious life in Tenochtitlan...the most important aspects of political, religious and economic life took place within this area.

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# The Aztec Government

- **Tenochtitlan** today has evolved into **Mexico City** which is the capital city of Mexico, and the largest city in North America.



- The population of Mexico City has grown by more than 20 million people in just over 110 years, from 500,000 in 1900 to 21.2 million people in 2012.

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# The Aztec Government

- Mexico City is the largest metropolitan area in the western hemisphere and the largest Spanish-speaking city in the world.
- Over 600,000 Americans live in Mexico City; the largest concentration of Americans living outside of the USA.



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# The Aztec Government

- The city is constantly sinking and has sunk more than nine meters in some areas over the last 100 years.



- Mexico City has had many nicknames in the past including “City of the Palaces”, “City of Hope” and “Capital in Movement”.

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# The Aztec Government



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# The Aztec Government

- As **Tenochtitlan** rose from the marshes, the Aztec dreamed of conquest and wealth.



- They wanted to collect tribute, or payment for their protection of people that they conquered.

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# The Aztec Government

- To fulfill their goal, the Aztec turned to strong kings who claimed descent from the gods.



- A council of warriors, priest and nobles picked each king from the royal family.

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## **The Aztec Government**

- Council members usually chose the last king's son, but not always.
- They expected a king to prove himself by leading troops into battle.



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# The Aztec Government



- Questions:
- 1) What did the Aztec people feast on when they were first given land by the Toltec?
- 2) What was the name of the sun god who promised to help the Aztecs find a home?
- 3) According to legend what would the Aztec people see when they found their new home?
- 4) Where did they build their capital city?
- 5) What is that city name today?

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# **The Aztec Government**

- **Questions:**
- 1) What did the Aztec people feast on when they were first given land by the Toltec?
  - **Poisonous serpents**
- 2) What was the name of the sun god who promised to help the Aztecs find a home?
  - **Quetzalcoatl**
- 3) According to legend what would the Aztec people see when they found their new home?
  - **An eagle spreading its wings and eating a serpent**
- 4) Where did they build their capital city?
  - **Lake Texcoco**
- 5) What is that city name today?
  - **Mexico City**

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# The Aztec Government

- The Aztec king, or sometimes referred to as the Emperor, was at the top of Aztec society.



- The rest of the population fell into four different classes: nobles, commoners, unskilled laborers and enslaved people.

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## Life in the Aztec Empire



- Like the Maya, the Aztec also developed a calendar...in fact they created two different calendars.



- They used a religious calendar with 260 days to keep track of spiritual rituals and festivals.

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## **Life in the Aztec Empire**

- They also had a 365 day calendar for daily use and to keep track of the harvest cycle of planting and gathering.



- This calendar was divided into 18 months with 20 days and a special 5 day week at the end of the year.

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## **Life in the Aztec Empire**

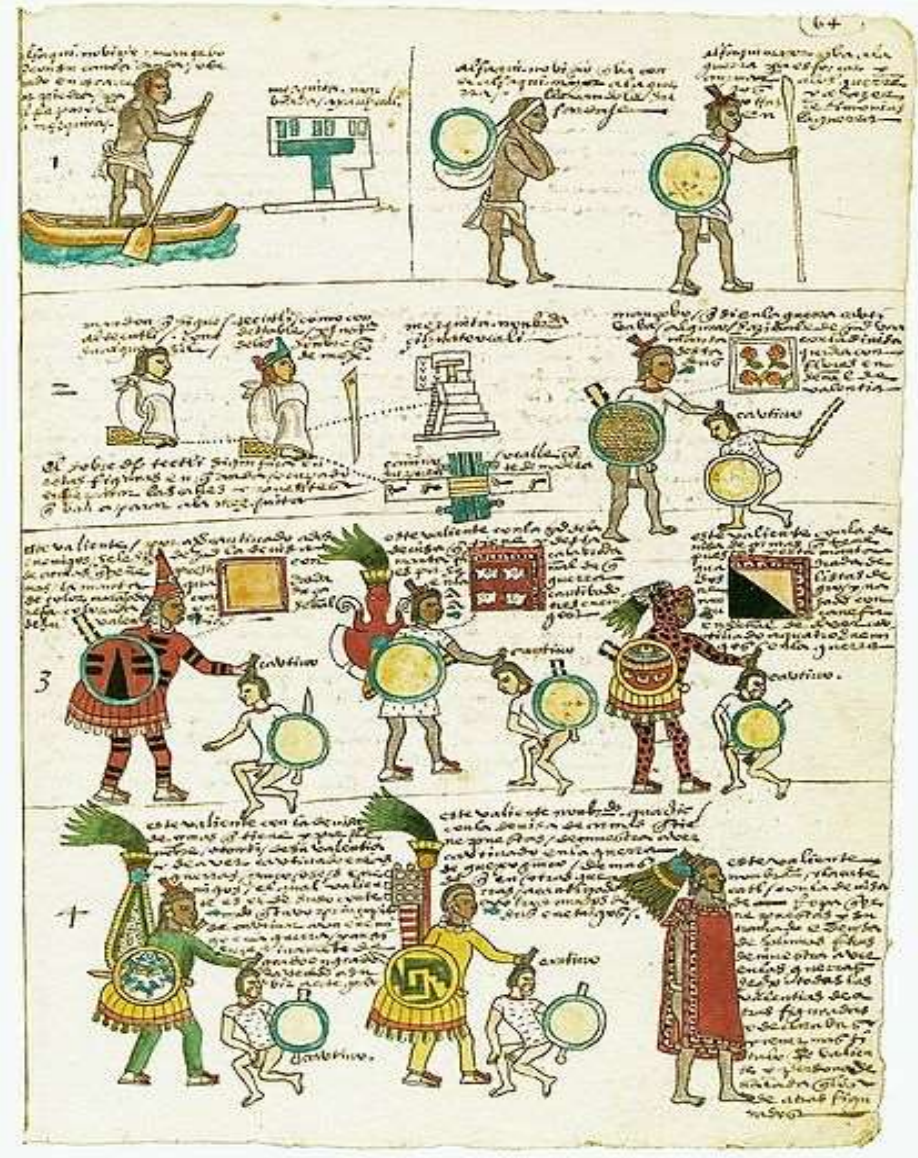
- In serving their gods, the Aztec saw death as honorable.



- Those worthy of an afterlife included soldiers who died in battle, captives who gave their lives in sacrifice and women who died in childbirth.

# Life in the Aztec Empire

- From an early age, children learned about the glories of war and the duties as an Aztec.
- Boys were taught that they had been born to become warriors.



# Life in the Aztec Empire



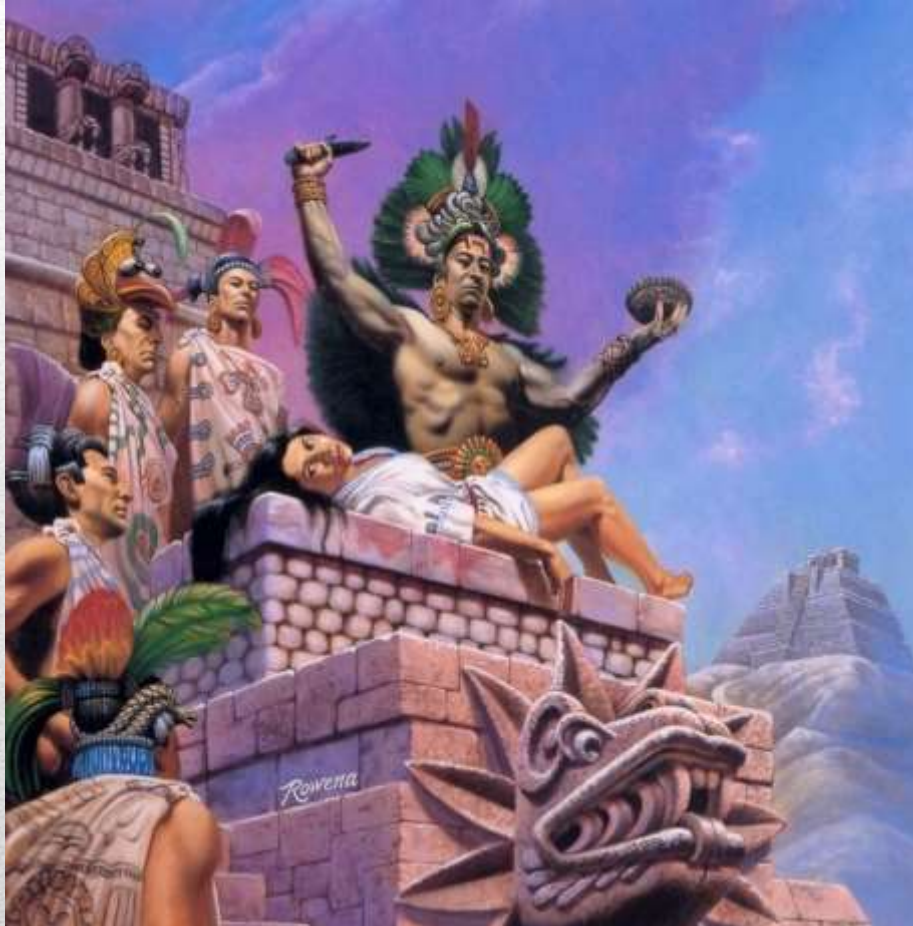


- Girls on the other hand were taught to stay in the home...those who gave birth were honored as heroes by the Aztec society.

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# Life in the Aztec Empire

- To honor the gods, the Aztec built a huge pyramid in the center of Tenochtitlan, known as the Great Temple...it rose 135 feet high and had more than 100 steps.



- Thousands of victims were taken to the top, where they were sacrificed to the gods.

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## Life in the Aztec Empire

- Tenochtitlan became one of the largest cities in the world and at one time had some 400,000 people living in it, with a million more in other cities and villages under Aztec control.



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## Life in the Aztec Empire



- Supporting such a large population was a challenge for the Aztec because much of the region was unsuitable for most agriculture.

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## **Life in the Aztec Empire**

- The Aztec, however, were able to make improvements to help them grow a plethora of crops.



- They irrigated and fertilized their fields and even drained lakes to turn water filled regions into farmland.

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# Life in the Aztec Empire



- The Aztec Empire also encouraged trade and paid for government and military actions through taxes and conquests of war.

# Life in the Aztec Empire

- **Questions:**
- 1) Who was at the top of Aztec society?
- 2) How could a commoner move into the Noble class?
- 3) What happened if the commoner died during battle?
- 4) How many calendars did the Aztec use?
- 5) What was the difference between boys and girls in Aztec society?

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# **Life in the Aztec Empire**

- **Questions:**
- 1) Who was at the top of Aztec society?
  - **The King or the Emperor**
- 2) How could a commoner move into the Noble class?
  - **By performing an act of bravery during war**
- 3) What happened if the commoner died during battle?
  - **Their family would be moved into the noble class**
- 4) How many calendars did the Aztec use?
  - **Two different calendars, a religious calendar of 260 days and a daily calendar of 365 days**
- 5) What was the difference between boys and girls in Aztec society?
  - **Boys were taught to become warriors from birth and girls stayed home and were honored for childbirth**

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# Life in the Aztec Empire





- Connections Across Time!!!

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# Connections Across Time!!!



- The floating gardens are called **Chinampas**, after an area in the Valley of Mexico.

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## Connections Across Time

- This area was called **Xochimilco** at the time of the Aztec and still is.



- **Xochimilco** means “where the flowers grow.”

## Connections Across Time

- **Xochimilco** is best known for its canals, which are left from what was an extensive lake and canal system that connected most of the settlements of the Valley of Mexico.



- These canals, attract tourists and other city residents to ride on colorful gondola like boats called “**trajineras.**”



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# Connections Across Time



- The floating gardens method of agriculture was developed in Mexico and again is still being used to this very day.

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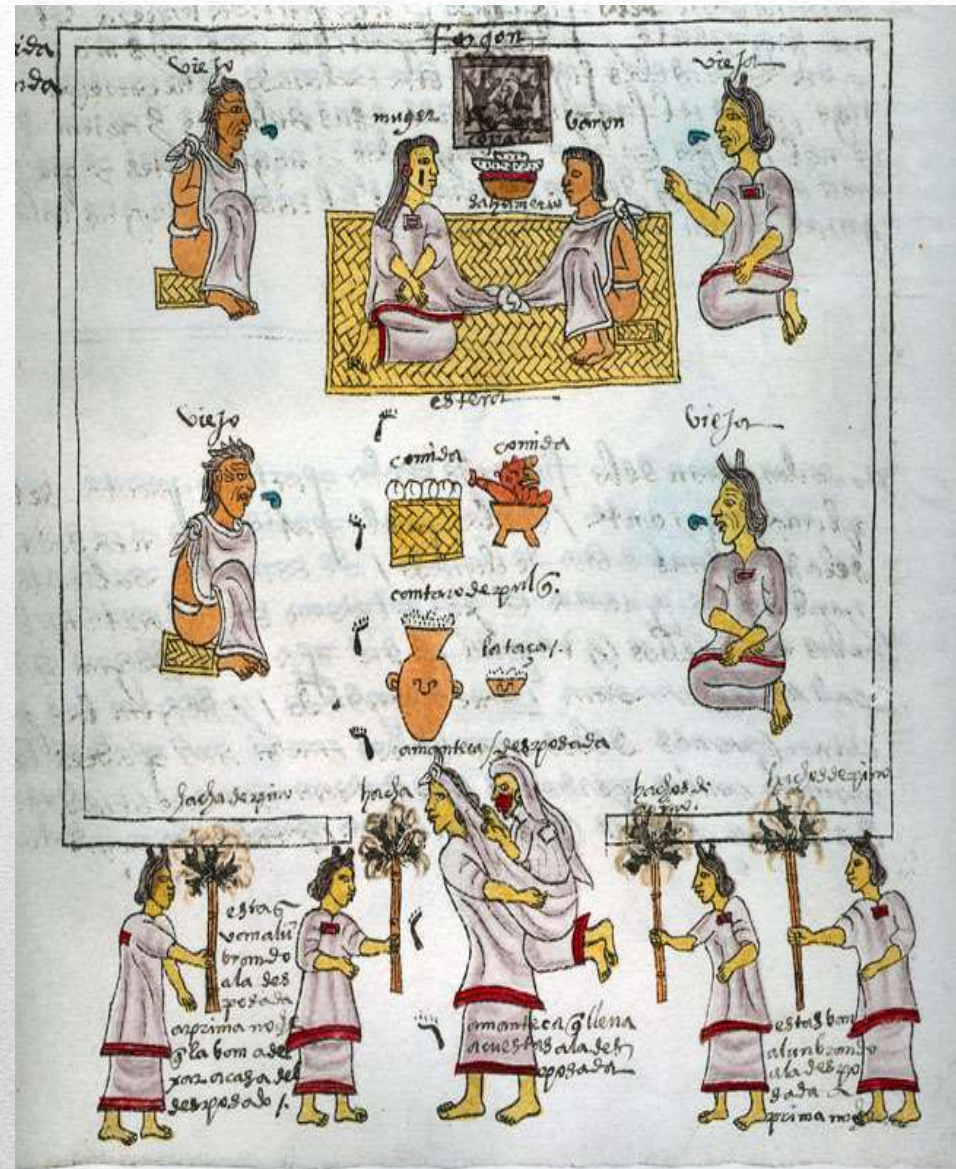
## **Connections Across Time**



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# Time Travel Time

- Childbirth carried a very special meaning for the Aztec's.
- Parents consulted **Soothsayers** who studied children's birthdates and predicted their fortunes using mysticism.



**Time Travel Time**

BBC



- Basically a Soothsayer is a person who claims to be able to foretell events or predict the future... a seer.

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# Time Travel Time





# Time Travel Time



- **Soothsayers** can be seen today in Mexico as modern fortunetellers.

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# Time Travel Time

- **Reading Response:**

- At the center of Tenochtitlan was a walled ceremonial area that contained temples, schools and the priest's homes.
- In a well written two paragraph open ended response please explain what ceremonial act took place at the top of the great temple.

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# **Tenochtitlan Open Ended Question**