

AZTECS CULTURE

AZTEC CULTURE I. LIVED A. Tenochtitla'n B. Aztec meant (heron people) C. fertile basin about 50 miles long and as wide surrounded by mountain ranges and containing an abundant water supply and several volcanoes D. 8000 ft. above sea level, days are mild but nights are cold during much of the year E. Their name is derived from a mythical homeland to the north called Azatlan II. LANGUAGE A. Nahuatl this language belongs to the same linguistic family as Shoshonean, a tongue will represented among Indians of the United States. III. AZTEC LIFE A. Principal crops 1. maize, 2. beans 3. squash 4. tomatoes 5. cotton 6. spiny-leave maguey 7. agave 8. chilies b. the last two crops the spiny-leave maguey and agave were used as cord, sacks and sandals and a substitute for cotton in clothing c. the fermented juice of the maguey called "pulque" was the Aztec ceremonial drink. customarily, only old men were allowed to drink pulque freely d. drunkenness among young men, except at certain religious feasts, was a serious offense and might even be punished by death E. Floating gardens were an unusual feature of Aztec agriculture. 1. digging ditches around squares or rectangle in the marshes 2. pile up mud on the area which the ditches enclosed 3. the mud were held in position by front coverings of cane and branches of trees 4. This type of agriculture can still be seen today at Xochimilco, a few miles south of Mexico City IV. LAND A. clan like groups B. tribe was divided C. each family were allotted sufficient land for its maintenance, if no one else were alive to take care of the land then the land were reverted back to the group. D. other lands were worked in common for the support of the nobility and for the religious need of the community E. urban communities, land ownership was communal, each local group, called a (capulli) was composed of a few families that jointly owned a piece of land. Part of the yield of cultivated land was given to the state as a kind of tax I. farmers A. general field workers charge with 1. preparing the soil 2. breaking up clods 3. hoeing (with the coa digging sticks) 4. leveling 5. setting boundary markers 6. planting 7. irrigating 8. winnowing, and storing grain B. horticulturists 1. knowledge of the planting of trees and transplanting 2. crop sequences 3. rotations 4. supervisory role, for they were expected to read the tonalamatl almanacs to determine the best time for planting and harvesting V. ANIMALS A. Domestic 1. turkeys 2. ducks 3. dogs which were raised as food and considered a great delicacy 4. special treats may have included boiled grasshoppers, cactus worms, locusts and insect eggs B. wild animals eaten 1. rabbit 2. deer 3. gopher 4. 40 species of water birds were edible 5. Iguanas, snakes, turtles, salamanders, insects eggs and larvae, many species of frogs, grasshoppers, ants and worms 6. Corixid water beetles an abundant protein source, were netted from the lake, mashed together in balls, wrapped in corn husks, and boiled. 7. tadpoles were eaten with great relish VI. SPECIALIZED CRAFTSMEN A. gold, silver, coppersmiths B. lapidaries, workers in leather and craftsmen who made elaborate designs of feathers for capes, headdresses, and shield covers VII. VALUED POSSESSIONS A. jade, turquoise and feathers of the quetzal B. Aztec wealth 1. heavy payments of tribute imposed on conquered peoples C. tribute included 1. jade 2. turquoise 3. feathers from the quetzal 4. gold dust 5. cochineal dye 6. shell 7. cacao beans 8. produce such as beans and maize IX MONEY A. cocoa beans were used B. commodities such as quetzal feathers, gold, loads of maize or slaves were valued in terms of cacao beans C. prices were higher at tenochtitlan than in the lowlands because of its distance from the center of production D. inflation was in impossible because any drop in the value of the beans resulted in more being taken out of circulation to make chocolate X. SOCIAL

AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS A. the tribe consisted of

twenty calpullis or clans like a precinct 1. each clan elected one officers and sent a representative to the tribal council 2. the tribal council elected four executive officers and from these four officers elect the supreme chief of the Aztec tribe 3. the chief must be chosen from a certain tribe 4.

treated as almost a god, but can be deposed by the tribal council B. formed military alliances that extended central Mexico to the Guatemalan

border C. Kingship remained in the other city-states, these became merely honorary titles XI. EDUCATION A. two types of schools according

to their inclinations and social position 1. Calmecac a religious seminary ,long spells of duty in the temple a. meager rations b. continually drawing

blood from their bodies to offer in sacrifice c. recite long religious and historical songs d. collect huge quantities of wood for the sacred fires e. long night pilgrimages for ceremonial bathing 2. telpochcalli (youth's house) a.

trained as warriors and to take their place in civil life XII

ARCHITECTURE AND ART A. their religious building were like the great pyramids of Egypt instead their cut off at the top broad stairways

often with banisters shaped like giant serpents led to the summit on the summit stood the shrine b. The great square featured a skull rack, a row of pointed stakes on which were impaled the heads of the thousands of persons sacrificed there C. Within the square stood the priests houses and the

ball court. A game resembling basketball was played except that the large rubber ball could be hit only with the knee or hip and the object was to

drive it through a ring set vertically in each side wall D. Causeways and bridges were built to connect the city to the mainland, aqueducts were

constructed, and canals were dug through out the city for easy transportation of goods and people XIII. WRITINGS A. hieroglyphs to represent

history ,geography and tribute list b. most of the hieroglyphs represent names of towns and persons C. used pictographic writing that was recorded

on paper or animal hides these writings were called codices still exist today XIV RULERS A. Montezuma II 1. 1502-1520 B. Ahuizotl 1. reigned

1486-1502 C. cuitlahuac 1520 D. cuauhtemoc1520-1525 E. In June 1520 the Aztecs grew restive under Spanish control, revolted Cortes called

on Montezuma to quell the revolt, but the Aztec ruler was stoned while addressing his subject he later died three days later F. He was later

succeeded by Cuitlahuac and 80 days later by his nephew, the last Aztec ruler XV SOCIETY A. divided into three classes 1. slaves 2. commoner

3. nobility B. slaves could buy their freedom, and those who escaped from their masters and reach the royal palace without being caught were

immediately given their freedom C. commoners, or maceualtin were given lifetime ownership of a plot of land on which to build their houses D. the

lowest group of commoners (tlalmaitl) however were not allowed to own property they were tenant farmers E. the nobility comprised nobles by

birth, priests, and those (especially warriors who earned their rank XVI AZTEC PEOPLE TODAY A. live in the vicinity of Mexico city B.

Number well over 1 million C. they are the largest aboriginal group in Mexico D. they retain the Aztec-Nahua language E. their religion is a blend

of Aztec and roman Catholicism XVII CLOTHING A. feather workers achieved the highest honor and prestige B. lived in communities of their

own C. techniques passed down generation to generation D. feathered garments were a specialty of weavers called amanteca 1. products were

reserved for the nobility and the highest ranking officials XVIII HARPY EAGLE A. gray hood b. black C. gray crest six foot wingspan E. legs and

talons roughly the size of a man's arms and hand F. long extinct G. and its habit of nesting in giant ceiba(silk-cotton)trees, the tree of life for most

Mesoamerican cultures, gave the harpy mythical status H. need large tracts of forest 25,000 to 720,000 acres I. Need large prey like monkeys,

sloths to feed their young J few tracts remain but their has been sighting

within the past five years XIX BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD A. devoted to children B. inherit the profession and status of their children I. newborn child was a special occasion A. midwife shouted war cries to honor the mother for having fought a good battle B. the umbilical cord (male) was buried on a distant battle field C. the umbilical cord (female) was buried by the hearth D. Powerful families, celebrated 20 days after the birth bringing fabulous gifts E. rarely some of the most intelligent children of the lower classes were chosen for calmecac F. one calmecac for boys another for girls in each city II. Marriage A. Late teens or early twenties B. when the youth arrived at marrying age parents would looked about for a suitable partner C. a meal was prepared 1. school masters were invited to tell his school days were over D. another council was called and the assembled kinsmen decided which young woman was the most available E. matchmakers were sent to the women's house 1. for four days to win the women and on the fourth day then the parents decided who was the most suitable F. elaborate preparations then required G. at the wedding 1. four mouthfuls of tamales for both bride and groom 2. then they led to the bedroom, then four days of feasting followed 3. were counseled about diligence, duties and obligation by the midwife XX MARKETS 1. no one could sale anything on the way to the market A. penalty of law B. fear of angering the market god 2. held every fifth day 3. everything sold by counts and measure not by weight 4. anybody caught stealing or selling stolen goods was punished by death F. the great market attracted about 60,000 people daily G. goods were brought into Aztec hands by tribute agreements with conquered territories and many goods were exported from the city to be traded in other parts of the Aztec empire and central America XXI LONG DISTANCE TRADERS A. pochteca B. a privileged position with the nobility 1. paid tribute in the form of merchandise but not to render personnel services C. seven merchants wards 1. pochtlan 2. tepetitlan 3. tzonmolco 4. atlahuico 5. amachtlan 6. itztotolco D. the term pochotl, from which pochteca and pochtlan derive, was the name for the bombax ceiba, the towering, sheltering tree of the tropical forests, which was traditionally regarded as a sacred " tree of life" E. in a figurative sense, pochotl means, father, mother, governor, chief, or protector F. this title suggests that pochteca occupied very high positions in mesoamerican societies before the Aztecs I four types of pochtecal A. pochtecatlatoque 1. commanders of the pochteca, selected from the oldest, most prestigious 2. stayed at home to serve , administrative capacity, advising, judgment on miscreant pochteca 3. administering the market place B. tlaltlani ( bather of slaves) 1. ritual bathing of slaves before their use as sacrificial victims 2 richest merchants 3. special privileges by rulers C. tencunenque 1. carry out personal trade for the rulers 2. on occasion served has tribute-collectors D. naualoztomeca 1. disguised merchants 2. traders-spies in search of rare goods BIBLIOGRAPHY Colliers Encyclopedia, by Macmillan Educational Co. Volume three Page 412. Ella D. Sorensen and Charles E. Dibble, An Aztec Bestiary; Sirs 1993 Life Science, Article 42, Page numbers 50-55 Internet Addressees: [Http://www.rmpic.co.uk...ics/aztecs/aztecs.html](http://www.rmpic.co.uk...ics/aztecs/aztecs.html), <http://www.mexicana.co...unity/29nf-aztec.shtml> Microsoft Encarta 96 Encyclopedia, Funk& Wagnalls Corporation, Montezuma II. The Cambridge History of Latin America, Volume 1, edited by Leslie Bethell, pages 3-47 Historical Maps On File, Martin Greenwald Publisher, Facts On File Inc. 6.000 The Western Hemisphere(including the U.S.A.) The Aztecs, by Richard F. Townsend, published 1992, Thames and Hudson Ltd, London pages 156-208 The Aztecs lived in the city of Tenochtitlan, which is a fertile basin about 50 miles long and as wide. Surrounded by mountain ranges and several volcanoes the Aztecs has abundant supply of water. With being 8000ft above sea level the day were mild and the nights are cold during much

of the year. The Aztecs name means "heron people" their name is derived from the mythical homeland to the north called Azatlan. This in mind their language(Nahuatl) also belong to the linguistic family as the Soshonean, a tongue will represented among the Indians of the Untied States. In the Aztecs culture their main principal crop was maize. Maize was usually cooked with lime then ground to make dough, then patted into tortillas, other principal crops were beans, squash, tomatoes, cotton, chilies. The two crops maguey and agave were used as cord, sacks and sandals and a substitute for cotton in clothing. From the juice of the maguey was use in a mild form of alcohol called pulque, which was the ceremonial drink. Only the old men of the committee was able to drink pulque freely, otherwise among the younger generation couldn't get drunk except at certain religious feast. Drunkenness was considered a serious offense even punishable by death. In the Aztecs culture there were clans, each clan there was tribes and each tribe was divided up. Then each family were allotted sufficient land for its maintenance, if no one else were alive in the family, then the land were reverted back to the tribe. Urban communities, the land were communal, each group called capulli was composed of a few families that jointly owned a piece of land. Then part of the yield was given to the state as a tax. Rest of yield would be either sold, traded or for their own use. There were two kinds of farmer, first there was the general field workers. They were in charge with preparing the soil, breaking up clods, hoeing(with the coa digging sticks), leveling, setting boundary markers, planting, irrigating, winnowing and storing grain. The second kind of farmer were the horticulturists their job was planting of trees, transplanting, crop sequences, rotations and a supervisory role, for they were expected to read the Tonalamatl almanacs to determine the time for planting and harvest. One of the unusual feature of the Aztec agriculture were the floating gardens. These gardens were built by digging ditches into squares or rectangle, then they would pile up mud on the area which the ditches enclosed. Once that was done the mud was held in position by cane and branches of trees. This type of agriculture can still be seen today at Xochimilco, a few miles south of Mexico City. In most culture there were domestic animals in the Aztecs culture there were turkeys, ducks, and dogs. The dogs were raised as food and were considered a great delicacy. The wild animals that were eaten were rabbit, deer, gopher, iguanas, snake, turtles, salamanders, insect eggs, many species of frogs, larva, grasshoppers, ants, worms, tadpoles and 40 species of water birds. The corixid water beetles an abundant protein source, were netted from the lake, mashed together in balls, wrapped in corn husks, and boiled. The metal specialized craftsmen were gold, silver and coppersmiths. In the leather department were the lapidaries who made elaborate designs of feathers for capes, headdresses and shield covers. The feather workers achieved the highest honor and prestige, living in communities of their own their techniques was passed down from generation to generation. These feather workers (Amanteca) were reserved for the nobility and the highest ranking officials. One of the prestige of Aztec wealth was jade, turquoise and feathers of the quetzal. With these prize possessions you were considered wealthy, but only the nobility or high ranking officials could get them. To get these prize possessions a heavy tribute was imposed on conquered people. Other tribute include gold dust, cochineal dye, shell, cocoa beans and produce such as beans and maize. In the Aztec culture cocoa beans were used as a currency, commodities such as quetzal feathers, gold, loads of maize or slaves were valued in terms of cacao beans. In Tenochtitlan the prices were higher then in the lowlands because of its distance from the center of production. Inflation was in possible because any drop in the value of the beans resulted in more being taken out of circulation to make chocolate. As the money always under control so was the political structure. The tribe consisting about

twenty capullis and each capullis would elect one officer. That officer would go to the tribal council from there the tribal council would elect four officers to elect the supreme chief for the Aztec, but the chief must be from a certain tribe. Even though the chief was treated like a god he could be easily deposed by the tribal council. In the other conquer city-states that the Aztecs to over kingship remained as a honorary title to their people. One of the things I like was they were devoted to their children, but their children usually inherit the profession of their parents. When a newborn was about to come this would be a special occasion. In the birth process the midwife would shout war cries to honor the mother for having fought a good battle. Then the umbilical cord of the male would be buried on a distant battle field. In the female case her umbilical cord would be buried by the hearth. In the powerful families the families would bring fabulous gifts and celebrate 20 days after birth. Once in their teens or twenties the youth would be at marriage age then the parents would look about for a suitable partner. Once that is done a meal would be prepared and the youth schoolmaster were invited to tell him/her their school were over. Another council would be called and the kinsmen then would decide which young women is the most available. So for four days these young men would go over to the young lady's house and try to win her hand. Then on the fourth the parents would decide who was the most suitable unless the young lady already had fancy for one. Then the wedding was prepared, once at the wedding the bride and groom would have to take four mouthfuls of tamales then would be led to the bedroom by the midwife shouting prayers. Once led to bed the rest would feast for four days. Before marriage there was the education, there were two types of schools according to their inclination and social position. One of the schools were Calmecac a religious seminar which included long spells of duty in the temple. In the temple the youths would have meager rations, then they would draw their own blood to offer as a sacrifice, recite long religious and historical songs, collect huge quantities of wood for their sacred fires and long nights of pilgrimages for ceremonial bathing. Rarely some of the most intelligent children of the lower class would intend in Calmecac. The other school called the Telpochacalli (youth's house) would be for the warriors which they would take their place in civil life. The Aztec's society was divided into three classes. One class was the slaves, the slaves could buy their freedom or if they escape their masters and reach the royal palace without being caught they were granted their freedom. In the commoner group or maceualtin were given lifetime ownership of a plot of land to build their houses on. The lowest commoner(Tlalmaitl) were allowed to own property they were just tenant farmers. In the highest positions were the nobles born by birth, priests and warriors who earned their rank. The Aztecs architecture especially the religious building were like the great pyramids of Egypt instead they were cut off at the top with broad stairways often with banisters shaped like giant serpents which led to the summit and at the summit there was a shrine. In the square around the pyramid featured a skull rack, a row of pointed stakes on which were impaled the heads of the thousands of persons sacrificed there. Within the square stood the priests houses and the ball court. A game resembling basketball except that the large rubber ball could be hit only with the knee or hip and the object was to drive it through a ring set vertically in each side wall. The writings of the Aztecs were called codices in which they were written on paper or animal hides and stones they mostly use hieroglyphs in their writing. Mostly what they wrote about was history geography and tribute lists but most of the writings consisted of people and towns. In the markets there were at least 60,000 people daily and these markets were held every fifth day. One of the things about the market that no one could sale anything on the way to the market because it was against the law and the fear of angering the market god. Each item sold

was sold by counts and measures not by weight. If you were caught stealing or selling stolen goods you be punished by death. One thing about the markets were the long distance traders these traders were called Pochteca and these traders had privilege position with the nobility. These traders were to pay tribute in the form of merchandise but not in personnel service. The term pochotl, from which pochteca and pochtlan derive, was the name for the Bombax Ceiba, the towering, sheltering tree of the tropical forests, which was traditionally regarded as a sacred "tree of life. This title suggests that pochteca occupied very high positions in mesoamerican societies before the Aztecs. There are four types of pochtecal the first one is the pochtecatlatoque, these traders were the commanders of the pochteca. Selected from the oldest the most prestigious they stay at home to serve the administrative capacity and advising the younger traders. The other one is the tlaltlani (bather of slaves) they gave their slaves baths before the slave get sacrifice. these merchants were one of richest men plus the were given special privileges by the rulers. Tencuneneque were the rulers personnel traders and they also were the tribute collectors. The last one were naualoztomeca these merchants were traders-spies in search of rare goods. The Aztec people today live mostly in the vicinity of Mexico City, There number well over 1 million people, which is the largest aboriginal group in Mexico. They still retain the Aztec-Nahuatl language and their religion is a blend of Aztec and roman Catholicism. One thing about Mexico is the Harpy Eagle which long thought to be extinct. This eagle has a gray hood, black body with a gray crest its physical feature is a six foot wingspan and legs, talons that are roughly the sizes of a man's arm and hand. This eagle nests in the ceiba (silk cotton) trees, the tree of life for most Mesoamerican cultures, gave the harpy mythical status. These harpies need a range of 25000 to 720000 acres and few forest of that size exist down in Mexico, they feed on large prey like monkeys, sloths. There has been sightings within the past five years. THE AZTECS CULTURE WRITTEN BY LEROY HOLDEN  
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