

Aztec and their city

Countries



Tenochtitlan was the main city and capital of the Aztec empire. The city was founded in 1325 when the Aztec emperor told some of his tribes to look for a spot for their new capital city. He told them that the spot for the city would be found when they saw an eagle eating a snake on top of a cactus. This symbol is now on the Mexican coat of arms and on the Mexican flag (King).

The tribes wandered around in what is now present day Mexico City, looking for this strange site. They finally came to the spot where they saw the scene.

It happened on a small island in the middle of Lake Texacco. All of the surrounding area of the lake was all swamp land, but because they saw the eagle there, that's where the city was to be built. The construction of Tenochtitlan took place under the rule of four different Aztec kings. They laid out the construction plans for the city on a grid, making the building of the city much easier and run smoother. The city was linked to the mainland by three raised causeways; the three different causeways pointed north, west, and south.

The raised causeways had bridges in the middle of them to allow canoes and other traffic underneath; the bridges could also be raised up in case of an attack. The city had two aqueducts that were 2.5 miles long to supply fresh water from the springs of Chapultepec, though most of this water was used for bathing, washing dishes, and other various reasons (Stearns). Most of the Tenochtitlan population bathed twice every day, but ruler Montezuma was rumored to bathe as many as 4 times a day.

The people preferred their drinking water from the nearby mountain springs, as it was much cleaner. When it was at its biggest point, Tenochtitlan covered a little more than five square miles. And at the height of its

existence, Tenochtitlan's population was approximately 150, 000 people (closely comparable to the size of the population of the city of Cordoba). Tenochtitlan was the largest city in Mesoamerica, but also one of the largest in the world (Tenochtitlan). The only two cities larger than this at the time were Paris and Constantinople which had populations of 300, 000.

The language of the city was Nahuatl, it was spoken throughout the Aztec empire. The people also practiced Aztec religion, the religion consisted of human sacrifice and religious festivals. Gods of different elements were worshiped and given sacrifices. Human sacrifices were given to the sun god in fear that the sun might not rise the next morning (Stearns). Templo Mayor was the largest temple in Tenochtitlan, it was rebuilt 6 different times (King). The temple first went under construction in 1325, in succession with the rest of the city.

Each time it was rebuilt, it grew slightly larger. The temple was dedicated to 2 different gods, Tlaloc, god of rain and agriculture, and Huitzilopochtli, god of war. Each god had its own separate temple at the top. In 1427 Aztec emperor Ahuitzotl sacrificed tens of thousands of people in the p of 4 days in honor of the temple.. The organization of the city was that of a city-state, with an organized central region. Agriculture was a thriving practice in Tenochtitlan. Because there was no room for it in the city, chinampas were developed.

Chinampas were fields created on floating platforms on the lake's surface. Spanish conquistador Hernan Cortes visited the city in 1519 and was amazed. Cortes and his men were in awe at the sight of the city. They were greeted by the Aztecs with gifts and food. Despite the hospitality, Cortes

challenged the Aztecs and took emperor Montezuma hostage. The Aztecs declared war and drove the Spaniards out in 1520. Cortes led later attacks on the city but most of the population was wiped by diseases that the Spaniards had brought. The city finally fell to the Spaniards in 1521. The city was demolished and rebuilt to what is now Mexico City. There are still ruins of Tenochtitlan that can still be seen today in central Mexico City.

Works Cited

1. Stearns, Peter et al. World Civilizations. 3rd ed. New York. Pearson Longman, 2000. " Tenochtitlan. " Retrieved from https://www.courses.psu.edu/anth/anth008_cmg149/aten.html
2. King, Heidi. " Tenochtitlan". The Metropolitan Museum of Art. (October 2004) Retrieved from http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/teno_1/hd_teno_1.htm (October 2004)