

Aztec that he was the  
god quetzalcoatl. an



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**AZTEC CIVILIZATION**The center of the Aztec civilization was the Valley of Mexico, a huge, oval basin about 7,500 feet above sea level. The Aztecs were formed after the Toltec civilization occurred when hundreds of civilians came towards Lake Texcoco. In the swamplands there was only one piece of land to farm on and it was totally surrounded by more marshes.

The Aztec families somehow converted these disadvantages to a mighty empire known as the Aztec Empire. People say the empire was partially formed by a deeply believed legend. As the legend went, it said that Aztec people would create an empire in a swampy place where they would see an eagle eating a snake, while perched on a cactus, which was growing out of a rock in the swamplands. This is what priests claimed they saw when entering the new land. By the year 1325 their capital city was finished.

They called it Tenochtitlan. In the capital city, aqueducts were constructed, bridges were built, and chinapas were made. Chinapas were little islands formed by piled up mud.

On these chinapas Aztecs grew their food. The Aztec Empire included many cities and towns, especially in the Valley of Mexico. The early settlers built log rafts, then covered them with mud and planted seeds to create roots and develop more solid land for building homes in this marshy land. Canals were also cut out through the marsh so that a typical Aztec home had its back to a canal with a canoe tied at the door. In the early 1400s, Tenochtitlan joined with Texcoco and Tlacopan, two other major cities in the Valley of Mexico. Tenochtitlan became the most powerful member of the alliance. Montezuma

I ruled from 1440 to 1469 and conquered large areas to the east and to the south.

Montezuma's successors expanded the empire until it extended between what is now Guatemala and the Mexican State of San Luis Potosi.

Montezuma II became emperor in 1502 when the Aztec Empire was at the height of its power. In 1519, the Spanish explorer Hernando Cortes landed on the East Coast of Mexico and marched inland to Tenochtitlan. The Spaniards were joined by many of the Indians who were conquered and forced to pay high taxes to the emperor. Montezuma did not oppose Cortes because he thought that he was the God Quetzalcoatl.

An Aztec legend said that Quetzalcoatl was driven away by another rival god and had sailed across the sea and would return some day. His return was predicted to come in the year Ce Acatl on the Aztec Calendar. This corresponded to the year 1519. Due to this prediction, Montezuma II thought Quetzalcoatl had returned when Cortes and his troops invaded. He did not resist and was taken prisoner by Cortes and his troops.

In 1520, the Aztecs rebelled and drove the Spaniards from Tenochtitlan, but Montezuma II was killed in the battle. Cortes reorganized his troops and resurged into the city. Montezuma's successor, Cuauhtemoc, surrendered in August of 1520. The Spaniards, being strong Christians, felt it was their duty to wipe out the temples and all other traces of the Aztec religion. They destroyed Tenochtitlan and built Mexico City on the ruins.

However, archaeologists have excavated a few sites and have uncovered many remnants of this society. Language: The Aztec spoke a language called  
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Nahuatl (pronounced NAH waht l). It belongs to a large group of Indian languages, which also include the languages spoken by the Comanche, Pima, Shoshone and other tribes of western North America.

The Aztec used pictographs to communicate through writing. Some of the pictures symbolized ideas and others represented the sounds of the syllables. Food: The principal food of the Aztec was a thin cornmeal pancake called a tlaxcalli. (In Spanish, it is called a tortilla.) They used the tlaxcallis to scoop up foods while they ate or they wrapped the foods in the tlaxcalli to form what is now known as a taco.

They hunted for most of the meat in their diet and the chief game animals were deer, rabbits, ducks and geese. The only animals they raised for meat were turkeys, rabbits, and dogs. Arts and Crafts: The Aztec sculptures, which adorned their temples and other buildings, were among the most elaborate in all of the Americas. Their purpose was to please the gods and they attempted to do that in everything they did. Many of the sculptures reflected their perception of their gods and how they interacted in their lives. The most famous surviving Aztec sculpture is the large circular Calendar Stone, which represents the Aztec universe.

Religion: Religion was extremely important in Aztec life. They worshipped hundreds of gods and goddesses, each of whom ruled one or more human activities or aspects of nature. The people had many agricultural gods because their culture was based heavily on farming. The Aztecs made many sacrifices to their gods.

When victims reached the altar they were stretched across a sacrificial stone. A priest with an obsidian knife cut open the victim's chest and tore out his heart. The heart was placed in a bowl called a chacmool. This heart was used as an offer to the gods. If they were in dire need, a warrior would be sacrificed, but for any other sacrifice a normal person would be deemed sufficient.

It was a great honor to be chosen for a sacrifice to the gods. The Aztec held many religious ceremonies to ensure good crops by winning the favor of the gods and then to thank them for the harvest. Every 52 years, the Aztec held a great celebration called the Binding up of the Years. Prior to the celebration, the people would let their hearth fires go out and then re-light them from the new fire of the celebration and feast. A partial list of the Aztec gods: CENTEOTL, The corn god.

COATLICUE, She of the Serpent Skirt. EHECATL, The god of wind.

HUEHUETEOTL, The fire god. HUITZILOPOCHTLI, The war/sun god and special guardian of Tenochtitlan. MICTLANTECUHTLE, The god of the dead.

OMETECUHLTI and his wife OMECIHUATL, They created all life in the world.

QUETZALCOATL, The god of civilization and learning. TEZCATLIPOCA, The

god of Night and Sorcery. TLALOC, The rain god. TONATIUH, The sun god.

TONANTZIN, The honored grandmother. XILONEN, " Young maize ear," Maize represents a chief staple of the Aztecs. XIPE TOTEC, The god of springtime

and re-growth. Aztec dances: The Aztec Dance is known for its special way of expressing reverence and prayer to the supernatural gods of the sun, earth, sky, and water.

Originally, the resources accessible to the native Indians were limited, yet they were able to create lively music with the howling of the sea conch, and with rhythms produced by drums and by dried seeds which were usually tied to the feet of the dancers. Summary: Overall, I feel that the Aztec civilization was very advanced. It had a very complex structure in which there were lower class, middle class and upper class peoples. They had a good system of transportation and irrigation through the use of canals. They had a strong warfare system, which was seen by their conquering of many lands. They also had their own language, and their own mathematical system. Their scholars were also very intelligent; they had developed their own system of time measurement and a calendar system that was very accurate.