



What If?: Aztec Empire

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to NYUMUNC XIII! We can't wait for y'all to open debate and steward the Aztec Empire at the height of its power. Without the arrival of the Spanish, how would the rapid rise of the Aztecs continue? Could the Aztecs have finally conquered their historical rivals the Purpecha Empire? Would the Aztecs ever find the fabled Aztlan? And how would the Aztecs have reacted to the Incan Empire and the Mayan Syndicate if they ever met? So many questions to ask, all of which will be answered in dramatic fashion in the committee.

Your CD, Chair, and staffers as well as the other committees can't wait to see how you will approach this crisis. Whether it be dastardly crisis arcs making power play coups or reaching out in search of divine beings, we're sure we'll have an amazing weekend!

Now a little bit about your CD and Chair:

Hi there! My name is Richard Gao, a junior studying economics at NYU, and it is my pleasure to chair this committee at NYUMUNC! I'm originally from North Carolina, and I've been doing MUN for a very long time. This topic in particular interests me very much, so I'm just as excited as you guys are about NYUMUNC. Outside of MUN I like to play tennis, skateboard, and try new restaurants in the city!

Hey y'all, my name is Adnan Ahsan and I'm honored to be your CD for this weekend. I'm a student at Tandon studying Computer Science and have been in MUN since my freshman year of HS. I'm born and raised in NYC from the Bronx so shoutout to any fellow bronxites. Also I'm addicted to TennisTV.

Now, to start off your preparation for the committee, here is the background guide prepared to you by all of us, Chair, CD, and staffers. If you have any questions, please do contact us. We look forward to seeing you in March!

Richard Gao
Chair
NYUMUNC XIII
aztecempire.chair@gmail.com

Adnan Ahsan
Crisis Director
NYUMUNC XIII
aztecempire.cd@gmail.com

History

Chicomoztoc and Aztlan

The Aztec Empire was a triple alliance of Nahua powerful city states in the valley of Mexico creating a sprawling complex society composed of millions of people. Rich in culture and religion, wealthy in their economy, and mighty to their enemies, the Aztec Empire did not start out this way. As the Aztec origin story goes, the first embers of empire started with the arrival of the Nahua people to the basin of Mexico around the middle of the 13th century. Prior to their arrival, as legend says, the Nahua people came from a mythical area called Chicomoztoc, translated into “The Place of the Seven Caves”¹. Each cave represented the different Nahua peoples and its location is still disputed to this day, theorized to be hundreds of miles north from the Valley of Mexico. Eventually the Nahua people migrated to a new area, establishing the city of Aztlan.

Aztlan, called by some to be a paradise, others to be a dictatorship ruled by a tyrannical nobility. It was situated on a lake that the tribes called Metztliapan, translated the “Lake of the Moon”. Conflicting accounts regard the tribes’ exit of the city. Some claim the tribes were rallied by a priest of the Aztec sun and war god Huitzilopochtli and fled the city. Others such as in the *Anales de Tlatelolco* codex claim that the tribes fled on 4 Cuauhtli of the year 1 Tecpatl, corresponding to January 4th, 1065 upon a sign from a supernova. A modern hypothesis claims that with the collapse of old farming states in central Mexico, the tribes migrated and conquered the weakened kingdoms².

Arrival in the Valley of Mexico – (1250)

The last tribe of the Nahua people to arrive, around 1250 AD, were known as the Mexica, coming over great challenges from established tribes who had already started Altepetl, translated into “kingdoms”. With most of the arable farmland already settled, the Mexica had an uphill

¹ Townsend, Camilla. *Fifth Sun: A New History of the Aztecs*. Oxford University Press, 2021.

² Ibid.

battle to survive and were in conflict with the surrounding powers³. According to Alvarado Tezozomoc, grandson of Emperor Moctezuma, the Mexica offered their services as mercenaries to the King of Culhuacan, King Coxcox in exchange to be allowed to settle in a poor patch of land called Chapultepec, translated “Land of Grasshoppers”.

Rebellion Against Culhuacan – (1299)

Eventually in 1299 AD, the ruler of the Mexica, Huitzilihuitl, believed themselves to be powerful enough to stand on their own. Differing accounts claim what occurred during this declaration of a kingdom. One account claims the ruler of Culhuacan decided to appoint his daughter to rule over the Mexica much to their resistance. Instead of accepting her rule, and deciding they were strong enough, the Aztecs chose to sacrifice her, flaying her skin, on the command of the god of agriculture and renewal, Xipe Totec⁴. Another account claims the princess was sent to marry the Mexica chief but was slain in a betrayal. Enraged at the slaying of the Culhuacan princess, the king of Culhuacan sent his armies to shatter the Mexica people. Unfortunately, the ruler of the Mexica made a miscalculation in the strength of his forces. King Coxcox personally led his war party, a coalition of forces, against the Mexica and shattered their army, sending them scattering to escape. On their defeat, their princess, whose name translated to “Shield Flower” was captured and burned at the stake. As she perished, with several different variations of the story floating about, she claimed to the enemy that her people would grow into great warriors⁵.

After the monarch of Culhuacan expelled the Mexica, they relocated to an island in the middle of Lake Texcoco, finding an eagle nested upon a cactus. Deeming this as a sign from the gods, the Mexica established the City of Tenochtitlan, dubbing the year of foundation as *ōme calli*, translated into “Two Houses”, in the year 1325 AD.

³ Katz, Friedrich. “The Evolution of Aztec Society.” *Past & Present*, no. 13, [Oxford University Press, The Past and Present Society], 1958, pp. 14–25, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/649866>.

⁴ Townsend, Camilla. *Fifth Sun: A New History of the Aztecs*. Oxford University Press, 2021.

⁵ *Ibid.*

Founding of Tenochtitlan and the First King – (1325/1372)

The area the Mexica settled on was undesirable by many other kingdoms. The kingdoms around it did not favor the swamp-like conditions of the area. However the Mexica did not abandon their area, taking inspiration from a rival people, the Xochimilca, they adopted the agricultural practice of chinampas. These chinampas, otherwise known as floating gardens, brought much food to the Mexica people, growing their city. Soon, the people of Tenochtitlan grew into a powerful state known for its military prowess⁶.

While ever growing, it was still not recognized as a legitimate Altepetl, being considered little more than a militarized rump state. The Mexica decided to seek allies, and created an alliance with the stronger city state of Azcapotzalco under the seasoned ruler Tezozomoc, paying tribute to him⁷. In doing so, with their new strength the Mexica then sought and successfully gained a marriage alliance with the recognized Altepetl of Culhuacan, marrying one of their daughters with their own kin. And thus, the first king of the Mexica was enthroned, King Acamapichtli, in the year 1372 AD⁸.

The Tepanec War – (1426)

In the year 1426, a striking political development changed the future of the Mexica. The powerful ruler of Azcapotzalco, King Tezozomoc, died in his sleep, creating a power vacuum in the state leading to a civil war. The king's sons immediately reached for the throne and gave an opportunity to those in Tenochtitlan. The presumed heir, Tayahuah was slain by an ambitious prince, Maxtla, usurping the throne and immediately set about war with his late father's allies who supported Tayahuah. Maxtla immediately attacked the city state of Tlacopan and Tenochtitlan. He first ousted the royal family of Tlacopan, installing his own puppets, then turned to Tenochtitlan.

⁶ Townsend, Camilla. *Fifth Sun: A New History of the Aztecs*. Oxford University Press, 2021.

⁷ Katz, Friedrich. "The Evolution of Aztec Society." *Past & Present*, no. 13, [Oxford University Press, The Past and Present Society], 1958, pp. 14–25, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/649866>.

⁸ Townsend, Camilla. *Fifth Sun: A New History of the Aztecs*. Oxford University Press, 2021.

In fighting Tenochtitlan, treachery started the conflict between the new king and the Mexica. Maxtla allegedly invited the then king of Tenochtitlan, King Chimalpopoca, to his home under the guise of celebrating his coronation with a feast but then strangled him to death⁹. In the ensuing death, Chimalpopoca's son ruled, Xihuil Temoc, given the fitting epithet of "Fallen Comet", as he ruled for sixty days before he suddenly died. Some accounts claim he fell in battle against Maxtla, others say Itzcoatl, the next in line for the throne, assassinated him. Itzcoatl, unlike the previous two kings was neither gullible or green in warfare, indeed the new king was a seasoned war party leader¹⁰. Titled the "Obsidian Snake", he was the son of a slave girl and had no legitimate claim to the throne but with charisma and sheer force of will he became King.

King Izcoatl, instead of storming King Maxtla's holdings, opted to search for allies and refused his people's calls to concede. He allied himself with the ousted royal family of Tlacopan and then, in a much criticized decision, threw himself into another separate civil war, sending emissaries to Texcoco, an Altepetl on the eastern side of the lake. Texcoco chafed under the iron grip of the late King Tezozomoc, and during his death, a civil war erupted with different lineages vying for power. However Izcoatl opted to send emissaries to look for the son of a late King Texcocoan king who was killed by the late Tezozomoc in revenge for a consolidation of power. Itzcoatl's emissaries coaxed the then stateless prince, Nezahualcoyotl, to join him in his idea of a triple city alliance comprising of Tenochtitlan, Texcoco, and Tlacopan¹¹. Nezahualcoyotl after consideration agreed and the triple alliance was created, arrayed against King Maxtla in 1428 AD. The war was brutal, but overtime the triple alliance beat back the forces of King Maxtla, and within a year expelled the usurper's supporters from the valley¹². King Maxtla escaped the alliance forces and disappeared from history. By the year 1432, the Kings of Texcoco,

⁹ Townsend, Camilla. *Fifth Sun: A New History of the Aztecs*. Oxford University Press, 2021.

¹⁰ Hassig, Ross. *Aztec Warfare: Imperial Expansion and Political Control*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1995.

¹¹ Townsend, Camilla. *Fifth Sun: A New History of the Aztecs*. Oxford University Press, 2021.

¹² Hassig, Ross. *Aztec Warfare: Imperial Expansion and Political Control*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1995.

Tenochtitlan, and Tlacopan ruled in an unspoken triumvirate with King Izcoatl becoming huey tlatoani, translated as “High King”, analogous to Emperor¹³.

The Triple Alliance – (1432)

As their power grew with conquests of surrounding regions, the undeclared triple alliance carefully balanced the political complexities of their partners. Soon, what was once a region that for centuries had no truly dominant power had a rapidly growing hegemon expanding farther than any Altepetl ever could. And to keep their new and fast growing number of tributary states in check, the Mexica made sure to put down rebellions with absolute brutality, slaughtering entire villages and enslaving the defeated.

To note, the Mexica did sacrifice their enslaved however it was a far cry from modern day depictions of senseless killing. The ritual sacrifices were a solemn occasion with traditions of fasting and significantly lower in number than modern day movie depictions. Eventually, as the triple alliance expanded more, their sacrifices soon became majority prisoner of war.

TABLE 2-1. CENTRAL PROVINCES' DATES OF ENTRY INTO THE AZTEC EMPIRE

Confederation and Polity Name	Date Empire Entered	Joined Empire by Alliance	Joined Empire by Conquest ^a
<i>Tenochca</i>			
Tenochtitlan	1428	+	
Atlacocho	1428	+	+
Ecatepec	1428		+
<i>Culhuac</i> ^b			
Colhuacan	1428		+
Huatzilopochtli	1428		+
Ixtapalapan	1430		+
Mescaltzinco	1428		?
<i>Misquit</i>			
Misquit	1429		+
<i>Cuauhhuac</i>			
Cuauhhuac	1429/30		+
<i>Xochimilca</i>			
Xochimilco	1429		+
<i>Chalca</i>			
Chalco Atenco	1456		+
Tenanco Tepeopalan	1456		+
Tlalmanalco	1465		+
Chalco-Amescamecan	1465		+
Chimalhuacan Chalco	1465		+
<i>Acolhua</i>			
Texcoco	1428	+	
Acolman	1428		+
Chashtlan	1434		+
Chicomautlan	1430 ^c		?
Chimalhuacan Atenco	1430		+
Cuauhhtlan	1427/30		+
Huexotla	1430		+
Otompan	1430 ^d		+
Teotihuacan	1430 ^e		+
Teperlaotoc	1430 ^f		+
Texcapan	1428 ^g		+
Teoyucan	1430 ^h		+
<i>Acolhua-Administered Territories within Valley of Mexico</i>			
Coatepec	1428		+
Ixtapalucan	1430		+
Tequistlan	1430 ⁱ		+
Tezaycan	1430 ^j		+
Xaltocan	1428		+

Confederation and Polity Name	Date Empire Entered	Joined Empire by Alliance	Joined Empire by Conquest ^a
<i>Acolhua-Administered Territories outside Valley of Mexico</i>			
Camopala	1430 ^k		+
Tecuilpan	1430 ^l		+
Tepeapulco	1430 ^m		+
Tetotmitl	1430-40 ⁿ		+
Tlaquilpan	1430 ^o		+
Tezcuilpan	1430 ^p		+
<i>Tlapanec</i>			
Tlacopan	1428	+	
Ancapotzalco	1428		+
Coyoacan	1428/29		+
Teoyucan	1428		+
Cuauhhtlan	1428	+	+
Tepeztotlan	1428	+	+
Tollitlan	1430		+
Apaxco	ca. 1428-40		+
Atzacopan	ca. 1428-40	+	+
Huiztlochtlan	by 1440 ^q		+
Tequiztlan	?		+
Tolmacuchilan	1430-40		+
Tecpatztec	1430 ^r		+
Tollan	between 1440 & 1469		+

Sources: Paso y Troncoso 1903-06; Codex Mendoza 1923; Anales de Cuauhhtlan 1938, 1943; Kelly and Palerm 1952; Duran 1967; Berdan and Anawalt 1992.
^aDocuments describe some polities as allied members of the Triple Alliance at its beginning, but these polities are mentioned as being conquered by one of the Triple Alliance capitals later. Rather than being regarded as inconsistent data, these changes in status can serve as evidence of the fluidity of political relations within the empire's center.
^bThe four Culhua polities are reported to have joined the empire by alliance, according to Chimalpahin (1961). The information on this chart represents conquest dates given by Tenochca conquest lists.

*Dates of Conquest of the Central Provinces*¹⁴

¹³ Townsend, Camilla. *Fifth Sun: A New History of the Aztecs*. Oxford University Press, 2021.

¹⁴ Berdan, Frances F. *Aztec Imperial Strategies*. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1996.

The Flower Wars – (1454)

The triple alliance eventually came into contact with Altepetl that were harder than others to conquer, Tlaxacala for example was situated in incredibly defensible terrain. And with a great famine afflicting the triple alliance in 1454, being believed to be the anger of the gods, many called for increases in sacrifice to placate them. Unable to conquer some defensive Altepetl and needing sacrifices, the period called the Flower Wars began. The Mexica engaged in a sort of activity wherein officials set up ritual-like skirmishes on the battlefield would be played out in ceremonial combat instead of all-out war to both gain prisoners to sacrifice and have battle-hardened military force¹⁵. For some enemies, like the Tlaxacala, historians postulate they were left alone to be used as targets for ceremonial warfare instead of pursuing a conquest, which while ultimately the Mexica would win, would drain them of great resources. The Flower Wars allowed the Mexica to placate their people and gain seasoned armies. During this time, and for the next fifty years, the Mexica continued their expansion with every Emperor, who continued reforms to consolidate power and centralize rule in Tenochtitlan¹⁶.

Reign of Moctezuma II and the Imperial Reforms– (1502)

With the coronation of Moctezuma the Young in 1502 AD, the new Emperor focused his efforts on creating a truly centralized state, to be an Emperor not only in name but with state power¹⁷. He quickly set about to reform the triple alliance political system, creating administrative divisions throughout the lands with complex bureaucracies and loyal governors¹⁸. The new Emperor also created military garrisons throughout the triple alliance regions, to support the Mexica people and enforce his rule throughout the land. Soon, even the judiciary was centralized with Nahuatl peoples being placed as judges to settle disputes over tributary lands and came a standardization of landholding that favored those loyal to Tenochtitlan¹⁹. And lastly, he

¹⁵ Townsend, Camilla. *Fifth Sun: A New History of the Aztecs*. Oxford University Press, 2021.

¹⁶ Hassig, Ross. *Aztec Warfare: Imperial Expansion and Political Control*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1995.

¹⁷ Townsend, Camilla. *Fifth Sun: A New History of the Aztecs*. Oxford University Press, 2021.

¹⁸ Hassig, Ross. *Aztec Warfare: Imperial Expansion and Political Control*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1995.

¹⁹ Ibid.

imprisoned and executed any dissent or non-loyal officials from Texcoco and Tlacopan, leaving Tenochtitlan as the de-facto ruler of the alliance. Indeed, with power shifting rapidly to Tenochtitlan, the triple alliance was soon less of an equal sharing of power among three kings and more of a centralized empire with an emperor at its head.

Current Situation– (1519)

The year is 1519, the triple alliance at this point through Moctezuma's centralizing reforms is the Aztec Empire in all but name. The empire stretches far and wide, with several tributary states and conquered peoples, a wealthy economy, and a military of a quarter-million soldiers ready to expand and put down rebellion. Emperor Moctezuma, known for his administrative prowess and charisma, leads the nation in the middle of a golden age for the Aztecs.

To the Aztec's east, several small Mayan states have consolidated into a unified syndicate, comparable to the Aztec Empire itself. To their south, fast spreading rumors have reached the Emperor of another empire among mountains, a sun-worshipping people allegedly named the Incas. To the Aztec's west exists the Tarascan state, historical rivals to the Aztecs and smaller but still powerful, defensible, and having advanced metalworking techniques bolstering their weaponry. And finally to the north lays a litany of smaller conquerable states but beyond that is the purported homeland of the Aztecs, Aztlan, waiting for any expedition or explorer to find it. Though who knows what one could find in Aztlan, if it even exists, it could be immense wealth, an abandoned city, or perhaps containing something so terrible that caused the abandonment of it in the first place.

As of now the Aztec Empire is in the middle of a golden age but with a burgeoning bureaucracy, several conquered peoples chafing under its rule, and several new powers on its borders. Only time will tell if the Emperor and his governing council can continue this golden age. Will the Aztec Empire flourish? Or will it fail in its mission and as the myth of the five suns claim, see the fifth sun set and have the Goddess of the Moon, Coyolxāuhqui, slay humanity?

TABLE 2-6. POLITICAL STATUS OF AZTEC COMMUNITIES

Regional State and Community	Tlatoani Present in 1519	Imperial Calpixqui Present	Cuaubtlatoani and Dates Present	Other Imperial Official Present	Ruler Office Lost
<i>Tenochca</i>					
Tenochtitlan	+	Petlacalcatl		+	
Tlatelolco		+	1475		+
Ecatepec	+	+			
Xochimilco	+++	+			
Mixquic	+	+			
Cuitlahuac	++++	+			
Culhuacan	+				
Huitzilopochco	+	+			
Ixtapalapan	+				
Mexicaltzinco	+				
Chalco Atenco		+	1464-86	+	++
Tenanco Tepopulan	+++		1464-86	+	
Tlalmanalco	+++		1464-86	+	
Amecamecan	+++++		1464-86	+	++
Chimalhuacan	+				
Tepetlixpan	+				
<i>Tepaneca</i>					
Tlacopan	+				
Tenayucan	+				
Azcapotzalco	++				
Coyoacan	+				
Tacubaya	+				
Cuaubtitlan	+	+			
Citlatepec		+		+	+
Coyotepec				+	
Huehuetocan				+	
Otlazpan		+			
Tehuilooyocan		+			
Tepaxic	+				
Tepoxaco		+			
Zumpanco					+
Tepotzotlan	+	-			
Tollitlan	+				
Apaxco	+				
Actopan		+			
Atotonilco	+	+			
Axocopan	+	+			
Tetepanco	+	+			
Hueyochitlan	+	+			
Azayucan	+	+			
Tezatepec	+	+			
Tetlapanaloyan	+	+			
Itzcincuitlapilco	+				
Tecpatepec	+	+			
Tequizquiac	+	+			
Tolnacuctlan	+				
—See Tributary Provinces chapter					
<i>Acolhua</i>					
Xilotzinco	+	+			
Yetecomac					+
Tollan	+	+			—see Tributary Provinces
Xilotepec	+	+			—see Tributary Provinces
<i>Acolhua Calpixque Centers in Valley of Mexico</i>					
Texcoco	+				
Acolman	+				
Ciauhitlan	+				
Chiconautlan	+				
Chimalhuacan	+				
Coatlincan	+				
Chicoloapan					+
Huexotla	+				
Orompan	+				
Teotihuacan	+				
Tezontepec		+			
Tepetlaotoc	+	+			
Tepexpan	+	+			
Temazcalapan		+			+
Tezoyucan	+	+			
<i>Acolhua-Administered Territories outside Valley of Mexico</i>					
Coatepec			1430+	++	+
Ixtapaluca					+
Tizayucan		+			
Xaltocan		+			+
Apan					++
Calpulalpan					?
Cempoala		+			+
Tecuilpan		?			
Tlaquilpan					+
Epazoyucan		+			+
Pachuca		+			
Tezontepec		+			

Sources: See Appendix 1.
 + = present (more than one + indicates more than one official)
 Blanks = no data
 ? = possibly present

Current Granular Political State of the Aztec Empire in 1519²⁰

²⁰ Berdan, Frances F. *Aztec Imperial Strategies*. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1996.

Government

Tenochtitlan (And Inner Provinces)

Tenochtitlan was the seat of the Empire, de facto capital and housing most of the imperial bureaucracy, military, and royal family. At the head of Tenochtitlan, and of the Empire, was the Huehuetlatoani, the Emperor of the Aztecs who had the final say on all matters of state. Beneath the Emperor was the Council of Four, a ruling advisory council of nobles who would aid the Emperor in his day to day proceedings²¹. They would also, on the death of the Emperor, choose among the relatives of the late ruler to become the new Emperor. Generally, the Council of Four were next in line to become Emperor as they were relatives of the ruler and were placed in positions of immense wealth or military power²². The Council of Four consisted of the Tlacocheacatl, Tlacteacatl, Ezhuahuacatl, and Tlillaancalqui. The Tlacocheacatl, roughly translated to general, was the second in command of Aztec forces. The Tlacteacatl, also translated into general, was the third in command of Aztec forces but almost exclusively picked from the Aztec military order of the Cuachicqueh. Little is known about the Tlillaancalqui, but its name is roughly translated to keeper of a house of darkness, implying to be a spy of some sort. And finally, the Ezhuahuacatl, translated into “Shedder of Blood” was perhaps the Imperial executioner.

Equivalent to the Council of Four was the Cihuacoatl, running the daily affairs of government, a prime minister of a sort, in addition to being Chief Justice of the Empire. The Huehuetlatoani would deal with the external issues of the Empire while the Cihuacoatl would deal with the internal issues. However to note, the Emperor could veto the Cihuacoatl’s decisions²³.

²¹ Berdan, Frances F. *Aztec Imperial Strategies*. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1996.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

Judicial System

The Aztec Empire had a vast tiered judiciary that dealt with a wide variety of laws. Most of the higher courts were dominated by Aztec-loyal and appointed Nahuatl judges but the lower courts were inhabited by locals of the conquered Altepetl. Overall the system was composed of, in order of precedence, the Supreme Court, Special Courts, Tlacxitlan Courts (Appellate), Teccalli Courts (Trial), and the Pochteca Courts (Merchant Trade).

The Pochteca Court dealt with matters of trade within the Altepetl, generally dealing with complaints between merchants. The Teccalli Courts dealt with civil and criminal cases regarding commoners. The Tlacxitlan Courts dealt with cases generally involving nobility and warriors, while also reviewing appeals from Teccalli Courts. And finally, the Supreme Court, led by the Cihuacoatl, translated to Chief Justice, had the last word on the law when cases were appealed from the Tlacxitlan Courts.

Regarding the Supreme Court, the Cihuacoatl had two choices when presented with a case. To recommend cases too important for the court to the Emperor and his Council of Four to determine, or rule on it which would deny any further appeals even to the Emperor from the Plaintiff. However the Emperor retained the right to intervene in these cases though such an intervention would incur strong backlash across the empire.

In addition the Aztecs had a litany of diverse special courts to handle more specialized matters such as religious courts, military courts, family law courts, and fiscal courts. And to the absolute granular level of the Aztec judicial system, there existed neighborhood courts who reported decisions to the Teccalli Courts, even having police forces to serve summons and arrest common criminals.

The judges of the Aztec Empire were revered and kept to a high standard. The Emperor appointed the Chief Justice who would in turn appoint all of the lower court judges (Tlacxitlan, Teccalli Courts, Family Courts, etc.) with the exception of neighborhood courts who would be elected by the neighborhood. Judges were appointed for life, being selected from judicial

apprenticeships, and only removed for misconduct. In the case of misconduct, the judge would face a rule of three approach, on the third reprimand the judge would be ousted. In addition, bribery or fixing an outcome by the judges would see them punished with death. A trial could last no longer than eighty days and at the end of the period, a majority vote by a jury would bring the verdict.

Of note, the Aztec Empire did have several distinct prison systems for certain cases. There existed the cuauhcalli (Death Row), the teilpiloyan (Debtor's Prison), and the petlacalli (Small Crimes).

Provincial Administration (Outer Provinces)

As the triple alliance grew and became an empire in all but name with Moctezuma II's reforms, it was still an empire that ruled by indirect means. The Aztecs still demanded tribute from their tributary states, collected by Calpixque, tribute collectors, but left day to day operations up to the locals. As such, the Aztecs instituted a provincial system designed to keep the possibility of a rebellion at a low.

Each Altepétl and their corresponding region was under the control of their own Tlatoani (King) who would be elected from a ruling council of upper nobles²⁴. Generally this council would have a pre-selected heir apparent who would tend to be from the current king's family. The Tlatoani would handle large decisions of the city, whether to go to war, establishing trade deals etc²⁵. Underneath the Tlatoani and their council would be the calpulli, tight-knight organizations led by calpuleh, leaders of neighborhoods within the Altepétl, that would control the police, act as lower court judges, and collect taxes²⁶. Outside of state administration, the military of each Altepétl would be under control of the Cuauhtlatoani who would also be appointed to be governor of any conquered areas of the Altepétl, however ultimate power rested in the elected Tlatoani.

²⁴ Berdan, Frances F. *Aztec Imperial Strategies*. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1996.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

TABLE 2-9B. NUMBER OF COMMUNITIES BY POLITICAL RANK IN VALLEY OF MEXICO POLITICAL HIERARCHY, CA. A.D. 1500, BY POPULATION SIZE

Population Size ^a	Political Rank				
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
100,000+	1 (100%)				
70,000-80,000		1 (50%)			
50,000-60,000			2 (8%)		
40,000-50,000			1 (4%)		1 (10%)*
30,000-40,000		1 (50%)	3 (13%)		
20,000-30,000			3 (13%)	2 (29%)	
10,000-20,000			6 (25%)	3 (42%)	3 (30%)
less than 10,000			9 (37%)	2 (29%)	6 (60%)
Totals^b (44)	1	2	24	7	10

TABLE 2-8. POLITICAL RANKS AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RANKS

Regional State and Polity Name	Political Rank ^a	Archaeological Site Rank ^b	Documentary Estimate, Number of Dependent Towns ^c	Archaeological Estimate of Dependent Villages ^d	Regional State and Polity Name	Political Rank ^a	Archaeological Site Rank ^b	Documentary Estimate, Number of Dependent Towns ^c	Archaeological Estimate of Dependent Villages ^d
<i>Texcoco State</i>					<i>Texcoco State</i>				
Tenochtitlan	1	1	82+	—	Texcoco	2	1	29+	18
Tlatelolco	5	—	0	0	Acolman	3	3	28	26
Ecatepec	3	3	6	6	Chiauhitlan	3	3	1	6
Mixquic	3	3	2	—	Chicomostlan	3	3	1	2
Cuauhhuac	3	3	0	—	Chimalhuacan	3	3	5	2
Xochimilco	3	3	30	1	Chicocolapan	5	5	0	—
Colhuacan	3	3	0	—	Coatimchan	3	3	5	2
Huitzilopochco	3	3	0	—	Huexotla	3	3	5	5
Ixtapalapan	3	3	0	—	Otompan	3	3	29	17
Mexcaltranco	3	3	0	—	Teotihuacan	3	3	17	21
Chalco Atenco	5	3	5	2	Tezontepic	5	?	2	—
Tenanco Tepopulan	4	4	16	11	Tepetitotoc	3	2	0	6
Tlamanalco	3	3	17	4	Tepexpan	3	3	13	39
Amecamecan	4	3	12	0	Teroyacan	3	2	1	1
Chimalhuacan-Chalco	4	—	8	—	+ Tequisitlan	5	—	2	0
<i>Tepaneca State</i>					<i>Acolhua Tributary Territories in Valley of Mexico^e</i>				
Tlacopan	2	3	37+	—	Coatepec	5	3	5	2
Azcapotzalco	3	3	7	—	Ixtapaluca	5	3	0	0
Coyoacan	3	3	16	—	Tizayucan	5	—	0	—
Tenayucan	4	3	0	3	Xaltocan	5	5	0	1
Cuauhuitlan	3	3	14	11	<i>Acolhua Territories outside Valley of Mexico</i>				
Citlaltepec	5	4	6	1	Apan	5	—	4	—
Coyotepec	5	4	—	2	Calpulalpan	5	—	18	—
Huahuotzacan	5	3	—	2	Cempoalan	5	—	10	—
Otlazapan	5	—	4	—	Tecpilan	5	—	4	—
Tehuilocan	5	5	0	—	Tlaquilpan	5	—	3	—
Tepaxic	4	—	0	—	Tzauqualan	5	—	4	—
Tepozotlan	4	3	13	14	Epazoyacan	5	—	6	—
Tollitlan	4	3	5	6	Pachuca	5	—	2	—
Zumpango	5	3	6	0	Tepapulco	5	—	0	—
Apaxco ^f	3	3	10+	1	Tezontepic	5	—	2	—
Actopan	4	—	3	—	Temascalapa	5	—	2	—
Azotomilco	4	—	6	—					
Axocapan	4	—	7	—					
Tetepanco	5	—	5	—					
Hueyochitlan	4	3	3	14					
Acayacan	5	—	—	—					
Tetlapamaloyan	5	—	1	3					
Tezatepec	5	—	—	—					
Izcuinquitlapilco	4	—	0	—					
Tecpatepec	4	—	0	—					
Tequizquac	4	3	2	1					
Tollmacuechlan	5	—	3	—					
Xilotzincan	4	3	0	2					
Yotecomac	5	—	0	—					
Tollan	3	—	—	—					
Xilotepec	3	—	See Appendix 4.	See Appendix 4.					

^aFor data on political ranks, see Appendix 1.

^bSanders, Parsons, and Sanley (1979: map 18).

^cCounts do not include categories of very small dependencies (i.e., *estancias* and *rancherías*).

^dCounts sites in each historically derived territory. Counts represent dispersed and nucleated

Large Village and Small Village categories. Hamlets are omitted, and sites ethnohistorically

identified by the survey project are also omitted because many of these represent *estancias* and

not towns (Source: Sanders, Parsons, and Sanley 1979: map 18).

^eSee Outer Provinces section and Appendix 4 for more information on Atotonilco, Tollan,

and Xilotepec.

^fOther Acolhua tributary territories in Valley of Mexico not included in this study's sample

are Papalotlan, Otzotzac, and Axapochco (Alva Ixtlixochoatl 1976-77, 2: 89-90).

— = data not available.

Aztec Empire Size Chart and Legend²⁷

²⁷ Berdan, Frances F. *Aztec Imperial Strategies*. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1996.

To note, for the tribute system, while the Calpixque were the tribute collectors moving around to collect said tribute, they reported back to the Huecalpixque, the provincial head of tribute²⁸. Huecalpixque all reported back to the Petlacatli, the head of tribute in the Empire. In the tribute system existed two types of states, tributary states wherein tribute was mandatory and strategic states wherein there was a mutual agreement between the Empire and the state for tribute²⁹.

²⁸ Berdan, Frances F. *Aztec Imperial Strategies*. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1996.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

TABLE 2-2. THE CENTRAL PROVINCES' TRIBUTE AND MILITARY OBLIGATIONS

Regional State and Polity Name	Imperial Tribute Province ^a	Additional Tribute in Goods to Tenochtitlan ^b	Support Imperial Defense/Army ^c	Local Calpixque Distribute Weapons ^d
<i>Tenochca</i>				
Tlatelolco	Tlatelolco	+		
Ecatepec	—	+		
Xochimilco	Petalcalco	+	Warriors	+
Mixquic	Petalcalco	+	Warriors	
Cuitlahuac	Petalcalco	+	Warriors	+
Culhuacan	—		Warriors	+
Huitzilopochco	Petalcalco	+	Warriors	+
Ixtapalapan	—		Warriors	+
Mexicaltzinco	—		Warriors	+
Chalco Atenco	Citlaltepec	+	Warriors	
Tenanco Tepopulan	Petalcalco	+	Warriors	
Tlalmanalco	Chalco	+	Warriors	
Amecamecan	—		Warriors	
Chimalhuacan Chalco	—		Warriors	
<i>Tepaneca</i>				
Tlacopan	—		Warriors	+
Tenayucan	—			
Azcapotzalco	—		Warriors	+
Coyoacan	—	+	Warriors	+
Cuahtitlan	Cuahtitlan	+	Warriors	
Citlaltepec	Citlaltepec	+		
Coyotepec	—		(assumed serving with Cuahtitlan) ^e	
Huehuetocan	—			
Otlazpan	Atotonilco	+		
Tehuilooyocan	Cuahtitlan	+		
Tepaxic	—	+		
Tepoxaco	Cuahtitlan			
Tepozotlan	—	+		
Toltitlan	—			
Zumpanco	—			
<i>Apaxco</i>				
Actopan	Hueyпочtlan	likely	Guard border	+
Atotonilco	Atotonilco*	+		+
Axocopan	Axocopan	+	Warriors	+
Yetecomac	—	+	Warriors	
Tetepanco	Axocopan	+		
Tezontepec	—			
Itzcuincuitlapilco	—	+	Warriors; Guard border	+
Tecpatepec	Axocopan	+	Supplies	
Tetlapanaloyan	—			
Hueyпочtlan	Hueyпочtlan	+		
Tezcatepec	Axocopan	+		
Tequizquiac	Hueyпочtlan	+	Warriors	
Tolnacuchtlan	—			
Xilotzinco	Cuahtitlan	+		
Tollan*	—			
Atenco	Axocopan	+	Warriors	
Michmaloyan	Xilotepec	+		
Nextlalpan	—			
Tezontepec	—			
Mizquiyahuacan	Axocopan	+		
Chilcuahtlan	—			
Ixmiquilpan	Axocopan	+		
Tlahuililpan	Axocopan	+		
Atidalaquian	—		Supply armies	
Xilotepec*	—			+
<i>Acolhua</i>				
Texcoco	—		Warriors	+
Acolman	—		Warriors	
Chiauhtlan	—			
Chiconautlan	—			
Chimalhuacan	—		Warriors	
Coatlinchan	—			
Chicoloapan	—			
Huexotla	—			

Graph of the Central Province's tribute to the Aztec Empire ³⁰

³⁰ Berdan, Frances F. *Aztec Imperial Strategies*. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1996.

Military

Warfare was regularly part of the Aztec Empire, and as a result, commanded much respect from the government. Although the Aztecs had a relatively small standing army, the elite soldiers were part of warrior societies that took after an animal who represented their ideals. Jaguar Knights for example often came into battle adorned with jaguar pelts. Warfare was meant not as a tool of conquest, but as a tool to gain tribute from foes who were weaker, and was part of every boy's regimen growing up. Every boy, with the exception of the noble class was trained to become a warrior. Formal education for commoner boys would consist of military training, and formal weapons training began at age fifteen, where boys would "shadow" veteran soldiers who would help them learn the ropes of warfare and get over any persisting fear. The goal of the Aztec warrior wasn't to soundly defeat the enemy. Instead, the goal would be to capture the enemy to use in Aztec sacrificial rituals.

Military Structure

In reality, the Aztec military consisted of generally two categories: commoners who received basic military training who could come to the empire's defence if required, and a small standing army of professional warriors, classified as nobility. Priests, a big part of Aztec culture, also took part in battle, often carrying effigies of deities meant to support the military. Generals were called Tlacohtlcatil, and would name successors before battle so they could rapidly be replaced. Because of the ranking structure, the Aztec military was decentralized, with members swearing loyalties to many different institutions. The rank of a



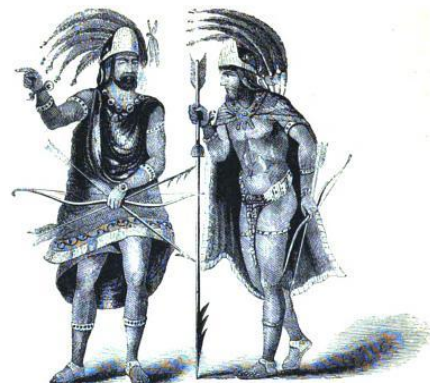
soldier in the military was largely determined by their ability to capture enemies, and a commoner could rise the ranks to the nobility class if they proved themselves an efficient captor. An exceptional commoner was accepted into the nobility class through the various warrior societies. The most common pathways for a commoner would be to enter the nobility through the Eagle or Jaguar Knights, ensuring their place amongst the other noble families. Each society had their own customs, and preferred fighting style and battle dress. Other societies existed, but the Eagle and Jaguar Knights were the best documented.

Total War

Merchants were often used as an important source of intelligence, capable of quietly infiltrating opposing factions disguised as merchants was an important trait, and Aztec leadership often assigned tasks for outgoing merchants. Aztec merchants actually received a lot of respect outside of the empire due to their support by the government, and killing an Aztec merchant warranted war from the empire. Scouts were used before a military campaign to bring as much information as possible. Ambassadors were also sent as an option to avoid war with the Aztecs. After deciding to conquer a city, the Aztecs sent ambassadors to offer the targeted city a peaceful way to join the empire. If the city refused, the Aztecs would send two more missions, after which, would come the might of the empire.

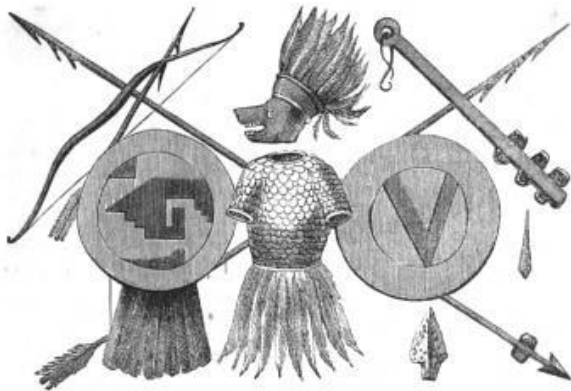
Equipment

Ranged weapons included slings, bows, and blowguns that utilized obsidian and poison to take down enemies. Some ranged weapons like the dart thrower were reserved for nobility, and launched obsidian darts at high speed towards enemies. Poison for their darts came from



poison dart frogs. Melee weapons were creative, and often combined sharpness and bluntness into the same package. The Macuahuitl, a club embedded with sharp obsidian edges, was documented to have been capable of decapitating a horse in the hands of a jaguar warrior. Many weapons had religious significance, and a weapon would commonly be used by a warrior society that adopted the weapon to fit their style.

The common soldier was not afforded the expensive armor and weaponry of the elite warriors, and would often go into battle with basic cotton armor and rudimentary weapons.



Nobility on the other hand, were adorned with designed helmets and emblems on their armor signalling what rank they were, and would be equipped with shields and well-made melee weapons. The more decorated the soldier was, the higher his rank.

Additionally, each unit would commonly have a signaller or a trumpeter that helped communicate with the broader military structure. The psychological factor of warfare was reinforced by the sheer numbers of the signals, and the addition of the Aztec death whistle made sure to frighten the opposing force.

Combat

Large military operations were facilitated through a series of smoke signals, trumpeteers, and messengers. Missile fire usually began the battle, followed by a convergence of the two opposing forces with the elite Aztec warriors leading the subsequent melee. Small-scale tactics were deployed, but for the most part, the melee descended into individual fights. If victory was assured, the youth that followed the army would join to take captives. Prudently, the Aztecs

would try not to burn down the city they were fighting, and only when faced with the most stubborn opposition did they raze the city. Although taking captives held high importance, the Aztecs adapted their strategy to fit the situation, and would take captives only when victory was nearly guaranteed.

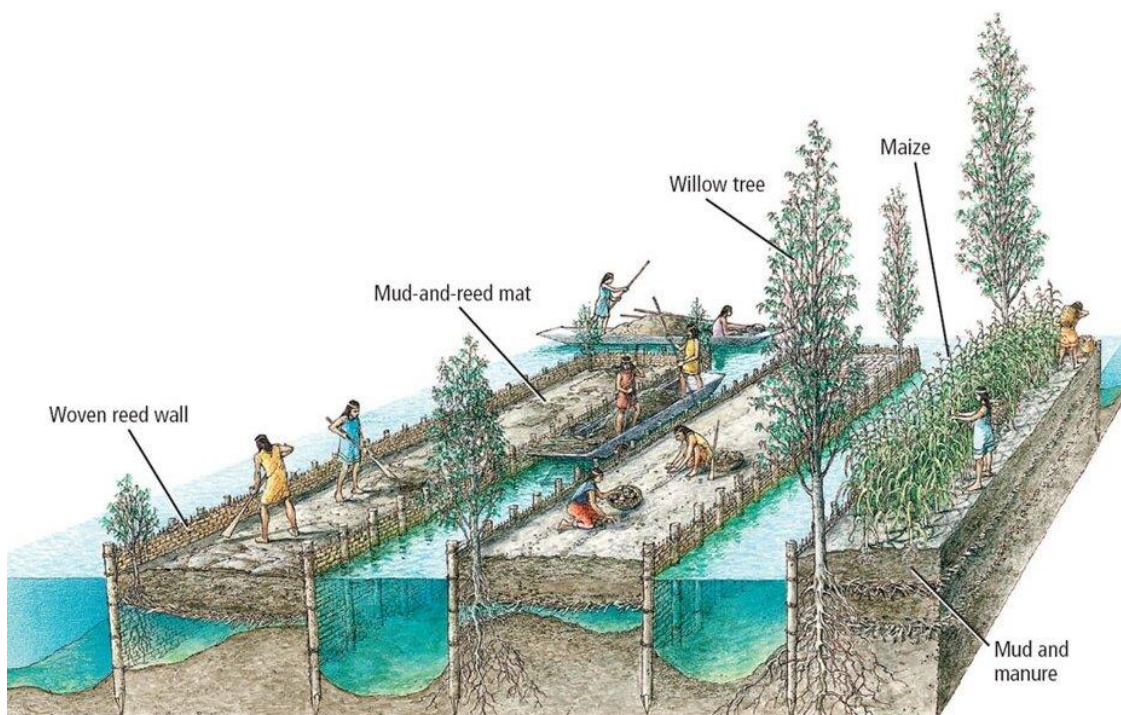
Economy

Prior to the years of Spanish conquest, *encomiendas*, and *repartimientos*, the Aztec Empire had a burgeoning economy reliant on tributes (taxation) and the efficient use of *chinampas*, or artificial islands created for agricultural use. Subjects of the empire were responsible for paying taxes to the Emperor based on the value of the services they provided or goods that they produced. Nobility, including military leaders, were exempt from such payments. Traveling merchants, or *pochteca*, journeyed to distant regions to carry out commerce with foreign groups, and were crucial to maintaining and diversifying the Aztec economy. Although they were not considered a part of the nobility and were expected to defend themselves from bandits on trade routes, they were still held in high esteem by Aztec society.

In regards to the collection of tributes and the use of *chinampas*, Mexican Archaeologist Matos Moctezuma asserts that “the duality of war and agriculture was crucial for the Aztec economy.” The prominent civilization expanded its borders with the domination of neighboring regions, whose residents it then taxed every 80 days. Because there was no uniform currency across the civilizations of Mexico at the time, these taxes came in the form of foodstuffs, paper, animal products, warrior costumes, and other valuable products. Failing or refusing to pay tribute

to the Emperor upon domination would result in harsh, usually capital punishment, which aided the Aztecs in profiting immensely from their military efforts.

Simultaneously, they were able to cultivate a wide range of agricultural products such as maize, beans, tomatoes, pumpkins, and chilis in their skillfully-designed and ecologically-friendly 3, or artificial islands. These islands were essentially rectangles of plotted land separated by canals of water, built by placing mud and vegetation in fenced off parts of a lakebed. Because the Aztecs' capital city of Tenochtitlan was settled on an island in the middle of a lake with limited dryland and abundant wetland, this agricultural method was ideal. Even so, they ran out of space, prompting them to partake in military efforts. Ultimately, their excellence in both agriculture and warfare proved critical to upholding Aztec society.



Local marketplaces, or *tianquiztli*, in which merchants sold and bartered goods were commonplace in Aztec cities, especially in major ones. Although there was not an official currency, cacao beans, pieces of cloth, precious feathers, and a few other materials were used as

cash, though sellers also accepted credit for their goods. *Tianquiztli* were active either on a periodic or daily basis and were monitored to prevent fraud. Furthermore, civil disputes could be settled in court-like systems that were permitted to administer capital punishment. Merchants were expected to pay tribute to the Emperor based on the profits they made from local marketplaces or the value of their services.

Society, Culture, Religion

Religion

The founding myth of the Aztec religion is that the universe was created by two deities: Ometecuhtli and Omeciuhatl, and our world stands in between thirteen heavens and nine underworlds.

The history of the universe is marked by the rise and fall of several ages, each ending in the destruction of the previous one and the rebirth of a new order. Each age had its own sun which presided over the world. Our age, the fifth one, was brought about fifty two years after the fourth age, when the god Tonatiuh sacrificed himself to birth a new sun. However, its path and trajectory was unstable, so the other gods sacrificed themselves to make sure the sun would remain kindled. Huitzilopochtli was then assigned to fight the dark forces and guarantee that every time the sun went down it would go back up and light up the world..

The Aztec founding myth shows us why blood sacrifices were such an essential part of their religion. They were seen as a way to give the gods the energy stored in our bodies and thus maintain the sun afire, as well as repay the gods for their sacrifices. Aztecs believed that our bodies held two energies, tonalli and teyolia, which were released after our death.

Tonalli was believed to be stored in the head, given to us while still in our mother's womb, and is basically our warmth and strength.

Teyolia was believed to be stored in the heart and was responsible for our reason. Upon a warrior's death, their teyolia would be released and go up to the sun, helping to keep the sun aflame. This explains why most blood rituals involved the sacrifice of a captured warrior.

The Aztecs followed a 365-day solar calendar, as well as a 260-day religious calendar, which produced a 52-year cycle. Every 52 days, the Aztecs performed special rituals, where they extinguished all fires in the city and lit up a new one in the body of a human sacrifice.

The Aztec pantheon:

Huitzilopochtli: God of war and dawn, generally associated with the form of an eagle. It was believed that Huitzilopochtli was the one who led the Aztec people to the valley of Mexico and showed them lake Texcoco where they would settle Tenochtitlan.

Ehecatl: God of the wind.

Tlaloc: God of rain.

Tonatiuh: God of the sun; presides over the current age.

Quetzalcóatl: God known as the Feathered Serpent.

Mictlantecuhtli: God of death and the underworld.

Ometecuhtli: God of chaos. No temple was erected to him by the Aztecs.

It is important to note that differently to many of the polytheistic religions we are familiar with, like the Greek and Norse mythologies, where gods have specific roles and powers assigned to them, Aztec gods many times intertwine and interchange roles between each other. That is why sometimes we may see Huizilopochtli being described as the god of the sun and warmth, as well as the god of dawn. It stays in theme to the idea that the Aztec is a religion that revolves around the idea of cycles, change, and transformation.

The after Life

Aztecs beliefs of what happened after death depended a lot on the way the person died or their position in society. People whose cause of death was drowning, lightning, leprosy, gout, and a few other diseases were believed to go to Tlaloc's heaven, since he was the cause of their death.

Warriors who died in battle or through sacrifice were believed to go to the companion of the sun, as well as merchants who died while traveling and mothers who died in their first child's labor. These mothers were given the name Cihuateto, meaning Divine Woman. The warriors who ascended to the sun were believed to return as a hummingbird after four years of their death.

The rest of the people who died were sent to Mictlan, home of Mictlantecuhtli, located under the northern desert. They traveled through Mictlan for four years, after which they would reach the ninth hell, where they would disappear forever.

Culture

Art

Aztec cultural pieces were produced in several mediums, some material, like paintings and ceramics, and some immaterial, such as poetry and music. It shared many characteristics with other Mesoamerican civilizations, like the Mayans.

One of the most highly regarded cultures by the Aztecs was that of the Toltec, a civilization that preceded the Aztecs, seeing their pieces as the epitome of art work. The Aztec nobility saw themselves as the successors of these people.

Unfortunately, the Spanish destruction and eventual colonization of the empire destroyed many cultural artifacts, leaving us with mainly descriptions and illustrations made by Europeans.

But other sites that were not destroyed by Europeans gives us a better look on what it may have looked like. Teotihuacán, a city founded even before Tenochtitlan, has many surviving works of art that we could theorize on.

One important characteristic seen in these paintings, especially depicting nobles and gods, is that human symbols of power were many times seen being worn by gods, as well as nobles using symbols commonly associated with gods on themselves.



This image found in Teotihuacán of a goddess can be seen wearing a crown of green quetzal bird feathers, which were a symbol of status. She can also be seen wearing jade ear flares, another symbol of status.



Similarly, in this other art found in Teotihuacán, a noble is depicted wearing the same headdress, as well as jade ear flares.

Although these art pieces were not created by the Aztecs, Teotihuacán had a very strong influence in their culture, having been the city where it was believed the gods were created. Its name comes from the Nahuatl, meaning “the place where the gods were created.”

It is important to remember though that the term Aztecs is a broad term that started to be used in more modern times to designate the people living in the Aztec empire, yet the people who lived in it did not see themselves as Aztecs. Rather, the empire was composed of several different cities of many cultural backgrounds which all shared a common language called Nahuatl.

Society

Aztec society was highly stratified with little chance for upward mobility, although it was not impossible.

On the top of the hierarchy there was the emperor, who ruled in Tenochtitlan, followed by the **teteuhctin**, who were the leaders of other cities-states. Following them there were the **pipiltin**, people of noble birth, and the **potcheca**, who were merchants who brought luxury items, such as jade and quetzal feathers. Positions in offices of the State, such as priests and judges, were only accessible to members of the nobility.

After them there were the commoners, known as **macehualtin**, who were the rest of the population. This included warriors, farmers, artisans, and so on. The majority of people were farmers, either doing the hard work of taking care of the fields, or as horticulturalists, overseeing the farms.

The lowest strata of society were the **slaves**, who either put themselves into slavery, or were put as a punishment for a crime. Slaves had rights and could not be mistreated, and it was also not passed on to the slave's children, who were born free. They could also buy their freedom and could not be sold to other people.

The Aztecs also had an education system, which was divided between girls and boys. Girls were taught on domestic duties, and boys taught on their social duties. The system was also further divided into, one for the nobility, the *calmecac*, and another for the commoners, the *telpochcalli*.

In the *calmecac*, students would learn skills needed for public office, like astrology, religion, law, and other activities. In the *telpochcalli*, students would have an education more guided towards military skills, such as combat and discipline.

Perhaps the most distinct institution of the Aztecs was the **calpolli**. The *calpolli* were groups of families led by elders who distributed the land of the *calpolli* to the members of the *calpolli* as if it were their own, on the condition of a regular tribute. These lands had to be worked on, or else they would be redistributed by the elders. The elders were also responsible for redistributing the land in the case of someone dying without an heir.

Foreign Relations



Map of Aztec Empire and Surrounding Territories

The Aztec Empire was very militaristic and often came into contact with surrounding territories. The Aztecs conquered surrounding regions to collect tribute and obtain people to use for human sacrifice.¹ War between the Aztecs and surrounding territories occurred when a territory closed its roads to commerce, a merchant or ambassador was killed, or a territory refused to pay tribute.¹ If war was declared, the emperor would issue a declaration of war and

send envoys to the enemy region.¹ The enemy was then given weapons and 20 days to respond to the declaration and submit to Aztec authority.¹ If an agreement was not able to be made, a second offering with the same gift of weapons and 20 days to respond to the declaration, and again with the third and final offering, each time with harsher terms.¹ If no agreement was reached after the third offering, the Aztecs would attack within 20 days and enemy kings would suffer personal punishment for waiting until the third offering.¹ Warriors captured during battle were enslaved and sacrificed.¹

Another institution of the Aztec Empire was the “flowery war” or *xochiyaoyotl*.² The flowery wars served the purpose of supplying enough humans to sacrifice to appease the gods.² In a flowery war, two states agree to fight battles in order to supply sacrificial victims.²

The most important aspect of Aztec foreign relations was that of the Triple Alliance - an alliance formed in 1428 between the Aztecs, Texcocans, and Tacubans to defeat the most powerful threat in the region, the Tepanec, and their capital, Azcapotzalco.³ Within the alliance, the Aztec Empire was the most powerful. The Triple Alliance combined their armies to conquer land in the Valley of Mexico.⁴ The impact of the Alliance on the areas they conquered had varying degrees of change from maintaining their independence under the condition of supplying tribute to the Triple Alliance to being destroyed if met with a struggle from the people.⁴ Tribute from these cities consisted of women, warriors, food, textiles, and precious minerals that were shared among the three empires.⁴ As a result of the large power gain from the Triple Alliance, the Aztecs began performing large scale human sacrifices as they became the dominant empire of Mesoamerica.⁴ These sacrifices were favored more by the ruling class of the Aztec Empire than its general population as a way of maintaining control over the area.⁴ To gain enough people for large scale human sacrifices, soldiers kidnapped people from territories the Alliance was

interested in conquering, bring them to Templo Mayor (Great Temple) in the capital city, and have them witness the human sacrifices. The captives were then sent home to detail what they had seen.⁴

At the time of the 16th century, the Aztecs ruled over 500 small states and 5 to 6 million people through conquest and commerce.³ At this time, the capital city has a population of over 140,000, the most densely populated city in Mesoamerica.³

Special Voting Mechanic

To replicate the imperial structure of the Aztec Empire and stray true to historical governance within the Empire's bureaucracy, we will be implementing a special voting mechanic in committee. This mechanic centers around the workings of The Council of Four, this is **The Council's Veto**.

The Council's Veto

ONLY during directive voting, a directive may automatically fail if **ALL** four members of the Council of Four vote nay. This represents the Imperial Council advising the Emperor to strike down the directive. This means if the **Ezhuahucatl**, the **Tlacochealcatl**, the **Tlillancalqui**, and the **Tlacateccatl** all vote nay, the directive fails. If any of them vote aye or abstain, the Council of Four's veto is broken and the directive is voted on normally.

The Abolishment of the Council of Four

There is a single counter to the Council of Four's veto. Delegates may "**Motion to Abolish the Council of Four**". This is considered the most destructive of any motion bar motions to suspend/close debate and takes 2/3rds of non-council delegates to pass. In passing this motion, the nobles of the Empire convince the Emperor his council is ineffective and the Emperor abolishes the council. The delegates of The Council of Four retain their portfolios and retain their imperial positions, but they may no longer collectively veto directives.

****DO NOTE:** Should delegates pass this motion, the Empire will be thrown into internal tumult at the rollback of Imperial Centralization. As such it is advised the committee does not take this lightly and the Council of Four does not abuse their veto.**

Character List

Chief Justice

Commander of the Main Army (C4)

Commander of the Reserve Army (C4)

Imperial Spymaster (C4)

Imperial Executioner (C4)

Imperial Prince

Imperial Head of Tribute

Lord of House Tepetl

Priestess of the South Temple

Priest of the North Temple

Imperial Minister of Agriculture

Queen Consort

Ambassador to the Mayans

Commander of the Jaguar Knights