



The Aztec Culture



The Aztec culture originated in the four-corner area of present day Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, and Colorado. In the late twelfth century they began a slow migration southward until they reached Mexico and gained prominence in the late fourteen hundreds.

The Aztecs were an advanced civilization that built intricate cities such as Tenochtitlan, which was their island capital. The Aztecs were primarily a sedentary culture that relied on hunting and gathering. The Aztecs were dedicated to their religion. A showing of this dedication was human sacrifices in impressive ceremonies to the gods.

Dress was an important part of Aztec religion and daily life. The Aztecs civilization was very advanced for their time and through religious beliefs, and family life they lived a full and productive life.

The Aztec empire had an elaborate government and society that consisted of four classes. The four classes were nobles, commoners, serfs, and slaves. These classes showed a hierarchy of power with nobles being the most powerful and slaves being the least powerful. In government most of the office positions were hereditary, but one could obtain a high office by serving the emperor. Slaves were obtained through war and people who couldn't pay their debts were also enslaved. Commoners made up the majority of the population and survived by farming. Serfs worked the land for nobles.

Aztec economy was based upon agriculture, corn being the most important crop. They practiced slash-and-burn agriculture and many times achieved crop surpluses. These surpluses were stored and used during hard times. They also had elaborate irrigation systems, which allowed them to farm dry lands. They farmed shallow lakes by scooping up mud and forming islands called chinampas. These islands made for very fertile land that was effective for growing crops. At Tlatoacalco they had an extensive market that was the largest of its time. Interestingly the Aztecs had no money system - they traded goods and services.

Religion was a staple in the Aztec culture. The Aztecs worshiped hundreds of gods and goddesses - each represented a different aspect of life. Ceremonies were very important to the Aztecs during the agricultural years ensuring good crops. During these ceremonies human sacrifices were given to the gods. Many of the sacrifices were war prisoners or children. They felt that human hearts and blood gave the gods strength. Large temples were built to perform these sacrifices.

Family was a major aspect of Aztec life. The men were primarily hunters and gatherers, while women mainly cooked and wove clothing. Young boys were educated by their fathers until the age of ten when they started school. Young girls stayed at home with their mothers and learned household chores. Common wedding ages were sixteen for women and twenty for men.

The Aztecs had many different kinds of food they enjoyed. Some of the most popular dishes were tacos, tortillas, and tamales. Other foods were seeds from the sage plant, which were used as cereal, spicy peppers, eggs, turkey, rabbit, and dog. A delicacy for the Aztecs was green slime, which was scooped off the top of Lake Texococo. It was said to have tasted like cheese. For refreshment they often drank water and on special occasions they drank beer and the nobles enjoyed chocolate sweetened with honey.

The warm climate forced the Aztecs to develop clothing that was loose and flowing. Women wore sleeveless blouses and wraparound skirts. Men wore cloth around the hip area and a cloak over a shoulder. Nobles wore cotton clothing with much decoration. The poor wore clothing made from maguey fibres. During religious ceremonies masks were often worn.

For protection the Aztecs constructed simple houses. Their houses were constructed for purpose rather than beauty. In the highlands the houses were made of adobe. In the lowlands the walls were made of branches plastered with clay. Some families also had storehouses and small sweatshouses that were used for steam baths.

The Aztecs expressed themselves through music, arts, crafts, and the sciences. Music played an important role in Aztec religious rituals. The most important instruments were flutes, drums, and rattles. These were played along with chanting to help worship the gods. A popular way to pass the time was through art. Some of the Aztec art is still around today. One such piece is the Calendar Stone. This stone, which was twelve feet in diameter, represented the Aztec universe. It is thought that the hearts of human sacrifices were placed on this stone and presented to the gods. Feathers were used for head dresses, cloaks, and masks. Other crafts were woodcarving, pottery, and weaving.

The Aztec communication skills were very well developed for their time. The Aztecs had their own language called Nahuatl. They wrote their thoughts through a system of writing known as pictographic writing. This consisted of small pictures that represented words. Pictographic writing was mainly used by the highly educated to keep business records.

The Aztecs were a highly civilized culture. Their extensive four-class society along with religion and government gave it a strong structure. The farming based economy gave the people an effective way to make a living. The music, arts, and crafts gave the Aztecs a means of expression. As one can see the Aztecs lead a structured and meaningful life that enabled the Aztec society to become a very advanced civilization.

Tenochtitlan, the capital of the Aztec Empire, flourished around 1300 A.D. as the last ancient civilization on earth. This town was a city built on small islands. A pyramid 45 meters in height towered above all in the centre of the city. This was used for ceremonies in which sacrifices to the gods were performed. The Aztecs were a very religious race and strongly believed in the practice of sacrificing people to please the gods. They sacrificed over 20,000 people a year.

The emperor thought that a special temple should be built for the deadly ritual, so, the Aztecs built the Sacrificial Temple.



One example of such a temple would be the Great Temple of Tenochtitlan.

The cities of the Aztec empire always wanted to make their sacrificial temple better than any other cities. They decided not to destroy the old temple, but to build over it! They made temples larger, more extravagant, and more pleasing to the eye with each new layer. In addition, the temples had more steps, more decorations, and a larger sacrificial area.



These temples look a lot like the great Egyptian pyramids except they do not have a pointed top. Instead, they have a flat top with two small compartments where the sacrifices were held. In a rare find, archaeologists found a temple that was built over six times! Each new temple was more magnificent than the others.

The Aztec (Mexica) Empire 1300-1519

Regardless of any unearthly properties the crystal skulls may or may not possess, the question remains: where did they come from? There are countless hypotheses that they are the legacy of some higher intelligence. Many believe they were created by extraterrestrials or beings from Atlantis or Lemuria. One theory maintains that the skulls were left behind by an advanced and sophisticated previous civilization, and the thirteen "master skulls" may contain the history of their culture.



The Mayans are most often associated with them, although some doubt exists that they could have made the skulls, and not simply because of the technical conundrum the job poses. Skull imagery figures prominently in Aztec art and religious symbols, and not in that of the Mayans. It could be that the skulls found in Mayan ruins are actually displaced Aztec relics.



A May broadcast of the BBC documentary series "Everyman" reported on studies done of a number of the crystal skulls. Using electron microscopes, the researchers found that two of the skulls possessed straight, perfectly spaced surface markings, indicating the use of a modern technology.

Ancient objects should show haphazard tiny scratches from the hand-polishing process. Regardless of whether the work was carried out five years ago or five hundred years ago, we still don't have any idea how the crystal skulls were created.

[cosmic]