

# The Aztecs



# Class Objective

Students will know the political, religious, cultural, and economic characteristics of the Aztec civilization.

# Aztec Geography: Valley of Mexico

- The Aztec civilization was located in the Valley of Mexico.
- The valley had several large shallow lakes.
- Very fertile soils and accessible resources.



# First Civilization

- The first major civilization of central Mexico was Teotihuacán, a city-state whose ruins lie just outside Mexico City.
- At its peak in the sixth century, it had as many as 125,000 people, making it one of the largest cities in the world at the time.







- At the center of the city stood a giant Pyramid of the Sun. This 200-foot-tall pyramid was larger at its base than Egypt's Great Pyramid.











- The Aztecs arrived in the Valley of Mexico around 1200 A.D.
- They started as a poor nomadic people from the harsh deserts of northern Mexico.
- Known for being fierce and ambitious, they soon adapted to local ways, finding work as soldiers-for-hire to local rulers.

# Aztec Legend

- According to Aztec legend, the Aztecs' sun god told them to found a city of their own.
- He said to look for a place where an eagle perched on a cactus, holding a snake in its mouth.

# Current Mexican Flag









# Agriculture

- Built their cities in the middle of lakes
  - *Chinampas*: Floating gardens



# Caste System

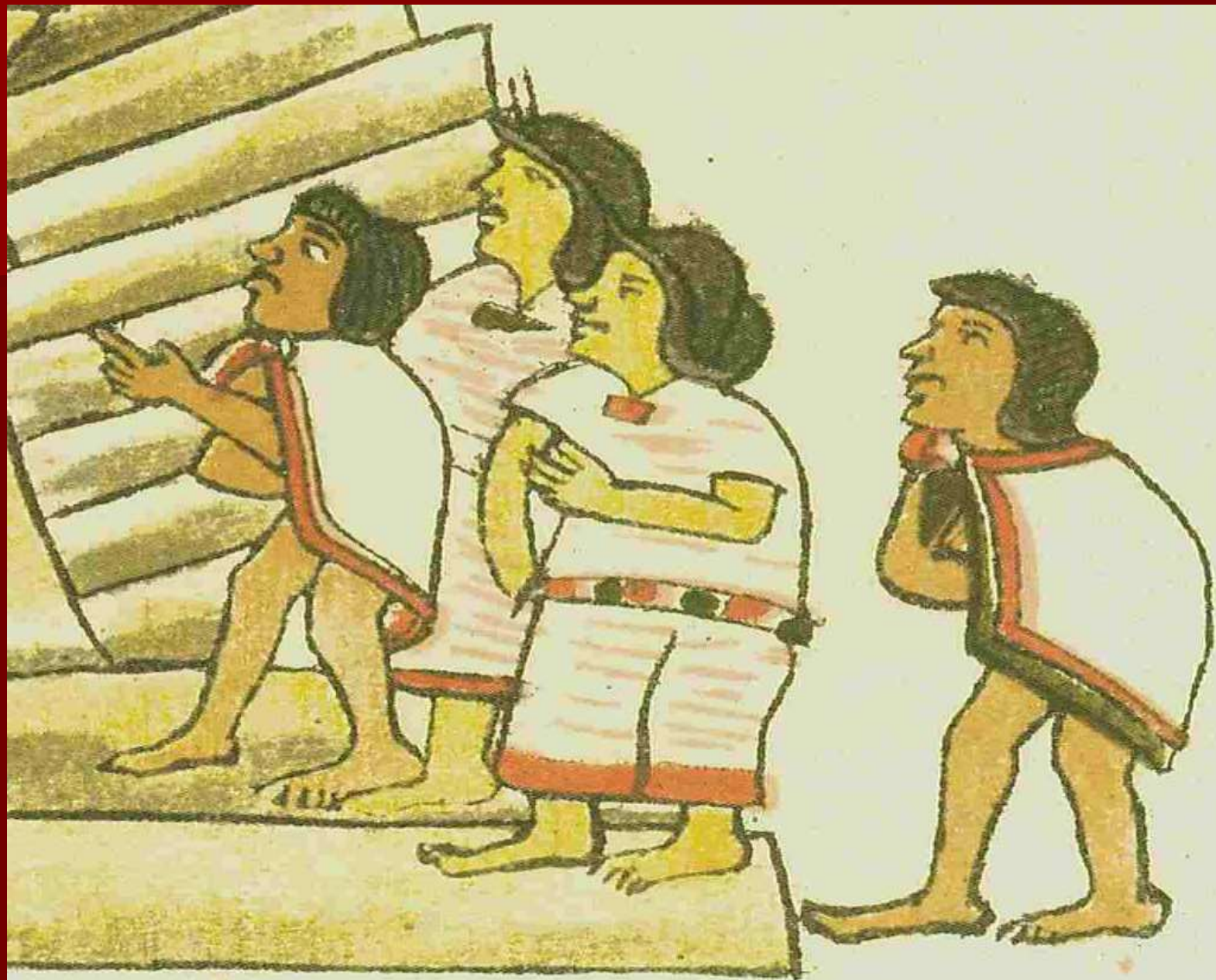
- Three major classes:
  - The Nobles
  - The Commoners
  - The Slaves
- ***The Noble class*** was comprised of government officials, priests, and military leaders.
  - In the Aztec empire military leaders held great power.





- **Commoners** included merchants, artisans, soldiers, and farmers who owned their own land.
- **Slaves** were the lowest class, they were captives who did many different jobs.







# Emperor

- The emperor sat at the top of the Aztec social pyramid. Although he sometimes consulted with top generals or officials, his power was absolute.
- He lived in royal splendor in a magnificent palace, surrounded by servants and his wives. Visitors had to treat him like a god.



# Religion of Aztec's



- The Aztecs adopted many of their gods and religious beliefs from other Mesoamerican peoples (people they conquered).
- Religion was centered on elaborate public displays. At these ceremonies, priests made offerings to the gods and presented ritual dramas, songs, and dances featuring masked performers.

# The Sun God

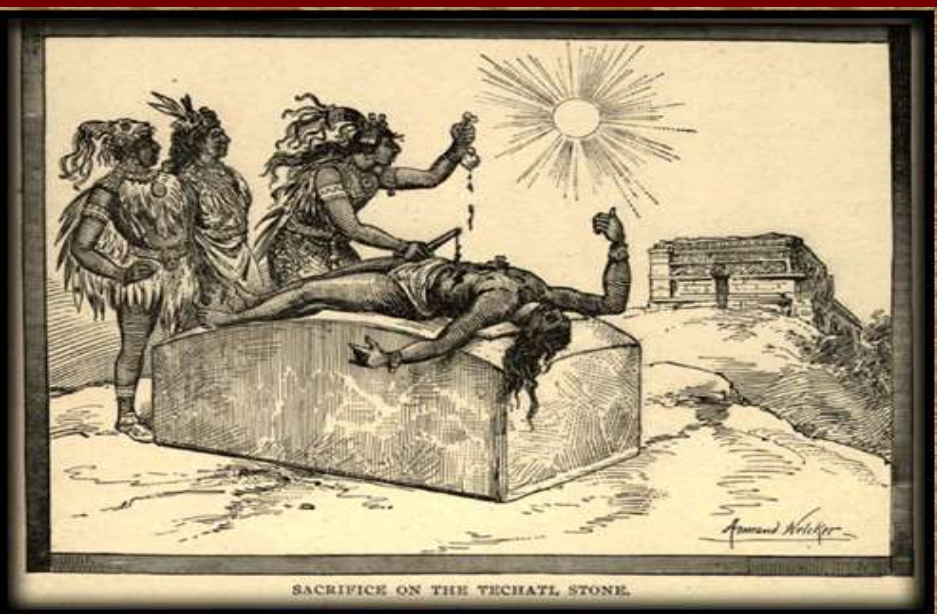
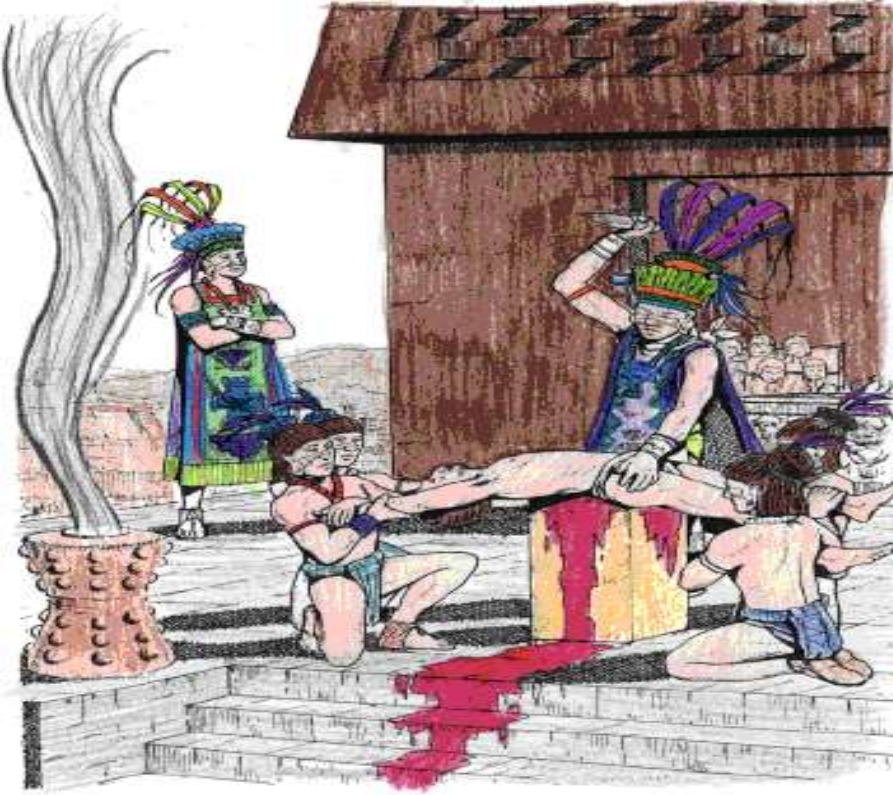
- The most important of these ceremonies involved the sun god. According to Aztec myth he made the sun rise every day, but he could only do this as long as he was nourished by human blood.
- Without regular offerings of blood, the sun would fall and all life would end.





# Human Sacrifice

- There is no way of knowing exactly how many people were sacrificed during the time of the Aztec, but most estimates are between 20,000 and 250,000 people per year.
  - If 20,000 per year: about 55 people per day!
  - If 250,000 per year: about 685 people per day!



SACRIFICE ON THE TECHATL STONE.





- For years the Aztec had demanded human sacrifice from the provinces under their control.
- As the Aztec population grew ever larger more sacrifices were required and some of these provinces started to rebel.



# Montezuma II

- In 1502 a new ruler was crowned.
- His name was Montezuma II.
- Under the reign of Montezuma II the Aztec empire started to weaken.



- The fall of the Aztecs would come when the Spanish conquistadors came wandering into the Valley of Mexico. The rebels helped the Spanish conquer the Aztecs.
- Further south in the Andes mountains another civilization was emerging.





