

## 16.3 The Aztecs Control Central Mexico

### 1. Setting the Stage

- a. The greatest empire of Mesoamerica rises around the Valley of Mexico which is modern day Mexico City

### 2. The Valley of Mexico

- a. A valley at 7500 ft. that had several shallow lakes, accessible resources and fertile soil

#### b. An early City-State

- i. \_\_\_\_\_ – first major civilization
  1. Peak around 6<sup>th</sup> century with a population between 150,000 and 200,000
  2. Heart of the city was lined with 20 pyramids dedicated to \_\_\_\_\_
    - a. Biggest was the \_\_\_\_\_
  3. Center of a thriving \_\_\_\_\_ that extended far into Central America
    - a. \_\_\_\_\_ – green or black volcanic glass used to make razor-sharp weapons – most valuable \_\_\_\_\_
  4. By 750, the city was abandoned
    - a. Believed that either an \_\_\_\_\_ or conflict among the \_\_\_\_\_
  5. Later settlers in the area named the city Teotihuacan, meaning, “ \_\_\_\_\_ ”

#### c. Toltecs Take Over

- i. Around 900, the \_\_\_\_\_ rose to power – set up capital at Tula
- ii. Extremely \_\_\_\_\_ people whose empire was based on \_\_\_\_\_
  1. Worshipped a \_\_\_\_\_ who demanded blood and human sacrifices
- iii. Around 1000, new ruler \_\_\_\_\_, tried to change the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ who to worship
  1. \_\_\_\_\_ – the feathered serpent
  2. Followers of the \_\_\_\_\_ did not like this and \_\_\_\_\_ forcing Topiltzin and his followers \_\_\_\_\_
- iv. By early 1200 their reign over the Valley of Mexico ended
- v. Topiltzin and Quetzalcoatl became one in the legend of the people of the Valley
  1. According to legend after his exile, the god traveled east, crossing the sea on a raft of snakes and would return one day bringing a new reign of light and peace

*What might inspire a ruler to try to change a state religion?*

### 3. The Aztec Empire

- a. \_\_\_\_\_ – arrived around 1200 to the valley

- i. Originally called the \_\_\_\_\_, were poor nomadic people from the desert of North Mexico
- ii. According to one of the Aztec legends, the god of sun and warfare, \_\_\_\_\_, told them to find their own city
  - 1. He said look for a place where an eagle perched on a cactus, holding a snake in its mouth
- iii. Found a small island in Lake Texcoco
  - 1. 1325, they founded their city named \_\_\_\_\_

**b. Aztecs Grow Stronger**

- i. \_\_\_\_\_ – 1428, Aztecs joined with 2 other city-states, Texcoco and Tlacopan
  - 1. By 1500s, the empire covered from central Mexico to the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean
  - 2. Divided into 38 provinces and estimated to have between 5 and 15 million people
- ii. Aztecs built their power on \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ they gained from their conquered subjects
  - 1. Generally exercised loose control over empire, often letting local rulers govern their own region
  - 2. Aztecs demanded tribute, and if rulers failed to pay, they would destroy the rebellious villages and capture their villagers or slaughter the inhabitants

**c. Nobles Rule Aztec Society**

- i. \_\_\_\_\_ – usually ruled with absolute power but sometimes consulted with top generals
- ii. \_\_\_\_\_ Class – Military leaders, government officials, and priests
  - 1. Many nobles owned vast estates and ruled them like lords, living a life of wealth and luxury
- iii. \_\_\_\_\_ Class – Merchants, artists, soldiers, and farmers who owned their land
  - 1. Merchants often acted as spies for the emperor
- iv. \_\_\_\_\_ Class – enslaved people

*Why might stories and myths about origins be important to a nation?*

**4. Tenochtitlan: A Planned City**

- a. By early 1500s, Tenochtitlan was a great urban center with a population between 200,000 and 400,000
  - i. Built on an island that had 3 \_\_\_\_\_ to connect the island to the mainland
  - ii. \_\_\_\_\_ – Huge market where the city inhabitants bought and sold their goods
    - 1. Fruits and vegetables were grown on floating gardens called \_\_\_\_\_
  - iii. The city center had, temples, palaces, government buildings, and the Great Temple

## 5. Religion Rules Aztec Life

a. Tenochtitlan contained hundreds of temples and religious structures dedicated to about 1000 gods

i. Aztecs \_\_\_\_\_ from other \_\_\_\_\_ peoples like \_\_\_\_\_

1. Depicted as a feathered serpent or a pale-skinned man with a beard

### b. Religious Practices

i. Centered on elaborate public ceremonies to communicate with the gods and win their favor

1. Aztec Calendar was full of religious festivals with varied depending on the god

### c. Sacrifices for the Sun God

i. \_\_\_\_\_, the sun god, according to legend when the \_\_\_\_\_ had to battle the \_\_\_\_\_ to get up the next day – to make sure he was strong enough he needed \_\_\_\_\_

1. Without \_\_\_\_\_, he would be too weak to fight and not come up, which would cause a state of \_\_\_\_\_ and all life would \_\_\_\_\_

ii. Aztec priests practiced \_\_\_\_\_ on a large scale every year

1. Thousands of victims were taken to the altar of the Great Temple and have their hearts cut out

2. Victims included enslaved people, criminals, and people offered by conquered provinces

a. Prisoners of war were preferred so Aztec warriors created battle tactics to ensure they took captives alive

*Why was religion such a central feature of Aztec life?*

## 6. Problems in the Aztec Empire

a. \_\_\_\_\_ – crowned ruler in 1502 and his empire started to decline

i. As the population of Tenochtitlan rose, Montezuma called for more tributes and sacrifices

ii. A number of provinces \_\_\_\_\_ against the Aztec \_\_\_\_\_

1. Began a period of \_\_\_\_\_

iii. Montezuma lessened the pressure on the provinces by reducing the demands for tribute payment

iv. Many Aztecs began to predict terrible things were going to happen through bad omens

1. \_\_\_\_\_ a temple in Tenochtitlan

2. \_\_\_\_\_ of the sun

3. Arrival of the \_\_\_\_\_ – the pale-skinned bearded men brought mind the legend of Quetzalcoatl