

Welcome students.

Under the initiative of the Directorate of Higher Education, Government of Goa titled:

Digital Integrated System for Holistic Teaching and Virtual Orientation for Developing E- Content.

I'm going to deal with the module 'The Aztecs'.

In this module we are going to have a look at the geographic location of Latin America.

Then I will talk about how the Aztec Civilization in Latin America was discovered,

The Aztecs- who they were, their administration, features of their society, features of the economy, their religious beliefs and practices, and finally, their achievements..

The learning outcomes expected of this module are:

First to acquire a general knowledge of the Aztec civilization of Latin America.

Second, to understand and appreciate the contributions of the Aztecs to World heritage.

This map shows you the location of Latin America.

Latin America basically refers to the countries of Central and South America, that were colonized by the Latin countries of Europe, namely Spain and Portugal.

Thus the Aztec Civilization developed and grew in Central America?

I quote "... gazing on such wonderful sights. We do not know what to say or whether what appeared before us was real....."

This was written by Bernal Diaz Del Castillo in his writings,

'The True History Of The Conquest of Mexico, 1632'.

This quote was in reference to the Capital City of the Aztecs of Central America.

The Aztecs were one of the several Nahua tribes who inhabited the region of present day Mexico.

They were a wandering tribe who emerged around 1200 AD.

overpowering the Toltecs, who had earlier displaced the Mayas of Central America.

The Aztecs had migrated Southwards into the Valley of Mexico,(Anahuac), in the 13th century AD

They were a Warrior tribe who created the Aztec Empire with their military strength and might,

forcing tribute from the subdued neighboring territories, that had to be paid to

the Aztec Chiefs in Tenochtitlan - the Aztec Capital City.

In 1325 AD, they built their famous Capital City, called Tenochtitlan.

That is why the Aztecs were also called the 'Tenochas'.

By the 15th century they became Overlords of Mexico and they created

an Empire that approximately covered almost two lakh square kilometers.

Aztec Administration.

They had a ruler who was called the 'Chief of Men.

He was elected by a Council. He was the King.

He was supported, appointed sometimes by the Council, which

was very powerful made up of Nobles, Priests and Warriors.

The entire Empire was divided into 38 provinces.

Each administered by a Governor, a Military garrison and Tax collectors.

Aztec Society.

They had a Ruling class that enjoyed power, luxury, and prestige.

A Priestly class that was very powerful and influential,

who determined who would be the successor to the Ruler.

The Military class was powerful.

The Merchants came next to the Military in importance,

Lastly the Common Folk who were very docile and obedient..

Religious Beliefs and Practices.

They were a Polytheistic Society, who adopted the deities of the Toltecs and the Olmecs

who lived there before them.

Basically the Aztecs were Nature Worshipers.

Their deities included the Sun, Corn- that was considered the 'Mother of gods'.

All Elements of Nature, including the Spring, rain, fire, wind and even death were worshipped as deities..

From the Toltecs they adopted their Deity of Learning and Priesthood.

To honour their deities, they built massive temples and pyramids.

One of the most amazing and gruesome practices that the Aztecs followed was human sacrifice.

They perform these sacrifices to appease their deities, to keep them happy.

A few aspects of Aztec Economy.

Their main crop and staple food was Corn, and as mentioned earlier,

The Aztecs had the Corn god, who was considered to be a very important deity.

They also grew manioc, beans, chili, and besides that they had fruits like avocados and pineapple,

the tomato and a few other crops like the red and green peppers, squash which were particularly

common with the Aztecs.

They excelled in mining and metallurgy. They had developed the art of smelting ores for

soft metals like copper and gold, and silver, which they used for their crafts along with gold.

Gold and silver were generally used for religious, and artistic purposes rather than for personal use.

They also excelled in mosaics and the use of semi precious stones, especially Jade and Turquoise.

They developed the art of weaving. They used fibres of cotton and wool.

They used fibers of the Maguey plant which was very special to the Aztecs.

In fact, it was called the 'tree of the poor' because every part of that plant was useful.

They excelled in pottery, featherwork, (they used feathers in their embroidery and their fabrics).

shell work and stone cutting.

Commerce was another important aspect of Aztec economy,

Merchants ranked after the Military in importance.

Coming to their medium of exchange, generally, the Aztecs used the barter system but

Cocoa beans were considered a very important medium of exchange.

They also used thin blades of copper and gold dust in quills.

Achievements of the Aztecs.

They developed a Calendar.

Time was divided into 52 years of 365 days related to their religious ceremonies.

Each Year was of 18 months, each of 20 days.. The balance of 5 days was considered unlucky.

The Aztecs were very famous for their 'Chinampas'.

They were the floating gardens that they created in their Capital City Tenochtitlan,

which was built on Lake Texcoco

The Aztecs had mastered the art of building floating towns on water and on hard ground.

They built fantastic causeways that connected the City to the shores.

They excelled in creating drawbridges which were pulled up to protect the Capital from the enemies.

Their writing was pictographic.

Records and other information were kept in Codices, very few of which survive to this date.

Finally came the end of the Aztec Empire.

The Aztec Empire was invaded by the Spaniard Hernan Cortez in 1519 AD.

It took only a handful of Spanish troops to bring down their mighty empire built and sustained by a powerful warrior tribe, who believed in the appeasement of their gods with human sacrifices - for hearts and blood, which they offered to their gods on the altars.

Whatever remains of their legacy today, still continues to amaze the world, as it did, the Spaniards, who invaded and destroyed the Aztec civilization in the 16th century.

By 1521, AD, the mighty Aztec Empire had come to an end.

Their legacy lives on, in their language, 'Nahuatl' spoken till today in Mexico and the symbol of the Aztecs that was adopted as the official emblem of Mexico..