

1. Description

- 1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: Aztec (aka Mexica), Nahuatl, Uto-Aztecan, Southern Uto-Aztecan, Aztecan, General Aztec, Aztec-of which there are 28 different versions or dialect representing the different regions of the Aztec. (12)
- 1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): nhi-this is for the classical Nahuatl dialect (12)
- 1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): South-Central Mexico, mainly the Valley of Mexico 19.67 degrees latitude and -99 degrees longitude and the surrounding area. (11,p. 30)
- 1.4 Brief history: The Aztec migrated to the Valley of Mexico over a two hundred year period from 1111 A.D.-1325 A.D. They migrated from a place called Aztlan whose location is debated but could have been as far away as the Southwestern United States, though it is believed they originated somewhere Northwest Mexico. They settled in Tenochtitlan in 1325. From 1325-1428 they were the tributary subjects of Azcapotzalco. The time under Azcapotzalco allowed the Aztecs to build up their city and military forces as well as gave them time to make alliances through friendships and trade and marriage. In 1427-1428 they allied themselves with the of the Acolhuacans Texcoco. With this alliance in place they were able to defeat Azcapotzalco in 1430 and became the new power in the region. They then allied themselves with the Tepanecs of Tlacopan to form the Triple Alliance. Over the next almost 100 years they expanded their empire through conquest of their neighbors making them tributary cities/states. Then in 1519 with the invasion of the Spanish led by Cortes the end was near for the Aztec empire. Cortes was able to ally himself with the neighboring city-states and on August 13, 1521 the Aztec's Huey Tlatcani (supreme ruler/commander) surrendered to Cortes. (9, p.3-10) (11,p.140-142)
- 1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: When the Cortez invaded in 1519-1520, he largely brought an end to the Aztec civilization, this occurred with the help of many of the Aztecs own people who essentially revolted against the empire. This was due to the fact that the Aztec Empire acquired much of its territory through the conquest of its neighbors. (9,p.159-162)
- 1.6 Ecology: Highland plateau (the Valley of Mexico) and lowland areas out side of the valley. (9 ,p.162)
- 1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: 1,000,000 to 25,000,000 estimated. Village size ranges from 212,500 to 600 for the Altepetl (city-states) Capitals and 8,000 to 30 for the second largest cities in the Altepetl. Home range varies from 1,350 hectares to 15 hectares for the Altepetl Capitals, the densities for the secondary cities is not available. (10, p.152)

2. Economy

- 2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): The Aztecs were agriculturalists and grew most of their food. The main staple for the Aztecs was maize because it could grow almost anywhere. They used it to make tortillas, tamales, soup, and elote or corn on the cob. Some form of corn/tortilla was served at every meal. Other common parts of the Aztec diet include avocados, tomatoes, different types of squash, and chile seasonings all grown on family plots (1, p.66).
- 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: Maize and beans were the main source of proteins and were also served at every meal. Meat was not a big part of the Aztec diet because there were not enough resources to hunt because of the high population. When they did eat meat it was their domesticated dogs, turkey, duck, and fish they caught. Another source of protein for the Aztecs was insects and algae which they used to make cakes and bread (1, p.67).
- 2.3 Weapons: The Aztec had atlatl (spear-throwers) to throw darts with great force and distance. The darts were made out of oak and had feathered ends and different pointed tips. They also used bows and arrows to kill animals and for battle and maguey-fiber slings to shoot stones (2, p.80). There were also thrusting spears, one and two-handed swords made of wood and obsidian/flint. They also had defensive weapons like shields, helmets, and body armor usually made out of hide, palm leaves, and bamboo. Many of them were covered in colored feathers and sometimes even gold (2, p. 85-56).
- 2.4 Food storage: Maize was allowed to harden before being harvested so it could be stored for the year. They would then soak the hard kernels in water with limestone before eating or making tortillas (1, p.68).
- 2.5 Sexual division of production: All Aztec women spun and weaved to make cotton cloth mostly for clothing, bedding, and items of adornment and battle armor (1, p.91). Their work was done in their homes raising children, cooking, and selling/trading her textiles for other goods at the market. Most men were farmers and worked in the fields from May to November and fulfilled their civic responsibility from December to April (1, p.140). Some men pursued artisan crafts such as carpentry, metalworking, goldsmithing, painting, and feather working close to home (1, p.139).
- 2.6 Land tenure: All families had personal gardens and terraced wall gardens grown on the hills and mountains around their homes. Large villages responded to a calpolli, a territorial unit that regulated land tenure and tribute payments (1, p.80).
- 2.7 Ceramics: Each family had many pieces such as water jugs, tortilla griddles, cooking pots, utensils, tools, and other small objects. All of these things were formed by hand in some sort of mold and baked in fires or kilns (1, p.89).
- 2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:
- 2.9 Food taboos:
- 2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

3. Anthropometry

- 3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): Males rarely greater than 5'6" and females 4'8" (18)
- 3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): N/A although they have been described as short and stocky with the women being of a more delicate build. (18)

4. Life History, mating, marriage

- 4.1 Age at menarche (f):
- 4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):
- 4.3 Completed family size (m and f):
- 4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

- 4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): Male-only allowed to marry once he reached the age of 20, Female-on average between 12 and 14 years of age some as early as age 8
- 4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: small proportion. Divorce was a judicial matter. The court often reconciled the couple. But if the couple was separated, property was equally divided and the children were separated according to sex (boys with fathers and daughters with mothers).
- 4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: Polygamy was practiced. Womens sons not guaranteed succession in royal families.
- 4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: Usually a bride service. Male works for brides parents for at least 4 years.
- 4.9 Inheritance patterns:
- 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: Parents were teachers. Elders were to be revered and respected. Punishment for misbehavior was severe starting with scolding. Punishment increases with age. Stick beating to inhaling chile smoke to hands and feet being tied and forced to lay on a wet mat. Men have a role in both male and female child rearing while women were only in charge of female education.
- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):
- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized? Family strongly based on “who is lived with” less than actual blood. Family can consist of in-laws. Eldest married man head of household. Patrilineal society. Young men move out later and live within their “young man’s house” of their calpulli.
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”)Role of woman is highly valued but men are still dominating in society. Women seen as possessions with specific household duties. Women reside with in-laws
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin) social groups and living patterns determined strongly by family ties. Both maternal and paternal lineage but preferred paternal lineage. Cross-cousin marriage. Elderly women are matchmakers and discuss possible marriage choices for a long time.
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? Adultery punishable by death
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring Husband not punished for extramarital relations with another single woman while females were expected to be faithful to their husbands. Adultery was often punished by being stoned to death.
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? If children are orphaned they live with their uncle and aunts. If mother dies at birth she is revered as a Goddess and lives with the sun like fallen warriors.
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females 1.063
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect? Each person has duties to specific kin while some also have duties to non-kin like priests. Rules for transmitting rights, titles, and property were kin based.
- 4.24 Joking relationships?
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations Patrilineal
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules Society was large enough that incest was easy to avoid.
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? Yes, fortunetellers decide date, tying of male’s cape to female’s blouse during the ceremony. Exchanging of incense. Women bath the female before parading to the male family’s home. Bride is carried by groom’s family back to their home.
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? Four days after being born there is a cleansing a naming ceremony. Bow arrow shield loin cloth and cape laid next to boys and baskets broom spindle skirt laid next to girls. The name of the child depended on the moment of birth. A wise man of the village (tonalpouhqui) corresponded the time of birth with a horoscope. Spiritual forces determines the child’s destiny. If it is an unlucky day he will decide the child’s name another day. Boys named after a male family member, females were given names related to stars, birds, flower etc. umbilical cords are buried in a field for battle if a boy and buried in the corner of the home if a girl.
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?) Within the community
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? Yes both parents and close kin. Male family initiates arrangement. Elderly women act as matchmakers. At first the female family declines proclaiming that she is too young. But they are not to take it seriously and continue to ask for the arrangement.
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: Those to be married have little or no say. It is ultimately up to the female’s family to decide who marries her.

Warfare/homicide

Jaguar Warriors

Bows & arrows/spears/heavy wooden clubs lined with sharp obsidian (Maquahuilitl)/quilted cotton soaked in salt water to be made stiff/wicker shields

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: Territorial warfare out-groups aim of warfare was not to kill however but to take as many captives a possible for sacrifice. adultery/family feuds/ritual sacrifice in-group

- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): Merchant classes did a lot of trading with out-groups still a lot of out-group warfare
- 4.18 Cannibalism? Ritual cannibalism. Bodies of victims became divine/flesh of a sacred person was considered truly blessed/ way to commune with the Gods.

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: ranges from 212,500 to 600 for the Altepetl (city-state) Capitals and 8,000 to 30 for the second largest cities in the Altepetl (10, p.152)
- 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):
- 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): The Aztec political system was an empire of city-states (Altepetl) the supreme ruler was the Huey Tlatcani who was the tlatoani (ruler-of major political bodies empires, cities, towns) of Tenochtitlán which was the capital city of the empire. Each city-state, city or town had a tlatoani, the tlatoani of Texcoco, and Tlacopan were the next most powerful as they were the other members of the Triple Alliance followed by the tlatoani of the other city states down through the size and power of the city or city-state. They formed a council that advised the Huey Tlatcani. Next were the tecutli (chiefs) they controlled a more restricted area than the tlatoani, occupying high military and government positions. The pilli (nobles) were next they were the children of the rulers and chiefs, which held governmental, religious and military positions. Merchants (pochteca) and luxury artisans (tolteca) were next followed by the commoners. The commoners were divided into three classes the free commoners (macehualtin), rural tenants (mayeque) and the slaves (tlacotin). (9,p.46) 11
- 5.4 Post marital residence: The married women commonly resides with the in laws in a joint house hold but either family could be lived with, this was until the newly married couple could obtain their own house, and if they wanted to nuclear and joint families were common. There seemed to be no strict rules on where they lived or whether it was in a nuclear family or a joint family. Some of the findings on joint families is that they were temporary, such as living with a women's parent during the bride service. (9,p.69-70)
- 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):
- 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): there were rules for interpersonal relations that were governed by explicit cultural codes, they were common to all members of the population but there was dramatic variation based on class, age, sex, and positions or occupations held. (9,p.73)
- 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: couldn't find any particular information on the subject but there were more than likely friendships amongst kin with the household being the primary source of social interaction
- 5.8 Village and house organization: The house is controlled by the male, and in the case of a joint house hold one of the married males. Men are responsible for the well being on the household and its property, they work the field or are in the military or merchants. The women were responsible for running the household: cooking, cleaning, ect. The house was normally one bedroom and constructed of adobe, some houses had multiple room's including the "women/wife's house" which was the kitchen area and then sleeping quarters. The palaces of the nobility on the other hand were elaborately decorated and could be quite large. (9,p.74)
- 5.9 Specialized village structures:
- 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? They slept on the floor in their houses, usually on reed mats.
- 5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: class based lineages, although there was some room for social mobility through the classes
- 5.12 Trade: could be carried on by virtually anyone from small scale producers to large scale professional merchants. Trading or selling the household surplus was common and constituted most of the vendors at the market place. The market place was always outdoors, and was a spot that people from every social class congregated. There was trade for utilitarian goods, luxury goods, maize, different types of clothing, basically whatever you want could be found in the market (depends on the size of the market and its location. Ex a smaller rural market might have more utilitarian goods than . Barter was the most common means of exchange in the markets. (9,p.31&41-42)
- 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? Differences in the form and elaborateness of dress, the types of houses, occupation limitations (15)

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

- 6 Time allocation to RCR:
- 6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): Priests performed rituals and ceremonies, managed temples, and were keepers of sacred texts, calendars, and knowledge of astronomy (1, p.220). Medicine was practiced by physicians, healers, and priests depending on the type of ailment: magical, supernatural, or natural. Sorcerers, also called "owl men," cast spells on others and were treated by healers and priests (1, p.261).
- 6.2 Stimulants:
- 6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): There were eighteen months to the Aztecs and each one had its own series of ceremonies mostly for agricultural fertility and sacrifice to the Gods (1, p.236).
- 6.4 Other rituals: Autosacrifice was a ritual that every Aztec took part in at some point in their lives where they would bleed themselves to "give life to the bones of the ancients" (1, p.221). The most common form was piercing their ears with maguey thorns. Other forms were piercing their tongue, thigh, upper arm, chest, and genitals (1, p.222). There was also human sacrifice where the heart was removed and they "were sent rolling down the steps of the temple," and then beheaded. This was done to honor the Gods as a repetition of the sacrificial deaths of the Gods (1, p.224).
- 6.5 Myths (Creation): Many myths of creation mostly centering on agricultural fertility and worshipping the sun. The myths and ceremonies were "unified by emphases on blood, sacrifice, and debt payment" (1, p.204). Recognize multiple deities and the souls of the dead and an underworld (1, p.213).

- 6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): The Aztecs produced many painted sculptures out of clay and used many hieroglyphs on sculptures, monuments, and in their writings on papyrus to depict the story the piece was telling (1, p.266). Literature and poetry were highly valued oratory skills, so people with these talents usually had high reputations. Sacred hymns were also sung to honor their gods (1, p.270). Most of the music and dancing was done at ceremonies with drums, pottery flutes, blocks of wood, and conch shells. Large circles of men and women danced in circles around the musicians holding big bundles of feathers and giant rattles while singing (1, p.273).
- 6.7 Sex differences in RCR: Women could serve as priests, but it was rare and only lasted a short term until she wanted to marry (1, p.220). Many of the ritual practices and responsibilities were shared equally between men and women.
- 6.8 Missionary effect:
- 6.9 RCR revival:
- 6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: Many sacrifices were followed by a meal where family members ate a piece of the body to honor their memory (1, p.225).
- 6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?
- 6.12 Is there teknonymy? No
- 6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.): All of their worship is done for the Gods and agricultural fertility because almost all of their food was grown. They believed the Gods sacrificed themselves for human benefit and they believed they owed the Gods a debt that was only repaid through human sacrifice. They borrowed a lot of their religion from their ancestors and much of it was based on myth (1, p.204).

7. Adornment

- 7.1 Body paint: Was practiced by the elite Cuahchicqueh warrior class, that painted their heads black or sometimes half blue and half yellow, however most of the warriors didn't practice body painting, or there is not significant evidence to suggest that they did. People in the priesthood readily practiced body painting as well as the male telpochcalli instructors, they wore black body paint from the soot of resinous tree. The priest also painted their faces with their own blood smearing it in front of each ear. The instructors wore lighter shades of black around the nose, eyes, and mouth. Women generally abstained from body painting although they did use a yellow clay and yellow make up used to cover the limbs and face. Commoners would wear body paint of the color of the chief that they followed. (14)
- 7.2 Piercings: They pierced the ears (of both sexes) the lip or labret and the nose. (13)
- 7.3 Haircut: There were many different hairstyles practiced by the Aztec. Children (boys and girls) had their hair cropped close around the entire head which remained this way till approximately the age of 10-11, then the girls hair was shown to grow long in the back. Unmarried women would wear their hair down, and married women would wear it up in two protruding spools on the crowns of their heads. Most of the commoners wore their hair in a normal style similar to each other. The hair of warriors was worn in many different elaborate styles and with different ornamentations to show their different conquest in battle (such as take a captive in battle) and to show their rank. Priest grew their hair out long. Officials showed their positions with special cuts and ornamentation. (16) (17)
- 7.4 Scarification: This accompanied the dedication of the child to the calmecac (school for religious training) and a life of religion, they would mark the child's body with scarification on the hip and chest. (16)
- 7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): The Aztec highly prized feathers of all types especially they were used to decorate the hair and for decoration of clothing and in the making of headdresses and ritual mask. Lip plates, ear spools, nose rings and a variety of different jewelry made from gold, silver and other types of precious metal, and stones. Women generally wore a cotton dress and men a loin cloth, the amount of decoration and material and color was determined by social class, no one was allowed to dress above their social class. Some of the wealthier men in the military (often chiefs) wore a gold or silver chest plate. (15) (11, p.60)
- 7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: Many different styles of headdresses (9,p.134)
- 7.7 Sex differences in adornment: Women were not allowed to have lip piercing these were reserved for the men, and namely the men in the military. There were also great differences in the adornment within sexes, this was based on class, with the nobles having the right to wear nose rings and more decorative jewelry (13)
- 7.8 Missionary effect:
- 7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: Today piercing of all sorts is commonly practiced, including the nose piercing, labret, and especially ear piercing (including the ear plugs and spools)

8. Kinship systems

- 8.1 Sibling classification system:
- 8.2 Sororate, levirate: The Aztecs recognized both sororate and levirate practices in certain circumstances to ensure high fertility because of the lack of men (4, p.164).
- 8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.): Calpulli were clans that lived together and ruled on a local level and had their own temples and priesthods. Members of a calpulli would be matched with someone from another calpulli by a matchmaker who would keep peace between the families/clans. Marriage was patrilineal and patrilocal (3, p.174).

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

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