

# Aztec Empire

Enquiry: How far did fear allow the Aztecs to control their Empire?

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# Empire

The Aztec Empire was made up of city-states. At the centre of each city-state was a large city that ruled the area by a **Tecuhtli**. For the most part, the Aztec Emperor did not interfere with the ruling of the city-states. However, it was required that each city-state paid the Emperor a **tribute**. As long as the tribute was paid, the city-state remained somewhat **independent** of Aztec rule.



# Aztec Emperors

Here are a few of the more famous Aztec Emperors or Huey Tlatoani:

- **Acamapichtli** - The first emperor of the Aztecs, he ruled for 19 years starting in 1375.
- **Itzcoatl** - The fourth emperor of the Aztecs, he conquered the Tepanecs and founded the Triple Alliance.



# Aztec Emperors

Here are a few of the more famous Aztec Emperors or Huey Tlatoani:

- **Montezuma I** - Under Montezuma I the Aztecs became the dominant power of the Triple Alliance and the empire was expanded.
- **Montezuma II** - The ninth emperor of the Aztecs



# Law

The Aztecs had an advanced system of law. There were lots of different laws, including laws against stealing, murder, drunkenness, and property damage. A system of courts and judges determined who was **guilty** and who should be punished. The Aztecs had a hierarchical system within their courts and even had a supreme court. Citizens could **appeal** and take their cases to a higher court if they did not agree with the judge.



# Law

One interesting part of the law was the "one time forgiveness law". Under this law, a citizen could confess a crime to a priest and they would be forgiven. This only worked if they confessed the crime before being caught. It also could only be used once. The punishments for breaking a law were severe with death being a common punishment. Other punishments included having your head shaved or being sold into slavery.



# Tenochtitlan- the Capital of the Aztec Empire

The center of the Aztec government was the capital city of Tenochtitlan. This was where the emperor as well as the majority of the nobles lived. At its peak under Montezuma II, Tenochtitlan is thought to have had a population of 200,000 people



# Glossary

**Tecuhtli** - wealthy men who were just below the emperor and were the rulers of the other city-states

**Tribute**- precious items, money and honour paid to the Emperor

**Independent** - free from outside control

**Guilty** - responsible for a specified wrongdoing

**Appeal** - apply to a higher court for a reversal of the decision of a lower court.



# Comprehension Questions

1. Who ruled the Aztec cities?

Sentence starter: The Aztec cities were ruled by...

2. How did the Aztec Emperors gain more power for their Empire?
3. How did the Aztec systems of law work?
4. What does the Aztec capital city, Tenochtitlan, show about Aztec power?

**Challenge:** How much control did the Emperors have over their Empire?



## Extension Question

6. Make a spider diagram to show the different ways the Emperor controlled the people in the Aztec Empire?

