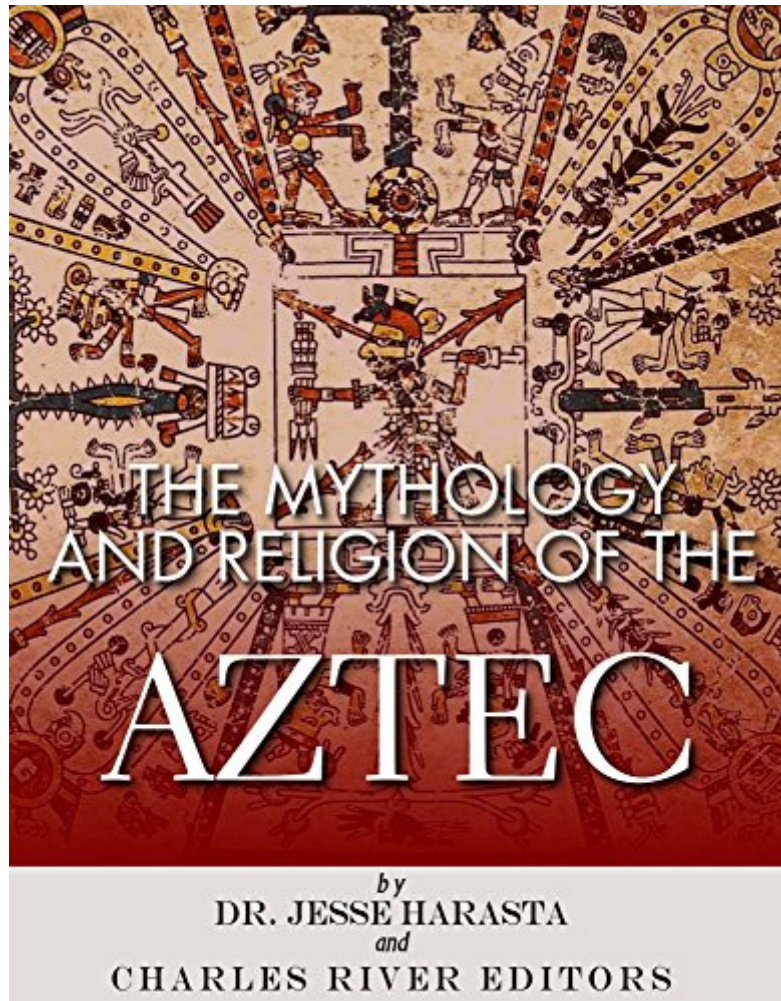


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# The Mythology And Religion Of The Aztec



## Synopsis

\*Includes pictures\*Includes Spanish accounts of the Aztec's human sacrifices\*Includes footnotes and a bibliography for further reading\*Includes a table of contents

"They strike open the wretched Indian's chest with flint knives and hastily tear out the palpitating heart which, with the blood, they present to the idols. They cut off the arms, thighs and head, eating the arms and thighs at ceremonial banquets. The head they hang up on a beam, and the body is given to the beasts of prey." — Bernal Diaz, a Spaniard who described the Aztec's human sacrifice

From the moment Spanish conquistador Hernan Cortés first found and confronted them, the Aztecs have fascinated the world, and they continue to hold a unique place both culturally and in pop culture. Nearly 500 years after the Spanish conquered their mighty empire, the Aztecs are often remembered today for their major capital, Tenochtitlan, as well as being fierce conquerors of the Valley of Mexico who often engaged in human sacrifice rituals. Ironically, and unlike the Mayans, the Aztecs are not widely viewed or remembered with nuance, in part because their own leader burned extant Aztec writings and rewrote a mythologized history explaining his empire's dominance less than a century before the Spanish arrived. While the Mayans are remembered for their astronomy, numeral system, and calendar, the Aztecs have primarily been remembered in a far narrower way, despite continuing to be a source of pride to Mexicans through the centuries. As a result, even though the Aztecs continue to interest people across the world centuries after their demise, it has fallen on archaeologists and historians to try to determine the actual history, culture, and lives of the Aztecs from the beginning to the end, relying on excavations, primary accounts, and more. That said, more is known about Aztec religious practices than any other aspect of their culture, mostly because the major element in the public ceremonies was focused on human sacrifice. The rituals were apparently so gruesome that they horrified even the Spanish, who were not exactly known for their gentility when it came to war and religious fervor. A Spaniard named Bernal Diaz described what happened at one religious ceremony: "They have a most horrid and abominable custom which truly ought to be punished and which until now we have seen in no other part, and this is that, whenever they wish to ask something of the idols, in order that their plea may find more acceptance, they take many girls and boys and even adults, and in the presence of these idols they open their chests while they are still alive and take out their hearts and entrails and burn them before the idols, offering the smoke as sacrifice. Some of us have seen this, and they say it is the most terrible and frightful thing they have ever witnessed." Naturally, Cortés and other Spaniards depicted the Aztecs as savages greatly in need of conversion to Catholicism. The Spanish used the Aztec's religious practices as a justification for Cortés's conquest, but even though the Spanish

attempted to burn as much as they could, plenty of information about Aztec mythology also survived. The Mythology and Religion of the Aztec examines the history and legacy of the religion practiced by the famous Mesoamerican empire. Along with pictures and a bibliography, you will learn about Aztec religion and mythology like you never have before, in no time at all.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This 65 page brief is packed with intriguing information from page one through page 65. In addition to a study of the religious practices, Dr. Jesse Harasta and Charles Rivers Editors have included several color reliefs and photographs to ensure readers can grasp a fuller, richer meaning of how the Aztecs came to be, (their ancestry) and how they were able to build an empire without staffing a military. The sacrifices are discussed in mildly graphic detail that is not so graphic as to unduly upset readers, young or old. Yet, it is sufficient so we can feel a revulsion at the images. I still shudder in reflection that some 20,000 to 80,000 people were dismembered, while alive, then thrust to the audience for their consumption during one holiday weekend. I also wonder, was it fate that a nation only recently freed from Muslim domination would be the conquerers of the Aztecs. What I mean is the Spaniards were especially dedicated to their own religious beliefs, as Catholics, and wishing to

please the Pope. It comes across as more than a little ironic that the Conquistadors arrived from the east that the Aztec God Quetzalcoatl was thought to have departed towards. Of course, it also is noted that the Aztec's belief that their world would be destroyed by an earthquake proved incorrect. To understand how I derived this, read *The Mythology and Religion of the Aztec* - an outstanding, short, easy to read narrative of an ancient civilization that was, but that has been assimilated into Catholicism.

The Aztec civilization in many ways was more advanced than much of Europe. In my study of Spanish, I read the accounts of the conquistadores. I had forgotten the description of the Aztec religious practices. The photos and drawings provide excellent clarification to the text.

To me this was hard to follow and appreciate. However to someone who is really interested in Aztec History, this is a great eyeopener and intro to that subject.

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