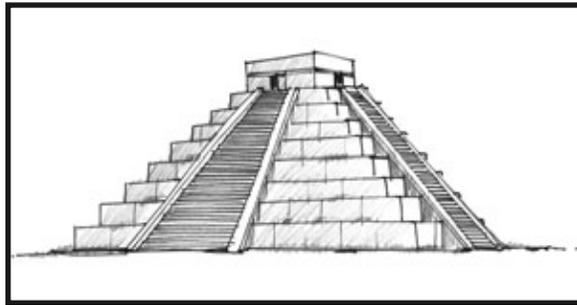


Ahuitzotl

One king, Ahuitzotl (ah-WEE-soh-tuhl), who reigned from 1486 to 1502, was a military leader as well as a political ruler. He conquered large areas and brought many people under Aztec rule, specializing in quick surprise attacks that left enemies helpless. Ahuitzotl also built a great temple in Tenochtitlán, which included two shrines at the top of a huge pyramid. The pyramid was dedicated to the god Huitzilopochtli, whom the Aztecs believed led them to their new home.



an Aztec pyramid

Montezuma

When Ahuitzotl died, the council chose as his successor his nephew, Montezuma, also called Moctezuma. Like his uncle, Montezuma was a brilliant general and he led the Aztec armies in battle. Thanks to his victories over neighboring tribes, Montezuma expanded the Aztec empire to its largest size. Historians believe Montezuma ruled over about 25 million people. More than 200,000 lived in the capital city of Tenochtitlán, making it one of the largest cities in the world.

ACTIVE READER

1 Identify *Underline the sentence that explains to whom the great temple was dedicated.*

2 Research *What did Tenochtitlán look like at the time of its greatest size and power? Use the Internet to find artists' representations of what the great city might have looked like at its peak.*

FOCUS

QUESTIONS

1. What skills allowed the Aztecs to take control of a large empire?

2. How were Aztec kings chosen?

Good to Know

Succession is the term used to describe how new rulers of a state are chosen. The Aztecs had a system of succession in which valued members of their government chose the best person to take over the kingship. Orderly succession helps a government remain strong. Disorderly succession can lead to confusion, conflict, or even civil war.