New Fire Ceremony

One of Xiuhtecuhtli’s most important roles was as overseer of the Toxiuhmolpilia festival or New Fire Ceremony (also called Binding of the Years). Held once every 52 years on the completion of one full cycle of the Aztec calendar (xiuhmolpilli), the primary function of the festival was to ensure the successful renewal (or re-occurrence) of the sun.

During the festival all fires, from temples to household hearths, were symbolically extinguished and idols were cleansed with water, streets swept and old cooking implements and hearth stones thrown away. Then, atop Mt. Uixachtecatl (or Citlaltepec), near the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán, priests gathered at midnight and awaited a precise alignment of the stars. Only when the Tianquiztli (Pleiades) reached the zenith and the Yohualtecuhtli star shone brightly in the very centre of the sky was a sacrifice made to Xiuhtecuhtli by cutting out the heart of a sacrificial victim. Fire was then kindled inside the open chest cavity and if the fire lit successfully then all was well and the fire was taken to re-light all of the [city](https://www.ancient.eu/city/)’s fires. If the flame had not lit successfully then it was believed to signal the coming of terrible monsters, the Tzitzimime, who would roam the darkness eating all mankind.

<https://www.ancient.eu/Xiuhtecuhtli/>