

Art of the Aztec Empire

LD 7: Interpreting Mexica Gods and Supernaturals

Introduction: The Aztec maintained a complex, and cosmologically-based, pantheon of more than 1000 gods and supernaturals that were both eclectic and otherworldly. Their pantheon contained virtually every naturalistic, and super naturalistic, phenomenon observable to humans. Your assignment this day will be to explore and describe the principal features and supernatural powers and characteristics of at least three major or minor deities, or cosmologically inspired concepts, pertaining to the Aztec system of belief and practice. Having identified three Aztec deities, you are then to identify one major festival or feast cycle, and associated rituals, associated with at least one of the principal deities identified.

Instructions: You are to assemble into teams, and both your individual and collective tasks will be to prepare an iconographic and thematic description of at least three major and or minor deities of the Aztec pantheon of Gods and supernaturals related to your specific horoscope reading. Your individual narratives, based on group work, should draw upon any and all information available from Internet research, as well as from that content provided in your readings, or in those guide books provided by your professor. Having selected Gods and or deities from your personal horoscope, please do the following:

1. First, each of you are to go to the www.azteccalendar.com website and look up your own respective Aztec “patron saints” by way of entering your birth date, and thereby, interpreting your Aztec horoscope, related God or deity, and its auguries. Please identify your own three Gods or deities based on readings from the *Xihuitl* (Solar Year), *Trecena*, and *Tonalli* portions of the calendar.
2. Having determined which Gods or deities rule over your birth date, you are to study and interpret, and thereby, describe the principal attributes of the deity who rules your fate by way of the *Tonalli* portion of the www.azteccalendar.com website.
3. Having completed a characterization of the first of the Gods or deities so identified, your group should then move to identify at least two other major or minor Gods and deities from those listed in your respective horoscopes, and as found at the *Wikipedia* or related sites (see *Note*, below). Your descriptions should identify the principal supernatural or divine attributes and powers of the selected Gods or deities. Your personal God-head should be described by you, and the other two deities so described should be the product of descriptions created by your respective group.
4. Having described the God’s or deities’ principal characteristics, you should now single out at least three principal icons or iconographic elements or symbols that distinguish your personal God-head or deity from those others selected for this exercise.
5. Upon generating said description, one or more members of your team should now correlate the God or deity with that divinity’s respective feast cycle or festival, and the offerings and or sacrifices that were necessary to honor or feed the God or deity in question. You may use the *Aztec Calendar* link to proceed with this portion of the assignment. See <http://www.azteccalendar.com/introduction-to-the-aztec-calendar.html> for a listing of Aztec day names and the *trecenas* or “weeks” and festivals so noted.
6. Having identified the major feast day cycles or festivals associated with the three deities selected, you are to research the significance and ritual protocols or ceremonies and sacrificial offerings identified with the feast day cycle or festival in question. For a list of such ceremonies, sans photos, see <http://dmc.utep.edu/jferret/Aztec%20Gods/aztec/ceremonies.html>.

Note: See the *Wikipedia* link to “Aztec mythology” for an expanded list of Aztec Gods and deities at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aztec_mythology#Gods. See also <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Academy/3088/dioses.html> for deity names and their translation.