

Art of the Aztec Empire

LD 4: “The Aztecs” Video Review

Introduction: The representation of American Indian, and Aztec civilization in particular, is fraught with many ill informed reconstructions, stereotypes and misconceptions. According to the jacket on the video that we are to view today, “This program explores Aztec culture and history, from the role of human sacrifice in the Aztec religion to their agricultural advances. Commentary by scholars, maps, and contemporary accounts provide an overview of the events that both shaped and destroyed an empire.”

Assignment: Using “The Aztecs” video as the basis for an assessment of media “images” and “reconstructions” of Aztec civilization, please consider the following questions:

1. What strategies does the video employ in representing Aztec civilization, particularly in so far as the question of human sacrifice is concerned? In other words, what are the primary themes employed, imagery used, and narrative content provided that serve to characterize Aztec civilization?
2. Does the narrative content of the video provide a satisfactory explanation for the origins and practice of human heart sacrifice? Why, or why not?
3. What does the video have to say about the agricultural practices of ancient Mesoamerican society? What effect might these agricultural practices have had on the development and ultimate character of Aztec civilization?
4. If you had the opportunity to author and produce a video on Aztec civilization, how would your creation differ from that of the video that you have just seen? What would you do differently, and why?