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The 6th Sun

Climbing the Totem of Consciousness

1. Jaguar - survival
2. Monkey - passion
3. Turkey - ego
4. Fish - reason
5. Eagle - wealth
6. Quequetzalcoatl - “in whom the serpent rises” Iztac Tonatiuh (White Sun)



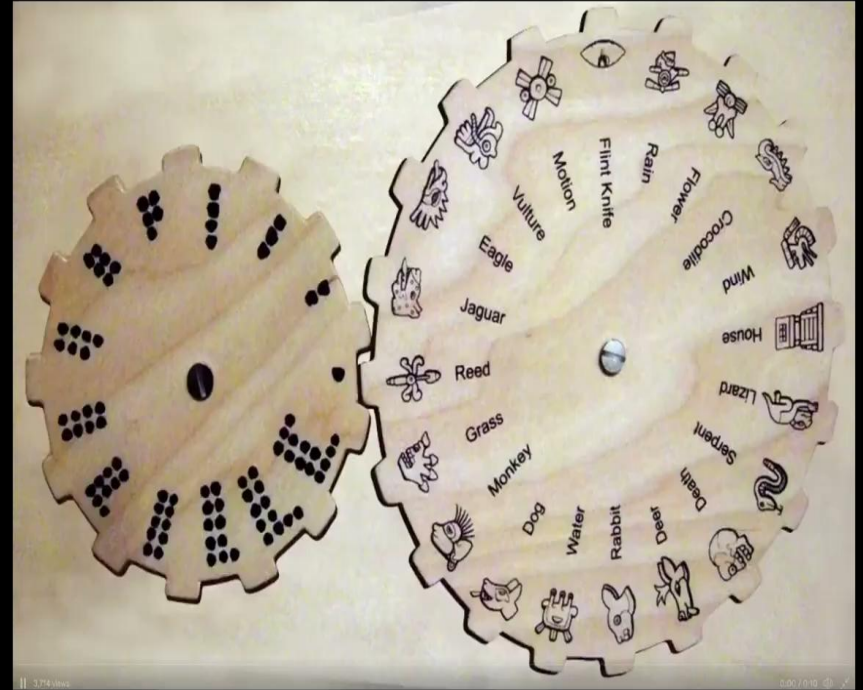
Why 52?

The 20-day group ran simultaneously with another group of 13 numbered days (perhaps not coincidentally the Aztec heaven had 13 layers). This meant that each day had both a name and a number (e.g.: 4-Rabbit), with the latter changing as the calendar rotated. After all possible combinations of names and numbers had been achieved, 260 days had passed. The number 260 has multiple significances: it is the approximate human gestation period, the period between the appearance of Venus, and the length of the Mesoamerican agricultural cycle.

They have often been explained as two engaged, rotating gears, in which the beginning day of the larger 365-day wheel would align with the beginning day of the smaller 260-day cycle every 52 years. This 52-year period constituted a Mesoamerican "century".

The passing of one 52-year cycle (xiuhmolpilli) to another was marked by the most important religious event of the Aztec world, the New Fire Ceremony, also known, appropriately enough, as the 'Binding of the Years' ceremony. This was when a human sacrifice was made to ensure the renewal of the sun. If the gods were displeased, then there would be no new sun and the world would end.

- Wheel13 1440
- Wheel20 936
- Venus 72
- Sun 52
- Days 18720



The next Ceremony of the New Fire is on Nov 24 2026

Table 6. New Fire Ceremonies in Mexica historical accounts

Number	Year	Year	Location
1	1 Rabbit	1090	Teocolhuacan
2	1 Rabbit	1142	Coatepec (Tollan)
3	1 Rabbit	1194	Huitzcol Apazco
4	1 Rabbit	1246	Tecpayocan
5	1 Rabbit	1298	Chapultepec
6	2 Reed	1351	Tenochtitlan
7	2 Reed	1403	Tenochtitlan
8	2 Reed	1455	Huixachtecatl
9	2 Reed	1507	Huixachtecatl

Source: Tena (1987:98)





What we're Told...

Central Mexican people regarded the transition from one fifty-two year period to the next as a time of great danger. It was feared that the sun might not rise again at the start of a new period, and that the world would be destroyed. In order to prevent this, to ensure that the sun would rise again at the start of a new 52-year cycle, Central Mexicans performed a 'New Fire Ceremony.'

ment, for if New Fire could not be created the universe would come to an end, the sun would be extinguished, and the stars would be transformed into monsters and de-

Fire God not so picky about schedule

Benjamin R. Coe (1938:100-101) that the change from 1 Rabbit to 2 Reed was done for the New Fire Ceremony of 1507:

In this year [1 Rabbit, 1506] they were to bind the years according to their count, and because it was always a difficult year for them, Motecuhzoma changed it to two reeds [i.e., the year 2 Reed, 1507] [Quiñones Keber 1995:274].

Fire Celebrations were carried out as many as several years after the target date, due to the unstable situation of the Mexica in their early centuries in the Basin of Mexico (see Tena 1987:91-93). According to the *Anales de Tlatelolco* (1948:18), once the Mexica had founded Tenochtitlan in A.D. 1325 (2 House), they celebrated an impressive New Fire Ceremony in Chapultepec. This may have been done to erase the memory of the two former ceremonies, each of which had to be delayed because of humiliating military defeats in the years 1 Rabbit (1246 and 1298). At this point in their history, the Mexica—like the Mixtecs or eastern Nahuatl peoples—may have been using the New Fire Ceremony as a ritual of foundation. By the mid-fifteenth century, however, the New Fire Ceremony at Tenochtitlan had taken on the imperial associations noted earlier.

other sources. He suggests that scribes later went back and retrospectively changed the dates of earlier New Fire celebrations in the historical records to 2 Reed in order to give the Mexica ceremony greater legitimacy. Regardless of exactly when the New Fire date was changed, and regardless of when (or whether) the

According to the reconstructions by Tena (1987) and Umberger (1987b), the Mexica moved the year of celebration from 1 Rabbit (1350) to 2 Reed (1351) for their sixth New Fire Ceremony, and 2 Reed became the normal date for these events through the Spanish Conquest.¹² The Mexica historical sources indicate that some New



New Fire Ceremonial Sites

The New Fire ceremonies were an ancient and widespread ritual in Postclassic Central Mexico that the Aztecs appropriated.



Sacrificial Caste System

1. Golden Child
2. Scapegoat
3. Middle Child

Even enemies of the Aztecs understood their roles as sacrifices to the gods since many also practiced the same type of religion. For many rites, the victims were expected to bless children, greet and cheer passers-by, hear people's petitions to the gods, visit people in their homes, give discourses and lead sacred songs, processions and dances.

The conquistadors Cortés and Alvarado found that some of the sacrificial victims they freed "indignantly rejected [the] offer of release and demanded to be sacrificed"



18 Jaguar Molars

Found in pit around
sacrifice victim's neck



Sacrificial victims highlight this. They were actually called

"gods" and treated "as though divine"⁵⁹. They become true *nahualli* (animal-twins) of the deities: "You are created Eagle-Jaguar"⁶⁰.

In this sense, death was pivotal to our theosis. Mexicans still

consider it important to "die well" and have "a good death"⁶¹. Mexican Indians will even say: "Tell me how you die, and I will tell you who you are"⁶².

Sacrificial victims found buried beneath the Temple of the Feathered Serpent at Teotihuacan in central Mexico. The victims, wearing necklaces made from real human teeth and jaws, were found with their hands behind their backs, indicating that their wrists had been bound. 150-200 CE [1613x2240]



Prep

All of the ceramics people owned were to be thrown out. A thorough cleaning operation was undertaken with the streets being swept, old hearth stones were thrown away and idols were ceremoniously washed and cleansed.

The statues, hewn in either wood or stone, kept in each man's home and regarded as gods, were all cast into the water.

The pestles and the three hearthstones (upon which the cooking pots rested); and everywhere there was much sweeping—there was sweeping very clean. Rubbish was thrown out; none lay in any of the houses [Sahagún 1950–1982:Book 7:25]



and they broke all of the jars and pitchers that had been used, and the cooking griddles and [other] vessels that they had, all were broken [authors' translation].

Prep

Pregnant women were locked in granaries and their faces were painted blue in the belief that they would not then turn into monsters during the night. Children also had their faces painted and were kept from sleeping to prevent them turning into mice. Finally, as darkness fell, the populace stopped all activities, climbed the roofs of their homes and waited with a hushed silence and baited breath for what was to come.



Extinguish all fires for 5 days

First Preparation for the ceremony began with the extinguishing of all fires of any kind, from temples to household hearths. They put out fires everywhere in the country around so that people could wait for the possible end of the world.



Showtime

On the evening of the last day of the 52-year cycle, priests climbed a hill called Huixachtlan near Culhuacan in the Basin of Mexico, where they watched the stars. When the Pleiades constellation crossed the zenith, this signaled that the sun would rise the next day to start another 52-year calendar round.

Using a fire drill, the priests then started a new fire on the chest of a sacrificial victim. When the flames grew into a full fire, the victim was sacrificed, and his heart was thrown into the fire. Over the course of the day, numerous victims were offered as sacrifices (Motolinía [1951:113] gives the total as 400)





turn into mice. At midnight the most competent fire priest (who had been practicing all evening) twirled the fire sticks on the fire board placed on the chest of a specially selected young prisoner. When fire had been produced, his heart was torn out and cast into the flames, followed by his body. Then swift couriers from the capital and all the neighboring towns sped to their home communities holding aloft blazing torches with which they ignited the sacred fires in their temples, from which householders drew fire, carrying it to their domestic hearths. At noon the next day a great feast was celebrated, hailing the passing of the danger and the renewal of the universe, at least for another fifty-two years.



The heart can survive for 10 minutes outside body

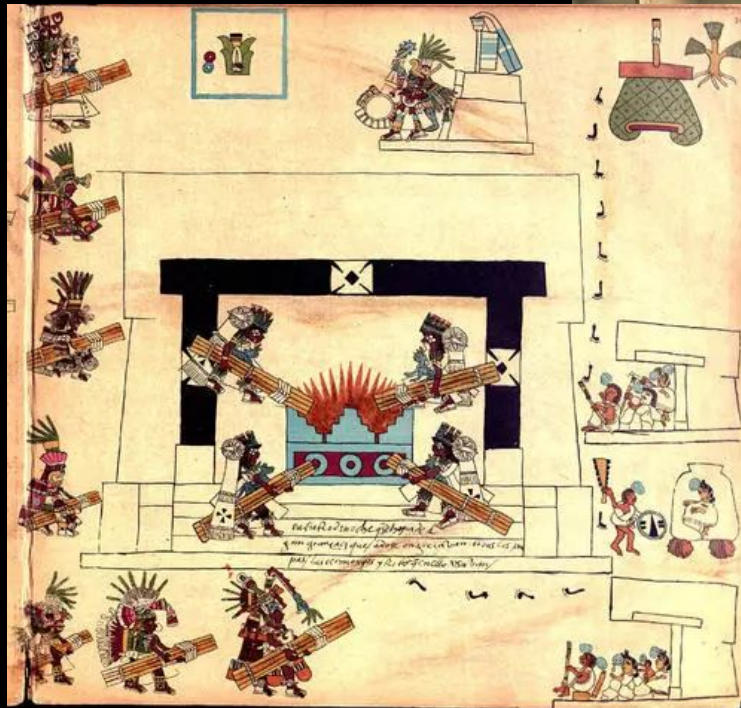
With help and an ice box, your heart can survive outside of your body up to 4 hours. Primarily because it gets fed nutrients and because the cold temperature keeps it from wasting energy by beating. Once the heart warms back up, it starts beating normally.

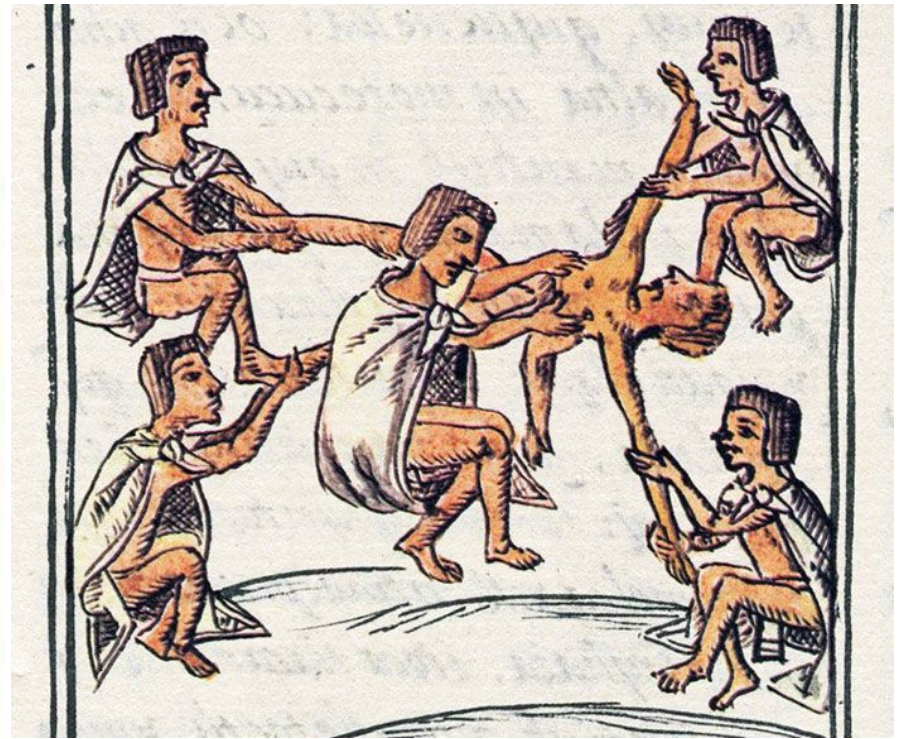


Then, just outside the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan, high priests gathered at the summit of the sacred volcanic mountain south-east of Lake Tetzoco, Mt. Uixachtecatl (also referred to as Huixachtlan or Citlaltepec and meaning 'thorn tree place', even if it is now called 'Hill of the Star'). The priests were magnificently dressed as the gods with fine cloaks, masks, and feather headdresses and led by the figure of Quetzalcoatl. Here, on a platform visible to the whole city below, the priests waited until midnight and a precise alignment of the stars which would signal the ceremony could begin. When the Tianquitzli (the Pleiades) reached their zenith and the Yohualtecuhtli star shone brightly in the very centre of the night sky, this was the moment a human sacrifice was made. The High Priest, probably dressed as Xuihtecuhtli and wearing a turquoise mask, cut out the heart from the living victim and a fire was kindled in the empty chest cavity using the sacred firestick drill, the tlequauitl. If the fire burned brightly, then all was well and Xiuhtecuhtli had blessed the people with another sun. If the fire did not catch, then the Tzitzimime would come without pity. These terrible monsters, armed with wickedly sharp knives, would roam the dark and sunless earth slashing and eating all humanity without exception. The world would end.



Thereupon, as the fire was being blessed, waiting Indians from many towns carried new fire to their temples. They did this after asking permission from the great chief of Mexico [Motecuhzoma], the pontiff who was, as it were, their pope. They performed this with great zeal and haste. Although the place might be many leagues away, they went in such haste that in a short time they placed the fire there. In the provinces distant from Mexico they performed the same ceremony and it was done everywhere with much feasting and rejoicing.





A great deal of cosmological thought seems to have underlain each of the Aztec sacrificial rites. Most of the sacrificial rituals took more than two people to perform. In the usual procedure of the ritual, the sacrifice would be taken to the top of the temple. The sacrifice would then be laid on a stone slab, a *chacmool*, by four priests, and their abdomen would be sliced open by a fifth priest with a ceremonial knife made of flint. The most common form of