

Aztec Sun Stone

The Aztec people carved the Sun Stone, sometimes also called Cuauhxicalli (Eagle Bowl) from solidified lava stone in the late 1400s. It was lost for 300 years and found buried under Mexico City's main square or Zocalo. Weighing 24 tonnes and spanning 3 metres across and 1 metre deep, it seems strange that something of this size was lost in the first place.

In the middle of the stone is Tonatiuh (pronounced Toh-nah-tee-uh), the Aztec Sun god, holding a human heart in each hand and his tongue outstretched as a blade used for sacrifices. Around him, the stone shows two calendar systems, one for farming and the other for religious ceremonies.



The farming calendar contains 365 days, broken into groups of 20 days for each of the 18 months. It describes daily rituals, seasons and planting, alongside predicting solar eclipses and disasters.

The religious calendar describes each day in relation to the Aztec gods, with each day given one of 20 names such as jaguar, water, wind or a number between 1-13. This is because Aztec weeks were 13 days long.

As the two calendars work together, days were given a different set of names, numbers and symbols that wouldn't repeat for 52 years. Aztecs believed that when the two calendars aligned, the universe was in danger, so they performed rituals including sacrifices to please their gods.

