Teotihuacan Culture

Historians are unable to explain the origin of the Teotihuacan culture. Even the exact dates of origin are uncertain. However, most agree that construction began sometime around 600 BC. Originally, it was believed that the city was constructed by the Toltecs. Eventually, this was disproved when it was determined that Teotihuacan was older than the Toltec capital of Tula.

Teotihuacan was not a ceremonial center, it was a city in every sense of the word. This city was so advanced that it had drainage canals, narrow parallel streets, town squares, temples, and towering pyramids. Temples found here, were decorated with fabulous stone sculptures and amazing art fresco paintings. The city was extremely well planned. The major thoroughfare, called Avenue of the Dead, divides the city in two. It ran 2.5 kilometers through the middle of the city. Also, located in the center of the city was the town square or Ciudadela, where as many as 100,000 people could gather comfortably.

The Pyramid of the Sun, in Teotihuacan, is the third largest pyramid in the world. It was constructed between 100 and 200 BC on top of a series of caves. As legends tells us the people of Teotihuacan believed that these caves were the source of life. Its sister pyramid, the Pyramid of the Moon, was constructed around the year 250 BC. Both pyramids were used as tombs.

At its height, Teotihuacan was had a population of between 150,000 to 200,000 people. It is described by historians as a military state that was controlled entirely by a ministerial class. The Teotihuacanos made a living by forcing surrounding provinces to pay tribute or taxes. On the outskirts of the city lived a large rural population that was agriculturally based. These farmers used terracing, and irrigation canals to get the most from their fields. Teotihuacan was not a major trading center. However, archaeologists tell us that they did trade extensively with the Zapotec of Oaxaca, and the Maya of Guatemala.

The people of Teotihuacan were very religious, and their great ceremonial center was believed to be sacred ground where only high priests could go. Murals throughout the city depict priests in various poses. They also have symbols of their various gods. Their supreme god was called Tloquenahuaque. Possibly, of equal importance was Tlaloc, the god of rain. In addition, they worshiped Chalchitlicue, the goddess of water. Tlaloc and Chalchitlicue would eventually find their way into Aztec religion.

Another god that was extremely popular was the feathered serpent Quetzalcoatl. Quetzalcoatl was also the focus of the last major monument in the city. Feathered Serpent Pyramid is one of the most amazing structures in Teotihuacan. All four of its sides are decorated in elaborate stone carvings, including large sculptural heads. Bodies were buried in all four corners of this pyramid. Quetzalcoatl was also the supreme god of the Toltecs.
Teotihuacan Questions

Answer by using complete sentences

1. Describe some of the advanced features of the city of Teotihuacan.

2. Describe the major thoroughfare.

3. Who lived on the outskirts of the city?

4. How many people lived in Teotihuacan at its peak?

5. How did the people of Teotihuacan make a living?

6. Who did the Teotihuacan people trade with?

7. State the names of three gods and what they represent.

8. Briefly describe the Feathered Serpent Pyramid.

9. Which two god would eventually assimilate into the Aztec religion?

10. What are the names of the two pyramids found in Teotihuacan?