



Symbols of Mexico

The word "**Mexico**" derives from the Aztecs, also known as **Mexicas**, who were warrior tribes that came from a place called **Aztlán**, thought to be in the north-western region of Mexico. They arrived in the Valley of Mexico at the beginning of the 13th century and in 1325 they settled on a small island in the Texcoco Lake.

The old word for Mexico, the place where the Mexicas lived, was "*metztlixictlico*", and is made up of three sounds in the old Nahuatl language spoken by the Aztecs:

- **Metztli:** *means moon*
- **Xictlii:** *means umbilical or centre*
- **Co:** *means place*



Ross, Kurt. 1978. *Codex Mendoza: Aztec Manuscript*

Metztlixictlico, then, means **Place in the centre of the moon** (or belly button of the moon). The Aztecs called Texcoco Lake the lake of the moon and in the centre was Tenochtitlan, their capital city (now called Mexico City). When the Spanish arrived in 1519, they found it difficult to pronounce the whole name metztlixictlico, so the word became shortened to just Mexico.

The National Emblem



The national emblem is an eagle holding a snake in its beak. The eagle stands on a *nopal* (cactus plant). The emblem dates back to the time of the Aztecs coming to the Valley of Mexico, and is based on the legend of the founding of the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan.

The Founding of Tenochtitlan

The legend says that the Aztecs left their home to look for a place to start a new life. Their god had told them to find a lake where an eagle with a snake in its beak would stand on a *nopal* cactus growing from a rock. That would be the place to build their new city.

After much travelling, the Aztecs eventually reached the Valley of Mexico. In the centre of the valley was a large, salty lake. On a small island in the lake, they saw the eagle stood on the *nopal* cactus, holding a live snake in its beak.



The Aztecs were sure that this was the sign they had been seeking, and in about 1325, they established their capital city on the island, calling it "Tenochtitlan", which means place where a cactus grows from a stone.

The National Flag



The Mexican flag consists of a rectangle divided in three equal vertical bands with the following colours, beginning from the left: green, white and red. In the central white band is the national emblem.

The story of the colours of the Mexican flag comes from the time of the War of Independence with Spain (1810 to 1821).

Originally, there were several different Mexican groups fighting for the creation of a new nation. When these groups came to an agreement and formed the Army of the Three Guarantees, they decided on an independent monarchy, one religion, and the union of all Mexican people.

Therefore the colours are:

Green→ for independence

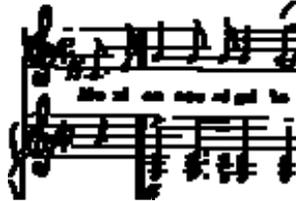
White→ for religion

Red→ for union



The National Anthem

The words of the National Anthem were written by Francisco González Bocanegra, and the music composed by Jaime Nunó.



The words of the chorus of the National Anthem are as follows:

*Mexicanos, al grito de guerra,
el acero aprestad y el bridón y
retiemble en su centro la tierra,
al sonoro rugir del cañón.*

*Mexicans, at the cry of war,
make ready the steel and the bridle,
and may the Earth tremble at its centers
at the resounding roar of the cannon.*
