

Mexican museum puts on exhibit for 'artistic' Aztec god

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A man bends down to take a picture of a giant symbolic sacrificial knife, part of a display of items offered to the Aztec god Xochipilli, at the Templo Mayor museum in Mexico City, Friday, Aug. 7, 2015. The Aztecs usually sacrificed quails to Xochipilli, rather than still-beating human hearts. And he was worshipped at vast poetry and music festivals, rather than martial displays. (AP Photo/Rebecca Blackwell)

In the pantheon of Mexico's pre-Hispanic gods, most Aztec deities are depicted as brutal, blood-thirsty beings only appeased by human sacrifices.

But Mexico's Templo Mayor museum on Friday put on display for the first time an exhibition dedicated to Xochipilli, the Aztec god of singing, dancing and the morning sun.

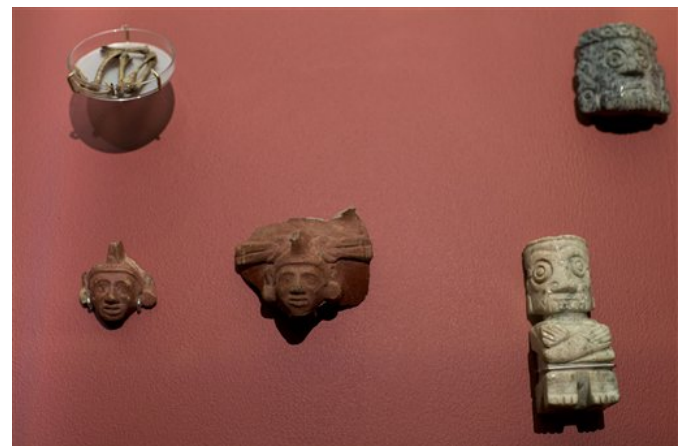
The Aztecs usually sacrificed quails to Xochipilli, rather than still-beating human hearts. And he was worshipped at vast poetry and music festivals rather than martial displays.

Museum director Patricia Ledesma said the display is meant to show another side of deities worshipped by the Mexica people who inhabited the Aztec empire.

"This is part of what we wanted to show, that the Mexicas didn't just do warlike or bloody things, but also artistic things," Ledesma said at the opening of the exhibit of pieces unearthed in 1978 at a small shrine on one side of the sprawling Templo Mayor complex in Mexico City.

The exhibit is unusual in that it consists of miniature stone carvings of musical instruments—rattles, drums, whistles and flutes—and for the red coloring doused over many of the objects.

Red was a color associated with the first rays of morning sunlight. The poetry of songs praising Xochipilli, which were written down by chroniclers after the 1521 Spanish conquest, also forms part of the exhibition.



An image of the Aztec god Xochipilli, center, is part of a display of items used as offerings to the god, at the Templo Mayor museum in Mexico City, Friday, Aug. 7, 2015. In the pantheon of Mexico's pre-Hispanic gods, most Aztec deities are depicted as brutal, blood-thirsty gods, only appeased by human sacrifices. But the Templo Mayor museum has put on display for the first time an offering dedicated to Xochipilli, the Aztec god of singing, dancing, and the morning sun. The offering was found in 1978 during excavations of the Red Temple, a small altar adjacent to Templo Mayor. (AP Photo/Rebecca Blackwell)

"We wanted to show a lesser-known facet of a people categorized as warriors, that they could express themselves with exquisite artistic style," Ledesma said.



A worker, standing in front of ongoing excavations at the Templo Mayor archeological site, directs people into the adjoining museum, in central Mexico City, Friday, Aug. 7, 2015. In the pantheon of Mexico's pre-Hispanic gods, most Aztec deities are depicted as brutal, blood-thirsty gods, only appeased by human sacrifices. But the Templo Mayor museum has put on display for the first time an offering dedicated to Xochipilli, the Aztec god of singing, dancing, and the morning sun. The offering was found in 1978 during excavations of the Red Temple, a small altar adjacent to Templo Mayor. (AP Photo/Rebecca Blackwell)

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