



At the Lake of the Moon, National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence Johan Reinhard finds a wooden scepter like the one in a 16th-century illustration of Tlaloc, the Aztec rain god.

Rainmakers Archaeologists have struck lightning in a Mexican volcanic lake: Their dives in frigid water at an elevation of 13,832 feet turned up eight wooden scepters shaped like bolts from the sky, likely used to sway the Aztec rain god, Tlaloc. After the Spanish conquest in the early 1500s, colonial historians wrote of local efforts to get more rain—or a break from too much. Now, in the first archaeological study of the two sacred lakes in the Nevado de Toluca crater, a team led

by Pilar Luna Erreguerena of the National Institute of Anthropology and History has uncovered artifacts that match the Spanish reports: the scepters, incense shaped into balls and cones, and spines from the maguey plant, probably used to draw sacrificial blood from tongues, earlobes, and penises. Future work may yet reveal evidence of the most tragic ritual, the sacrifice of children. —A. R. Williams

