

MAYAN CIVILIZATION

Cult of the Jaguar

Heirs of the Olmec
culture



MAYA TIMELINE

Evolution of Mayan culture

Olmec	1200-1000 B.C.
Early Preclassic Maya	1800-900 B.C.
Middle Preclassic Maya	900-300 B.C.
Late Preclassic Maya	300 B.C. - A.D. 250
Early Classic Maya	A.D. 250-600
Late Classic Maya	A.D. 600-900
Post Classic Maya	A.D. 900-1500
Colonial period	A.D. 1500-1800
Independent Mexico	A.D. 1821 to the present

MAYA TIMELINE

11,000 BCE	The first hunter-gatherers settle in the Maya highlands and lowlands.
3114 or 3113 BCE	The creation of the world takes place, according to the Maya Long Count calendar.
2600 BCE	Maya civilization begins.
2000 BCE	The rise of the Olmec civilization, from which many aspects of Maya culture are derived. Village farming becomes established throughout Maya regions.
700 BCE	Writing is developed in Mesoamerica.
400 BCE	The earliest known solar calendars carved in stone are in use among the Maya, although the solar calendar may have been known and used by the Maya before this date.
300 BCE	The Maya adopt the idea of a hierarchical society ruled by nobles and kings.
100 BCE	The city of Teotihuacan is founded and for centuries is the cultural, religious and trading center of Mesoamerica.

MAYA TIMELINE

100 CE	The decline of the Olmecs
400 CE	The Maya highlands fall under the domination of Teotihuacan, and the disintegration of Maya culture and language begins in some parts of the highlands.
500 CE	The Maya city of Tikal becomes the first great Maya city, as citizens from Teotihuacan make their way to Tikal, introducing new ideas involving weaponry, captives, ritual practices and human sacrifice.
600 CE	An unknown event destroys the civilization at Teotihuacan, along with the empire it supported. Tikal becomes the largest city-state in Mesoamerica, with as many as 500,000 inhabitants within the city and its hinterland.
751 CE	Long-standing Maya alliances begin to break down. Trade between Maya city-states declines, and inter-state conflict increases.
899 CE	Tikal is abandoned
900 CE	The Classic Period of Maya history ends, with the collapse of the southern lowland cities. Maya cities in the northern Yucatán continue to thrive.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- ✘ Ruled over much of what is today southern Mexico and Central America.
- ✘ Civilization estimated as large as 14 million.
- ✘ Often referred to as the “Greece of the New World” for its high degree of sophistication

MAYAN POLITIES

- ✘ Polity = center
- ✘ Ruled by a hereditary priest-king who was worshipped as a descendant of the sun-god.
- ✘ Council of priests and nobles helped govern by levying and collecting taxes, administering justice, performing diplomatic functions, and making military decisions.
- ✘ Headmen were appointed to govern the affairs of outlying villages, but only after passing civil service exams. Also led their local military forces.
- ✘ Most “centers” were part of a loosely organized confederation based on intermarriage, political alliances, or diplomatic agreements

WAR

- ✘ Mayan kingdoms fought constantly with each other and warriors won tremendous prestige by capturing high-ranking enemies
- ✘ Captives were usually made slaves, humiliated, tortured, and ritually sacrificed



POLITY CULTURE

- ✘ Common patterns of elaborate aristocratic residences, pyramids, and temples surrounding courts or plazas
- ✘ Elaborate carvings, paintings, and murals were the hallmarks of classic Mayan art
- ✘ In poor rural areas, groups of structures were smaller, crudely constructed, and unadorned.

TIKAL

Tikal was the most important Mayan political center between the 4th and 9th Centuries
It was the meeting place for all Mayan city states on important astronomical/religious dates
40,000 people lived here



TEMPLE OF JAGUAR

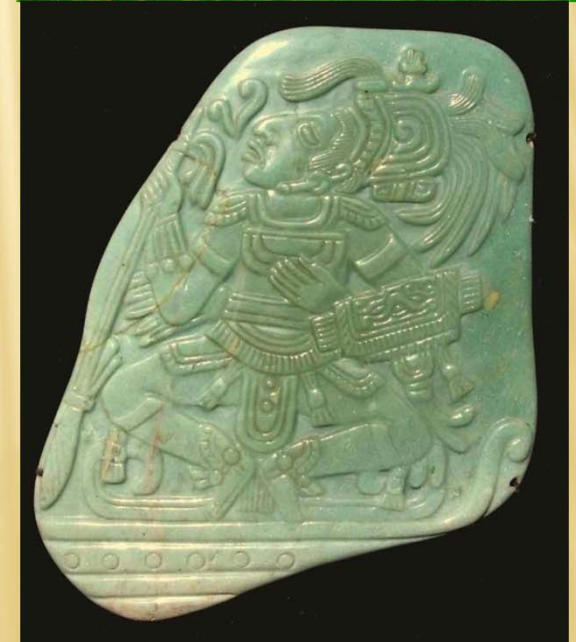


ART



ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

- ✘ Agricultural society
 - + Terrace farming
 - + Irrigation systems
 - + Shifting cultivation using milpa (ash created by burning the forests; 4-7 year rotation)
 - + Maize (80% of their food source), cacao
- ✘ Architects, sculptors, potters
- ✘ Cacao used as money and as a stimulant
- ✘ Merchants traded in luxury goods like jade, fancy textiles and animal pelts
- ✘ Population was largely rural and used cities primarily as religious centers.



RELIGION

- ✘ Nearly all aspects of Mayan social life revolved around religion.
 - + Even laws and taxes were viewed as being religious principles and offerings.
 - + Education was a training program for priests
- ✘ Polytheistic; believed gods made people out of maize and water
- ✘ Human blood sacrifice and ceremony keep the gods happy so they keep the world going and agriculture good
- ✘ Gods ruled natural events and the all-important agricultural cycles.



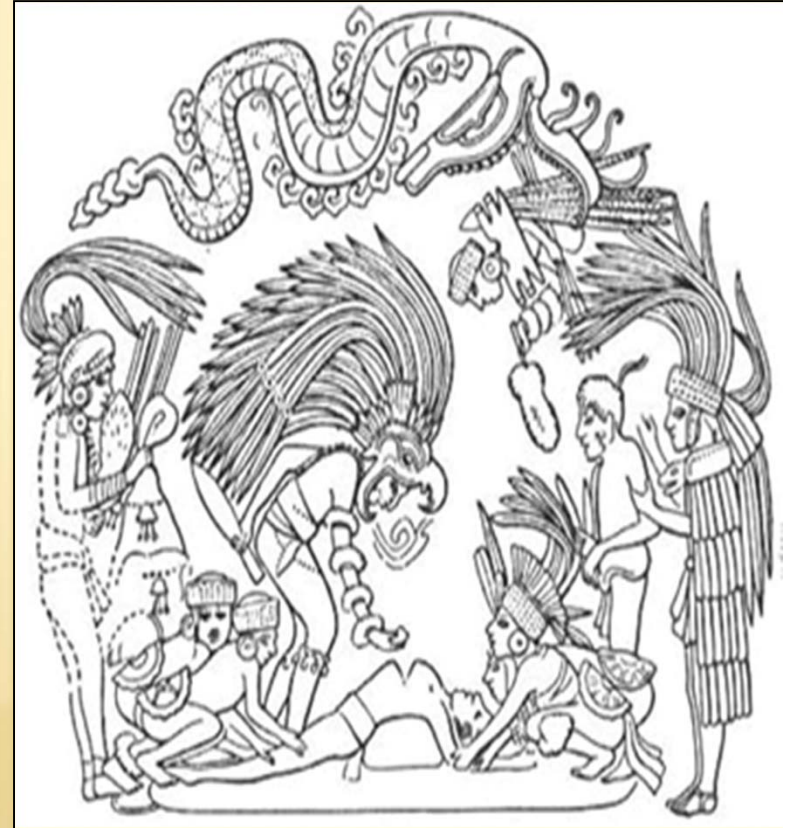
MAYAN BALL GAME

- ✘ Winners live; losers sacrificed to the gods



HUMAN SACRIFICE AND BLOODLETTING RITUALS

- ✘ Bloodletting involved both war captives and Mayan royals
- ✘ Bloodletting involved piercing the tongue and/or genitals and dripping the blood down a rope into a bowl before offering it to the gods



RELIGIOUS RITUAL SACRIFICES

- ✘ Killing animals, slaves, children, and prisoners of war were important parts of their culture
- ✘ These rituals occurred on important dates, when priests demanded it, or as punishment for crimes.
- ✘ Burned copal resin along with the sacrifice, creating more smoke and a sweet smell.
- ✘ Offerings to the spirits were to insure agricultural success.





PRIESTS –

- ✘ Responsible for keeping calendar, holding ceremonies to the gods and human sacrifices
- ✘ Most important Priest called Ah Kin Mai ("The Highest One of the Sun")
 - + Ruled over priests below him (called Ah Kin , "The Ones of the Sun").
- ✘ There were two special priestly functions involved in human sacrifice: the chacs, who were elderly men that held down the victim, and the nacon, who cut the living heart from the victim.

AFTER LIFE

- ✘ The Mayas believed in an elaborate afterlife, but heaven was reserved for those who had been hanged, sacrificed, or died in childbirth.
- ✘ Everyone else went to xibal, or hell, which was ruled over by the Lords of Death.

SOCIAL HIERARCHY

- ✘ Class distinctions with each class having specific rights and responsibilities
 - + King and ruling family
 - + Priests and hereditary nobles (political and religious responsibilities)
 - + Warriors
 - + Artisans, craftsmen, and merchants (prosperous middle class)
 - + Peasants
 - + Slaves (widely practiced and used for both agriculture and construction)

MAYAN BEAUTY

- Prized a long, backward sloping forehead
 - Infants would have their skulls bound with boards.
- Crossed-eyes were favored
 - Infants would have objects dangled in front of their eyes in order to permanently cross their eyes (this is still practiced today).

INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ✘ Astronomy, calendrical systems, hieroglyphic writing, ceremonial architecture, and masonry without metal tools
 - + Could plot planetary cycles and predict eclipses of the sun and moon
 - + Invented the concept of zero and used a symbol to represent zero mathematically, which facilitated the manipulation of large numbers
 - + Calculated the length of the solar year at 365.242 days– about 17 seconds shorter than the figure reached by modern
- ✘ Intellectual developments were highly ritualistic – viewed as necessary for ceremonies

MAYA NUMBER SYSTEM



MAYAN NUMBERS

A VIGESIMAL (BASE 20) SYSTEM

ICON IMAGES CORRESPOND TO NUMBERS SHOWN

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0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19

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MAYAN CALENDAR

- ✘ Interwove two kinds of year
 - + A solar year of 365 days governed the agricultural cycle
 - + A ritual year of 260 days governed daily affairs by organizing time into twenty “months” of thirteen days each



WRITING

- ✘ Ideographic elements and symbols for syllables
- ✘ Used to write works of history, poetry, and myth and keep genealogical, administrative, and astronomical records



MAYAN DECLINE

- ✘ By about 800, most Mayan populations had begun to desert their cities
 - + Full scale decline followed everywhere but in the northern Yucatan
- ✘ Possible causes include foreign invasion, internal dissension and civil war, failure of the water control system leading to agricultural disaster, ecological problems caused by destruction of the forests, epidemic diseases, and natural disasters