

The ancient mayan economics

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The trade network was expanded with the cities of Olmec, Zapotec, and Teotihuacan as well as other Caribbean islands and different groups on the gulf coast of Mexico (Demarest, 2004). The trade relations were facilitated with the efficient allocation of resources and specialization in different areas of crafts and skills (Demarest, 2004). Scholars have often used the economic laws of demand and supply to assess the ancient Mayan trade because of the vast availability of resources used by the Maya (Hirst, n. d). Given the growing population of the Maya, specialized exploitation of resources began giving the Maya specialization in trade (Hirst, n. d). This specialization combined with the availability of resources that each trading party had to offer was the key to Maya commerce (Demarest, 2004). Many scholars believe that the long-distance trade of the ancient Maya was accompanied by the exchange of mathematical and writing knowledge along with other cultural manifestations (Demarest, 2004). This extensive trade network is the prime mechanism for the ancient Maya's economic growth.

The agriculture of Maya consisted of maize, beans, cucurbits, chili peppers, amaranth, palms, cocoa, vanilla, avocado, agave, Ramon, and manioc (Hirst, n. d). Irrigation canals and terraces were constructed in the Maya highlands in order to take advantage of the environment there while crops were grown on raised platforms in the Maya lowlands. The household economy of the ancient Maya was related to the subsistence economy. Each household had its farmland where they planted corn, squash, beans, and other items (McKillop, 2004). Households also had seasonal workshops where crafted goods were produced.

Economic stability was very important for the ancient Maya making agriculture the most important contributor to the economy. The use of raised
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fields and irrigation are examples of technological change that helped the Maya to increase output and strengthen the economy (Demarest, 2004). However, as time passed, commerce became too complex and the shift of trade routes from the main hub led to the decline in the economy of the Maya (Demarest, 2004). Since trade routes were shifted, the lowlands were bypassed, causing a discontinuity in the flow of trade affecting not just the lowlands but every class and lands of the ancient Maya. Without the proper agricultural items and farming tools, the daily activities were hindered causing economic slow-down (Demarest, 2004). Although commerce is an important factor in the contribution of the ancient Maya's economy, it is also the downfall of its economy.