

# The mayas and the incas.

[Art & Culture](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The Mayas and the Incas are two Indian civilizations that inhabited South America and left a significant mark on the culture and history of these places. They both have legends that link their arrival to immigration from the East; however, it is more likely that the immigration occurred from the north. Though these two cultures had some similarities, one of these was not language as they had several differences in their native tongues. However, regardless of the differences, legends have claimed a community of origin between these two civilizations, in the remote past.

The Inca civilization has a reign of less than 200 years in comparison to the Maya civilization and has its base in the area that is now Peru. They flourished in the highlands of the Andes and their reign is estimated as being from AD 1438 – 1534. They also extended into the areas that are now Ecuador and Chile. There are links that show that this civilization was derived from a warlike tribe that moved into the valley at Cuzco. Their reign was estimated to span from the Maule River to the Quito.

In contrast, the Maya civilization emerged in BC 1000 and lasted more than a thousand years in the Yucatan area of Mexico into Guatemala, Belize and Honduras. They were responsible for the creation of many cities in their time such as Tikal and Uxmal. They also had a wide population; however, their system of governance varied greatly and there was no emperor but rather several powerful heads in each city. There was also no capital as each city ruled itself.

In terms of religious practices, both civilizations practiced sacrificing of animals and at times of humans as well. They also both worshipped several Gods. The Incas believed in a creator and many sky gods. They called gold

the “sweat of the sun” and viewed it as precious only in materials used for ceremonial items. They focused on rituals that they believed led to healing and increasing harvest. In a trait similar to the Mayas, in times of calamity they believed in the sacrifice of humans.

These times included earthquakes and drought. The Inca also had a similar religion to the Inca. They also believed in several nature Gods and in the use of sacrifice to appease the Gods. The thought that the feeding of blood to the Gods would also appease and satisfy the Gods so that their children would be healthy and their crops would be good. Religion was important in daily life and this is evident from the information that has been attained from pottery, the walls of buildings and murals.

Inca architecture was ornate. The capital city was Cuzco and this was the richest city in the Americas at that time. The temples were decorated with gold plates. There were many royal estates and palaces that were for the nobility and were constantly maintained by the builders and artisans. The Mayas had elaborate buildings as well but were more advanced in their use of material.

They used concrete in their construction and built pyramids as monuments to Gods and leaders. Some of these pyramids were as tall as 200 feet. They also had a distinctive style of construction. The pyramids that they built the tops were flat unlike those in Egyptian architecture. This meant that their leaders were able to climb and sit atop the pyramids.

There were mainly three staples in the Inca diet. These were corn, potato and a seed called quinoa. They were advanced in thinking and grew a

surplus of food for times of war and drought. The quinoa was the seed that was used to produce flour and cereal.

Corn was used in religious ceremonies and to make a drink called Chicha. The Maya diet was also largely reliant on agriculture. They cultivated corn, beans, sweet potatoes, squash and yucca. Corn was the main staple in their diet. They also sourced meat from the hunting of deer, monkey, duck and wild turkey. The product that was limited in consumption to the nobles was chocolate and was referred to as the drink of the Gods.

The Incas had rulers that enforced a strong work ethic in them. Though they had leisure time this time was focused more on religious festivals. Many festivals would take place that were to honour leaders, Gods and to help with a good harvest. The Maya, in contrast, actually had a lot more activities. They had a game called “ pok-ol-pok” that used a rubber ball.

This game is very similar to what we know today as soccer. As in soccer the hands were not used to touch the ball and the ball had to be hit through a ring. This game could be very competitive and sometimes the losing team would lose their life. They also had trumpets made from conch shells and drums that they used to play music. Some other instruments included the turtle shell rattles and the pottery flutes. They loved to dance and play music and would honour the rulers and Gods by doing these activities.

Both societies were classed societies. The Maya had at the bottom of the ladder the slaves. This was followed by the peasants, artisans, nobility, priests and the leaders at the top. There was no supreme leader. The

farmers raised crops and worked hard as they did not use animals to prepare fields. Craftsmen made murals, pottery, jewellery and many other items.

They also had piercing and tattoos like today but viewed beauty differently. The Inca had a similar class but with labourers below and an Emperor at the top. Farmers also worked hard and grew crops but also reared animals. The llamas were used for transport and the alpacas for their wool. The Inca painted their faces and also had piercings. They in addition had the ear of boys pierced in a manhood ceremony and a gold disc placed in the hole. When the boy grew older this disc was replaced with larger and larger discs. This was considered to be a sign of beauty.

The culture of the Maya was very developed. They possessed a written language and books. They also had experts in the fields of mathematics and astronomy. As already mentioned, their architecture was exceptional and they constructed palaces and pyramids with great skill. The writings of the Maya are perhaps one of the first writings of the Americas. They utilized pictures and symbols to represent words and thoughts.

These symbols can be known as glyphs and have been found in books and walls. Their books were folded like a fan and were called codices. Their number system was advanced and they based it on the number 20 unlike our present system that uses 10. The Maya could subtract and add. It has also been seen that they were able to plot the movement of the sun, moon and Venus. They performed calculations on the orbit of Venus that have been found to be very accurate today. Their calendar is the most accurate one from the ancient world. They based their year on a 365 day system over one thousand years ago.

The Inca culture was not as advanced and they did not have any written language. They did have the foresight to have verbal historians in their society that ensured that their history was passed along through the generations. The form of mathematics that was practiced was also not very developed. They used a quipus to keep track of numbers. This consisted of coloured strings and knots tied. The quipu rememberers were able to translate the knots and keep track of amounts.

The method by which the quipu was used is not known today. Although not very advanced like the Maya in many aspects the Inca were also skilled in terms of architecture. The material they used was stone and not concrete however they were skilled enough to be able to fit the stones perfectly without the use of mortar. They also had the insight to build a lot of roads as much as 10, 000 miles in addition to many temples, palaces and bridges. Their bridges were great structures that were made using a rope suspension method and they were advanced in terms of irrigation.

The Inca and the Maya civilizations both have a lot of similarities and differences. The similarities in their religious beliefs are evident on further inspection. These may be due to the fact that they most probably have in their lineages common ancestors or roots. The belief in sacrifices as well as the similarities in some of their Gods points clearly to this. The importance that the societies have placed on religion is also evident in their cultures.

One factor that can account for the advanced development of the Maya civilization is the fact that they were an old civilization. This civilization had a lot of time to develop. The time period that they existed for was over a thousand years giving them a lot of time to develop, grow, explore and

<https://assignbuster.com/the-mayas-and-the-incas/>

investigate the world around them and ways to improve their life. This information could then be passed along through the generations and built on and further developed with each successive generation.

The Inca civilization, however, is one that was very young in age. They were around for only a period of about 200 years. This means that they were not able to advance to the degree of the Maya civilization within that timeframe. Their achievements are in fact great for the limited time that they were in their prime. Their language given time, I am certain would have developed into a written language as well.

Location of the civilizations can also account for differences in their diet and daily life. Though in the southern continent of the Americas the types of crops planted and reared would have varied from area to area and this would affect the type of food that was consumed by the population.

The governance system of the civilizations may also account for some of the differences. The Mayas were not dependent on the governance of an Emperor and were able to function as independent cities while the Inca had a supreme Emperor. This may indeed have held back the development of the Inca as they were dependent on the genius of one individual whereas the Maya were led by several leaders in many cities. These reasons may account for the differences and similarities in the Inca and Maya civilizations. These civilizations had many similarities and many differences but were both in their own way and in their own time great in terms of their achievements and development.

## References

<https://assignbuster.com/the-mayas-and-the-incas/>

Strohl, M. and S. Schneck. Mayas, Aztecs, Incas: Cooperative Learning Activities. New York: Scholastic Professional Books, 1994.

Baquedano, E. Eyewitness Books: Aztec, Inca, and Maya. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993.

Mesoamerican Civilizations: Mayas and Incas. 24th April, 2007

Bleeker, S and Sasaki, K. The Maya: Indians of Central America. Published: Morrow, 1961.