

Mayans customs and traditions

Government



The Mayans believed that the world was full of spirits and ghost, that every creation had an unseen power. A mountain can hold a deity and a rock a spirit, much like animism. It is to their belief that ghosts come out at night and spirits roam the jungle. To get in touch with the supernatural, such as the jaguar spirit or other transformations, the shaman (a priest who uses magic for certain purposes) would use hallucinogenic plants found in the jungle with a doobie.

Mayans believed that some certain of their ancestors were reborn as gods. According to the Spanish, Mayans could date back their ancestry hundreds of years ago in detail. Rituals would be performed to their ancestors to gain favour and support. When a member of the family died, they would be buried in simple graves under their houses and the wealthy ones would be buried in tombs along with their belongings such as jewellery, pottery and food.

According to Mayan beliefs, it is common for them to have ancestor worships, especially to the royals as they believe that they have re-joined the gods. They also believed that the gods had spilled their own blood to form human flesh. Mayan blood sacrifices were a ritual of returning blood to the gods. One way they did this was by ripping hearts out of the human sacrifice, mainly high- ranking war prisoners, and leaving it there for the gods or by pushing them down a cliff.

They used human sacrifice because it was believed that human blood made the gods stronger. Yet, another custom was practiced which was self-torture, where they would pierce a body part and run a thread through to let the blood run down it. Sometimes, the Mayans would have dances and dressed up in clothing and masks resembling their gods. The dances were made to

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ensure the success crops throughout the year. Prior to marriage, Mayan families would use an atanzahab, or matchmaker to examine the couple's horoscope to avoid future conflicts.

Typically, the bride's family would be given compensation for their daughter and the groom would have to work for the bride's father for a period of time. The couple would meet for the first time at their wedding ceremony and would not speak to each other until they were married. One major game Mayans would play was a ball game where they had to hit a ball through a ring vertically. They would be rewarded with fine jewellery if they won or be tied up and sent to the high priest to be decapitated then rolled down the long steps to the plaza's floor below. Thank you.