

The quiche maya from guatemala



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Quiche people are a Native American people belonging to the Maya ethnic groups. Their indigenous language is the K'iche which is a Mesoamerican language of the larger Maya language. This essay will discuss about the history, religion, believes, culture and customs of the Quiche people of Guatemala.

History

The history of the Quiche is found in the Popol Vuh written by members of the Quiche Maya nobility who dominated the highlands of western parts of Guatemala. The name of this people simply means ' many trees' perhaps from the forested highlands that they inhabited. Around the year 250AD, The Mayan civilization arose in Mesoamerica largely influenced by the culture and religion of Olmecs. The Mayan urban culture continued to flourish until the Spanish conquest. During the Classic Period, the Mayan civilization consisted of more than 40 cities that were spread in Guatemala, modern day Mexico and the northern parts of Belize. The cities were mainly ceremonial centers because majority of the Mayan people lived in rural parts around the cities practicing farming.

After 900 AD, the Mayan culture declined greatly. During this time the Mayan cities were abandoned and most scholars attribute the decline to loss of trade routes caused by war. Most of the southern cities declined in population and were eventually abandoned while the cities in the Yucatan peninsula continued to thrive in the post classic era (this lasted between 900-1519 AD). Such cities include Mayapan, Chichen Itza and Uxmal. When the Spanish arrived in the early 16th century, they found that most of the

Maya were practicing farmers in the village. Some of the Maya were conquered by the Spanish missionaries who converted them to Christianity (Roman Catholicism). The present Mayan people are spread Guatemala town of Quiche, Totonicapan and Quetzaltenango and they are about half a million people

The Quiche people were in the year 1525 subjugated by Pedro de Alvarado under rapidly declining customary atrocities mainly due to slavery and heavy tributes imposed on them. This was also contributed by the Pope's warnings and humane laws promulgated by the Spanish government.

The Quiche Mayan religion

The Quiche people are native Mesoamerican people who came to develop one of the most sophisticated cultures before the arrival of Spanish explorers. The Mayan religion is usually characterized by worship of nature gods (nature gods here include the gods of rain, the gods of sun, the gods of corn), priestly class, believe in the importance of astronomy and astrology and performed human sacrifices. The Maya people built elaborate pyramid temples to worship their gods. But with the Spanish missionaries, came the catholic religion who attempted to replace their beliefs. This effort of replacement was not very successful because the Mayans resisted change and tried as much as they could to hold onto their native religious beliefs. The result has been a mixture of Mayan beliefs, folklore and Christian teachings. The Quiche people are known to be very spiritual with ancient traditions; hey mix Catholicism with Mayan beliefs. Although many are noted to be Christians, they mix that with their ancestral pagan practices with

Mayan beliefs forming a confused form of religion. Religion presently is populated by followers of Dios Mundo, the Heart of Christ and the Earth as they still worship along rivers and mountain tops. This kind of religion is referred as Christo/pagan religion (Quiche, a Mayan People of Guatemala).

According to Christenson, Christianity was formally established in Guatemala in the year 1534 by Bishop Francisco Marroquin. Through the bishop, Mayan Quiche were baptized and their traditional remnants of idolatry and paganism destroyed. Priests used to gather in Mayan towns to instruct people in Christian faith. Because an early war had destroyed Cumarcah, the Quiche remnants were moved to a new settlement nearby in 1555 in a place which came to be known as Santa Del Quiche or simply Holy Cross of the Quiche. Most sources suggest that it is here that the Popol Vuh was compiled

Practices

The Maya people practiced divination based on their calendar system and knowledge based on astronomy. The priests had the job of discerning lucky days from unlucky days and advise rulers and kings on the best time to plant, harvest or engage in war. The quiche people used an advanced calendar with 365 days in a year. The calendar was divided into a total of 18 months each with 20 days and a five day period.

The Spanish conquest in the early sixteenth century was a big blow to the Maya literacy in Guatemala as Christian missionaries were involved in burning a number of hieroglyphic texts especially the native scribes which were singled out for persecution. The main reason was to eradicate the

religious practices and they succeeded in eradicating the art of hieroglyphic writing among the Maya people

Other practices performed by the Quiche included human sacrifices which was especially central to their religious activity. Human sacrifices were believed to encourage fertility, appease the gods and demonstrate piety. They believed that the Mayan gods nourished on blood and the ritual bloodletting practices were seen as making contacts with them.

Other rituals practiced by the Maya included prayer to gods, dancing, drama performances and several other competitions.

Texts

The Quiche Maya of Guatemala had a highly sophisticated culture that included Hieroglyphic language which were carved into stone monuments, painted on pottery and written on books called codices of the bark paper. The most famous of these texts written by the Quiche Maya of Guatemala is the Popol Vuh in 1554-1558 and later translated into Spanish by a catholic priest. The popol vuh tells of the cosmology of the post classic Guatemala Maya and its Mexican influences. The popol vuh also chronicles the creation of man, the gods' actions, the origin and history of the Quiche Maya of Guatemalan people and the chronology of their kings from 1550. These Mayan texts although not regarded as sacred or authoritative in themselves are important records of religious rituals and a source of knowledge. (Mayan Religion - Religion Facts)..

The Spanish authorities realized that preserving of records by the Maya constituted danger to their own political and religious domination of the Guatemala area and thus they resorted to suppressing their cultural memory mainly to ensure that they converted them to Christianity. Prior to this, the Maya people had developed the hieroglyphic script that was capable of recording complex literary compositions. It was a hallmark of the Maya culture to preserve written records.

Language

The Quiche people mostly speak their native language with a working knowledge of Spanish. This is mainly dominant in the western parts of Guatemala and it is closely related to other Mayan language Sipacapa, Sacapultee and Tzutujil. The Quiche language has a set of consonants that include a voiceless series and a glottalized series. This language however lacks voiced stops like b, d and g. in grammar and syntax, Quiche usually depends on suffixes and also uses prefixes. According to Christenson, asserts that the Quiche language stresses passive verb constructions which are difficult to follow when translated to English.

Economic activity

The Quiche people are farmers especially because they stay in agricultural areas. They practice hand tilling of land planting food crops like maize, beans and squash while the cash crops tilled are strawberries and peaches. They also practice weaving and pottery while clothing has been practiced since time memorial (Quiche people).

Marriage

The Quiche Maya people value marriage very much that it is considered a highland among them. Public officers are expected to be married and no significant office may be held by an unmarried person. They consider a person as only "complete" if married and a man is expected to be accompanied by his wife in important occasions. Elaborate procedures and ceremonies are performed if a member of the royal family marries or is married.

The present Quiche people

Today the Quiche descendants of the original K'iche are about 700,000 and they make the largest remaining indigenous Maya group. Quite a good number of them continue many of the traditions which made their ancestors a formidable tribe in the world.

Summary and conclusion

The paper has discussed about the Quiche people who were part of the Mayan culture which was founded in the 13th century. The quiche also called the K'iche from the K'iche kingdom was founded in Guatemalan highlands and went on to become one of the most powerful Mayan states before the Spanish conquest of 1524. The most famous of texts written by the Quiche is the Popol Vuh in 1554-1558 and later translated into Spanish by a catholic priest. The Popol Vuh tells of the cosmology of the post classic Guatemala Maya and its Mexican influences. They practiced several rituals including prayer to gods, dancing, drama performances and several other

competitions. The present Quiche people number around 700, 000 and live by practicing agriculture in the Guatemala highlands.