

# Mayan civilization

Government



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The Mayans were an extremely advanced Mesoamerican civilization. They were located near modern day Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Mexico, on the Yucatan Peninsula. They were skilled in art and architecture. This is evident by the many pyramids they constructed.

This civilization also utilized a great deal of technology. They built magnificent cities with huge stone temples and pyramids. They also developed an advanced system of writing, mathematics and astronomy, which they used to calculate an accurate calendar. Another example of how the Mayans were advanced is their agricultural technology. For example, they used the slash and burn method on their crops in order to clear plots of land and fertilize the soil.

Mayans used certain building techniques which is a part of what makes their civilization unique as well as successful. Because there were such large supplies of limestone and flint available, plaster and cement was easily produced. This allowed the Mayans to build impressive temples and stepped pyramids.

Flat roofs made of cedar beams overlaid with mortar were also common in this area, along with murals often displaying religious figures in vibrant colors. Certain cities were particularly famous for this typical Mesoamerican architecture. One of these cities is Tikal. It was the largest city in the empire, home to over 100,000 people. There were eight pyramids built in the city.

This civilization also had its own interesting religious beliefs. The Mayans were polytheistic and worshipped hundreds of gods, each of whom played a different role in the creation of the earth.

The religion seems to have been made up of thirteen heavens and nine underworlds ruled by the nine lords of the nights, whose names are not known. Of all of the gods worshipped in this civilization, the sky god was the most important to the Mayans. The god of the sky was also the most frequent to appear in their ancient art, which included sculptures, ceramics, murals and architectural structures. It is evident that many of the structures built by the ancient Mayans were built in honor of the gods. Certain compounds were built with large open areas, from which all the citizens could view religious ceremonies, such as sacrifices that were held on elevated platforms.

The Mayans had an advanced language that they used to communicate with each other. Their alphabet was composed of glyphs rather than letters. Not all inscriptions of this text can be deciphered yet. However, analyzing the written language became easier in the 1950 when a Russian ethnologist named Yuri Knorozov proposed that the Mayan script was at least partly phonetic.

His theory was later proved correct, which was a breakthrough for all those studying this ancient civilization. 4 Another impressive feature of the Mayans was their strategic military. The empire was once thought to be peaceful, and held military forces solely for defensive purposes. Eventually, population growth increased competition with others, resulting in heightened levels

of violence. Military action became involved in order to gain political control of people, land and resources. Some scholars have suggested that the capture of sacrificial victims was another driving force behind warfare.

Mayans also had a decentralized government which made it more difficult to defeat, in turn protecting the nation from becoming over-ruled.

Overall, the Mayans were an extremely successful civilization. They made many significant discoveries in math and science. They also flourished artistically. After experiencing a golden age lasting five centuries (300 to 800 AD), the Mayans suddenly and mysteriously abandoned their cities. The cause could have been from disease, natural disaster, deforestation, or even revolt but it is unknown to this day.