

Key Knowledge

Maya Trade

Maya merchants dealt in two kinds of goods, subsistence items and luxury items. Subsistence items were things used every day such as salt, especially necessary in a hot climate, food items, clothing and tools. Luxury items were those things royalty and nobles used to showcase their wealth and power.

Religion

The Maya believed in and worshipped a number of different gods. They believed that the gods had a good side and a bad side and that the gods could help or hurt them. The Maya would dance, sing and sometimes make offerings of blood to the gods. Priests were very important in Maya society as it was believed that they could communicate directly with the gods. They would perform different rituals during festivals or special ceremonies in order to appeal to the gods.

Maya Numbers

The Maya developed a complex number and counting system that was advanced for their time. They were one of only two cultures in the world to develop the concept of zero. The Maya people used just three symbols in their number system. These are thought to represent items that the Maya people might have first used to count with, such as pebbles, sticks and shells. The Maya used a base 20 number system, so after number 19, multiples of 20 were written above the bottom number



Maya Cities

There are many Maya cities including Lowlands - Highlands - Iximche.

Tikal - Tikal, city and ceremonial centre of the ancient Maya civilization. The largest urban centre in the southern Maya lowlands, it stood 19 miles (30 km) north of Lake Petén Itzá in what is now the northern part of the region of Petén, Guatemala, in a tropical rainforest.



Iximche - Iximche is a small Maya archaeological site that can be found in the western highlands of Guatemala, about two hours away from Guatemala City. This is a tiny and not very popular place that hides a lot of importance for the history of modern Central America and especially for Guatemala. That's why in the 1960s it was declared a national monument.



Maya Settlements (Chichen Itza)

Chichen Itza is a Maya settlement, it gives us a lot of information about the Maya. It is full of beautiful stone carvings that is seen on all sorts of buildings, structures and statues. There are many temples within Chichen Itza.



Key Vocabulary

Maya - the name for the people of that time in Central America.

Mayan - the language spoken by the Maya people.

Civilisation - the culture of a particular society that has reached an advanced level.

Hieroglyphs - Writing that uses pictures and symbols.

UpperWorld - The heavens.

MiddleWorld - The earth.

UnderWorld - Under the earth.

Drought - A long period with very little rain.

Ritual - A ceremony, often religious, with set actions performed in a set order.

Scribes - People paid to write things down, either as an official record or for someone else unable to write.

Codices - Ancient handwritten texts.

Maize - Another word for sweetcorn or corn on the cob.

Artefact - Any object made by human beings.

Sacrifice - To make an offering of to a god.

Empire - a group of countries ruled by a single person, government, or country.

Kingdom - a place ruled by a king, queen or important person

Temple - a building used for the worship of a god or gods in some religions.

Cocoa Beans - Cacao trees sprout pods directly from their trunks. When they are ripe, the pods can be broken open to reveal the beans, which can then be dried, roasted and ground.

Settlements - a place, typically one which has previously been uninhabited, where people establish a community.

Key figures

Maya Gods - the Maya worshipped many Gods including: Itzamna (God of fire who created the earth), Kukulcan (The feathered Serpent).

Leader - K'inich Janaab Pakal, the longest reigning Maya king in history.