

What were the glories of Mayan Civilization?

Things Mayans thought were signs of beauty:

- Elongated skull, so they squished heads of babies when they were born.
- Put jewels in their teeth

The Classic Period of Mayan Civilization (250 CE - 900 CE)

Most of the Maya city-states were located in what is now Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico. Each city had elaborate public spaces, temples, and residential areas.

- These cities were independent city-states that had favorable conditions for food production.
- Some cities were linked to each other through cosways.
- They usually had areas for religious ceremonies.

Chichen Itza means "at the mouth of the well of Itza," and is the 2nd most visited archaeological site of Mexico today.

Life in Mayan City-States

- Much trade among the cities - especially luxury goods.;
- Each city produced its own food, using the raised-bed method of agriculture.
- Jade was especially prized for making religious and luxury ornaments.
- Social class: king at the top, then a noble class of warriors and priests.
- The position of the king was hereditary, and he was considered semi-divine.

The *Popul Vuh*

1. What came before the world was created? God? Gods? Something else?

Before the world was created, the "Forefathers, the Creators, and Makers," existed, and these beings were called Tepeu and Gucumatz. They decided that humanity was to be created, and thus they set on accomplishing their goals. Thus, Gods didn't necessarily exist, but some sort of deity/original being was there.

2. What was the process of world creation?

The process of world creation was such that first the sky and Earth were created. Then the sun, then the moon, and then the stars were created above the Creators and Makers.

3. What was the process of human creation?

The process of human creation was such that, after the forefathers first found what must enter into the flesh of a man, they put food, like corn, into the flesh of the man. The blood was also placed in the man. They were only born as men, and women at the time were not present. They were then given intelligence.

4. What kind of hierarchy is created in the story?

A hierarchy created is sort of the resemblance of the difference between men and women in their places in Mayan society; men came first, then women.

5. How does this creation story reflect the values and concerns of the Maya?

It shows that they greatly valued food, especially corn, as if it was something sacred. This is because they believed that it was part of them, and not just food.

Mathematics & Religion

- Mathematics and astronomy were employed in the name of religion.
- A complex calendar helped to determine when the plant crops, make sacrifices, crown new rulers, and please the gods.
- Calendar was based on careful astronomical observations.
- A *writing system* was created using hieroglyphics.
- These hieroglyphics were called **glyphs**.

The Game

- The Maya had a ball game call Pok-A-Tok. It was played on an odd shaped field.
- The object of the game was to move a hard rubber ball without the use of hands or feet through a hoop.
- There is debate whether it was the losing team of the winning team that was sacrificed

Why did the Mayan Civilization Decline?

Many cities were abandoned in the 800s. Some cities continued to thrive for a few more centuries. But by 1500, the Mayans were largely gone. Why?

- Warfare may have led to economic hardship.
- Possibly, famine, and disease (soil depletion).

However, despite their unusual decline, Mayans left a heritage of: grand cities, a writing system, accurate calendars, and complex mathematics.