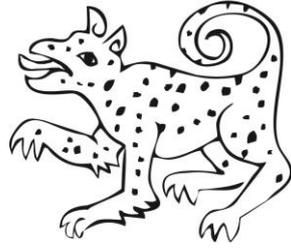


The Young Explorer's Companion



The Temple of the Crystal Timekeeper

The Official Illustrated Guide

To The Temple of the Crystal Timekeeper

Chronicles of the Stone: Book 3

FIONA INGRAM

Author's Note



Writing *The Secret of the Sacred Scarab*, the first book in *The Chronicles of the Stone* series, was an amazing journey that changed my life. I experienced some incredible adventures, and then found that there was so much more to discover about the ancient Egyptian civilization. That's why I created the first *Young Explorer's Companion* as an official guide for readers who have enjoyed the first book, and those who are still thinking about reading it. The same goes for the second book, *The Search for the Stone of Excalibur*. You'll find that the information Justin and Adam learn on each journey helps them unravel the many clues and pointers they need to locate the Seven Ancient Stones of Power on their quest. Book 3: *The Temple of the Crystal Timekeeper* also took me on an amazing adventure, one that surprised even me, the author! Often, I wasn't sure just how my young heroes would react, especially as the two boys and Kim meet a young boy who comes from such a different culture to theirs.

This guide will increase your knowledge of the world in which Adam, Justin, and Kim find themselves when their plane crashes in the Lacandon jungle. They learn about the magnificence and grandeur of the two lost ancient civilizations of the Maya and the Aztecs. These notes will help you to understand just how different things were in the past, and perhaps shed some light on the quest! Check out the map in the front of the fiction book to find the places mentioned and don't forget to study the clues left by Thoth, the Egyptian god of wisdom.

Please feel free to email me fiona@fionaingram.com with any questions. I love hearing from readers.

CONTENTS



Why I Wrote Book 3

What's the Book About?

Who Were the Rubber People?

Who Were the Cloud People?

Who Were the Rain People?

Who Were the Maya?

Who Were the Aztecs?

Who Was Topiltzin?

Who Were the Toltecs?

Human Sacrifice Among the Maya and the Aztecs

Who Invented Chocolate?

How Well Do You Know the Maya? Take the Quiz!

How Well Do You Know the Aztecs?

The Lacandon Jungle

Coming next

Why I Wrote Book Three



Book 3 naturally grew out of the adventure that Adam, Justin, and Kim experienced when they located the second Stone of Power in the hilt of King Arthur's sword, Excalibur, in Book 2. I have always been fascinated with the ancient civilizations of the Maya and the Aztecs, and I wanted my young heroes to experience something completely different, and be dropped into an environment unlike anything they had ever experienced. Crashing into a jungle was certainly the best way to do it!

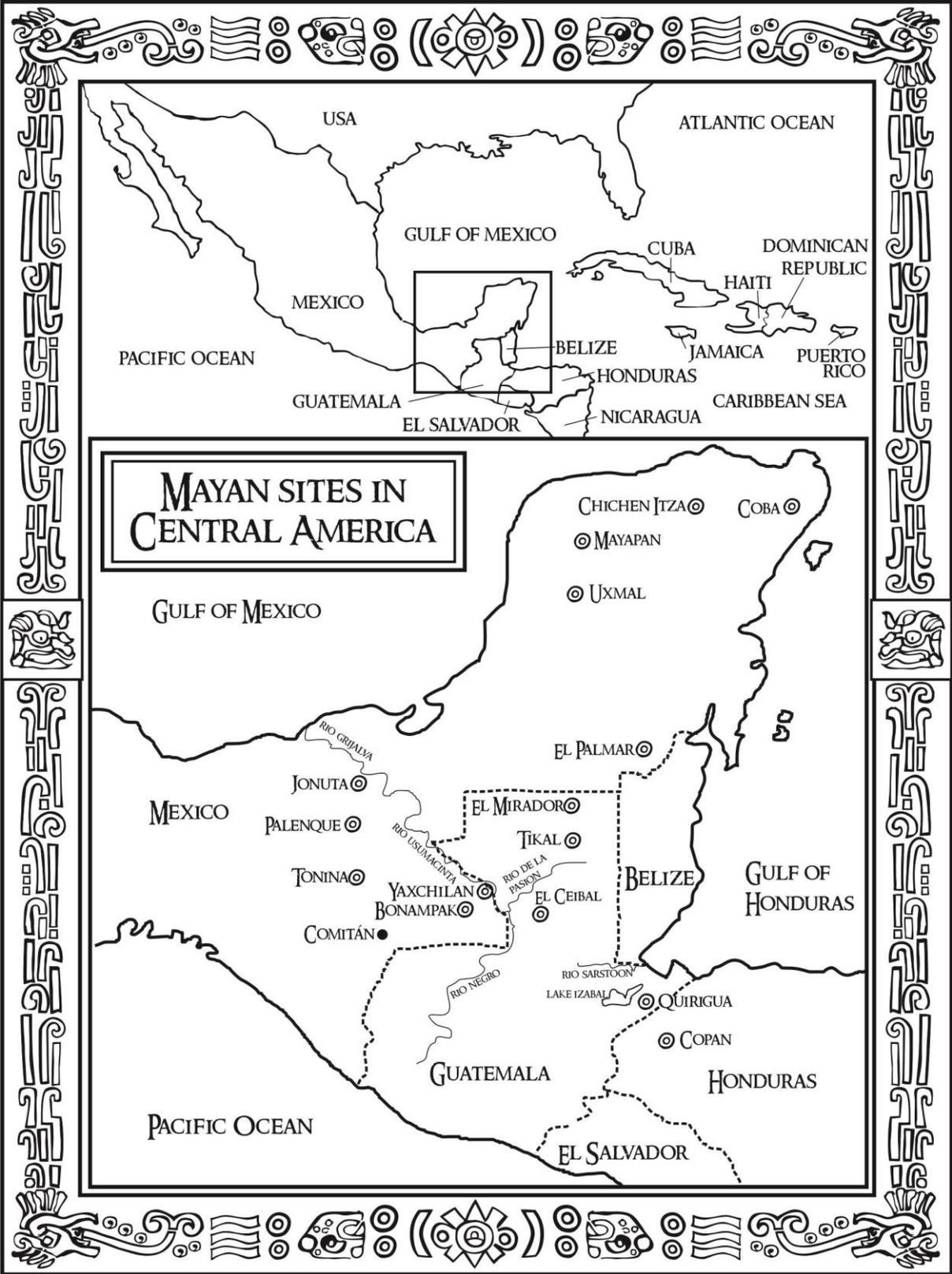
Not only that, but the kids must deal with whoever they meet in the jungle. Adam is naturally open to new friendships and experiences, although he doesn't like being uncomfortable. Justin, on the other hand, feels challenged by the obstacles and the people they encounter, and he reacts badly. Kim takes everything in her stride and copes better. I found the changes in the young heroes very interesting and revealing. How would you cope if you crashed into a jungle and had to rely on people from another culture?

If you love history, geography, action, adventure, archaeology, and a story that grips you from page one (plus lots of danger!), then this is the book for you. This will also appeal to anyone who wants to save the world or (for those readers a little older) who remembers their plans to do so!

If you'd like to know when each adventure is coming out, send your request via the book or author website and your name will go onto the mailing list. Don't miss out on the action!

www.chronicsofthestone.com

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What's the Book About?



Continuing the adventure that ended in Britain just a short while ago, cousins Adam and Justin Sinclair, with their friend Kim Maleka, are now hunting for the third Stone of Power, one of seven mysterious stones lost centuries ago. The third stone might be located in an ancient city, hidden in the depths of the Mexican jungle.

When their small plane crashes in the jungle, an uncontacted tribe rescues Adam, Justin, Kim, and James. James, who is wounded, must stay behind as the kids, with only a young boy, Tukum, as their guide, make their way through the dense and dangerous jungle to find the city. River rafting on a crocodile-infested river and evading predators are just part of this hazardous task. It doesn't help that Justin keeps picking fights with Tukum, their guide, who is the only person who can get them to the lost city, help them find the third Stone of Power, and hopefully get them safely back home again! The problem is Tukum knows his home, the jungle, like the back of his hand, but Justin just wants to be the boss.

Of course, their old adversary Dr. Khalid is close behind as the kids press on in search of the lost city of stone gods. But he is not the worst of their problems. This time Adam will clash with a terrible enemy who adopts the persona of an evil Aztec god, Tezcatlipoca, and is keen to revive the ancient tradition of human sacrifice. Adam, Justin, and Tukum must play a dreadful ball game of life and death and maybe survive. Will they emerge alive from the jungle? Will Dr. Khalid find the third Stone of Power before they do? And what about Adam's dreams and visions of not only an ancient god-king, but also of a terrible book with snakes on the cover...

Who Were the Rubber People?



When one thinks of Mesoamerican (pre-Columbian) civilizations, most people automatically think of the Maya, and then the Aztecs. But there were other groups of people, with their own unique cultures and lifestyles, living sometimes in the same era as the Maya.

The Olmecs were the first true Mesoamerican civilization. There were small villages and groups of people in the area in which the Olmec developed, but these societies are referred to as pre-Olmec. The Olmecs were a fully-fledged civilization because they were more organized and socially advanced than their predecessors.

There are differing opinions regarding the Olmec timeline. Some say the start was around 1500 BC, but the more popular timeline puts the beginning of the Olmec at roughly 1200 BC and the decline of the culture sometime near 400 BC.



The Olmecs are unique for many reasons. It appears that the Olmec culture developed alone. Most cultures develop with outside influences by engaging in activities such as trade and immigration. Developing independently is rare and, when it happens, the culture is known as “pristine.” The Olmecs had several firsts in the Americas. They developed the first monumental architecture and first signs of city planning. They were the first known people to use a writing system in the Americas. Another first was the use of chocolate, which was their preferred drink. The Olmecs are the earliest known civilization in the Americas to have used mathematics and had the concept of zero. The first calendar in long count format was discovered on the lower half of Stela C in the Olmec region of Tres Zapotes. The name

Olmec means “rubber people.” It’s how the Aztec tribes described the Olmecs and makes sense as they are the best candidates for inventing the first ball games.

The Olmecs inhabited the area around the Gulf Coast of Mexico, now the modern states of Tabasco and Veracruz. They took advantage of the fertile land. Several large cities have been attributed to them, including San Lorenzo, La Venta, Tres Zapotes, Las Limas, and Laguna de los Cerros. The first major city of the Olmec civilization was San Lorenzo, with a population of at least 15,000. It had a very elaborate drainage system that may have helped its success. The Olmecs achieved this feat by using carved stone pipes with lids. San Lorenzo had vast influence and political power in Mesoamerica. Ten amazing colossal heads were discovered there.



The colossal heads represented rulers or elites. They differ from one another in facial characteristics and size. Each was also carefully carved with a distinctive headdress. The largest head at the San Lorenzo is 9.3 ft. (2.8 meters) high, 6.9 ft. (2.1 meters) wide, and weighs about 25.3 tons. The San Lorenzo colossal heads were at the center of the site and formed two lines oriented north-south.

By 400 BC, the Olmecs mysteriously vanished, the cause of which is still unknown. There are many theories about the downfall of the Olmec civilization such as catastrophic climate change, illness, volcanism, and overpopulation. Although archaeologists only rediscovered the Olmecs relatively recently, i.e. after the Second World War, they were by no means a forgotten civilization. After all, the word Olmec itself (meaning “rubber people”) can be found in the Aztec language. It seems that the Olmecs invented the Mesoamerican ballgame, which was observed by the Spanish when they encountered the Aztecs. As this game involved the use of a rubber ball, this may be the reason why the Olmecs were named as such by the Aztecs. This ballgame and several other features of Olmec civilization may be found in subsequent Central American civilizations. Thus, the Olmecs had a considerable amount of influence on these later cultures. As so little is known about the Olmecs today, it would require much more work and research to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of their importance to succeeding Central American societies.

Who Were the Cloud People?



In the Valley of Oaxaca, located in the southern highlands of Mesoamerica, an indigenous, pre-Columbian civilization, known as the Zapotec civilization or the “Cloud People,” flourished around 2,500 years ago. They left behind impressive ruins and provided a lasting influence on the many cultures that superseded them.

During the Monte Alban 1 phase (400–100 BC), the Zapotec civilization began to form in the Oaxaca Valley. They were the largest indigenous group in Oaxaca, with populations reaching approximately 350,000 at their height. Members of the Zapotec civilization created and developed a powerful state system that went through periods of development and decline. The Zapotecs can be divided into three distinct



groups - the Valley Zapotec (in the Valley of Oaxaca), the Sierra Zapotec (to the north), and the Southern Zapotec (in the south and east, near the Isthmus of Tehuantepec). The peoples were primarily peasant farmers, living in communities of approximately 5,000. Altogether, the Zapotecs lived in farming villages, mountain settlements, scattered ranches, rural areas, and two urban centers, Juchitán and Tehuantepec.

A typical Zapotec community contained government buildings, a place of worship, school buildings, dry-goods stores, and possibly a health building or clinic. Their houses were made of stone and mortar. The Zapotec were hunters, and were believed to have hunted antelope, deer, jackrabbits, squirrels, fox, rats, and quail. They did their hunting with darts and spears. They strategized hunting by disturbing bushes to drive squirrels and rabbits to a central location.

The languages of the Zapotec civilization belong to an ancient family of Mesoamerican languages known as the Oto-Manguean language family. Around 1500 BC, the Oto-Manguean languages began to split off, creating differing languages across the regions. The Zapotec language is a tone language, which means that the meaning of a word may vary based upon the tone with which the word is spoken. Today, the Zapotec language is still heard in parts of the Northern Sierra, the Central Valleys, the Southern Sierra, the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, along parts of the Pacific Coast, and in parts of Mexico.

The Zapotecs developed their own logosyllabic system of writing, which assigned a symbol to each syllable of their language. This is believed to be one of the first writing systems created in Mesoamerica, and a predecessor of the Maya, Mixtec, and Aztec writing systems. Their writings were read in columns, from top to bottom. The Zapotec used their writing system to record important events in their civilization's history. Archaeologists have found many Zapotec writings, but a number of them remain to be deciphered.

The religion of the Zapotecs was polytheistic, with two primary deities. The deities included rain god Cocijo, and Coquihani, the god of light. Their lower-level deities were both male and female, often focusing on agriculture and fertility. The males wore breechclouts and capes, and the females wore skirts. There is some variation as to what the Zapotecs believed of their origins. Archaeological evidence suggests that they believed their ancestors emerged from the earth or caves, or that they formed from jaguars or trees. Alternatively, there is some indication that they believed to have descended from supernatural beings living among the clouds, a status they would return to upon death.

The Zapotecs are an example of an ancient civilization that experienced periods of both thriving and struggling. There is no trace of a violent destruction, and the reason for their



decline is unknown, although it occurred during a time of much conflict in the area. Their location was later adopted by the Mixtecs as a sacred site and royal burial location, and can still be visited to this day.



Who Were the Rain People?



The Mixtecs were one of the most influential ethnic groups to emerge in Mesoamerica during the Post-Classic period. In pre-Columbian times, the Mixtecs were one of the major civilizations of Mesoamerica. Never a united nation, the Mixtecs waged war and forged alliances among themselves as well as with other peoples in their vicinity. They also produced beautiful manuscripts and great metalwork, and influenced the international artistic style used from Central Mexico to Yucatán.

During the Classic period (AD 250-900), the Mixtecs lived in hilltop settlements of north-western Oaxaca, a fact which is reflected in their name in their own language, Ñuudzahui, meaning “People of the Rain.” Later, during the Post-Classic era, the Mixtecs slowly moved into adjacent valleys and then into the great Valley of Oaxaca. This time of expansion was recorded in a large number of deerskin manuscripts, only eight of which have survived. Nevertheless, these manuscripts allow us to trace Mixtec history from AD 1550 back deeper in time than any other Mesoamerican culture except the Maya.

Even though surrounded by more textual writing systems, the Mixtecs opted to write in a more minimalistic manner. Mixtec “writing” is really an amalgam of written signs and pictures. In particular, pictorial scenes would depict historical events such as births, marriages, coronations, wars, and deaths, while written glyphs would record the date of the event and identify the people and places involved.

Mixtec society was organized in kingdoms or city-states ruled by the king who collected tribute and services from the people with the help of his administrators, who were part of the nobility. This political system reached its height during the Early Post Classic period (AD 800-1200). These kingdoms were interconnected among each other through alliances and marriages, but they were also involved in wars against each other as well as against common enemies. Two of the most powerful kingdoms of this period were Tututepec on the coast and Tilantongo in the Mixteca Alta.

The most famous Mixtec king was Lord Eight Deer “Jaguar Claw,” ruler of Tilantongo, whose heroic actions are part history, part legend. According to Mixtec history, in the 11th century, he managed to bring together the kingdoms of Tilantongo and Tututepec under his power. The events that led to the unification of the Mixteca region under Lord Eight Deer “Jaguar Claw” are recorded in two of the most famous Mixtec codices: the Codex Bodley, and the Codex Zouche-Nuttall.

Early Mixtec centers were small villages located close to productive agricultural lands. Some archaeologists have explained the construction during the Classic Period (AD 300-600) of sites like Yucuñudahui, Cerro de Las Minas, and Monte Negro on defensible positions within the high hills as a period of conflict among these centers. About a century after Lord Eight Deer “Jaguar Claw” united Tilantongo and Tututepec, the Mixtecs expanded their power to the Valley of Oaxaca, a region historically occupied by Zapotec people. In 1932, the Mexican archaeologist Alfonso Caso discovered in the site of Monte Albán—the ancient capital of the Zapotecs—a tomb of Mixtec nobles dating to the 14th-15th century. This famous tomb (Tomb 7) contained an amazing offering of gold and silver jewelry, elaborately decorated vessels, corals, skulls with turquoise decorations, and carved jaguar bones. This offering is an example of the skill of Mixtec artisans.

At the end of the pre-Hispanic period, the Aztecs conquered the Mixtec region. The region became part of the Aztec empire and the Mixtecs had to pay tribute to the Aztec emperor with gold and metal works,



precious stones, and the turquoise decorations for which they were so famous. Centuries later, archaeologists digging in the Great Temple of Tenochtitlán, the capital of the Aztecs, found some of these artworks. Important ancient centres of the Mixtecs include the ancient capital of Tilantongo, as well as the sites of Achiutla, Cuilapan, Huajuapán, Mitla, Tlaxiaco, Tututepec, Juxtlahuaca, and Yucuñudahui. The Mixtecs also made major constructions at the ancient city of Monte Albán (which had originated as a Zapotec city before the Mixtec gained control of it). The work of Mixtec artisans who produced work in stone, wood, and metal was well regarded throughout ancient Mesoamerica.

At the height of the Aztec Empire, many Mixtecs paid tribute to the Aztecs, but not all Mixtec towns became vassals. They put up resistance to Spanish rule until they were subdued by the Spanish and their central Mexican allies led by Pedro de Alvarado.

Mixtecs have migrated to various parts of both Mexico and the United States. In recent years, a large exodus of indigenous peoples from Oaxaca, such as the Zapotec and Triqui, has seen them emerge as one of the most numerous groups of Amerindians in the



United States. As of 2011, an estimated 150,000 Mixteco people were living in California and 25,000 to 30,000 in New York City. Large Mixtec communities exist in the border cities of Tijuana, Baja California, San Diego, California and Tucson, Arizona. Mixtec communities are generally described as trans-national or trans-border because of their ability to maintain and reaffirm social ties between their native homelands and diasporic community.

Who Were the Maya?



The Maya were a Mesoamerican civilization. They lived in what is now known as southern Mexico and northern Central America, including Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, Yucatán Peninsula, and El Salvador. Their descendants still live there today, and many of them speak the Mayan languages.

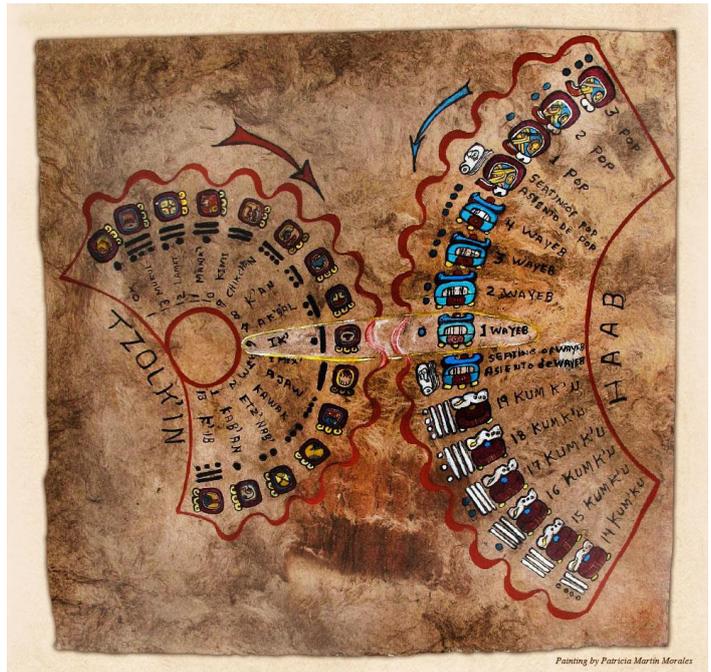
Maya History

The earliest Maya settlements appeared around 1800 BC and show they were an agricultural people harvesting crops such as maize, beans, and squash, which are still staples of the Mexican diet. They cleared the jungle for farming, but also started to develop sophisticated irrigation and terracing techniques. Maya civilization was at its height during the Classic Period from AD 250-900. This is when the great cities appeared, such as Tikal in modern Guatemala, Copán in Honduras, and Uxmal, Calakmul, Yaxchilan, and Palenque in Mexico. The Maya were master architects, building pyramids and even entire cities, many of which are still standing today. There are hundreds of Maya sites spread across five countries: Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico. The number and size of the plazas, palaces, ball courts, temples, and pyramids that remain give an idea of their grandeur. Maya pyramids were made of stone blocks carved to create a stair-step design. On the top of each pyramid was a shrine or temple dedicated to a particular deity. Rituals thought to influence the gods were held in these shrines. At its peak, there may have been two million people in the Maya empire.

The Maya Culture

Their rulers led the Maya in elaborate worship of more than 150 gods, to whom they believed their kings were related. The benevolent Itzamna was the creator god, lord of the heavens as well as day and night. Chaac was the god of rain, while Ah Man was the corn god of

agriculture. While mostly peaceful farmers, the Maya displayed a violent side in the human sacrifices that seem to have been a central part of their religious rituals, judging by the evidence of inscriptions and human remains. They also believed in three planes of existence: The Earth, The Heavens, and The Underworld. They had the most advanced writing system in the Americas prior to European contact. They used sophisticated mathematic systems, were skilled in astronomy, and had complex and useful cyclical calendars. The Maya calendar has become famous for its sophistication.



Art and Architecture

The Maya produced a vast array of structures. Their extensive architectural legacy places the Maya civilization as one of the great preindustrial civilizations of the world. The great cities of the Maya were composed of pyramid temples, palaces, ball courts, *sacbeob* (causeways), patios, and plazas.



Some cities also possessed extensive hydraulic systems or defensive walls. The exteriors of most buildings were painted, either in one or multiple colors, or with imagery. A wealth of sculptures also adorned many buildings.

The End of the Maya

The Maya civilization mysteriously collapsed by AD 900 and researchers are not sure why, although there are some clues. Warfare, environmental destruction because of over-

population, or a long drought are possible answers, or even a collapse in the system of rulership, which was poorly adapted to environmental and political changes. The highland cities of the Yucatán survived the longest. Chichén Itzá, for example, was inhabited until around 1250 and a large population of Maya was farming the area when the Spanish arrived. In the early 1530s, the Spanish tried to conquer the Yucatán Peninsula and establish Chichén Itzá as a capital called Ciudad Real. They ended up besieged in the city ruins before being driven out in 1534. It was only by recruiting an army of Maya from elsewhere in Mexico that the Spanish were eventually able to subdue the region. The Spanish conquest stripped away most of the defining features of Maya civilization. However, many Maya villages remained remote from Spanish colonial authority and, for the most part, continued to manage their own affairs. Maya communities maintained their traditional day-to-day life.

Do the Maya Still Exist?

It's not surprising to assume a people has vanished when we see empty ruins of ancient cities. But there are some seven million Maya still alive today, many of them native speakers of Mayan rather than Spanish. While the city-states of the Classic Period lowlands may have been abandoned in the tenth century, the Maya people did not disappear. The largest group of modern Maya is found in the Yucatán region of Mexico. They speak both "Yucatec Maya" and Spanish, and are generally integrated into Mexican culture. Maya that are more traditional are found in Guatemala. Many of them wear traditional clothes and practice traditional customs. The most traditional Maya are a group called the Lacandon, who avoided contact with outsiders until the late 20th century by living in small groups in the rainforests. The Maya have continued to hold on to their unique way of life.

Maya Timeline

The timeline of the Maya civilization is often divided up into three major periods: the Pre-Classic Period, the Classic Period, and the Post-Classic Period.

Pre-Classic Period (2000 BC to AD 250): The Pre-Classic Period covers from the start of the Maya civilization to AD 250 when the Maya civilization began its golden age. A lot of development took place during this period. The major cities during this period were El Mirador and Kaminaljuyu.

2000 BC - Farming villages begin to form across the Maya region.

1500 BC - The Olmec civilization develops; the Maya will take on much of their culture.

1000 BC - The Maya begin to form larger settlements at places like Copán and Chalchuapa.

700 BC - Mayan writing first starts to develop.

600 BC - Large buildings are built in the city of El Mirador.

600 BC - The Maya begin to farm. This enables their society to support larger populations and the cities begin to grow in size.

600 BC - The settlement at Tikal is formed. This will be one of the major cities in the Maya civilization. It will reach its peak in power during the Classic period.

400 BC - The first Maya calendars are carved in stone.

300 BC - The Maya adopt the idea of a monarchy for their government. They are now ruled by kings.

100 BC - The city-state of Teotihuacán is established in the Valley of Mexico. It influences the Maya culture for many years.

100 BC - The first pyramids are built.

Classic Period (AD 250 to 900): The Classic Period is considered the golden age of the Maya city-states. Most of the artistic and cultural achievements of the Maya civilization took place during this period.

400 - The city-state of Teotihuacán becomes the dominant city and rules over the Maya highlands.

560 - The city-state of Tikal is defeated by an alliance of other city-states.

600 - The powerful city-state of Teotihuacán declines and is no longer a cultural center.

600 - The city-state of Caracol becomes a major force in the land.

900 - The southern lowland cities collapse, and Teotihuacán is abandoned. The reason for the collapse of the Maya Classic period is still a mystery to archaeologists. This signals the end of the Classic Period.

Post-Classic Period (AD 900 to 1500): Although the southern city-states collapsed, the Maya cities in the northern part of the Yucatán Peninsula continued to thrive for the next several hundred years during the Post-Classic period.

925 - The city-state of Chichén Itzá becomes the most powerful city-state in the region. It will rule for the next two hundred years.

1250 - After declining for years, Chichén Itzá is abandoned.

1283 - The city-state of Mayapan becomes the capital city of the Maya civilization. The League of Mayapan is formed to rule the region.

1441 - The people rebel against the rule of Mayapan. The city is abandoned by the late 1400s.

1517 - The Post-Classic period comes to an end with the arrival of the Spanish and conquistador Hernandez de Cordoba.

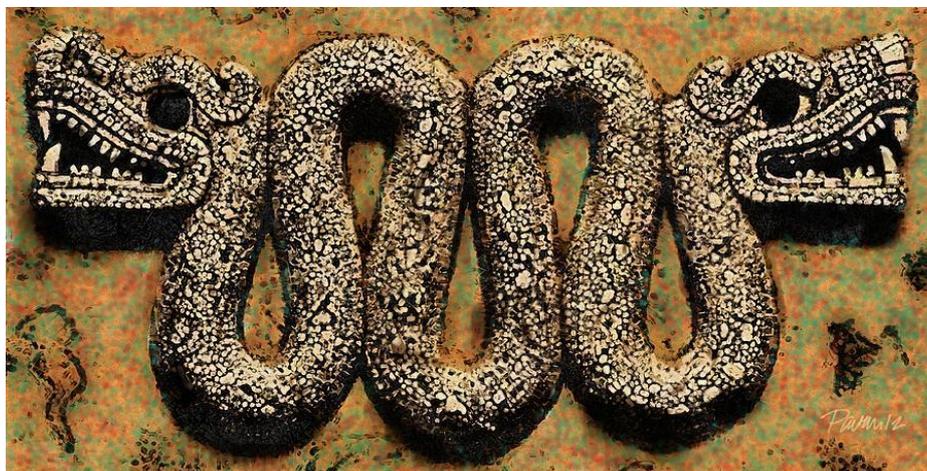
Colonial Period (1500)

1519 - Hernán Cortes arrives and explores the Yucatán Peninsula.

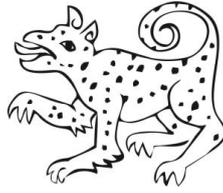
1541 - Many of the Maya city-states are conquered by the Spanish.

1542 - The Spanish found the city of Merida.

1695 - The ruins of Tikal are discovered by a Spanish priest lost in the jungle.



Who Were the Aztecs?



The Aztecs, who probably originated as a nomadic tribe in northern Mexico, arrived in Mesoamerica around the beginning of the 13th century. From their magnificent capital city, Tenochtitlán, the Aztecs emerged as the dominant force in central Mexico, developing an intricate social, political, religious, and commercial organization that brought many of the region's city-states under their control by the 15th century. Invaders led by the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés overthrew the Aztecs by force and captured Tenochtitlán in 1521, ending Mesoamerica's last great native civilization.

Early Aztec History

The exact origins of the Aztec people are uncertain, but they are believed to have begun as a northern tribe of hunter-gatherers whose name came from that of their homeland, Aztlán (or "White Land"). The Aztecs were also known as the Tenochca—from which the name for their capital city, Tenochtitlán, was derived—or the Mexica (the origin of the name of the city that would replace Tenochtitlán, as well as the name for the entire country). The Aztecs appeared in Mesoamerica, as the south-central region of pre-Columbian Mexico is known, in the early 13th century. Their arrival came just after, or perhaps helped bring about, the fall of the previously dominant Mesoamerican civilization, the Toltecs.

When the Aztecs saw an eagle perched on a cactus on the marshy land near the southwest border of Lake Texcoco, they took it as a sign to build their settlement there. They drained the swampy land, constructed artificial islands on which they could plant gardens, and established the foundations of their capital city, Tenochtitlán, in AD 1325. Typical Aztec crops included maize (corn), along with beans, squashes, potatoes, tomatoes, and avocados; they also supported themselves through fishing and hunting local animals such as rabbits, armadillos, snakes, coyotes, and wild turkey. Their relatively sophisticated system of agriculture (including intensive cultivation of land and irrigation methods) and a powerful military tradition would enable the Aztecs to build a successful state, and later an empire.

The Aztec Empire

In 1428, under their leader Itzcoatl, the Aztecs formed a three-way alliance with the Texcocans and the Tacubans to defeat their most powerful rivals for influence in the region, the Tepanec, and conquer their capital of Azcapotzalco. Itzcoatl's successor Montezuma (Moctezuma) I, who took power in 1440, was a great warrior, remembered as the father of the Aztec empire. By the early 16th century, the Aztecs had come to rule over up to 500 small states, and some five to six million people, either by conquest or by commerce. Tenochtitlán at its height had more than 140,000 inhabitants, and was the most densely populated city ever to exist in Mesoamerica.

Bustling markets such as Tenochtitlán's Tlatelolco, visited by some 50,000 people on major market days, drove the Aztec economy. The Aztec civilization was also highly developed socially, intellectually, and artistically. It was a highly structured society with a strict caste

system; at the top were nobles, while at the bottom were serfs, indentured servants, and slaves. The Aztec religion shared many aspects with other Mesoamerican religions,



like that of the Maya, notably including the rite of human sacrifice. In the great cities of the Aztec empire, magnificent temples, palaces, plazas, and statues embodied the civilization's unflinching devotion to the many Aztec gods, including Huitzilopochtli (god of war and of the sun) and Quetzalcoatl ("Feathered Serpent"), a Toltec god who served many important roles in the Aztec religion over the years. The Aztec calendar, common in much of Mesoamerica, was based on a solar cycle of 365 days and a ritual cycle of 260 days; the calendar played a central role in the religion and rituals of Aztec society.

European Invasion and the Fall of the Aztec Civilization

The first European to visit Mexican territory was Francisco Hernández de Córdoba, who arrived in Yucatán from Cuba with three ships and about 100 men in early 1517. Córdoba's reports on his return to Cuba prompted the Spanish governor there, Diego Velasquez, to send a larger force back to Mexico under the command of Hernán Cortés. In March 1519, Cortés

landed at the town of Tabasco, where he learned from the natives about the great Aztec civilization, then ruled by Moctezuma (or Montezuma) II. Defying the authority of Velasquez, Cortés founded the city of Veracruz on the south-eastern Mexican coast, where he trained his army into a disciplined fighting force. Cortés and some 400 soldiers then marched into Mexico, aided by a native woman known as Malinche, who served as a translator. Thanks to instability within the Aztec empire, Cortés was able to form alliances with other native peoples, notably the Tlascalans, who were then at war with Montezuma.

In November 1519, Cortés and his men arrived in Tenochtitlán, where Montezuma and his people greeted them as honored guests according to Aztec custom (partially it has been suggested due to Cortés' physical resemblance to the light-skinned Quetzalcoatl, whose return was prophesied in Aztec legend). Though the Aztecs had superior numbers, their weapons were inferior, and Cortés was able to immediately take Montezuma and his entourage of lords hostage, gaining control of Tenochtitlán. The Spaniards then murdered thousands of Aztec nobles during a ritual dance ceremony, and Montezuma died under uncertain circumstances while in custody.



Cuauhtémoc, his young nephew, took over as emperor, and the Aztecs drove the Spaniards from the city. With the help of the Aztecs' native rivals, Cortés mounted an offensive against Tenochtitlán, finally defeating Cuauhtémoc's resistance on August 13, 1521. In all, some 240,000 people were believed to have died in the city's conquest, which effectively ended the Aztec civilization. After his victory, Cortés razed Tenochtitlán and built Mexico City on its ruins; it quickly became the premier European center in the New World.

Aztec Timeline

1100 - The Aztecs leave their homeland of Aztlán in northern Mexico and begin their journey south. Over the next 225 years, the Aztecs will move many times until they finally settle down at the city of Tenochtitlán.

1200 - The Aztecs arrive in the Valley of Mexico.

1250 - They settle in Chapultepec, but are forced to leave by the Culhuacan tribe.

1325 - The city of Tenochtitlán is founded. It will become the capital of the Aztec Empire. The priests pick the location because it is where they see the foretold sign of an eagle holding a snake while standing on a cactus.

1350 - The Aztecs begin to build causeways and canals around Tenochtitlán.

1375 - The first dominant ruler of the Aztecs, Acamapichtli, comes into power. They call their ruler the Tlatoani, which means “speaker.”

1427 - Itzcoatl becomes the fourth ruler of the Aztecs. He will found the Aztec Empire.

1428 - The Aztec Empire is formed with a triple alliance between the Aztecs, the Texcocans, and the Tacubans. The Aztecs defeat the Tepanecs.

1440 - Montezuma I becomes the fifth leader of the Aztecs. His rule will mark the height of the Aztec Empire.

1440 to 1469 - Montezuma I rules and greatly expands the empire.

1452 - The city of Tenochtitlán is damaged by a great flood. The next few years are filled with famine and starvation.

1487 - The Templo Mayor (Great Temple of Tenochtitlán) is finished. It is dedicated to the gods with thousands of human sacrifices.

1502 - Montezuma II becomes ruler of the Aztec Empire. He is the ninth of the Aztec kings.

1517 - The Aztec priests mark the sighting of a comet in the night sky. They believe the comet was a sign of impending doom.

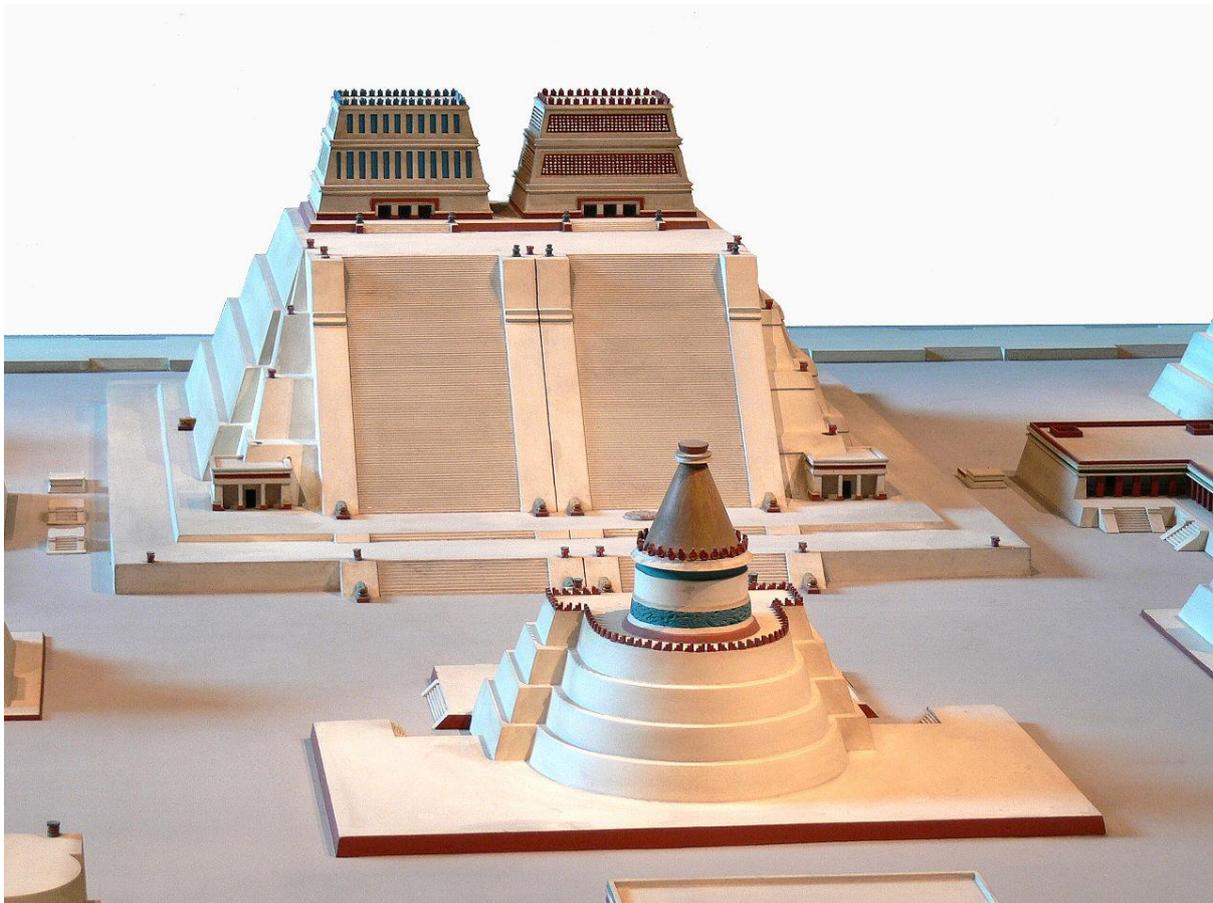
1519 - Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés arrives in Tenochtitlán. The Aztecs treat him as an honored guest, but Cortés takes Montezuma II prisoner. Cortés is driven from the city, but Montezuma II is killed.

1520 - Cuauhtémoc becomes the tenth emperor of the Aztecs.

1520 - Cortés forms an alliance with the Tlaxcala and begins to attack the Aztecs.

1521 - Cortés defeats the Aztecs and takes over the city of Tenochtitlán.

1522 - The Spanish begin to rebuild the city of Tenochtitlán. It will be called Mexico City and will be the capital of New Spain.



Model of The Templo Mayor (Great Temple of Tenochtitlán)

Who Was Topiltzin?



Topiltzin is not only an interesting figure from history and folk tales, but he plays an important part in the whole plot of Book 3, as Adam soon finds out. There are numerous stories about his life, where he came from, and how he died (or in some cases became the Feathered Serpent god Quetzalcoatl), each one as different as the next, but his importance as a cultural hero is irrefutable.

Not much is known historically speaking about the Toltecs and their famous king, for much of what we know was passed down orally by the Mexica (the forerunners of the Aztecs), and like many before them, they most likely twisted and changed the tales to benefit their own interests. Tōllan, a Toltec city, is an actual place though, with magnificent ruins that include Atlantean warrior statues (also called atlantes, are carved stone support pillars in the shape of fierce men) and numerous temples decorated with reliefs of eagles and coyotes. What remains of the ancient city is in the southwest of what is now the state of Hidalgo, 75 km north of Mexico City. The word “Toltec” means “artisan” in the Aztec language, Nahuatl, and all the archeological evidence found in pottery and sculpture supports that attribute. It’s unknown if Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl was ever a real, historical figure, but the Mexica and many other tribes treated him as such.



Topiltzin Cē Ācatl Quetzalcōatl was the ruler of the Toltecs and their major city Tōllan. He was born in the 10th century, during the year and day-sign 1 Acatl, which correlates to May 13 of the year 895, allegedly in what is now the town of Tepoztlán. According to various

sources, he had four different possible fathers, the most popular of which is Mixcōatl (“Cloud Serpent”), the god of war, fire, and the hunt, and presumably an earlier Toltec king— Mesoamerican leaders and high priests sometimes took the name of the deity who was their patron. His mother is at times unnamed, but Chimalman is the most accepted.

Few accounts of Cē Ācatl’s early childhood exist. However, all information agrees that he proved his worth first as a warrior and then as a priest. He assumed lordship over the Toltecs and migrated his people to Tōllan. Reigning in peace and prosperity, he contributed much to the abundant lifestyle of the Toltecs. His followers generally considered him a god on earth with similar powers to those of his namesake.

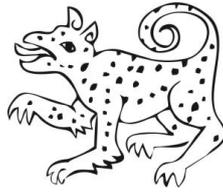
He dispelled the traditions of the past and ended all human sacrifice during his reign. The stories claim that he loved his people so much he insisted that they only meet the ancient standards of the gods; he had the Toltecs offer snakes, birds, and other animals, but not humans, as sacrifices. To prove his penance, to atone for the earlier sins of his people, and to appease the debt owed to the gods (created by lack of tribute of human blood) he also created the cult of the serpent. This cult insisted that the practitioners bleed themselves to satiate the needs of the netherworld. It also demanded that all priests remain celibate and did not allow intoxication of any kind. These edicts and his personal purity of spirit caused Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl to be beloved by his vassals and revered for generations. The representation of the priestly ruler became so important that subsequent rulers would claim direct descent from Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl to legitimize their monarchies. Once he left Tōllan, the name was used by other elite figures to keep a line of succession and was also used by the Mexica to more easily rule over the Toltecs.

The tales end with Topiltzin traveling across Mesoamerica, founding small communities and giving their respective names. The Aztecs believed that Topiltzin’s search for his holy resting place eventually led him across the sea to the east, from whence he vowed to return one day. Other sources insist that Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl would not return, but that he would send representatives to warn or possibly pass judgment on those inhabiting the land. Aztec rulers used the myth of the great founder of Tōllan to help legitimize their claims to seats of power. They claimed that, as the direct descendants of the priest-king, they had the right and duty to hold his place until the day Topiltzin would return. The myths would prove to have a lasting effect on the Aztec empire. They rationalized the mass sacrifices that were already destabilizing the empire when the first Spaniards arrived.

The stories of Topiltzin further expedited the collapse of the Aztec nation by sheer coincidence; they bore incredible likeness to the arrival of the first Spaniards. The Aztecs may have truly believed that they were seeing the return of the famous priest when the white-haired Hernán Cortés landed on their shores in 1519. He came from across the sea to the east, wearing brilliant armor (as the deity Quetzalcoatl is oft depicted) accompanied by four men. The Spanish arrival terrified the ruling class. They feared they would be exposed as frauds and, at the very least, lose their ruling status to Topiltzin. Conversely, the oppressed Aztec people, taxed and forced to wage war for sacrifices, hoped that these arrivals would bring a new era of peace and enlightenment. Ultimately, the arrival of the Spanish heralded the end of the Aztec empire.

As the Spanish conquered Mesoamerica, they destroyed countless works concerning and pre-dating the Aztecs. The story of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl was almost destroyed as the conquistadors forced the few remaining traces into hiding. Only relatively recently have accurate translations of much of the information about Topiltzin been made available. Unfortunately, even the comparatively complete accounts are but a portion of the story. Much of the information varies from region to region and has changed through the course of time. King, priest, leader, or deity, Topiltzin lives on in both myth and memory.

Who Were the Toltecs?



The Aztecs were strongly influenced by the Toltecs, who rose to power after the collapse of Teotihuacán, a major Mesoamerican city, in AD 550. The Toltecs arrived in the Valley of Mexico just prior to AD 900, led by a very powerful king named Mixcōatl. Before long, the Toltecs gained control over the entire area. The Toltecs were masters of architecture, art, medicine, engineering, and calendrics. They were deeply religious, and also deeply devoted to human sacrifice. Their capital was called Tula or Tōllan. Here, using masonry and precision craftsmanship, they built homes, temples, and palaces. Tula, or Tōllan, is now only magnificent ruins and numerous temples decorated with reliefs of eagles and coyotes. What remains of the ancient city is in the southwest of what is now the state of Hidalgo, 75 km north of Mexico City. The Toltecs acquired skills from other cultures, especially the descendants of Teotihuacán. They cast objects out of metal, made writing paper, wove textiles of colored cotton, and were remarkable in both architecture and astronomy.

The finest example of Toltec architecture is the temple called Star of Venus or Tlahuizcalpantecutli at Tōllan. This temple features gigantic carved statues of warriors called *atlantes*. The atlantes stand fifteen feet high, and they once supported the roof. They are examples of some of the finest stone craftsmanship in all of the ancient Mesoamerican cultures. Toltec ceramics were developed to a high level. Some of the ceramic styles are also believed to be inherited from the Teotihuacán culture. The Toltecs were so respected for their artistic and cultural achievements that virtually every tribe in the region claimed Toltec ancestry.

Their civilization peaked from around AD 900-1150, at which point it fell when Tōllan was attacked, sacked, and destroyed. The ruins of the city show signs of violent destruction; many architectural columns and statues were burnt and purposely buried. Led by the final Toltec leader Huemac, the remnants of the Toltec people resettled at Chapultepec on the west banks of Lake Texcoco, in either AD 1156 or 1168. The Aztecs sought to claim descent only from

the Toltecs, and the magnitude of their reverence and respect is shown in the Aztec expression *Toltecayotl* or “to have a Toltec heart,” which meant to be worthy and to excel in all things.



The temple called Star of Venus or Tlahuizcalpantecutli at Tōllan

Human Sacrifice Among the Maya and the Aztecs



During the pre-Columbian era, human sacrifice was performed by many Mesoamerican cultures at this time, including the Maya. Human sacrifice in Maya culture was the ritual offering to the gods. Blood was viewed as a potent source of nourishment for the Maya deities, and the sacrifice of a living creature was a powerful blood offering. By extension, the sacrifice of a human life was the ultimate offering of blood to the gods, and the most important Maya rituals culminated in human sacrifice. Generally, only high-status prisoners of war were sacrificed, with lower status captives being used for labor. Important rituals such as the dedication of major building projects or the enthronement of a new ruler required a human sacrificial offering. The sacrifice of an enemy king was the most prized offering, and such a sacrifice involved decapitation of the captive ruler in a ritual reenactment of the decapitation of the Maya maize god, Hun Hunahpu.

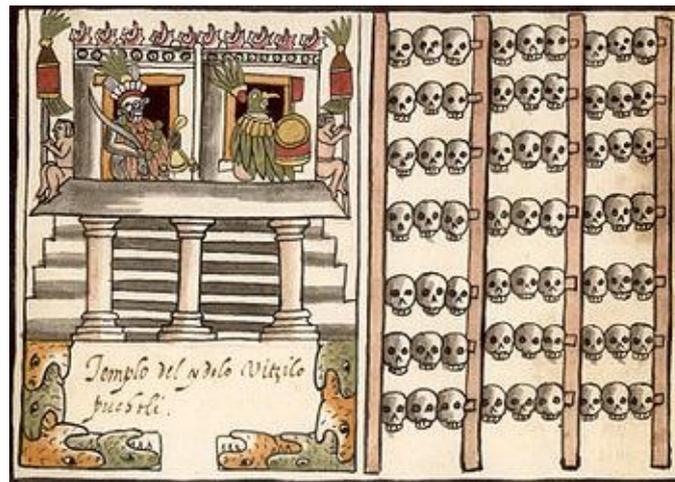


However, the Aztecs are particularly well known for human sacrifice because of the large numbers of victims that were subjected to death this way in their society. The Aztecs believed that they owed everything to the gods who had created them as well as the world around them. They would perform sacrifices for a good crop yield or good weather, among other things. They believed that the best way to repay the gods was to offer up blood in regular rituals. Archaeologists estimate that a few thousand people would have been sacrificed each year. Some were members of the Aztec community, but they believe that most were prisoners of war. Instead of killing their enemies in battle, they would sometimes capture them and take them back to the capital to be offered up to the gods. In one ritual, the prisoners were forced to walk up the many stairs of the temple. Once they reached the top, the priest would cut open their stomach from throat to stomach. They would rip out the victim's heart to offer it to the gods. The bodies were then pushed down the stairs. At the bottom, the body would be dismembered or carried off, depending on the ritual.

Every Aztec year had 18 festivals, and human sacrifice was central to the festivities at each of these. The Aztecs believed that the universe would collapse after 52 years unless the gods were fed and kept strong. Human sacrifice was performed as a ritual offering to the gods so the universe would survive and thrive. To mark the 52-year cycle, a New Fire Ceremony was performed where all fires were put out at midnight and human sacrifices were made. The Aztecs would wait until dawn, hoping that the sun would rise again, and the sacrifices had been sufficient. The universe could then continue for 52 further years without risk of collapse. The "Flower Wars" were ritual wars conducted to select human sacrifice victims from the Aztec people themselves. The wars would be between the different cities within the Aztec empire and the warriors were mostly volunteers. Instead of men being killed on the battlefield, the aim was to take prisoners who would then be sacrificed as payment to the gods.

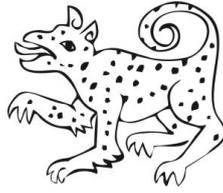
Some offerings weren't outright killings. The Aztecs also cut themselves and offered their own blood to the gods. This process of self-harming allowed large amounts of blood to be shed without death occurring. Offering this blood to the gods was considered the same as sacrifice. Although many people assume only human blood would do, they also sacrificed animals as well. The Aztecs killed snakes, deer, and even butterflies for the same reason. They also created images of the gods using dough mixed with human blood and honey. In a religious ceremony, these sculptures would be "sacrificed" and then either burnt or eaten.

There are many reasons for the Aztec defeat at the hands of the Spanish in 1521, one of which was the ritual of human sacrifice. Firstly, this bloodthirsty practice made them many enemies among neighboring tribes. These other tribes formed alliances with the Spanish and helped them defeat the Aztecs. It is also thought that the high number of human sacrifices made each year (up to 20,000 people) physically affected their chances of success because they simply had fewer people than they could have had to offer a better resistance.



It's hard to believe this sort of activity happened regularly, especially as a public event where people would gather in the square to watch. Human sacrifice was a part of their religion and a way to please the gods, so the Aztecs could avoid disaster. However, no amount of human sacrifice could have stopped their collapse at the hands of the Spaniards.

Maya Numbers and Counting



Maya math was the most sophisticated number system ever developed in the Americas. The importance of astronomy and calendar calculations in Maya society required mathematics, and the Maya constructed quite early a very sophisticated number system, possibly more advanced than any other system in the world at the time. The ancient Maya used mathematics to support many activities in their daily lives, from market transactions to predicting eclipses and making sophisticated calendar calculations. It allowed scholars, astronomers, and architects to make complex calculations, but it was simple enough to be used by market traders and illiterate farmers. Not long ago, traditional people in the Yucatán still used seeds, sticks, and shells to make calculations.

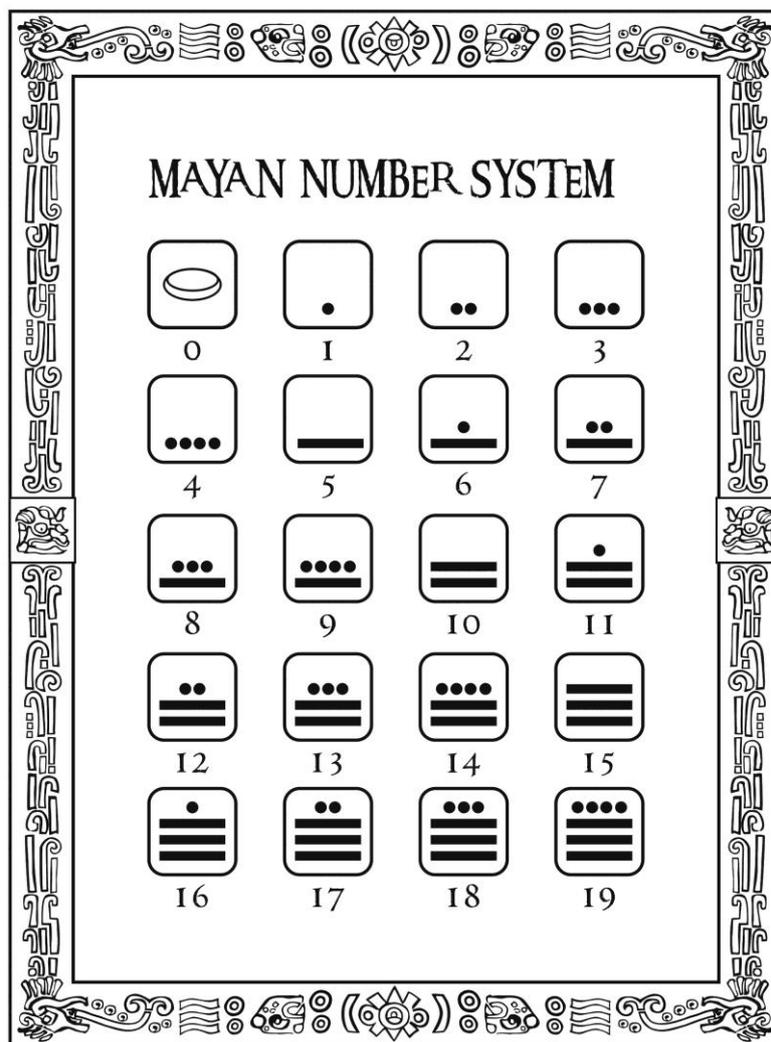
The Pre-Classic Maya and their neighbours had independently developed the concept of zero by at least as early as BC 36, and there is evidence of their working with sums up to the hundreds of millions, and with dates so large it took several lines just to represent them. Despite not possessing the concept of a fraction, they produced extremely accurate astronomical observations using no instruments other than sticks, and were able to measure the length of the solar year to a far higher degree of accuracy than that used in Europe.

The Maya used a number system with the base number of 20 (we use a base-10 number system). Where we learn to count on our fingers, Maya children counted on their fingers and toes. In fact, the number twenty was very important to the Maya, so much so that the words for “human being” and “twenty” share the same root in most Mayan languages. They wrote numbers using a system of bars and dots. A bar represented the number 5. Every five numbers they added another bar.

The number zero was written with a symbol that looked like a shell. The Maya were one of the first people to use the symbol for zero. Yes, zero was already there and the Sumerians used it before the Maya. The Sumerians, however, used a slanted double wedge to denote that a number is absent. Using the symbol of zero as a placeholder came from the Maya.

However, they really did not use zero as a number. The idea that zero can be used as a number came from ancient Indians.

See the picture below for an example of how the Maya wrote the numbers 0 to 19. This works up to nineteen, but rather than twenty being four lines, they started a new count above the first one. Zero is represented by a shell. So twenty is a single dot above a shell. The ancient Maya were extremely clever, when you consider that the ancient Egyptians never cracked the concept of zero and that complex calculations with Roman numerals were too complicated for ordinary Romans.



Maya Writing



Mayan glyphs are one of only three writing systems in the ancient world—the other two being Sumerian cuneiform in ancient Mesopotamia and Chinese—to be invented independently. All others were probably modelled after or influenced by existing scripts. Mayan was the last of the three scripts to be deciphered, beginning in the 1950s. Mayan hieroglyphics are often referred to as “glyphs” for short. The Maya had about 800 symbols. Archaeologists have figured out what many of the symbols mean, but not all of them. Some glyphs were used as numbers. Some were used as sounds. Some were phrases or words. To read Maya glyphs, you read downward, left to right, in pairs.

The Maya writing system was a combination of phonetic symbols and ideograms. It is the only writing system of the pre-Columbian new world that can completely represent spoken language to the same degree as the written language of the old world. The Maya used glyphs to create books about their gods, leaders, major happenings, and daily life. These books were made of soft bark and folded like a fan. A Maya book is called a codex. (The plural of codex is codices.) The Maya used both drawings and hieroglyphic symbols to write in their books.

Deciphering Classic Maya writings has been a long laborious process. Bits of it were first deciphered in the late 19th and early 20th century (mostly the parts having to do with numbers, the calendar, and astronomy), but major breakthroughs began in the 1960s and 1970s and accelerated rapidly thereafter, so that now most of Maya texts can be read nearly completely in their original languages. With the decipherment of the Maya script, it was discovered that the Maya were one of the few civilizations where artists attached their names to their work.

The Maya had a huge volume of literature, covering a whole range of interests. This literature was written, in their own peculiar “calculiform” (having the shape of a pebble) hieroglyphic characters, in books of Amate paper or parchment, which were bound in wood, or carved upon the walls of their public buildings. Amate paper is a type of bark paper that has been

manufactured in Mexico since the pre-contact times. It was used primarily to create codices. Maya codices found by archaeologists as mortuary offerings in burial sites have not survived the ravages of time.

Unfortunately, shortly after the conquest, zealous Spanish priests ordered the burning of all the Maya books. While many stone inscriptions survive, mostly from cities already abandoned when the Spanish arrived, only three books and a few pages of a fourth from the ancient libraries remain today.

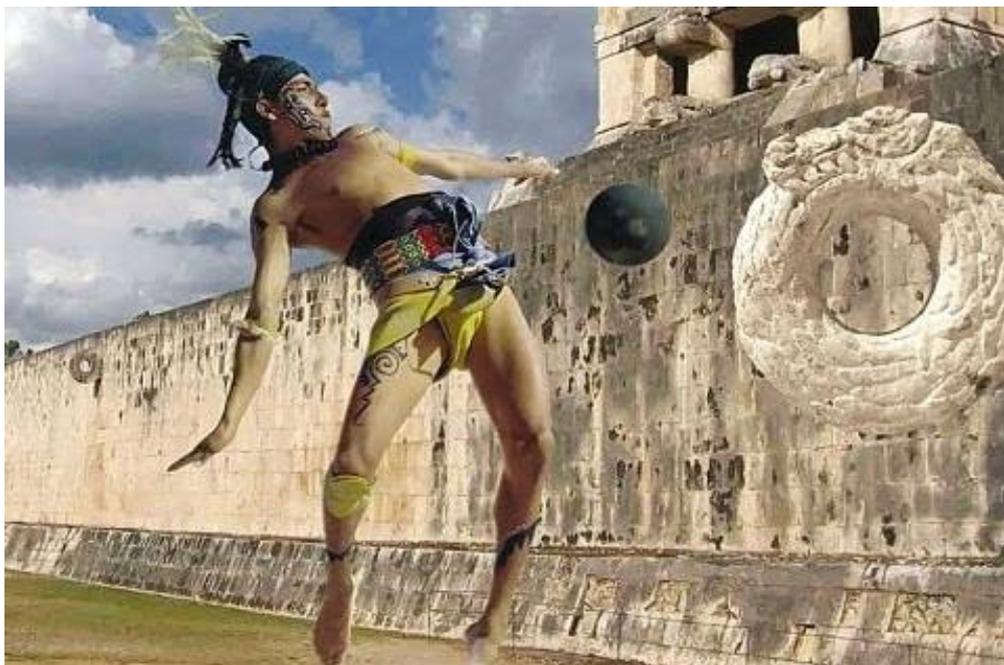


The Mesoamerican Ball Game



This ancient sport has been around for over 3,500 years and could possibly claim the title of the world's oldest and first team sport. It wasn't just a game, though, for the players and spectators; it was a complex ritual based on social customs, religious beliefs, and much more. Winners were rewarded and admired; losers were sacrificed. Sometimes, however, the winners were sacrificed because it was considered an honor to join with the gods. Human sacrifice wasn't a necessary part of all the ball games, but it happened often enough for there to be carvings at various historical sites depicting this.

Ullamalitzli to the Aztecs and *Pok'ak'Pok* to the Maya, the game became the focus of Mesoamerican society because of their beliefs: it symbolized the eternal battle for life to continue as the ancient people knew it, and the gods must always be pleased to make sure the rains came for good crops, and the sun rose every day. War captives and warriors depicted on wall carvings suggest the game may have been a substitute for war. Musical instruments have been discovered in ancient ruins, confirming that music was part of the entertainment.



The Ball Court: Many Mesoamerican ball courts have been discovered and most of the larger Mesoamerican cities of antiquity had at least one. Seen from an aerial view, a ball court looks like a capital “I” with two perpendicular end zones at the top and bottom. The brightly painted walls were often slanted. Images of serpents, jaguars, raptors, and human sacrifice were common.

The Ball: The difference between this ball game and any others played in the ancient world lies in the ball itself. The inhabitants of Mesoamerica learned how to make their ball bounce by making it out of rubber. This technique of making rubber balls has survived for centuries. Raw liquid rubber, or latex, was tapped from a rubber tree. Then the juice of a plant, the Morning Glory vine, was added to give the ball that extra bounce. The liquid rubber was shaped into a solid mass, the ball, which hardened in a few minutes. The large rubber balls were around ten to twelve inches in diameter and could weigh up to eight pounds.

The Rules: The exact rules of the game are unknown since the only evidence available is gleaned from interpretations of surviving sculptures, art, ball courts, and glyphs. Some interpretations suggest that players were spread out along the court and the ball was passed at a fast rate. Teams varied in size from two to six players and the object was to hit a solid rubber ball across a line. On each side of a playing alley were two long parallel walls against which a rubber ball was bounced from each team. The players had to use their hips to return the ball and there was no net (the ball had to cross a line). The ball also had to be kept in motion, without touching the ground, and in some versions of the game could not be hit with hands or feet. Later, the Maya added two stone hoops to the court, one on either side of the vertical walls. The game usually ended when a player managed to get the ball through one of the stone hoops. Points were also scored when opposing players missed a shot through the hoops, were unable to return the ball to the opposing team before it had bounced a second time, or allowed the ball to bounce outside the boundaries of the court.

The Equipment: Because of the weight of the balls, and the speed of the game, inevitably players had to wear protective gear. While no doubt the players arrived on the ball court dressed in elaborate ceremonial clothing and feathered headdresses, ultimately they had to strip down to simple items that were light enough for them to play in, yet robust enough so that the heavy ball would not injure them. Such items would probably be knee and shin protectors, a leather waistband to protect the player’s hips, leather strips around the player’s feet, and a stiff, fan-shaped leather chest protector.

The Ball Game Today: Yes, the ball game lives on, primarily in the Mexican states of Sinaloa and Oaxaca. The name has changed slightly—*ulama*—and is derived from the Aztec version of the game, with three variations now played.



Who Invented Chocolate?



The history of chocolate begins in Mesoamerica. Fermented beverages made from chocolate date back to 1900 BC. The Aztecs believed that cacao seeds were the gift of Quetzalcoatl, the god of wisdom, and the seeds once had so much value that they were used as a form of currency. Originally prepared only as a drink, chocolate was served as a bitter, frothy liquid, mixed with spices, wine, or corn puree. It was believed to give the drinker strength. Today, such drinks are also known as “Chilate” and are made by locals in the South of Mexico. The word “chocolate” comes from the Classical Nahuatl word *chocolātl*, and entered the English language from the Spanish language.

After its arrival in Europe in the sixteenth century, sugar was added to it and chocolate became popular throughout society, first among the ruling classes and then among the common people. In the 20th century, chocolate was considered a staple, essential in the rations of United States soldiers at war.

While researchers do not agree which Mesoamerican culture first domesticated the cacao tree, the use of the fermented bean in a drink seems to have arisen in Mexico. Scientists have been able to confirm its presence in vessels around the world by evaluating the “chemical footprint” detectable in the micro samples of contents that remain. Ceramic vessels with residues from the preparation of chocolate beverages have been found at archaeological sites dating back to the Early Formative (1900-900 BC) period. For example, one such vessel found at an Olmec archaeological site on the Gulf Coast of Veracruz, Mexico dates the preparation of chocolate by Pre-Olmec peoples as early as 1750 BC. On the Pacific coast of Chiapas, Mexico, a Mokayanan archaeological site provides evidence of cacao beverages dating even earlier, to 1900 BC.

Earliest evidence of domestication of the cacao plant dates to the Olmec culture from the Pre-Classic period. The Olmecs used it for religious rituals or as a medicinal drink, with no recipes for personal use. Little evidence remains of how the beverage was processed.

The Maya people, by contrast, do leave some surviving writings about cacao, which confirm the identification of the drink with the gods. The Dresden Codex specifies that it is the food of the rain deity Kon; the Madrid Codex that gods shed their blood on the cacao pods as part of its production. The consumption of the chocolate drink is also depicted on pre-Hispanic vases. The Maya seasoned their chocolate by mixing the roasted cacao seed paste into a drink with water, chile peppers and cornmeal, transferring the mixture repeatedly between pots until the top was covered with a thick foam.



By 1400, the Aztec empire took over a sizable part of Mesoamerica. They were not able to grow cacao themselves, but were forced to import it. All the areas conquered by the Aztecs that grew cacao beans were ordered to pay them as a tax, or as the Aztecs called it, a “tribute.” The cacao bean became a form of currency. The Spanish conquistadors left records of the value of the cacao bean, noting for instance that 100 beans could purchase a canoe filled with fresh water or a turkey hen. The Aztecs associated cacao with the god Quetzalcoatl, whom they believed had been condemned by the other gods for sharing chocolate with humans. Unlike the Maya of Yucatán, the Aztecs drank chocolate cold. It was consumed for a variety of purposes, or as a treat for men after banquets, and it was also included in the rations of Aztec soldiers.

How Well Do You Know the Maya? Take the Quiz!



1. The Maya believed people were created from maize.
2. People living in different Maya cities all spoke the same language.
3. The Maya put gold fillings in their teeth.
4. Cacao beans were used to make jewelry.
5. The Maya believed the number 13 was very unlucky.
6. The Maya sutured wounds with human hair.
7. The Maya built stone columns called stelae to ward off evil spirits.
8. In some parts of the Maya civilization, a sacred cenote was a sinkhole used for sacrifices.
9. The ancient Maya practiced bloodletting because they thought it cleansed their bodies.
10. Players in the Maya ball game couldn't touch the ball with their hands or feet.

How Well Do You Know the Maya? Quiz Answers!



1. Answer: True

2. Answer: False

3. Answer: False. The Maya used jade, pyrite, hematite, or turquoise.

4. Answer: False. Cacao beans were used as currency.

5. Answer: False. The number 13 was considered a sacred number.

6. Answer: True

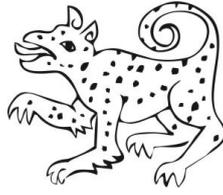
7. Answer: False. The stelae were used to record religious dates, chart family trees, glorify rulers, and chronicle wars.

8. Answer: True

9. Answer: False. Bloodletting was done to please the gods, celebrate events, and maintain power.

10. Answer: True

How Well Do You Know the Aztecs? Take the Quiz!



1. What was the name of the most important city of the Aztec Empire?

A. Culhuacan

B. Tenochtitlán

C. Teotihuacán

D. Tenochca

2. What were the two social classes of Aztec society?

A. The commoners and the nobility

B. The priests and the commoners

C. The workers and the slaves

D. The commoners and the slaves

E. The slaves and the nobility

3. What was the purpose of Aztec warfare?

A. To settle disputes

B. To capture victims to be used in religious rituals

C. To give the men something to do

D. To prove one was worthy of honor

4. Name the god described as “the plumed serpent.”

A. Huitzilopochtli

B. Tlaloc

C. Xipe

D. Quetzalcoatl

5. What is the name for the Aztec god of war?

A. Huitzilopochtli

B. Tlaloc

C. Xipe

D. Quetzalcoatl

6. What is a name for the Aztec god of rain?

A. Huitzilopochtli

B. Tlaloc

C. Xipe

D. Quetzalcoatl

7. What was the purpose of Aztec sacrifices?

A. To keep the world from being destroyed

B. To make their enemies fear them

C. To earn the gods’ favor

D. To allow the priests to communicate with the gods

E. To offer payment for the wrong things they had done

8. What was the significance of the end of the 52-year cycle?

A. The gods had the right to decide to destroy the universe

B. A new fire ceremony was conducted offering sacrifices to the gods

C. The people mourned for the world

D. The people waited for the constellation Pleiades as a symbol that the world would be allowed to continue

E. All of the above

9. What language did the Aztecs speak?

A. Spanish

B. Nahuatl

C. Quechua

D. Yucatec

Look back at what you have learned about the Aztecs from this guide and create your own answers! Are they right?

The Lacandon Jungle



The Lacandon Jungle is the site of the crucial opening scene when Adam, Justin, Kim, and James are plunged into the midst of the jungle, when their small plane crashes, and with no hope of escape. The Lacandon Jungle is an area of rainforest, which stretches from Chiapas, Mexico, into Guatemala and into the southern part of the Yucatán Peninsula. The heart of this rainforest is in the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve in Chiapas near the border with Guatemala in the Montañas del Oriente region of the state. Although most of the jungle outside the reserve has been partially or completely destroyed and damage continues inside the Reserve, the Lacandon is still the largest montane rainforest in North America and one of the last ones left large enough to support jaguars. It contains 1,500 tree species, 33% of all Mexican bird species, 25% of all Mexican animal species, 44% of all Mexican diurnal butterflies and 10% of all Mexico's fish species. The Lacandon in Chiapas is also home to many important Mayan archeological sites including Palenque, Yaxchilan and Bonampak, with numerous smaller sites that remain partially or fully unexcavated.

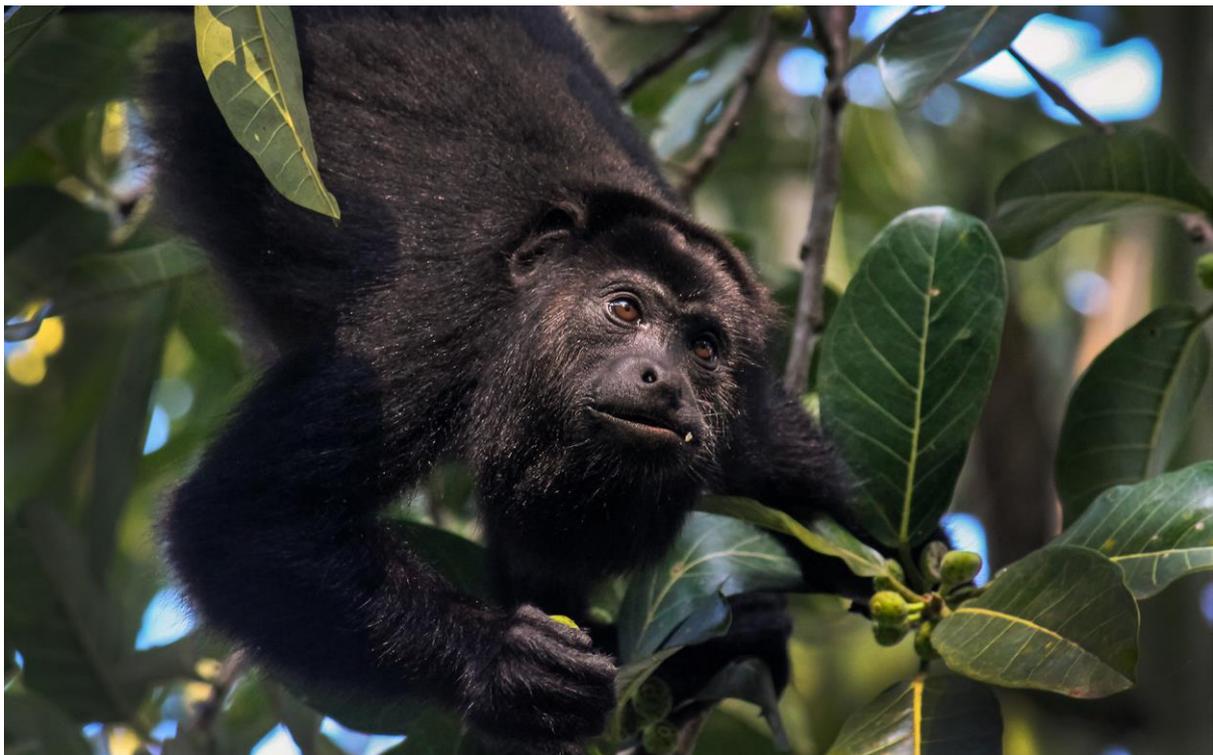


The Lacandon has approximately 1.9 million hectares stretching from southeast Chiapas into northern Guatemala and into the southern Yucatán Peninsula. The Chiapas portion is located on the Montañas del Oriente (Eastern Mountains) centered on a series of canyon like valleys called the Cañadas, between smaller mountain ridges oriented from northwest to southeast. Dividing the Chiapas part of the forest from the Guatemalan side is the Usumacinta River, which of the largest in Mexico and the seventh largest in the world based on volume of water.

The Lacandon is the best known of Mexico's rainforest areas because of the attention it has received in the press and efforts by international organizations to protect what is left of it. The Lacandon is one of the most biodiverse rainforests in the world, with as much as 25% of Mexico's total species diversity. The predominant native vegetation is perennial high rainforest with trees that can grow to an average height of thirty meters and often to fifty or sixty. Mammoth Guanacaste trees shrouded in vines and bromeliads among clear running streams, enormous palms and wild elephant's ear plants can still be seen. The jungle contains many endangered species such as the red macaw, the eagle, the tapir, the spider monkey, the howler monkeys, and the swamp crocodile. It is one of the last jungles in North America big enough to support jaguars. Central American jaguars are reported, though rare, in Selva Zoque.



There are two major attractions within the Chiapas portion of this rainforest, the El Chiflón Waterfall and the Gruta de San Francisco cave. El Chiflón is located 53 km west of Comitán de Domínguez formed by the San Vicente Rivers. The water falls from a height of over seventy meters surrounded by steeply sloped hills. Above El Chiflón are two smaller falls called Suspiro and Ala del Angel, which are about six meters in height. A cascade after it is called the Velo de Novia. The Gruta de San Francisco is in the La Trinitaria municipality near the community of Santa María. The cave has several chambers filled with stalactites and stalagmites with capricious shapes, formed by the dripping of water through the cavity. These caves were considered sacred in the pre-Hispanic period as passages to the underworld. The cave is also home to millions of bats, which emerge at night to feed in the surrounding jungle.



Archaeological Sites

The jungle is also home to some of Mexico's most numerous and impressive archaeological sites, all of which belong to the Mayan civilization. The most important of these sites are Palenque, Bonampak and Yaxchilan, but there are many more sites and ruins that still lie unexcavated under the vegetation.

PALENQUE: Palenque lies on the edge of the Lacandon, where the Eastern Mountains meet the Gulf Coast Plains. It is not the largest Mayan archaeological site, but it has some well-preserved sculpture and architecture the culture produced. Major structures include the Temple of Inscriptions, the Temple of the Sun and the Temple of the Cross; however, only a small fraction of it has been excavated.

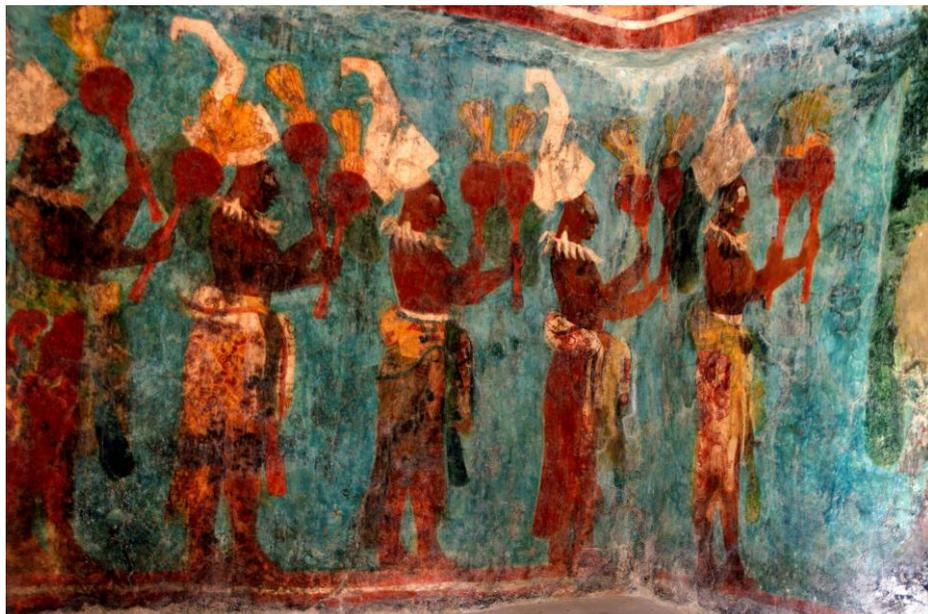


YAXCHILAN: Yaxchilan flourished in the 8th and 9th centuries. The site contains extensive ruins, with palaces and temples bordering a large plaza upon a terrace above the Usumacinta River. The architectural remains extend across the higher terraces and the hills to the south of the river, overlooking both the river itself and the lowlands beyond. Yaxchilan is known for the large quantity of excellent sculpture at the site, such as the monolithic carved stelae and the narrative stone reliefs carved on lintels spanning the temple doorways. Over 120

inscriptions have been identified on the various monuments from the site. The site is relatively natural with howling monkeys, bats, toucans and other wildlife to be seen in and around the buildings.



BONAMPAK: The city of Bonampak features exceptionally well-preserved Maya murals, depicting Maya clothing, rituals, games, food and other aspects of life from that time. The realistically rendered paintings depict human sacrifices, musicians and scenes of the royal court. The name means “painted murals.” It is centered on a large plaza and has a stairway that leads to the Acropolis. There are also a number of notable Maya stelae.



The People of the Lacandon Jungle

While my uncontacted tribe is fictional, the idea of people living in the jungle is not. The population of the area is mostly subsistence peasants. These include indigenous groups of Chiapas such as the Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Ch'ol, Tojolabal and Lacandon Maya as well as non-indigenous. However, except for the Lacandon Maya, almost all the population has migrated to the Lacandon, especially during the 20th century onward.

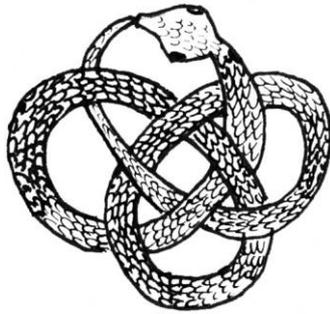
Until the early 18th century, the now-extinct Lakandon Ch'ol occupied the Lacandon Jungle and bordering areas of Guatemala. They lived along the tributaries of the upper Usumacinta River and the foothills of the Sierra de los Cuchumatanes. The Spanish forcibly relocated most of the Lakandon Ch'ol to the Huehuetenango area of Guatemala in the early 18th century. The resettled Lakandon Ch'ol were soon absorbed into the local Maya populations there and ceased to exist as a separate ethnicity. Prior to the Spanish conquest, the Xocmo were a Cholan-speaking group; they occupied the remote forest somewhere to the east of the Lacandon. The Xocmo were never conquered and escaped repeated Spanish attempts to locate them; their eventual fate is unknown, but they may be ancestors of the modern Lacandon people. After the fall of the Itza capital Nojpetén to the Spanish invaders in 1697, a mix of Itza, Kejache and Kowoj refugees fled into the Lacandon jungle, where they too became the ancestors of the modern Lacandon people.

The Lacandons are descendents of the ancient Maya. Since the 16th century, they have been able to survive as a culture by living deep in the rainforest, with many communities out of contact with the rest of the world until the 20th century. Before the Conquest, the Lacandon dominated about a million hectares of these lands, but mostly indigenous people from other areas of Chiapas have encroached upon them since the early 20th century. This has dramatically altered their lifestyle and worldview. Today the Lacandon Maya are primarily found in three villages called Naja, Lacanja Chansayab and Metzobok, near the ruins of Bonampak and Yaxchilan. Local lore states that the gods resided here when they lived on earth. They refer to themselves as the Hach Winik, meaning "True People" in their language. Their culture is inseparable from the Lacandon rainforest where they have lived for hundreds of years.

The traditional dress is an undyed tunic called a “xikul.” Some Lacandon still wear traditional clothing, but others use modern clothes and conveniences as well. Traditional Lacandon shelters are huts made with fronds and wood with an earthen floor, but this has mostly given way to modern structures. The Lacandon Maya have supported themselves for centuries practicing a method of “agro-forestry” in which they rotate areas in which they plant crops. This features a fallow period to allow for soil regeneration.

In the mid 20th century, the Lacandon had all but disappeared. Franz and Trudy Blom were one of the first Europeans to make sustained contact with the Lacandons since the Spanish conquest. For the rest of their lives, the Bloms worked to publicize the plight of these people and, by the time she died in 1999, Trudy Blom had created a collection of over 55,000 photographs of both the people and the Lacandon Jungle. The couple’s efforts, along with those of Lacandon activist Chan Kin, have spurred the Lacandons to work to preserve their land and culture. This has included developing ecotourism with cabins, rafting, horseback riding and more. While there are concerns that ecotourism will make the jungle a commodity and cause changes in Lacandon culture, it also helps to keep younger generations from migrating out of the area. Today, the Lacandon Maya numbers have increased and are estimated to be anywhere from 600 to 1000 people in about a dozen villages.





COMING NEXT

THE CABAL OF THE OUROBOROS

Fresh from their exciting adventure in the Mexican jungle, where they located the Third Stone of Power, heroes Adam, Justin and Kim find themselves on the trail of the secrets of the Knights Templar treasure. Their first stop is Paris where they take refuge from Dr. Khalid in the famous catacombs of the city, with the help of two young friends who are also hiding out there. The adventure escalates rapidly as the kids discover a frightening secret organization, the Cabal of the Ouroboros. And do Adam's dreams of a hideous book have anything to do with their search for the Seven Stones of Power?