

# The Mayan civilization

## Government

Mayans had a hierarchy, at the top was the king, after came priests, nobles, commoners, and the lowest class was slaves. The king elected the prime priest, prime army general and the members of the council to do things such as collect taxes, manage public works. The ruling was passed to the oldest son, if there was no son it was passed to the brother, and if there was no brother it was passed to the closest sibling, it could even be a woman, but each city usually had a separate king.

## Religion

The Mayan religion was very complex and played an important role in their civilization. The religion was polytheistic, which means the religion believes in many gods. A major point of the religion was that every person had their own spirit animal which represented their type of personality. Additionally, their gods were very human like and represented something from nature. They also had temples for sacrifices to please their gods.



## Economy

Some aspects of the ancient Mayan economy are yet to be discovered, but from what has been discovered, it is known that trade was very important to the Mayan's economy. Mayans had no real currency, but cacao beans were seen as valuable and were often used in trades. The Mayans had access to many different minerals, such as obsidian, copper, or limestone, and used them in trading with other nearby city-states. The Mayans extensive trade network gained them access to many materials they wouldn't have had otherwise. The majority of the Mayan population were farmers, and so they often traded crops for more valued resources from nearby developments.



## Writing

The Mayan's way of writing was incredibly complicated, and was even harder than the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics. They had a very difficult writing format and the symbols were very unique. Writing helped historians piece together some Mayan history, but most history of the Mayans has been destroyed. Writing also helped them create calendars and pioneer complex math.



## Legal Systems

Mayans began creating laws at 250 A.D and were created by the Halach uinik (supreme ruler) and his council. These laws were very strict and severe with punishments ranging from paying more taxes to death and slavery. For example, if someone stole 2 loaves of bread, they would only be charged with more taxes. But, if someone stole a whole flock of sheep, they might have all their possessions sold at an auction. These laws are only a few of the many the Mayans made over the course of their civilization, the majority were destroyed by Spanish priests in 1519 A.D. Although these laws may be considered harsh, they did help keep the Mayan civilizations stable.

## Urban Culture

The Mayans created hundreds of towering cities throughout its lifespan and they were all made with a grid planning system. This allowed the Mayans to neatly build or create structures next to one another. These cities had temples, pyramids and even giant sport arenas (some even bigger than modern football stadiums) where they played an early version of basketball. For example, by 600 A.D, the Mayan Capital Tikal had schools, libraries, hospitals and sports arenas. But of course, life in these cities also contained wealth inequality (nobles and emperors), racism (people from captured lands) and sexism (a patriarchal society)

