

# **MAYAN, INCAN, AND AZTEC CIVILIZATIONS**

BY  
DR. MICHAEL KRAMME

COPYRIGHT © 1996 Mark Twain Media, Inc.

ISBN 10-digit: 1-58037-051-9  
13-digit: 978-1-58037-051-6

Printing No. CD-1886

Mark Twain Media, Inc., Publishers  
Distributed by Carson-Dellosa Publishing Company

The purchase of this book entitles the buyer to reproduce the student pages for classroom use only. Other permissions may be obtained by writing Mark Twain Media, Inc., Publishers.

*All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America.*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Time line .....	iii
Introduction .....	iv
The Arrival of Man .....	1
The Olmecs .....	4
Teotihuacan .....	7
The Mayas .....	10
Mayan Religion .....	13
Mayan Cities .....	18
Mayan Writing .....	21
Mayan Mathematics and Astronomy .....	24
Mayan Arts and Crafts .....	27
Mayan Agriculture .....	30
Mayan Trade .....	33
The Great Mayan Mystery .....	36
The Mayas and the Spanish .....	39
The Toltecs .....	42
The Incas .....	45
Incan Religion .....	48
Incan Agriculture .....	51
Incan Weaving .....	54
Incan Arts and Crafts .....	57
Incan Roads and Bridges .....	60
Cities of the Incas .....	63
The Inca and His Government .....	66
The Llama: The Animal of the Incas .....	69
The Incas and the Spanish Conquest .....	72
The Aztecs .....	75
Aztec Daily Life .....	79
Aztec Society .....	83
Aztec Religion .....	86
The Aztec Calendar .....	90
The City of Tenochtitlan .....	94
Aztec Art .....	97
Aztec Games .....	100
Aztec Agriculture .....	103
Aztec Medicine .....	106
Aztec Warfare .....	109
The Arrival of the Spaniards .....	112
Answer Keys .....	115
For Further Reading .....	124

## MAYAN RELIGION

Religion was important to every part of Mayan life. The Mayas worshipped many different gods. Each day, month, city, and occupation had its own special god or goddess. The Mayas had a variety of religious festivals and celebrations. Most of these celebrations included human sacrifice.

The Mayan empire was divided into many city-states. Each city-state had its own ruler. His name was *halach uinic*. This meant “the true or real man.” The Mayas believed halach uinic was a living god. He ruled until his death. At his death, his oldest son became the next halach uinic. If the halach uinic did not have a son, his brother would rule. If he did not have a brother, the ruler’s council elected a member of his family to serve. Some historians believe that the halach uinic also served as the high priest during religious ceremonies.

The halach uinic dressed in elaborate and colorful clothes. He also wore a very large head-dress. Temple wall paintings show him with large ear decorations, crossed eyes, and many tattoos.

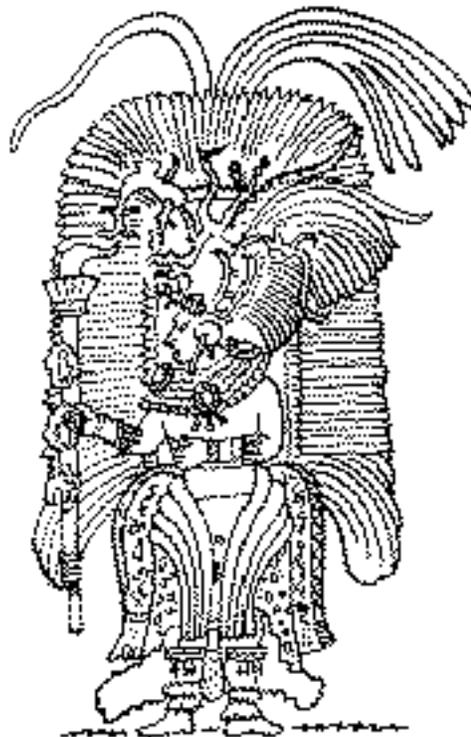
Many other priests served with the halach uinic. These priests, named *ahkin*, performed many duties. They had the knowledge of mathematics and astronomy. Some of the ahkin were prophets. Some of them performed the religious sacrifices. Other ahkin performed medical rituals. The Mayas believed that only the priests could explain the mysteries of life and death. The Mayas believed that the earth was flat. They thought it was on the back of a crocodile that floated in a large pond. At another time they believed the earth was the floor of a lizard house.

The Mayas’ religion taught that there were 13 layers of heavens above the earth. They also believed nine underworlds were below. They thought that they lived in the fifth creation of the world. The previous four worlds had each been destroyed by a great flood. At the beginning of the fifth world, the gods created humans from corn.

Many of the Mayan religious ceremonies included gifts and sacrifices to the various gods and goddesses. The Mayas believed the gods would give favors to them in return for prayers, offerings, and sacrifices. The sacrifices included valuable gifts, their own blood, and human sacrifices.

In many ceremonies, the priests cut themselves to get blood to present to the gods. The Mayas had three methods of giving the human sacrifices. Often, the priests took the victim to the altar at the temple. Then the priests cut the heart out of the living victim and presented it to the god.

In another method, the priests tied the victim to a wooden pole. Then they threw spears and arrows at the victim’s chest in the area of the heart.



**Each Mayan city-state had a ruler called the halach uinic. He may have also served as the high priest during religious ceremonies.**

In the third type of sacrifice, they threw the victim into a sacred well. The most famous of these wells is the Well of Sacrifice at Chichén Itzá. If victims survived the fall and did not drown, the priests pulled them back out of the well. The Mayas believed the gods had chosen to spare these victims. The priests then asked the victims what messages they brought back from the gods. The victims received special treatment from then on since the Mayas believed they had spoken to the gods.

The Mayas also worshipped the dead. They believed the dead became one with the gods. They worshipped their ancestors at many religious ceremonies. They also built pyramids over the sacred remains of their dead rulers.

## THE MAYAN GODS AND GODDESSES

The Mayas worshipped many gods. Here are some of the more important ones:

**Itzamná:** He was the head god, lord of the heavens and lord of night and day. His name meant lizard. Carved pictures show him as an old crossed-eyed man. He had a lizard's body. The Mayas believed he invented books and writing.



**Kinich Ahau:** He was the sun god. He was also the god of the rulers.



**Chac:** He was the rain god. Carvings show him as a reptile with a large nose pointing down and curling fangs. He had four aspects:

Chac Xib Chac	Red Chac of the East
Sac Xib Chac	White Chac of the North
Ek Xib Chac	Black Chac of the West
Kan Xib Chac	Yellow Chac of the South



## THE MAYAN GODS AND GODDESSES (continued)

**Yun Kaax:** He is the god of maize (corn). He is also the god of all agriculture. Pictures always show him as a young man. He is either carrying a plant or has a plant as a headdress.



**Ah Puch:** He is the god of death. Carvings of him show a skull and skeleton.



**Ek Chaub:** He is the god of trade. Mayan artists painted his face black and he had a drooping lower lip.



**Ix Chel:** She is the moon and rainbow goddess. She is also the goddess of weaving and childbirth.



**Buluc Chabtan:** He is the god of war and human sacrifice. Carvings of him show a black line around his eye and down onto his cheek. He is at times shown with a torch or weapon in his hand.



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. What did people call the ruler of each city-state?

2. What did the Mayas believe the halach uinic was?

3. What may the halach uinic also have served as?

4. What was the Mayan name for the priests?

5. What did the Mayas believe about the earth?

6. What did the Mayas believe the earth rode on the back of?

7. According to the Mayan religion, what were humans made from?

8. How many underworlds did the Mayas believe there were below the surface of the earth?

9. Briefly describe one method of human sacrifice.

10. What would happen if a sacrificial human were thrown into a well and didn't die?