

Maya

Maya civilisation has three periods, with collapses following pre classic and classic eras. The pre classic period is dated from around 1800-2000 B.C. to 250 A.D., sites like El Mirador and Nakbe are important sites from this period. The next period where the Mayans really flourished is the Classic era, dated from 250 to 900 A.D., forming a more organised society with specialists and even a hierarchy with a king. The final period is of the least importance to me in regards to this essay as looking at earlier times is more important for ancient context, this is called the post-classic era, 900 A.D. to 1519, this period along with the classic era saw a collapse due to the Spanish conquistadors, with one Maya kingdom holding out until 1697.

1800-2000 B.C. – A.D. 250

The period saw the earliest Maya being agricultural and food such a maize, cassava and squash. Most of the early cultural developments came from the southern highlands.

2000 B.C.-Rise of the Olmec Culture this is where Maya derived a lot of its culture, such as religious traits, their number system and so on.

700 B.C.- Developed a writing system of 800 signs or hieroglyphs which were paired together and read left to right.

400 B.C.- The earliest stone calendar was created amongst the Maya, possibly taken from the Olmecs. This was a sacred 260-day calendar.

300-100 B.C.- The Mayans adopt a hierarchical system, this included an upper class of a King, nobles and priests. A middle class filled with merchants, bureaucrats, officers and so on, then a lower class of farmers, servants and slaves.

100-250 A.D.- “Pre-classic collapse” possibly of political and economic systems.



(“Maya International and Military Law”, 2018)

250 – 900 A.D.

This is known as the classic era, possibly the most important as this is where the culture really took off and grew throughout Mesoamerica, with over 40 Mayan cities being established. The thing that really symbolises the beginning of this period could be the first commemorative stelae at Tikal and Uaxactun which later spread across Maya. They built their cities with Neolithic technology.

500-600 A.D.- The Maya city of Tikal becomes the first great Mayan city, with the population of Teotihuacan migrating to Tikal. The integration of cultures leading to new ideas, including weaponry, human sacrifice and rituals among the people.

600-683 A.D.- An unknown even destroys Teotihuacan and the empire supported by the city, making Tikal the biggest city in Mesoamerica. This therefore gives the Mayans far more power over the land, housing around 500,000 people.

751-869 A.D.- The alliances Maya had have begun to break down lowering inter-city trading, meaning a rise in inter-state conflict.

869-900 A.D.- Tikal building stops and the city is abandoned. The southern lowland cities collapse, however the northern Yucatan cities of the Maya continue to thrive. Even with the northern cities thriving this marks the end of the classic period.



("Your guide to travelling to the Tikal ruins of Guatemala", 2019)

900 A.D. – 1519

This era saw the northern cities in the Yucatan flourish as the Mayans moved their civilisation there after abandoning the southern cities, however millions died or disappeared during the moving period. Building and expansion once again took place with cities like Chichen-Itza and Uxmal. The culture faced challenges like swapping from a rainforest environment to a drier climate in the Yucatan.

1200-1263- Northern cities are abandoned, with Chichen Itza being abandoned by the Toltecs. Then abandoned by the Itza, who began building Mayapan, becoming the capital of Yutacan.

1441-1511- A rebellion takes place within the city, leading to it being abandoned 1461. Yucatan then becomes 16 statelets rivalling for power.

1517-1519- The Spanish first arrive on the shore of the Yucatan, bringing with them old world diseases like smallpox, influenza and measles. Within a century 90% of Mesoamerica's population would be killed off.



("Uxmal Mayan Ruins & Hacienda Ochill", 2019)

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