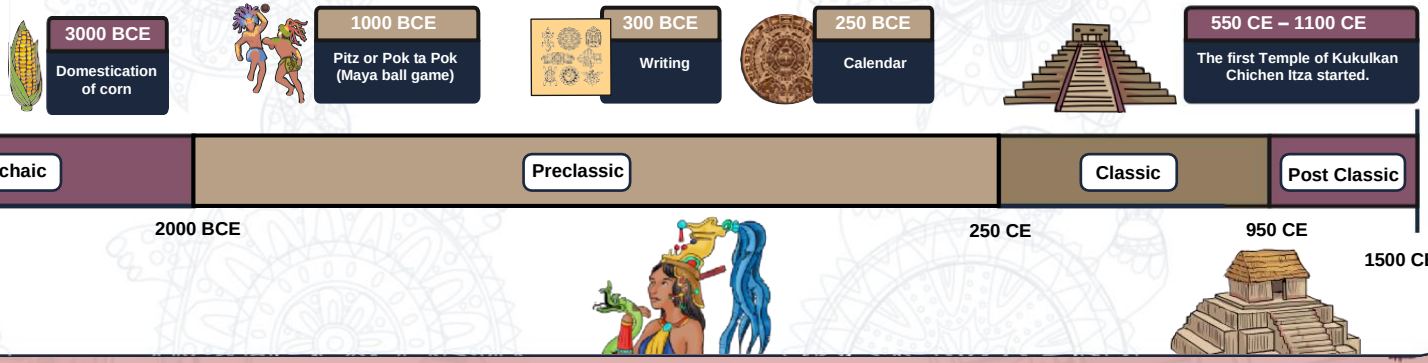
The Ancient Maya Civilisation



The Ancient Maya Civilisation

People have lived in this region for over **12,000 years,** and when they settled here first, **they were hunter-gatherers.** This means they migrated across the land, **searching for food and places to settle.** Over time, these people learned to farm and settled in small villages. Eventually, these grew into **large city-states** spread across what would one day become **Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador and Honduras.** These people were called the **Maya,** and their power and might reached their height in the **10th century.**

How do we know about the Ancient Maya?

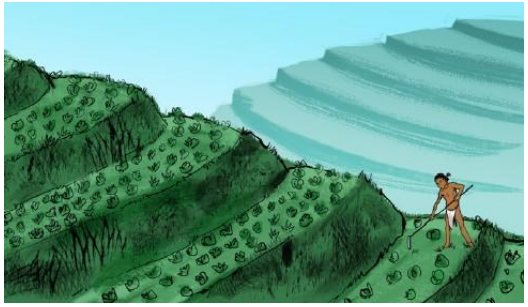
We know about the Maya because **archaeologists have found evidence of their existence.** The Maya were famous for their **wall art and beautiful writing.** Many examples have been discovered over the years, and these two records give us an idea of what life was like for the different people in Maya society. There have also been many other archaeological discoveries of **Maya tombs, funeral masks, architectural remains of the large city-states, and the famous stone pyramids** that still stand today. There is one mystery that still puzzles archaeologists today. Something strange began to happen in the **10th century** – the **Maya people** of the central Maya Lowlands **began to abandon their cities.** There is **no real evidence** to tell us why just **multiple theories.**

How did the Maya civilisation become successful?

Farming was important for the Maya people. It was one of the main reasons that the civilisation grew and **became so powerful.** They developed many specialist **farming techniques** to help grow crops and invented a way of **collection and storing water** to irrigate their crops.

The Maya lowlands were also filed **with limestone – a perfect building material.** They also had access to plenty of **obsidian – a volcanic glass the Maya could sharpen to use as a tool.**

The Maya civilisation grew with a plentiful supply of **water, specialist farming techniques, and abundant natural limestone and obsidian** for building materials and tools.

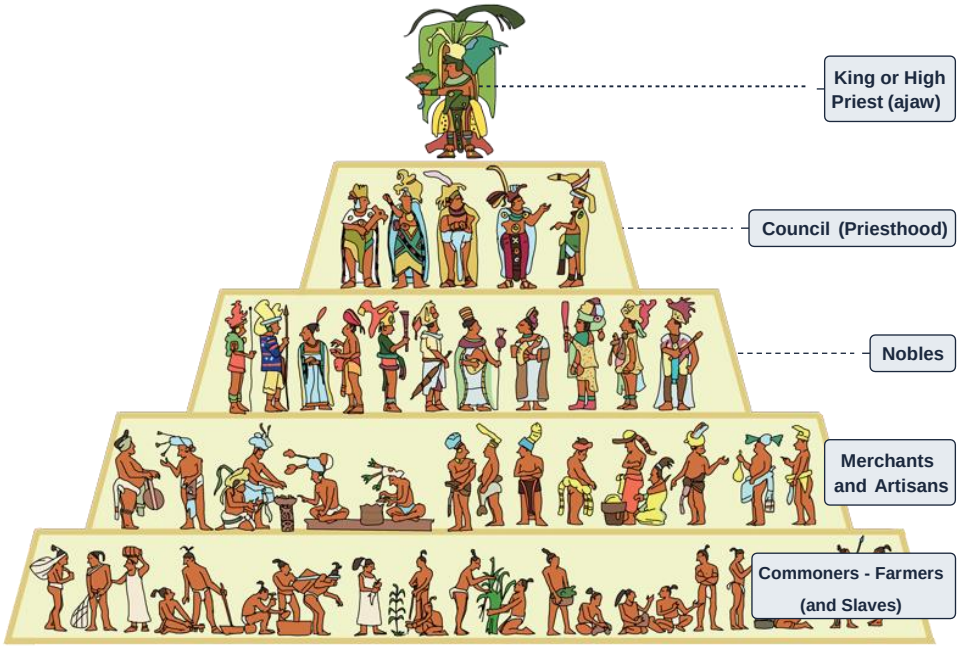


Over time, the city's population grew, and **the Maya built temples, ballcourts and plazas**. These were **attractive places to live and work** and provided a place for the Maya people to **worship their gods.**

Who ruled the Maya people?

The Maya **were not a united empire** of people with a capital city like **Ancient Egypt.**

Instead, **each city was a state** with **its own ruler** and council of high priests.

The city-states of the Maya often **went to war with each other** to prove that they were **the strongest in the region.**

Artefacts show historians and archaeologists that life was **very different for the rich and poor in Maya society.**