



Maya Civilization

Why in News

According to a new study the Maya civilization may have had access to nearly 500 [drought](#) resistant edible plants.

- The mystery behind Maya civilization's sudden fall from glory still eludes us. Scientists have long suspected that **drought pushed its people towards starvation**.
- The Maya people faced starvation because of their **dependence on drought-sensitive crops** such as corn, beans and squash.



Key Points

- **About:**
 - The Maya are an **indigenous people of Mexico and Central America** who have continuously inhabited the lands comprising modern-day Yucatan, Quintana Roo,

Campeche, Tabasco, and Chiapas in Mexico and southward through Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador and Honduras.

- The Maya civilization **originated in the Yucatan Peninsula**. Known for its monumental architecture and an advanced understanding of mathematics and astronomy.
- The rise of the Maya began about 250 CE, and what is known to archaeologists as the Classic Period of Mayan culture **lasted until about 900 CE**. At its height, Mayan civilization **consisted of more than 40 cities, each with a population between 5,000 and 50,000**.
- But then, suddenly, between 800 and 950 CE, many of the southern cities were abandoned. This period is called the collapse of the Classic Maya civilisations, puzzling modern-day scientists.

▪ **Special Features:**

- As early as 1500 BCE the Maya had settled in villages and had developed an agriculture based on the cultivation of **corn (maize), beans, and squash; by 600 CE cassava (sweet manioc)** was also grown.
- They began to build **ceremonial centres**, and by 200 CE these had developed into cities containing temples, pyramids, palaces, courts for playing ball, and plazas.
- The **ancient Maya quarried immense quantities of building stone** (usually limestone), which they cut by using harder stones such as chert. They practiced mainly slash-and-burn agriculture, but they used advanced techniques of irrigation and terracing. They also **developed a system of hieroglyphic writing and highly sophisticated calendrical and astronomical systems**.
- The Maya made paper from the inner bark of wild fig trees and wrote their hieroglyphs on books made from this paper. Those books are called **codices**.
- The Maya also developed an elaborate and beautiful tradition of **sculpture and relief carving**.
- **Architectural works and stone inscriptions** and reliefs are the chief sources of knowledge about the early Maya.

Other Ancient Civilizations

- **The Incan Civilization**- Ecuador, Peru, and Chile
- **The Aztec Civilization**- Mexico
- **The Roman Civilization**- Rome
- **The Persian Civilization**- Iran
- **The Ancient Greek Civilization**- Greece
- **The Chinese Civilization**- China
- **The Ancient Egyptian Civilization**- Egypt
- **The Indus Valley Civilization**- Northeast Afghanistan to Pakistan and northwest India
- **The Mesopotamian Civilization**- Iraq, Syria, and Turkey

[Source: DTE](#)

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