



Ancient Mayans

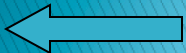




Introduction



- The Maya developed an advanced civilization around 2600 B.C.in the Yucatan area in Mexico and Central America
- Accomplished mathematicians, astronomers, and invented an advanced form of writing.





Mayan Cities

- ▶ Center for rituals and religion
- ▶ Pyramids such as “El Castillo” served as ceremonial sites for priests.
 - These were built without metal tools!

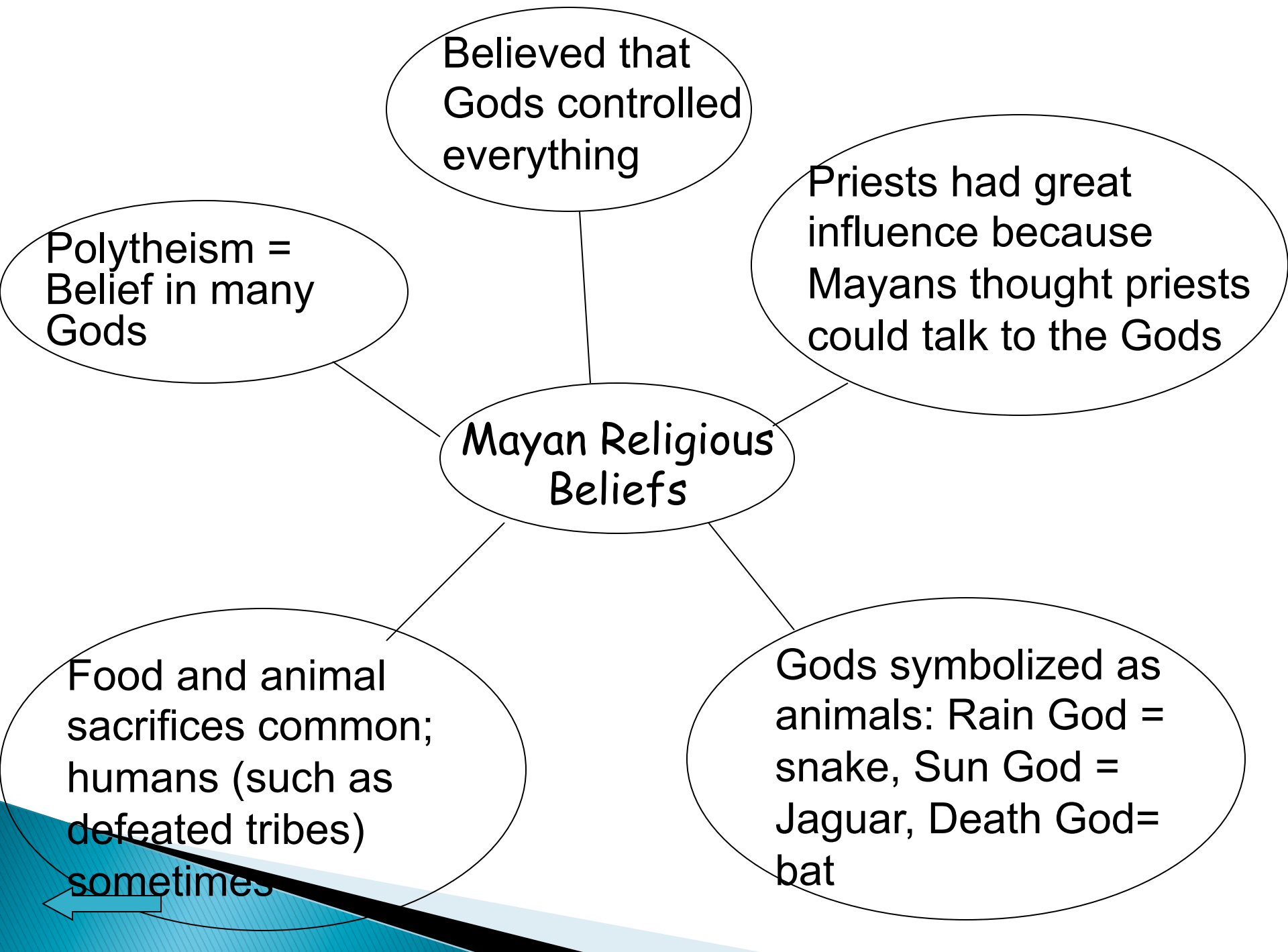


Mayan Cities

- ▶ Center of the city was religious section
- ▶ The farther from the city center the lower the social status

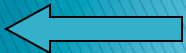
Cities: the major centers were Palenque, Tikal, and Copan





Religion: Importance of Agriculture

- ▶ Mayan religion reflected the fundamental role of agriculture in their society
- ▶ *Popol Vuh*, was the Mayan creation myth that taught that the gods had created human beings out of maize and water
- ▶ Gods kept the world in order and maintained the agricultural cycle in exchange for honors and sacrifices

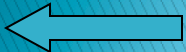


Religion: Bloodletting Rituals

- ▶ Mayans believed the shedding of human blood would prompt the gods to send rain to water the maize
- ▶ Bloodletting involved both war captives and Mayan royals

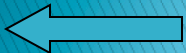


Mayan queen holds a bowl filled with strips of paper used to collect blood.



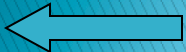
Religion: Bloodletting

- ▶ A popular bloodletting ritual was for a Mayan to pierce his own tongue and thread a thin rope through the hole, thus letting the blood run down the rope



Religion: The Ball Game

- ▶ Mayans inherited a ball game from the Olmecs that was an important part of Mayan political and religious festivals
- ▶ High-ranking captives were forced to play the game for their very lives
 - The losers became sacrificial victims and faced torture and execution immediately following the match
- ▶ Object of the game was to propel an 8 inch ball of solid baked rubber through a ring or onto a marker without using your hands



Mayan Ball Court

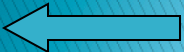


Mayan calendars



Tonalamatl, by Roberto Sieck Flandes (1939)

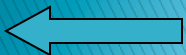
The Maya developed a sophisticated calendar. The ritual calendar that developed in Mesoamerica used a count of 260 days. This calendar gave each day a name, much like our days of the week. There were 20 day names, each represented by a unique symbol. The days were numbered from 1 to 13. Since there are 20 day names, after the count of thirteen was reached, the next day was numbered 1 again. The 260-day or sacred count calendar was in use throughout Mesoamerica for centuries, probably before the beginning of writing.

























Astronomy

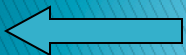
- ▶ Masters of the Night Sky– known for their observatories
- ▶ Accurately charted the planets by using a forked stick like implement
- ▶ Created an accurate yearly calendar
- ▶ Predicted eclipses of the sun



Mayan numbers

				
0	1	2	3	4
				
5	6	7	8	9
				
10	11	12	13	14
				
15	16	17	18	19

The Mayans had a number system consisting of shells, dots, and lines. You could write up to nineteen with just these symbols. The Maya were one of the only ancient civilizations that understood the concept of zero. This allowed them to write very large numbers



Glyphs



- ▶ Mayans created the most advanced pre-colonial writing in the Western Hemisphere
- ▶ Over 800 different images were used to record their history



king



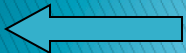
sky



house



child



Social System

- ▶ Had no central king, but instead had city-states like Greece
- ▶ Social classes
 - Nobles and priests at the top
 - Middle class made up of warriors, craftsmen, and traders
 - Farmers, workers, and slaves were at the bottom

What happened to them?

- ▶ The Mayan Empire was mysteriously abandoned—we still don't know why



Mayas Today

- ▶ Mayas live in Mexico and Central American
- ▶ Speak Maya languages
- ▶ Observe some religious customs of their ancestors combined with Christianity

