

# Ancient Maya Codices



Maya codices are books that have been found (above), made from the inner bark of fig trees. The Mayan word for 'paper' was 'huun'. The codices were the works of professional scribes who wrote of gods, war and history.

## Mayan Meanings

						
Mayan:	chan	winik	witz	k'in	b'alam	k'ak'
Meaning:	sky	person	mountain	sun	jaguar	fire
						
Mayan:	bak	way	juun	ja'	ajaw	muyal
Meaning:	bone	spirit	book	water	lord	cloud
						
Mayan:	ix	ch'am	k'uk'	chan	ch'ul	chok
Meaning:	woman	to grab	quetzal	snake	holy	to scatter
						
Mayan:	jaab	yax	pakal	tok	naj	k'al
Meaning:	year	blue/green	shield	flint	house	twenty



# Lives of the Ancient Maya

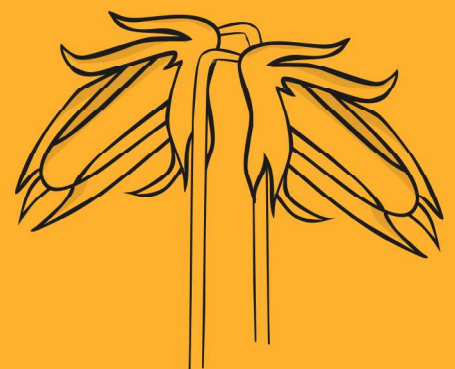
The great monuments and cities of the ancient Maya were created over thousands of years. Farming was the first step towards this. The Maya learned how to clear forests in order to turn it into farmland. The forests were burned and the nutrients created from the ash turned the soil into highly fertile land. This farming method is called 'slash and burn' and is still used in agriculture today. Because of this, the Maya became very successful farmers.

## Crop of Life

Though the Maya grew numerous crops such as squash, avocados and beans, their staple crop and a huge part of their diet consisted of maize or corn. Corn was very important to the Maya and their creation story even goes to say that the first successful humans were made of corn! Corn was consumed in different ways. It was ground and made into flat breads, which have become today's tortillas and it was also made into porridge and fermented into a type of beer.



It was mainly the job of the Maya peasants to clear forests for farming. The corn ears would have to be tipped upside down in case of any rainwater collecting in it as the water would cause the corn to rot.

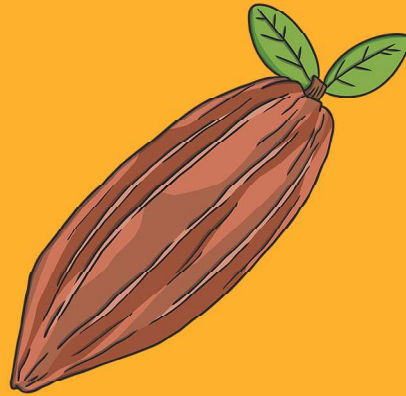




# Precious Cacao

One of the many crops that the Maya farmed was the fragrant cacao bean. These beans grew on trees from the soils of el Salvador, Guatemala and Belize.

They were a precious crop, prized for their chocolatey flavour and used in drinks for the rich and noble. Unsweetened cacao is deeply bitter and the Maya would spice it up with some chillis, this is a drink still enjoyed today.



## By the Sea

The Maya people living by the coast would source things such as fish, turtle shells and salt from the sea. The diet of the Maya was made up mostly of fruits, nuts and grains so salt was quite important for them since they hardly ate any meat. Salt was also used for trading.

Below: A carving showing a Maya bloodletting ritual



Turtle shells were collected for making into instruments that were played with antlers and conch shells were blown into and used as horns.

Spines from stingrays were also collected by Maya priests and rulers for bloodletting and piercing their tongues and body parts with. This was a way to win favour with the Maya gods. Even the common people did this.