

# Mayan Fashion

The Maya grew cotton in the Yucata`n and other settlements. As a result, this was the choice of material for basic garments. The basic garment for the common peasant (far right) would be a a loincloth made from a long strip of cotton called an 'ex'. They would usually be barefoot.

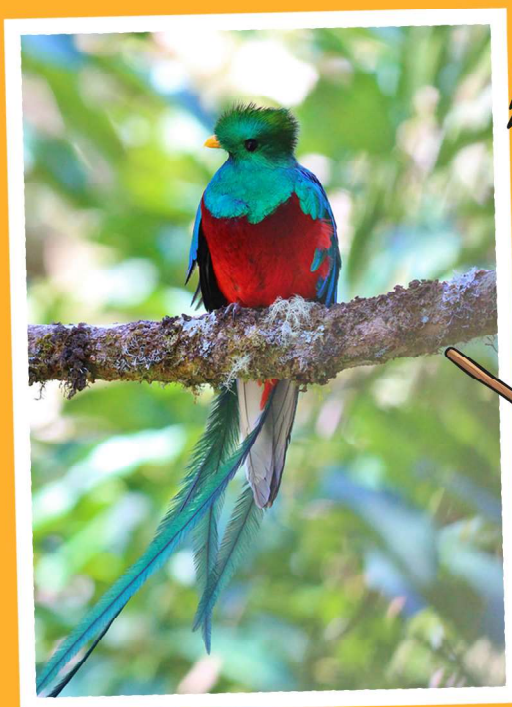
Maya women wore cotton skirts or simple cotton dresses, called a 'huipil'. Both males and females would also cover their shoulders with a square of cotton or animal skin.

## Dressing for Society

Around the Classic period of the Maya civilisation (200AD), social hierarchy became much more important and the rich and royal started to dress more and more elaborately.

They would adorn themselves with items that peasants could never hope to afford, such as huge, fancy headdresses made with the feathers of macaws and quetzal birds. Quetzal feathers were highly precious.

Skins of ocelots, jaguars and other large predators were made into clothing and footwear for the elite. They also wore huge earplugs and facial ornaments made from bone, shell or jade. Body paint was also used for markings and they even filed their teeth into sharp points and put jade mosaics on the front of them!



Above: A quetzal bird



Left: Maya priest  
Right: warrior



# Maya Beauty

The Maya idea of beauty was for a person to have a strong, large nose and sloped forehead. Crossed eyes were seen as beautiful too. In all Maya classes, it was custom to bind the heads of children between two flat boards in order to give them the desired shape of forehead. A bead on a string was also attached to boards so that it would make the child look inwards and become cross-eyed.

The evidence for this is found in carvings of the rich and royal, who all seemed have these traits. Some ancient Maya were even known to make their noses appear bigger with clay!

Though beauty and society were very important, the most important part of life was religion. Pleasing the gods was vital to the Maya and this was because the gods had reign over all aspects of life, from birth to death and crops to wealth.

Below: A carved Maya figure showing a highly elaborate headdress.





# The Maya Gods and Religion

Maya gods were gods of nature. One of the most respected was the maize god, Hun Ixim (below), since maize was their main crop.

The maize god would decide whether a crop would fail or succeed that year. After a war, the Maya would capture the enemy survivors and bring them home as prisoners or even sacrifices to the gods to please them.

## Popul Vuh

The 'Popul Vuh' was almost like a bible of the ancient Maya. Stories of creation and life are written in this book. This book was found in the 1500s before the Spanish conquest.

The picture below shows the only two gods that existed before the world was created, Tepeu the Maker and Gucumatz the Feathered Spirit, both glittering in the dark.

