

Kukulkan:

A World Wonder

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From the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries the Mayan Pyramid of Kukulcan was used to practice religious ceremonies and create astronomical observations.

The Kukulcan Pyramid was a tribute to the main Mayan god, Kukulcan, god of the Sun. The Maya were extremely religious, and worshiped many gods affiliated with nature. The Maya are known today for being very advanced for their time and their amazing architectural feats. The first traces of the Maya date back to around 2000 B.C. and end around 900 A.D. where a rapid decline is seen in their civilization, which is thought to be caused by a massive drought that starved many with a combination of internal warfare. The Maya used their knowledge of the cosmos to enforce their religious ideas. The Mayas were great builders, with advanced mathematical equations they could figure out how to build many complex temples and buildings that many other civilizations couldn't. They invented a writing system before 700 B.C., which only four other civilizations could do. The Mayans were also said to have invented chocolate and the use of herbal medicines.

The pyramid of Kukulcan is made of limestone, it is the most plentiful type of stone because there is the city of Chichen Itza (which is where the pyramid is located) sits on top of a limestone plateau. Researchers and archeologists have found very little traces of the wheel being used to build the pyramids, however they have found wheels being used in traditional toys. Surprisingly the Maya pyramids were not only built by slaves and prisoners of war, but by citizens that thought that helping in the construction would give them a special blessing and

guaranteed a bountiful harvest. Building a pyramid without using some sort of wheel would have been extremely difficult but not impossible. The Maya cities are almost completely made of limestone that was highly decorated and painted with vivid colors. The pyramids in the cities were used as stages for religious ceremonies. The Mayan cities from central Mexico to Central America have buildings and pyramids that look nothing alike but somehow are from the same people which is very strange, almost all Egyptian pyramids look identical and only change in size. This could be because the Egyptian city-states stayed in close contact with neighbors, unlike the Maya.

The Mayan people collectively built more than 35 Pyramids that spread from Northern Mexico to Belize. The time of these pyramids being built also ranges from 500 B.C. to around the end of the Maya civilization at 900 A.D. The earliest pyramids are located at the southern tip of Mexico, moving south towards Belize and Honduras, and finally coming back north to Central Mexico. The Pyramid of Kukulkan was one of the best built pyramids because it was well planned and taken care of extensively. The reason why this pyramid was well executed was because it was built after the realization that Chichen Itza was one of the most beautiful and advanced cities of the Mayan culture.

When the Pyramid was finished the Maya saw Chichen Itza as a holy city. Chichen Itza had many buildings to help astronomers further their studies, for example there is an observatory that was built by the Maya, and a great sports center. Chichen Itza was a place for Mayans to make their pilgrimage to. Chichen Itza was like Mecca, for the Maya.

The Pyramid contains many features that demonstrate the creativity and intellect of the Maya, for example, the pyramid is built in a way that when there is a solstice or equinox the

shadows created by the edges of the pyramids creates a shadow on the walls that depicts the serpent god, going down the stairs into the cenotes which are like giant natural wells. That entire event is from the religious belief that after a Mayan dies he goes on a journey from the underworld to a giant tree that is like heaven, but the journey starts off at the cenotes and ends at the top of the tree. Some Mayan religious events would try to replicate the journey from the dark underworld to the top of the tree by starting off in a dark cave and have the contestants find their way from that deep cave to the top of the pyramid. In other religious practices some people were thrown into the deep cenotes, if they survived they were seen as holy people.

The Pyramid of KuKulkan contains the basics of the Mayan Calendar. Each face of the Pyramid contains 91 steps, and with the shared step of the platform on top, adds up to 365, which is also the number of days in the year. The nine main platforms of the pyramid are thought to represent the 18 months of the haab, and the 52 panels represent the number of years it takes for a calendar round date to recur.

I chose this topic because the once on the news I saw a video of the pyramid creating the shadow of a serpent. I could not believe that an ancient civilization had the proper tools, knowledge, and most importantly the creativity to come up with such an idea. I was truly blown away by the dedication and intelligence of the situation. I also thought that if I chose something that really interests I would have a good time, and actually want to do the project and not just leave it for last minute. I visit Mexico frequently and would really enjoy to visit Chichen Itza and admire the hard work that went into the beautiful site, and now I know that when I visit that place I will truly enjoy the experience. Learning about an ancient civilization that added a very

rich culture to a country of my heritage is very important. If I had a choice to travel anywhere in the world I would chose Chichen Itza.

The Maya created amazing buildings and made amazing technological and academic advances. One of the most influential buildings of the Maya was the Pyramid of KuKulkan because of the time and effort put into it. The hidden details of the Mayan calendar, the amazing show created with the shadows of the sun, and beautiful structure.

### References:

**Kirk, W. V. (2012, March 10). Chichen Itza. . Retrieved May 17, 2014, from [http://sacredsites.com/americas/mexico/chichen\\_itza.html](http://sacredsites.com/americas/mexico/chichen_itza.html)**

Human Sacrifices were made at the top of the Pyramids, Sacrifices were either virgins or war prisoners

**Allison, T. (2010, April 15). Pyramid of kukulcan at Chichen Itza. . Retrieved May 17, 2014, from <http://www.atlasobscura.com/places/pyramid-kukulcan-chichen-itza>**

Pictures and Information on legends that have been spread by word of mouth.

**Available, N. (2009, January 4). Chichen Itza Facts. . Retrieved , from [http://www.softschools.com/facts/wonders\\_of\\_the\\_world/chichen\\_itza\\_facts/75/](http://www.softschools.com/facts/wonders_of_the_world/chichen_itza_facts/75/)**

Chichen Itza was not the name of the pyramid but the name of the city where the pyramid is located.