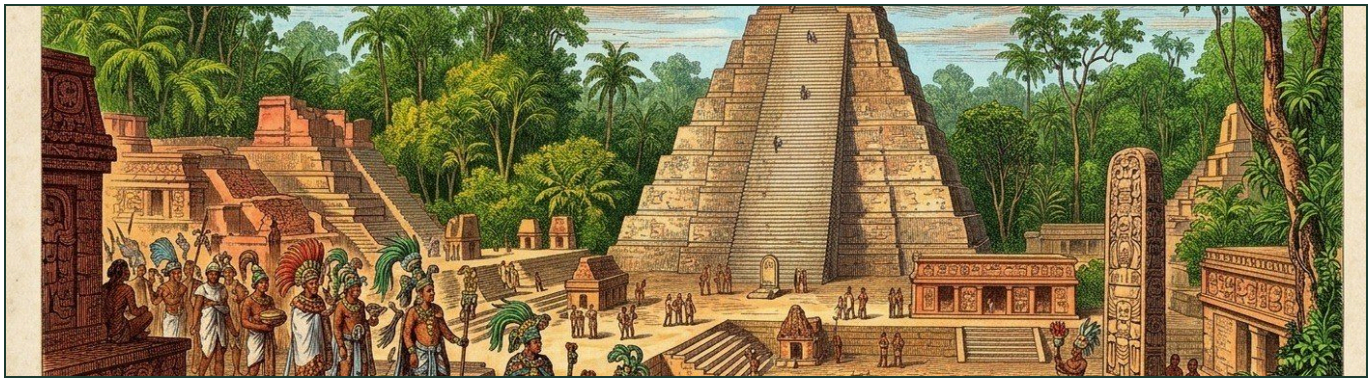


2000 BC – AD 1697

Maya Civilization Timeline

The Maya civilization was one of the most sophisticated in the ancient Americas, known for pyramid cities, a complex writing system, advanced mathematics, and precise calendars.

~2000 BC

Early Maya Villages

Maya-speaking people establish farming villages in the highlands and lowlands of present-day Mexico and Guatemala.

> **Why it mattered:** *Settled farming provided the food surplus needed to support specialists, artisans, and eventually cities — laying the foundation for one of the most sophisticated civilizations in the Americas.*

~300 BC

First Cities Emerge

Large Maya cities begin to form, including El Mirador in Guatemala — one of the largest cities in the ancient Americas, with massive pyramid complexes.

> **Why it mattered:** *El Mirador showed that Mesoamerican peoples could build on a monumental scale centuries before what most people think of as the Maya's golden age.*

~AD 250

Classic Maya Period Begins

The Classic Maya period marks the height of Maya civilization, with dozens of competing city-states flourishing across the Maya world.

> **Why it mattered:** *The Classic period produced the Maya's greatest achievements in architecture, mathematics, astronomy, and art — a world of competing kingdoms not unlike ancient Greece.*

AD 292

Tikal Stela 29

A king of Tikal sets up Stela 29, carved with the Long Count date 8.12.14.8.15, one of the oldest known Long Count dates in the Maya lowlands. The Long Count was a place-value count of days that used a sign for zero.

> **Why it mattered:** *It shows that Maya kings were already using writing, place-value numbers and the Long Count calendar early in the Classic period, more than 600 years before the southern cities emptied.*

Maya Civilization Timeline *continued*

~AD 600

Tikal vs. Calakmul

The two great Maya powers — Tikal in present-day Guatemala and Calakmul in Mexico — build rival networks of alliances and fight proxy wars across the Maya world.

> **Why it mattered:** *The rivalry between Tikal and Calakmul shaped Maya politics for generations — two superpowers competing through allies, diplomacy, and occasional direct warfare.*

AD 683

Death of Pakal of Palenque

King Pakal of Palenque dies after ruling for 68 years, leaving behind magnificent temples and one of the longest Maya inscriptions ever found, which records his dynasty.

> **Why it mattered:** *Pakal's tomb, discovered in 1952, is one of the richest royal burials ever found in the Americas — and its inscriptions helped scholars crack the Maya writing code.*

~AD 800–900

Classic Maya Collapse

The major cities of the southern Maya lowlands are abandoned one by one over about a century; the population of the region collapses.

> **Why it mattered:** *Historians point to drought, warfare, soil exhaustion, and political breakdown as likely causes — the collapse ended the Classic Maya world but not the Maya people.*

~AD 1000

Chichen Itza Flourishes

In the northern Yucatan, cities like Chichen Itza rise to power after the southern collapse, blending Maya traditions with influences from other Mesoamerican peoples.

> **Why it mattered:** *Chichen Itza became one of the most powerful and influential cities in all of Mesoamerica — its pyramid, El Castillo, is still one of the most visited sites in the Americas.*

1200–1500

Late Maya City-States

New Maya kingdoms rise in the Yucatan and highlands; the Maya world remains politically divided but culturally vibrant on the eve of Spanish contact.

> **Why it mattered:** *The Maya who met the Spanish were heirs to one of history's great civilizations — not a vanished people but a living, diverse culture stretching across Mesoamerica.*

1524–1697

Spanish Conquest of the Maya

Spain gradually conquers Maya territories over 170 years of resistance; the last independent Maya kingdom, the Itza of Lake Peten, falls in 1697.

> **Why it mattered:** *Unlike the Aztec Empire — which fell in about two years, 1519–1521 — the decentralized Maya required 170 years to subdue. Some Maya communities resisted Spanish influence for centuries longer.*