



MAYAN ARCHITECTURE



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 3. E-groups
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 7. Ball courts



MAYAN ARCHITECTURE (Introduction)

- The Maya civilization was a Mesoamerican civilization developed by the Maya peoples, and noted for its logosyllabic script.
- The Maya civilization developed in an area that encompasses southeastern Mexico, all of Guatemala and Belize, and the western portions of Honduras and El Salvador.
- Maya architecture spans several thousands of years, several eras of political change, and architectural innovation before the Spanish colonization of the Americas.
- Classic period rule was centred on the concept of the "divine king", who acted as a mediator between mortals and the supernatural realm.
- Based in general Mesoamerican architectural traditions, the Maya utilized geometric proportions and intricate carving to build everything from simple houses to ornate temples.
- Maya architecture tends to integrate a great degree of natural features.
- At the heart of the Maya city existed the large plazas surrounded by their most valued governmental and religious buildings such as the royal acropolis, great pyramid temples, and occasionally Ballcourts.



MAYAN ARCHITECTURE (Introduction)

- The main focal point of each town became large pyramid-like structures. The people regarded these buildings as mountains rising out of the swamps and forests.
- Though city layouts evolved as nature dictated, careful attention was placed on the directional orientation of temples and observatories so that they were constructed in accordance with Maya interpretation of the orbits of the stars.
- Immediately outside this ritual center were the structures of lesser nobles, smaller temples, and individual shrines: the less sacred and less important structures had a greater degree of privacy.
- Outside the constantly evolving urban core were the less permanent and more modest homes of the common people.
- The Maya considered houses and temples the center of the world, one for family and the other for the gods.



MAYAN ARCHITECTURE (Introduction)

- Interior spaces were dark and small, especially in temples, since these places housed gods and their ancestors. Public access into these palaces was prohibited, but they were allowed to stand in the courtyards where many Mayan rituals and festivals were held.
- The Maya controlled movement by using various architectural designs, like constricted entrances, causeways, stairways, and other devices used to channel movement.
- Though the Maya did not use a specific measuring unit, their buildings were still proportioned according to the golden mean.
- Since the Maya had religious connotations for which proportions they used hence their form of measurement is called sacred geometry.



ZONAS ARQUEOLÓGICAS



MAYAN ARCHITECTURE (Notable Construction)

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Ceremonial platforms

- These were commonly limestone platforms of typically less than four meters in height where public ceremonies and religious rites were performed.
- Constructed in the fashion of a typical foundation platform, these were often accented by carved figures, altars and perhaps *tzompantli*, a stake used to display the heads to the victims or defeated Mesoamerican ballgame opponents.



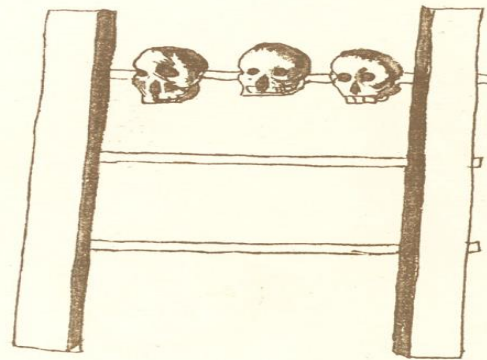


CEREMONIAL PLATFORMS

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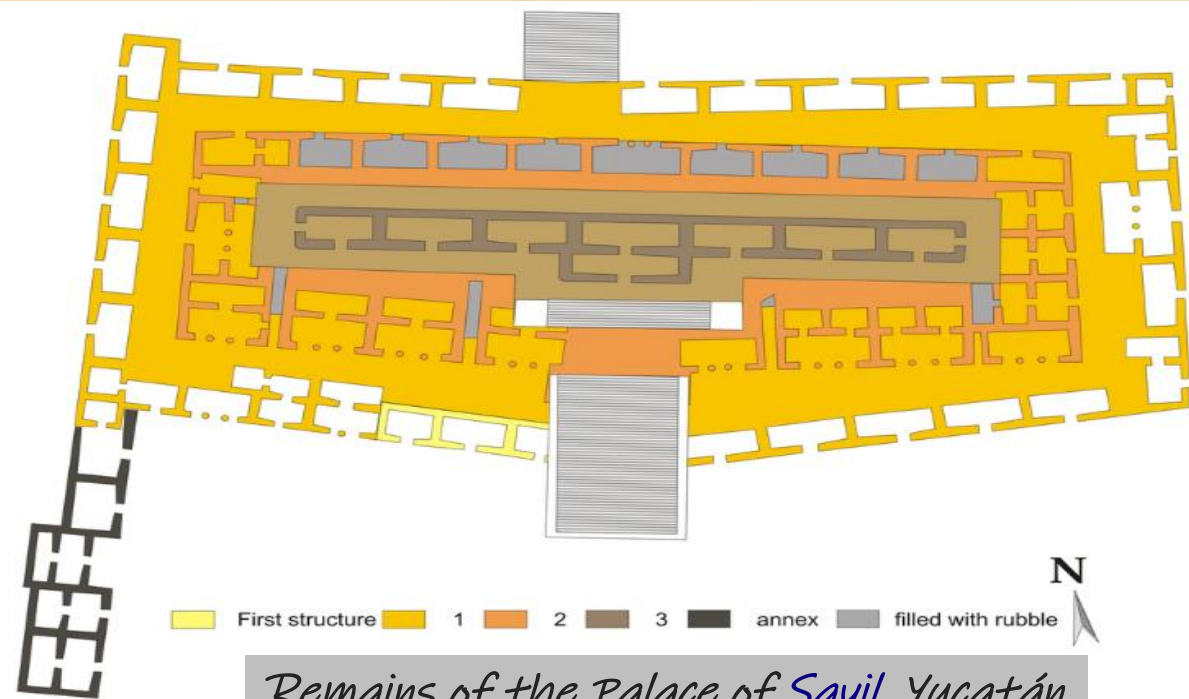


CEREMONIAL PLATFORMS

Palaces

- Large and often highly decorated, the palaces usually sat close to the center of a city and housed the population's elite.
- Every exceedingly large royal palace, or one consisting of many chambers on different levels might be referred to as an acropolis.
- However, often these were one-story and consisted of small chambers and typically at least one interior courtyard; these structures appear to take into account the needed functionality required of a residence, as well as the decoration required for their inhabitants stature.





Remains of the Palace of Sayil, Yucatán

E-groups

- "E-Group" is a classification given by Mayanists to certain structure complexes present at a number of Maya sites located in the central and southern Maya lowlands (e.g., the Petén region).
- They are central components to the settlement organization of Maya sites and could have served as astronomical observatories.
- Complexes of this type consist of a stepped pyramid main structure, situated on the western side of a quadrilateral plaza or platform.
- A raised but rather elongated structure appears along the eastern side of the plaza, running north-south; a variation has three smaller temple mounds on top of or replacing this platform, the middle of these substructures placed directly opposite the main structure.
- Often, two other subsidiary structures appear on the north and south sides of the plaza, respectively.
- The main western structure is typically terraced (i.e. has several levels), with inset stairways on each of its four sides, with only the eastern stairway, leading from the plaza, providing access to the summit.

North Face of the Temple of Masks, E Group Uaxactun

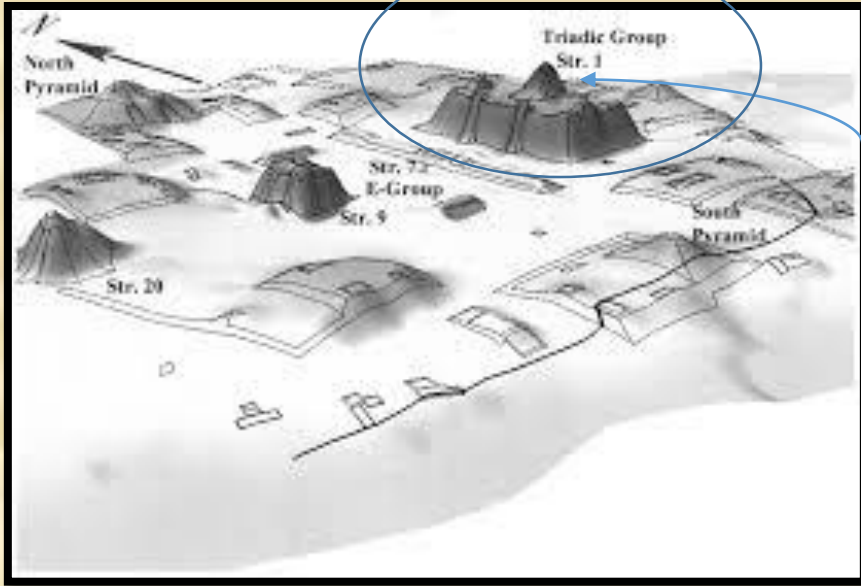


Group E view from the top of the temple of masks, Uaxactun.

Triadic Groups

- They consist of an elevated platform (either an extensive acropolis or a steep pyramid) with a monumental stairway, with a central building facing the stairs, and two lateral structures facing each other on both sides of the platform.
- This formal complex has been attributed to the earthly re-creation of the Celestial Hearth (modern-day constellation of Orion), or a stage for enthronement rituals.
- Most recently Triadic Groups have been interpreted as sanctuaries commemorating Maize God's resurrection upon the Flowery Mountain.
- Such complexes appear during the Late Preclassic times and gradually decrease in number until their disappearance in the Early Postclassic.





Model of a triadic pyramid at Caracol, Belize



Pyramids and temples

- Maya pyramids soaring above the surrounding jungle, such as the 65-metre high Temple IV at Tikal (8th century CE), are amongst the most famous images from the ancient Americas.
- Pyramids were used not only as temples and focal points for Maya religious practices where offerings were made to the gods but also as gigantic tombs for deceased rulers, their partners, sacrificial victims, and precious goods.
- In addition, individual shrines could be amalgamated into a single giant complex over time as Maya rulers attempted to impress their subjects and leave a lasting mark of their reign. A good example of this development can be seen at the North Acropolis of Tikal.

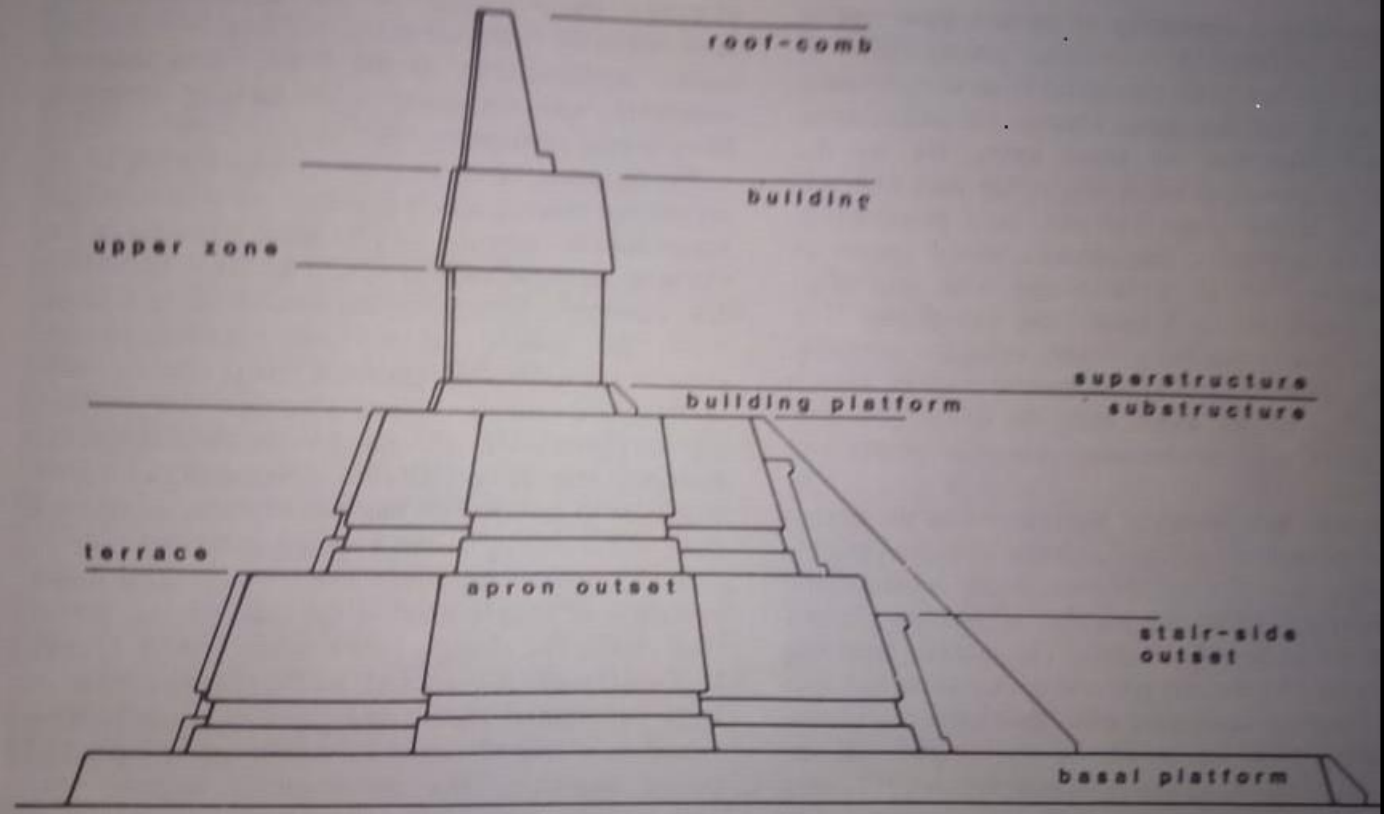


Pyramids and temples

- Low land Maya builders vaulted the temple buildings & expressed the vaulting on exteriors by means of a horizontal band known as the upper zone, on which were highly conspicuous symbolic images in painted relief.
- In fully developed Maya temples of southern Mexico & Guatemala elaborate substructures were formed as additive assemblies of distinct, three- dimensionally recognisable 'bodies', and also some extent were standardised.
- A description of Temple I at Tikal, in Guatemala, for example, with its six component types- basal- platform, pyramid, supplementary- platform, building- platform, building, and roof- comb- is equally applicable to more than a hundred temples built over more than 800 years.



THE AMERICAS



MAYA TEMPLE SCHEMATIC



List of Some Famous Pyramids/ Temples :

- Chichen Itza – Temple of Kukulcan
- Uxmal – Pyramid of the Magician
- Palenque – Temple of the Inscriptions
- Tikal – Temple of Ah Cacao / Temple of the Great Jaguar
- Coba – Ixmoja Pyramid
- Tulum – El Castillo
- Lamanai – The High Temple
- Calakmul – Temple II
- Tazumal – Structure B1-1
- Yaxchilan – Structure 33

MAYAN ARCHITECTURE (Notable Construction)

Temple of Kukulcan, Chichen Itza

- El Castillo, also known as the Temple of Kukulcan, is a Mesoamerican step-pyramid that dominates the center of the Chichen Itza archaeological site in the Mexican state of Yucatán.
- Built by the pre-Columbian Maya civilization sometime between the 9th and 12th centuries AD, El Castillo served as a temple to the god Kukulcan.



MAYAN ARCHITECTURE (Notable Construction)

Pyramid of the Magician, Uxmal

- The Pyramid of the Magician is a Mesoamerican step pyramid, also known as the Pyramid of the Dwarf, Casa el Adivino, and the Pyramid of the Soothsayer.
- Construction of the first pyramid temple began in the 6th century AD and the structure was expanded over the next 400 years.
- The pyramid fell into disrepair after 1000 A.D. and was thereafter looted during the Spanish Conquest of Yucatán.



MAYAN ARCHITECTURE (Notable Construction)

Temple of the Inscriptions, Palenque

- The Temple of the Inscriptions "House of the Nine Sharpened Spears" is the largest Mesoamerican stepped pyramid structure at Palenque constructed a short time after 683.
- The structure was specifically built as the funerary monument for K'inich Janaab' Pakal, a ruler of Palenque in the 7th century whose reign over the polity lasted almost 70 years.
- Construction of this monument commenced in the last decade of his life, and was completed by his son and successor K'inich Kan B'alam II.



MAYAN ARCHITECTURE (Notable Construction)

Temple of Ah Cacao / Temple of the Great Jaguar, Tikal

- Temple 1 or Temple of Ah Cacao was a funerary temple associated with Jasaw Chan K'awiil I, a Classic Period ruler of the polity based at Tikal, who ruled from AD 682–734.
- The tomb of this ruler has been located by archaeologists deep within the structure (the tomb having been built first with the temple being raised over it).
- The temple rises 47 meters (154 ft) over the Great Plaza and is topped by a funerary shrine, containing finely carved wooden lintels from sapodilla wood.



MAYAN ARCHITECTURE (Notable Construction)

Ixmoja or Nohoch Mul Pyramid, Coba

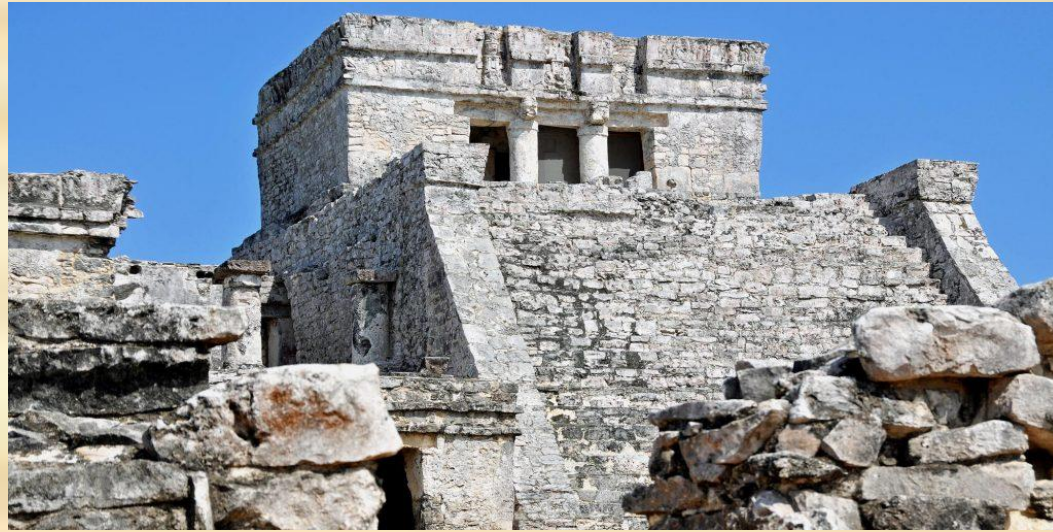
- The centerpiece at the Mayan Ruins in Coba is Ixmoja or the Nohoch Mul pyramid.
- The base is believed to have been constructed during the Early Classic period (250 – 550 AD) and the temple on top during the Late Post Classic period (1200 – 1539).
- Its name means large hill or great mound.



MAYAN ARCHITECTURE (Notable Construction)

El Castillo, Tulum

- In the central precinct of Tulum is the Castillo, which is 7.5 m (25 ft) tall and constructed in stages on a previous colonnaded structure.
- A temple as well as a fortress, El Castillo was originally covered with stucco and painted red.



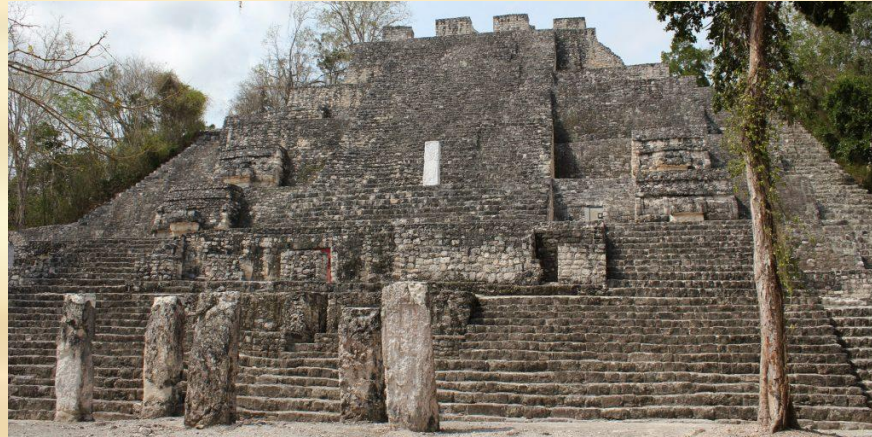
The High Temple, Lamanai

- One of three prominent temples at Lamanai, the High Temple reaches a height of 33 metres (108 ft) and allows visitors to have panoramic views of the surrounding landscape above the tree canopies.
- The first phases of the temples construction dates back to 100BC, with a later modification in the late classic phase around AD 600.



Temple II, Calakmul

- Temple II (or Structure II) is a massive north-facing pyramid temple, one of the largest in the Maya world.
- Its base measures 120 metres (390 ft) square and it stands over 45 metres (148 ft) high.
- In common with many temple pyramids in the Mesoamerican cultural region, the pyramid at Calakmul increased in size by building upon the pre-existing temple in order to increase its bulk.



MAYAN ARCHITECTURE (Notable Construction)

Structure B1-1, Tazumal

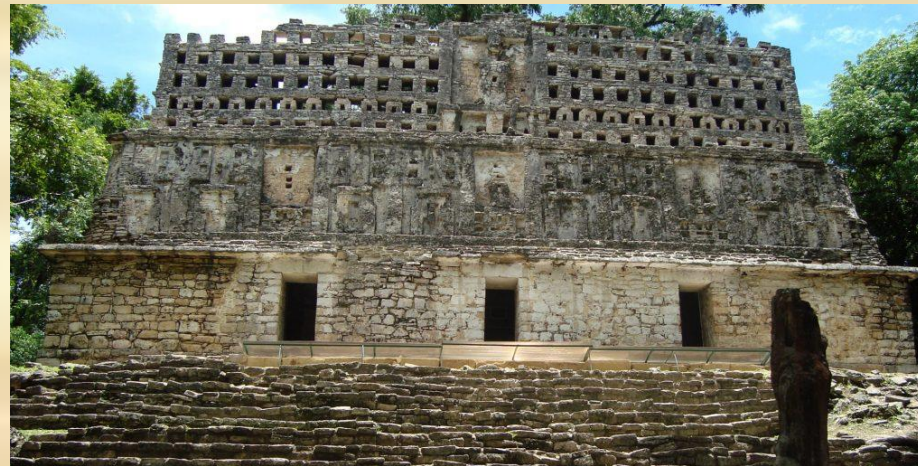
- Structure B1-1 is the principal structure in the Tazumal group and dominates the complex.
- The pyramid underwent various phases of construction through the Classic and Early Postclassic periods.
- Structure B1-1 was built upon a basal platform, called the Great Platform by Boggs, that measures 73 by 87 metres (240 by 285 ft) (east-west by north-south).
- The main pyramid B1-1 was built upon the Great Platform, behind the western platform and covering the original central temple.
- The Great Platform was remodelled at least three times before it reached its final dimensions.



MAYAN ARCHITECTURE (Notable Construction)

Structure 33, Yaxchilan

- Structure 33, in the Central Acropolis, has been described as a masterpiece in stone and was probably dedicated in 756 by Bird Jaguar IV.
- The structure overlooks the plaza and the river and would have been prominent to river traffic in the 8th century.
- In centre of the back wall of the structure, opposite the central doorway, is a niche containing the headless sculpture of a human figure, probably Bird Jaguar IV himself.



Observatories

- Maya astronomer-priests looked to the heavens for guidance.
- They used observatories, shadow-casting devices, and observations of the horizon to trace the complex motions of the sun, the stars and planets in order to observe, calculate and record this information in their chronicles, or "codices".
- From these observations, the Maya developed calendars to keep track of celestial movements and the passage of time.
- The Maya built observatories at many of their cities, and aligned important structures with the movements of celestial bodies. Some of these are temple groupings, such as a group of three at Uaxactún, which marks the Sun's rising position at summer solstice, the two equinoxes and winter solstice.



El Caracol, the Observatory, ChichenItza

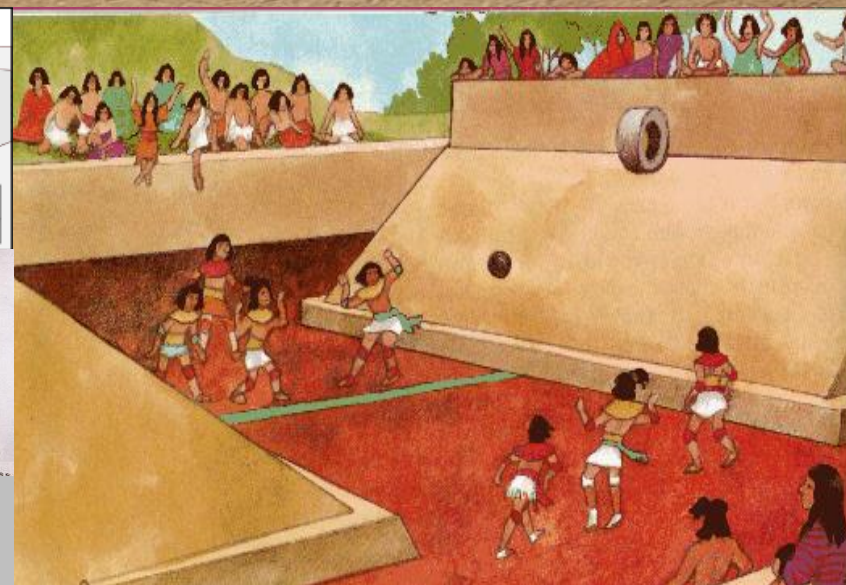
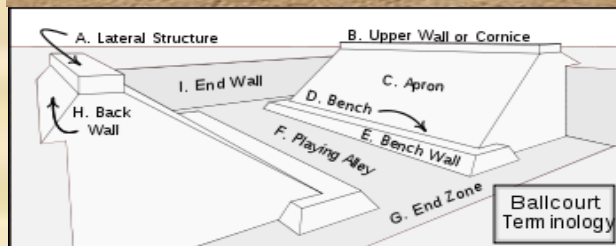
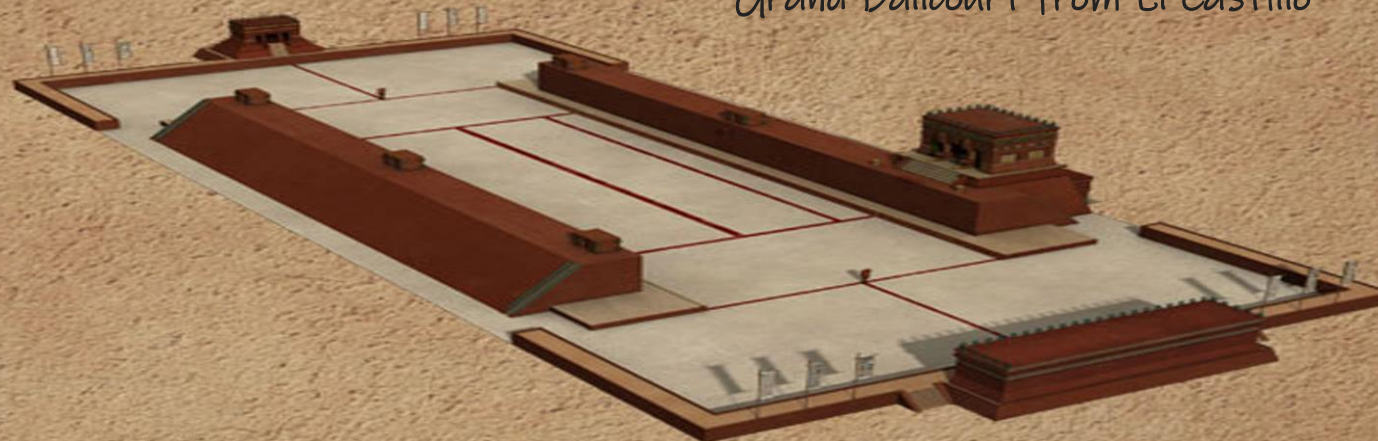


Ballcourts

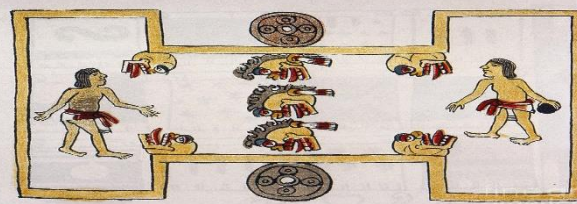
- As an integral aspect of the Mesoamerican lifestyle, the courts for their ritual ballgame were constructed throughout the Maya realm, often on a grand scale.
- The playing alleys of ballcourts were defined by two long walls.
- Courts built earlier in Maya history (as at Cobá) had sloped sides, while ones built later (as at Chichén Itzá) had vertical sides.
- Frequently, the ends were enclosed so as to create an I-shaped court when viewed from above.



Grand Ballcourt from El Castillo



Classic I shaped ball court in Chiuatan site, El Salvador



THANK YOU

