



# Mayan Government

The Maya civilization was composed to many city-states that each had its own independent government. City-states included the central city and surrounding settlements and agricultural areas. Sometimes they also included smaller cities. Archeologists think that at its peak, the Maya civilization included hundreds of city-states.

Each city-state had its own king. The Maya believed that the gods gave the kings the right to rule. They also believed that the kings could communicate with the gods. Councils of leaders who ran the government came from the noble class. Religion was an important part of Maya life, so the priests played a significant role in their government as advisors to the kings.

Mayan laws were very strict. Murder, arson, and acts against the gods were punishable by death. However, they did reduce sentences when these actions were accidental, or when the victim of the crime wanted to pardon the criminal. Other punishments included slavery, fines, and shaving the person's head (as a sign of shame). Local leaders or nobles (and occasionally kings) served as judges. Trials included witnesses and the presentation of evidence. The Maya did not have prisons, and punishment for the guilty was swift.

1. What is a city-state? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Describe who was involved in Mayan government. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. How did the Maya deal with crime? \_\_\_\_\_

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