

## Year 6 - Topic - Maya Architecture

### EXAMPLES OF THE THREE DIFFERENT TYPES OF MAYAN TEMPLE:

#### Tombs

Two untouched **tombs** have been discovered beneath **Mayan** pyramids in Guatemala. Archaeologists say that the secret **tombs** date back to 650-700AD, the same period of the disappearance of the **Mayan** Empire. It was very fortunate that archaeologists found them first before **tomb** raiders.



Mayan City of Palenque, Mexico (a tomb)

#### Who is buried there?

Archaeological finds indicate that the city of Palenque was occupied at least as early as 500 B.C. but reached its peak in the seventh century A.D. under the rule of K'inich Janaab Pakal, also known as "Pakal the Great."

When Pakal died at about age 80, he was **buried** along with five or six human sacrifices in a jade-filled tomb (including a jade funerary mask he wore) deep inside his pyramid. His sarcophagus shows the king's rebirth and depictions of his ancestors in the form of plants. The tomb was re-discovered in 1952.

## Mayan Astronomical Observation Structure

### El Castillo

El Castillo ('The Castle') is a step-pyramid, built between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Centuries as a temple to the god Kukulkan. The western and eastern sides of the temple are angled to the zenith (highest point) of sunset and nadir (lowest point) of sunrise, which may correspond with calendar events, such as the time for planting or harvesting crops.

Around the spring and autumn equinoxes, the late afternoon sun casts triangular shadows against the northwest balustrade, creating the optical illusion of a feathered serpent crawling down the pyramid.



## Maya Ball Court



A Mayan ceremonial ball court

**Maya Ballgame**, a branch of the **Mesoamerican Ballgame**, is a sport event that was played throughout the **Maya civilization**. The Maya civilization was spread out throughout much of Central America. One of the common links of the Mayan culture of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and Belize is the game played with a rubber ball. Maya ballgame was played in big stone courts. The ball court itself was a focal point of Maya cities and symbolized the city's **wealth and power**. The playing arena was in the shape of an I with high platforms on either side of the court allowing for large numbers of spectators. Portable stone court markers, known as *hacha*, usually depicting animals or skulls were placed around the **arena**. The game was played for up to 2 weeks.

### **HISTORY**

The Maya ball game originated more than 3,000 years ago. Through this ball game, a conflict of the forces of darkness and light is described and enacted. By tradition, the twin brothers, **Hun Hunaphu** and **Xbalanque**, used their time on earth to play ball. Through the noise of the game, the anger of **Vucub Came**, the master of the underworld, was aroused. A fight ensued,

from which resulted in the formation of the MBG. After the game, one of the brothers was decapitated and his head was used as the game ball. From the decapitated trunk of the player, blood escaped in the form of snakes. This blood was taken as a **symbol of fertility**. This scene is depicted in reliefs on the walls of Mayan ballgame courts, such as the most famous example in **Chichen Itza, Mexico**.

Taken from work by Mrs Piredda