

Maya Indians

by

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The Maya Indians are an ancient tribe. In 1839 a writer and an artist were riding mules along muddy trails in the Central American rainforest in search of ancient ruins. What they discovered was abandoned cities hidden for centuries from human eyes. The artist, Frederick Catherwood drew sketches of the very large carved pyramids and temples. John Lloyd Stephens wrote four books about this mysterious civilization. Since their

discovery of the ancient Maya, archaeologists have dug up and studied several monuments and tombs with treasures, and temples inside temples. There are dozens of monuments with hieroglyphs on them as well. The Maya Indians created the most complex writing system in the Americas.

The Maya Indians main source of food was maize. The Mayas in both highlands and lowlands have raised corn for about four thousand years. Their methods are still used today that were used by the Mayan farmers during the classic period. The new cornfields are called milpas. They choose well-drained forest areas before planting their crops. They have to do a lot of clearing and cutting down plants and trees. The farmer does most of this clearing in late autumn when the trees are dried up and dead. The Maya was very creative





in their art, sculptures, pottery, mathematics, and writing just to name a few. They wrote books, hundreds and perhaps thousands of them, but only four of them have survived. Perhaps their number system is most interesting. The Maya wrote them with a system of bars and dots. A dot represents the number one, a bar stands for five, and a shell stands for zero. The Maya were the first known people in the world -to develop the concept zero. The

Mayas count by twenties not by tens and they read their numbers from the bottom up. They used their numbers system to make calendars as well.

