

Maya civilization

- Southern part of Mexico, northern Guatemala
- Inhospitable area – yet developed system of agricultural, supplying large areas of population
- Slash & burn agriculture: cut growth and burned, then sowed field
- Priests served as intellectuals – more advanced than Europeans in math (Mayans developed concept of zero, Europeans still on Roman numerology)
- Became skilled astronomers; can see amid ruins of today a royal observatory
- Devised calendar – based on astronomical system
- Then ca. 900 AD – suddenly declined; political dominance ending; why?
 - System of agriculture collapsed (slash and burn inefficient, depletes nutrients)
 - Were victims of warfare, rebellion – architecture shows evidence of conflict (that Toltecs moved in and invaded; evidence – settlement called Chichen Itza – Mayan for “foreign”)
 - Mayan religious practices continued – yet no longer politically dominant