

BELIZE FACTS AND FIGURES

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SECTION: PART II: THE PEOPLE OF BELIZE AND THEIR HISTORY/MAYA RELIGION

Maya Religion

The Maya believed in many gods which were associated with natural phenomena. They believed that the universe was made of three layers: The invisible Upperworld, the visible Middleworld or the earth's surface and the invisible Underworld.

The Upperworld or heaven was comprised of 13 layers governed by 13 benevolent gods collectively called the *Oxlahuntiku*.

The Underworld also called *Xibalba* or the home of the dead was ruled by nine gods called the *Bolontiku*.



Depiction of the sun god, moon goddess, Bacabs and Venus at Xunantunich

Over a twenty-four hour period, the Sun god travelled through the 13 layers of heaven during the daytime and it traversed the 9 layers of *Xibalba* during the night.

Middle earth which was the home of man, the trees and animals was envisioned as occupying the back of a crocodile floating in a sea. At the centre of the world was the Ceiba or great sacred tree which held up the skies and connected the Upper, Middle and Lower Worlds. The corners of the skies were held up by supernatural beings called *bacabs* which were similar to rain gods.

The pantheon of Maya gods included the following:

Itzamna: the creator god

Kinich Ahaw: the sun god

Chak: the rain god

K'awil: the ruler god

Pawahtun: the sky god

Ix Chel: the goddess of medicine

The Maize god

The Death god

The Moon goddess

The Merchant god

The Hero twins

The paddler gods