

## MAYA ARCHITECTURE: Adventure game

### ROAD PLAN: Quest of the researcher

It's the end of the university semester. You are now free to leave behind your position as professor of archaeology to devote yourself entirely to your research in Central America. That's when you receive a phone call from a colleague who needs information to write an article on the Maya civilization. You cannot refuse this favor to a colleague who often invited you to give conferences. Since you don't have all the information in mind, you decide to postpone your trip to accomplish this research. Your library (the exhibition) is vast and the clues are minimal but you have an [index](#) that will help you to find the information. Here is the text to complete:

### The power of monuments

The appearance of monumental architecture in the (1)\_\_\_\_\_ Lowlands in the (2)\_\_\_\_\_ century B.C. marks the beginning of the Maya civilization and of its political-religious system.

The public monuments were, at the beginning, destined to the veneration of divinities and, later, the commemoration of rulers who became divine individuals, such as the ruler (3)\_\_\_\_\_ who founded the dynasty of the city of (4)\_\_\_\_\_ in the the year (5)\_\_\_\_\_ and was commemorated by the largest pyramid of the city covering his tomb located in a perfectly preserved temple or the ruler (6)\_\_\_\_\_ who was recognized in the (7)\_\_\_\_\_ century as the greatest ruler of the city of (8)\_\_\_\_\_ for his military conquests and was commemorated by the largest pyramid of the city covering his tomb located in a richly decorated crypt.

Thus, the ceremonial centers used periodically by shamans were transformed into urban centers controlled in permanence by rulers whose kingdom could be as vast as the city of (9)\_\_\_\_\_ spread over (10)\_\_\_\_\_ square kilometers in the middle of the Guatemala jungle. The temple (11)\_\_\_\_\_ of the city of (12)\_\_\_\_\_ dated to (13)\_\_\_\_\_ and originally built in perishable materials demonstrates this transition from a community use to an institutional function. Moreover, the monuments served to commemorate the military exploits of the rulers who gained prestige by conquering other kingdoms, such as the capture of the ruler (14)\_\_\_\_\_ of the city of (15)\_\_\_\_\_ by the ruler (16)\_\_\_\_\_ of the city of (17)\_\_\_\_\_ who regained its independence and erected the tallest know stelas.

As representatives of divinities, the rulers commanded the construction of fabulous temples, such as the temple (18)\_\_\_\_\_ of the city of (19)\_\_\_\_\_ built in the year (20)\_\_\_\_\_ by the ruler (21)\_\_\_\_\_ that represented, with its nine levels, the spirit world and the divine power of the ruler who had the exclusive use for ceremonies. These ceremonies, during which the ruler communicated with divinities, often took the form of a cult of ancestors reinforcing the transfer of divine powers to

individuals. In fact, new monuments are often in continuity with the old ones to symbolically legitimize the power of the new ruler which was based on his filiation with a divine ancestor.

Hence, each ruler had his own monuments built using a symbolism established since the founders, such as the duality of some ceremonial centers marked by the presence of two complexes separated by a central ballcourt that materializes a social structure based on the religious beliefs of the population. In fact, the monuments were built in great part to justify a stratified social order based on an unequal access to the spiritual world. Communication with the spiritual world being essential to the preservation of the cosmic order, the individuals who controlled it were in power.

This notion is central to the understanding of the abandonment of the Maya cities if we assume that the monuments have no more importance than the rulers that they represent and would lose their importance if the rulers should fail their responsibilities.

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