

WOMEN DURING MAYAN TIMES: MAYAN QUEENS

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Black African Studies: Women during Pre-colonial, colonial, & Post-colonial time

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INTRODUCTION

There were three types of groups that were native to Central and South America. They were called the Mayas and were found in Mexico and Central America. The Incas were in Northern Mesoamerica. Then Aztecs were found in South America. They were each different in their own way. Since each was in different areas they had different beliefs. The Mayans are what I found interesting. So I'll be discussing the Lady of Tikal and the Mayans during their pre, during, and post colonial times and how it affected them. Also how this correlates to Women in Africa and their similarities.



LADY OF TIKAL



Mayas seem to settle around 1800 B.C. they were also most known in Mesoamerica which was used to describe Mexico and South America before the Spanish conquered in the 16th century. Lady of Tikal was around since AD 504, she was known as the Mayan Queen of Tikal and was only six years old. In “Lady of Tikal” by Edwin Shook it states “Her appointment and long rule as queen shows that from the very beginnings of history it is possible that man and woman can rule together equally and peacefully.” This goes back to women in Africa before colonization men and women were equal and there weren’t segregated and treated differently because of their gender. In "Power and Womanhood in Africa" by Oseni Taiwo it says "Women were treated with unparalleled respect because they were seen to be closer to the creator than men ever had the potential of being. This is because women themselves had the ability to create due to the fact that they were able to give birth." (pg 3) Meaning that women were able to do something like bring another human life to this Earth, which is a big role for a woman. Lady Tikal would perform ceremonies dedicated to Kaloomte’ Balam.

INTRODUCTION

While the queen of Tikal was very young when she was ruling she wasn't alone. In "the queen of middle classic Tikal" by Simon martin it says "but the same monument provides evidence that she did not rule alone. Its front face carries the portrait of a male figure, his name appearing on a side text as the stela's 'owner'." Showing that the queen had some help since she was very young and she had been helped by men. As time went on there was a decline in the community. But that didn't stop the Spanish from conquering them. This is similar to women in Africa because many men and women had their style of living which was women were running their businesses and men weren't the one source of income. People in Africa were doing their own thing and didn't know anything different until Europeans came along. As we read in the Shona women of Zimbabwe by, during the pre-colonial women were the ones to bring money to the household. They had their own business and were thriving. But when colonizers came, they started taking these things away from women.

MAYANS LIFESTYLE: PRE-COLONIAL TIMES MAYAN



Mayans were found in Mexico, the Yucatan Peninsula, Guatemala, Belize, and western parts of El Salvador and Honduras. While they were divided into the northern lowland (Yucatan Peninsula), southern lowlands (northern Guatemala, portions of Mexico, western Honduras, and Belize), and southern highlands (Southern Guatemala) they were all growing corn, beans, squash, and cassava. Around this time they were also building cities out of bricks and stones. If you go to some of these countries you can still find some of the work they've created. There were many different time periods. One of them is the Olmec period, according to "Maya Civilization" by Joshua J Mark he states "The Olmecs settled along the Gulf of Mexico and began building great cities of stone and brick. The famous Olmec heads strongly suggest highly sophisticated skill in sculpture and the first indications of Shamanic religious practices date from this period." The Mayas were also known to be very religious and believed in many gods and these gods had a lot to do with nature. Their culture is surrounded heavily by god and had many rituals and ceremonies.

DURING COLONIAL TIMES

During colonial times, the Spanish started to conquer Yucatan, which is where it all began. As the decline of Yucatan began, they had a lady of Izamal. Lady of Izamal was known to help her community. In “our lady of Izamal” it states “the Izamal virgin became known for her many miracles, including becoming too heavy to transport when a move to Valladolid was attempted, but mainly for the trips, she made to Mérida, freeing it of various epidemics and plagues of locusts” which was around the 16th century, this period is called the postclassic. The Tikal was abandoned because of the decline of their city. The Mayas were known to be hostile to the Spanish due to their building a Christian church on top of a large pyramid that was important to the Mayas. But what made the Mayans different from the Incas and Aztecs the Mayans had many political centers. The Spanish would have to overthrow them one by one.

DURING COLONIAL TIMES

According to “the Decline of the Mayas” it says “myths of gold and precious metals motivated many Spanish forces to capture and dominate the Maya lands. However, the yucatán does not offer rich mining opportunities, and some areas were difficult to navigate because of the dense jungle environment” This means there were misconceptions as to why the Spanish wanted to take over which wasn’t for money but for the land itself. Many Mayans had restrictions and weren’t allowed to do many things. In “how colonialism destroyed Mayans astronomy” by Wil Parada it states “Mayans were forbidden from speaking their native language, partaking in their native religious rituals, and made to serve the Spanish through perpetual forced labor. In the 16th century bishop, Diego de Landa burned perhaps thousands of books during the Spanish inquisition”. The colonizers were trying to strip away the Mayans from their culture by silencing them. The Mayans also invented math, astronomy, and calendars but they have never been credited for it. This relates to women in Africa because many of the pyramids we have today wouldn’t have been built without math and geometry which the greeks stole from the Egyptians. As we learned through reading many Europeans felt threatened by the way black women were in power. This led them to take away women’s power by taking away their businesses leading women to rely on men for income. Also, many men were taken away from their villages to do work for the Europeans leaving women in Africa to be alone.

POSTCOLONIAL

During post-colonial times there was an Anti-Discrimination Law that many Maya organizations declined because they thought it was too general and in a way they felt as though it denied the existence of their people. In “The Maya Movement, Post-colonialism And Cultural Agencies” by Arturo Arias it states “Other Maya organizations complained that congressmen did not consult with them, or even consider their opinion, let alone incorporate their recommendation, said Marta Lopez.” Meaning that many Mayans were going unheard and organizations were not listening to what they had to say. Also, European Christian beliefs rubbed off on the Mayans. In “The Spanish conquest and the Maya collapse” by Elizabeth Graham, Scott E. Simmons & Christine D. White it states “About Maya conversion to Christianity in the sixteenth century, the writers of the documents categorized Maya behaviors – such as rituals carried out in churches – as evidence of apostasy and rebellion” meaning that the Europeans had them shift from what they usually do to being done in churches which were popular within Europeans.

MAYAN RITUALS AND CEREMONIES



WHAT HAPPENED TO THE LADIES¹¹ OF TIKAL AND IZAMAL?

They also still celebrate Izamal although as time went on. In “Lady of Izamal” it states “Izamal remains to this day a place of religious pilgrimage for the Catholic congregation, for the unassuming statue Our Lady of Izamal (the Immaculate Conception) has been proclaimed the patron of Yucatán, and she is celebrated each December 8 with a big fiesta, with many activities taking place for a week beforehand.” This shows that although Europeans had negative effects on the Mayans it didn’t take away one of the ladies they looked up to. We can relate this to women in Africa because treating women differently to men was foreign in Africa but after the colonization, it shifted that. Europeans would segregate women and men and treat them differently. Which led to them adopting that and carrying it on for generations. Lady of Tikal was a queen during Mayan times and she was a big part of pre-colonial times. At the young age of 6, she was helping her community and involved with the region. During and post-colonial times she wasn’t around but she still left a big impact. Lady of Izamal was around during post-colonial times and she had a huge impact on her community.

LADY OF IZAMAL



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THANK YOU

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