

*Religion and Ritual in the Yucatan*  
**MAYAN CULTURE**



**Mayan J'Men Jose Tamay**

lives in the Mayan village of Xcalacoop, nearby Chichen Itza, Yucatan, Mexico. Jose Tamay is an active Maya Foundation In Laakeech's Board of Trustees who celebrates many Mayan holistic rituals and sacred ceremonies with utmost respect and honor to Junab K'uj (Mayan Supreme God) and to the Mayan spiritual guardians at the Hacienda Chichen sacred ceremonial grounds. His kind spirit and dedication to the Maya sacred traditions has earned him the respect of J-Men Elders and Senior Mayan Wiseman in Yucatan, Mexico.

### What does being a Mayan healer involve?

In an effort to preserve and share our Mayan ancestors' traditions and wisdom, we, J-Men or Mayan Holistic Healers and Priests, continue teaching and practicing sacred Mayan knowledge, healing and spiritual traditions passed verbally and practices from generation to generation. As a J'Men I have the privilege to serve God and my community health and spiritual needs and continue preserving my Mayan spiritual heritage and Mayan Cosmo-vision knowledge to future generations.

### What does the title J'Men mean?

To the Maya people, a J'Men is a "Holistic Healer and Shaman", J'Men is the titled given by the Senior Healers and Priest to a respected Medicine Wiseman known for his understanding of holistic Mayan healing and sacred healing rituals. Maya people healing requires more than knowledge of medicinal plants and natural remedies... a J'Men works with Mayan sacred healing rituals and ceremonies as well as with spiritual "vision" and "insight" to understand a person's Chu'el (integral energies: souls, mind, body, emotions, aura, and non-physical bodies). A person's Chu'el holistic harmony may be imbalance due to internal or external factors that affect a person's wholeness and can manifest in spiritual, mental, emotional, or/and physical ailments.

### Can you describe your "education?"

I have studied with many Mayan J'Men and medicine females that have taught me about Mayan medicinal plants, preparation of healing remedies, healing techniques and holistic healing energy care as well as the importance of holistic healing rituals and ceremonies... all part of the Mayan Healing traditions still practice today in Yucatan and other Mayan lands in Central America. Senior Mayan Priest and Elder J'Men, Don Bartolomee Poot Nahuat has taken me under his guidance and teachings for many years as he recognizes the spiritual healing gift in me and is committed to helping me grow in my medicinal and shamanic education and service to my people.

### Can you tell us about your home village?

Xcalacoop is a Mayan rural village 8km away from the ancient Mayan archaeological zone of Chichen Itza, in Yucatan, Mexico. My grandfather was one of the founders of Xcalacoop many years ago. Xcalacoop is a Mayan name that means "between two dried cenotes or "rejoyadas" as these natural geological formations are called in Spanish.

### What do the Maya believe about the creation of Man?

Many Mayan people after the Spanish Colonial Conquest began blending Mayan spiritual beliefs with Catholicism and Christian teachings; since then, scientific studies have proved that man has evolved from primal life forms and forces in the planet. That said, I think I best answer the question by saying that ancient Mayan mythology portrays Gods and Deities first creating "Man" out of clay, but this creature was not satisfying to them, so clay-man dissolved and crumbled away.

The Mayan gods then created a being of wood which had no soul; thus, this "wood-manly-being" had no recollection of its creators; so the gods had it burn. Then the Maya Gods and Deities chose to form a third kind of man, this time from corn and they were pleased. Therefore, ancient Mayas believed, and many of us respect such belief but understand its symbolism, to be the son's of maize.

### Can you offer an historic overview of Maya culture?

The ancient Maya civilization is the highest cultural legacy of Mesoamerica. The Maya are believed to originate in the Yucatán around 2600 B.C. They developed the mathematical position of zero, along with a highly advance understanding of many sciences including a unique mathematical system, impressive knowledge about the cosmos astronomy, exact multi-calendar system, majestic architectural achievements, medicinal care including herbal healing, sacred holistic ceremonies, and a complex hieroglyphic writing combining phonetic suffixes, prefixes and detailed artistic symbols within its format.

### What is nature's role in Mayan life?

Our understanding and observation of Nature, Earth's cycles, the Cosmos, life and death, play an important role in the Maya Spiritual and Religious beliefs and way of life.

The shamanic Mayan traditions teach us (J'Men) that humans are a holistic expression of the Universe's cosmic creative intelligence; we are expressions of spiritual unfolding living consciousness manifested in a soul/body hologram emerging within planet Earth's evolutionary trajectory.

Maya Cosmo-vision traditions help us appreciate that we share a common holistic foundation of existence with all living matter (Mother Nature) and non-visual powers of our planet. Spiritual reverence in our daily appreciation of our planet's natural life source, and reconciliation with our planets unique living global system is a central teaching in the Mayan holistic spiritual traditions.

### Traditional Mayan Ceremony



**Can you describe the Mayan calendar?**

The Maya timekeepers created many calendars by calculating various celestial orbits. The solar calendar of 365 days is called "Haab;" it is divided into 18 months of 20 days, each with a period of 5 days called "Uayeb," were left over at the end of the year. The most important calendar cycle for the Maya J'Men or Healer is the Tzolkin, a ritual calendar of 260 days also known as the Sacred Almanac.

Every day in the Tzolkin and in the "Haab" calendar has a unique corresponding position in time. Each day's position in the calendars only repeats itself every 52 solar years. A cycle of 52 solar years, called the Sacred Calendar Round intermeshes with both Haab and Tzolkin calendars to form a calendar system of the Maya's Cosmo-vision and time.

This Holographic Mayan Calendar System includes the Long Count Mayan Calendar cycle with its fifty two thousand solar calendar year periods, counted as units of time/space cycles. The Maya interlocking calendar Cosmo-vision and interpretation of time and space was perfected during the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium A.D. by ancient Mayan Wiseman and still fascinates even today's scholars for its accuracy and hologram simplicity of a complex mathematical calculation and interpretation of time/space. The Maya LONG COUNT Calendar - The Maya calculated dates millions of years in the past and the future for ritual purposes with the use of their "Long Count" which records the total number of days that have elapsed since the Mayan ancient date zero day 0.0.0.0.0 to the correlated date, August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3114 B.C. in our Gregorian calendar.

The present Haab calendar cycle will end on 13.0.0.0.0 or December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2012 A.D. in our Gregorian calendar. December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2012 Winter Solstice marks not only the conclusion of the present Haab and Maya Long Count calendar, but in astronomic terms in such time the Sun will conjunct with the plane of the ecliptic intersection of the Milky Way; this rare astronomical event was calculated with extreme exactitude by ancient Mayan Wiseman.

**What would you tell readers/potential visitors about Maya architecture?**

Ancient Maya had a spectacular and advance architecture; many of the Mayan ancient cities and pyramids were based on Maya Cosmo-vision and in many instances served as temples to honor the Gods and the Royal families. All ancient Mayan pyramids were made of hand cut limestone blocks carefully aligned to form intricate architectural designs with impressive stone reliefs depicting many aspects of the Cosmos, life, death, warfare, mythology, and royal lineage. The complexity of ancient Mayan architecture design and its majestic beauty speaks of the cultural and scientific achievements this civilization reached.

**Could you describe some of the Maya Gods and how the significance of the elements?**

The intricate complexity of Mayan spiritual belief system and Cosmovision, All of these gods and deities have a dualistic nature and qualities, normally associated with day & night, life & death, health & illness, light & dark, etc. Ancient Mayan Gods, deities and supernatural beings, represent different aspects of the Cosmos, they also play an important roll in many aspects of human life and their calendar cycles a number, day, week, month or year within their calendar systems and/or a symbolic cycles observed by the Maya in nature. Today rural Mayans have transferred many of their ancient spiritual connection to a mix of Mayan spirituality and mythology to the Catholic faith as a result of many years of oppression and discrimination caused by years of Colonization of our people.

**FIRE** follows the blessing of the water as the symbol of purification and energy. New Fire is offered to Junab K'uj (Supreme God) prior to initiating all rituals or ceremonies.

**EARTH** and gifts of Mother Nature are an integral part of a J'Men healing elements, specially sacred Mayan clays and medicinal plants, sacred stones and gems, tree bark, leafs, and roots, as well as honey and corn are all part of the spiritual connection that help the Mayan healer cure and restore the life energy flow in each of us.

**AIR** is the element that carries vital energy and the spirit of life. Chanting and prayer help bring powerful vibrations that heal a person's mind, emotions, and body. The spiritual power of wind and sahumados (copal or burning aromas) purify and unblock the effects of block energy and emotional trauma. Visions play an important assistant part of the healer's tools.

**Recommended Resources**

For great articles and images on Mayan culture visit: [www.yucatanadventure.com](http://www.yucatanadventure.com)

**Embrace eco-tourism and cultural heritage at Hacienda Chichen**

Come experience the mystical energy of Maya sacred ceremonies or learn from Maya Senior J-Men Wiseman and Ix-Men Healers wisdom at:

[www.haciendachichen.com](http://www.haciendachichen.com)

