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### **Maya: The Blood of Kings**

Maya: The Blood of Kings is a documentary episode from the TV series Lost Civilizations. It explores the history and culture of the Maya civilization, focusing on the city of Palenque in present-day Mexico. The episode begins with an overview of the Maya civilization, highlighting their art, architecture, mathematics, and astronomy achievements. It then focuses on Palenque, one of the most important Maya cities during the Classic period (250-900 CE).

The documentary follows the story of Palenque's most famous ruler, K'inich Janaab' Pakal, who ruled the city from 615 to 683 CE. The episode explores Pakal's life, achievements, and the significance of his burial chamber, which was discovered in 1952. The episode delves into the religious beliefs of the Maya, including their worship of the gods and their practices of human sacrifice. The documentary examines the role of bloodletting and hallucinogenic drugs in Maya religious rituals. Throughout the episode, archaeologists and historians provide insights and analysis of the Maya civilization and its culture. The documentary concludes with a discussion of the decline of the Maya civilization and the theories surrounding its collapse.

As illustrated in the film, the "cultural screen" of the Mayan society refers to the cultural beliefs, practices, and values that shaped the Maya civilization. The documentary explores various aspects of the Mayan culture, including their religious beliefs, art, architecture, and social structure. One key factor of the cultural screen of the Mayan society that the film highlights are their spiritual practices. The Mayans had a complex pantheon of gods and

goddesses. Their religious beliefs influenced many aspects of their lives, from the construction of monumental architecture to the practice of human sacrifice. The film shows how the Mayan elite used their religious authority to reinforce their power and status.

The documentary also highlights the importance of art and architecture in the Mayan culture. The Mayans created stunning works of art, including intricate carvings and paintings, which were used to convey religious, political, and social messages. The film explores the symbolism and meaning behind many of these works. Another aspect of the cultural scene of the Mayan society that the film examines is their social structure. The Mayan civilization was highly hierarchical, with a ruling elite controlling political and economic power. The documentary shows how this elite used art, architecture, and religious rituals to reinforce their position and maintain social control.

The Maya civilization made significant technological advancements, particularly in agriculture, architecture, and mathematics, that helped define their culture and society. The Maya developed an extensive system of agriculture that allowed them to sustain large populations in areas with poor soil conditions. They constructed raised fields, terraces, and canals, which enabled them to grow crops such as maize, beans, and squash. This agricultural system allowed the Maya to build their civilization and develop their culture around agriculture, such as creating rituals and ceremonies related to farming.

The Maya were renowned for their impressive architectural feats, such as the construction of giant pyramids, temples, and palaces. They used advanced building techniques, such as corbel arches and plastering, to create aesthetically pleasing and durable structures. The architectural achievements of the Maya defined their culture and served as symbols of their power and status. The Maya made significant advancements in mathematics, including using the

concept of zero, developing a positional numbering system, and creating the Long Count calendar. These mathematical innovations helped the Maya with astronomical observations, architectural designs, and agricultural practices. The use of mathematics also played a significant role in developing their culture, including their religious and astronomical beliefs. The Maya developed a sophisticated writing system that used hieroglyphs to represent sounds and ideas. This writing system allowed the Maya to record their history, political events, religious beliefs, and cultural practices. The Maya also used writing to create works of art, including stone carvings and painted books. The ability to record their culture and history in writing helped to define their civilization and preserve their cultural heritage.

The hierarchical system of the Maya civilization was a complex social structure with a ruling elite at the top and a large lower class at the bottom. Here is a brief overview of the different levels of the hierarchy and their responsibilities to the general welfare of society. At the top of the Maya order were the ruling elites, which consisted of the king, the nobles, and the priests. This group controlled political and economic power, and their primary responsibility was to maintain social order, protect the kingdom from external threats, and ensure that the gods were appeased. They achieved this through the construction of monumental architecture, the organization of religious ceremonies, and the use of military force.

Below the ruling elite were middle-class citizens, which included merchants, artisans, and scribes. This group played a crucial role in the economy and was responsible for producing goods and services for the ruling elite and the lower class. They were also responsible for maintaining social order and serving as a buffer between the ruling elite and the lower class. Most of the Maya population was in the lower class, including farmers, laborers, and enslaved people. This group was responsible for agricultural production and other forms of manual labor.

They were also required to pay tribute to the ruling elite, provide military service, and participate in religious ceremonies. The lower class was the backbone of the Maya economy and provided the labor necessary to sustain the civilization.

Reference:

Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Maya." Encyclopedia Britannica, January 6, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Maya-people>. Accessed March 31, 2023.