



jaguar (perhaps representing the planet Venus), emerging from the mouth of a giant animal which represents the earth. They constructed pyramids for ceremonial purposes and also as burial sites of important persons, since skeletal remains and funerary objects have been found in rooms under the pyramids. Since these practices are also found in Mayan culture, it has been assumed that the Mayans adopted at least some of the Olmec beliefs. There is also evidence that Mayan culture was influenced, probably at a later time, by invasions from areas around present-day Mexico City, i.e., from the Toltecs and early Aztecs. The Mayans, in turn, also influenced the Aztecs.

Following the Olmecs was the Izapan culture located along the western side of what is now Guatemala. Since Izapan writing and stone monuments are similar to those of the Mayas, it is assumed that they were the immediate antecedents of Mayan culture, which emerged around the fourth century in the Chiapas province of Mexico and adjoining area of Guatemala, whose name is the modern form of the Nahuatl word “Cuautemallan” or “place of many trees.”

Another Mexican culture, the Mixtec (pronounced “Mish-tek”), lived in Oaxaca, Puebla, and part of Guerrero in southwest Mexico. Their origin is obscure. They were probably influenced by Olmecs and flourished prior to arrival in their area of the Toltecs. They had extended periods of warfare with their rivals, the Zapotecs, as well as with the Aztecs, before they were subjugated by the Spanish. Little is known of their religious beliefs and neither