

The Aztec and Inca Empires

AP World History Notes
Chapter 13



General Info

- Aztecs = in Mexico and Central America
- Incas = in South America
- Both lacked: work animals, metal tools, wheels
- Both still developed: centralized governments & armies and both conquered other empires
- Both ended when: conquered by the Spanish



Aztec Empire



Inca Empire



Aztec Empire

- Capital = Tenochtitlan (modern-day Mexico City)
- Agricultural center and marketplace



Aztec Empire

- Built chinampas = **artificial islands** used for farming made by piling mud from the lake onto rafts → floating gardens
- As population grew, Aztecs expanded outside of the city → built canals and bridges to connect the mainland to the island where the capital was





The Empire

- Stretched from Mexico to the border of Guatemala
- Stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean
- Conquered people had to pay tribute (taxes) in the form of: food, clothing, raw materials, prisoners for sacrifice, jewelry, military supplies, rubber balls, etc.



The Empire

- Aztec civilization organized as a hierarchy
 - At the top = the emperor
 - Classes = nobility, commoners, serfs, slaves
 - Land owned by: nobility and commoners
 - Commoners = priests, merchants, artisans, farmers
 - Serfs = farm workers tied to noble lands
 - Lowest class = slaves = prisoners of war; criminals; debtors – often sacrificed





Huey Tlatoani



Tecuhtli (Lords) & Pilli (Nobles)



Pochtecatl (Merchants)



Macehualli (Commoners)



Mayeque (Slaves)



Religion & the Arts

- Religion moved them to engage in war and sacrifice
- Live human sacrifices were needed to keep the gods happy
- Aztec artists decorated temple-pyramids with scenes of gods or battles
- Writers glorified Aztec victories in their works



Quetzalcoatl

God of dying & resurrection

The Inca Empire

- Lived in the Andes Mountains in South America
- Empire stretched about 2500 miles along the Andes
- Capital = Cuzco



The Inca Empire

- Raided other tribes and slowly built a large empire
- Strong central government → local rulers had to report to Inca emperor
 - Unlike the Aztec Empire, which had no centralized government or complex administration



The Inca Empire

- Emperor closely controlled the lives of common people
 - Owned all land and carefully regulated the growing & distribution of food
 - Farmers used step terraces on hillsides
 - Part of all crops after every harvest went to emperor as taxes



The Inca Empire

- Work crews built roads & bridges to link different regions of the empire
- Gods pleased with food, animal, and human sacrifices
 - Not even close to the scale of the Aztecs
- No writing system → used quipus to record information = ropes with knotted cords of different lengths



The Inca Empire

■ Mita = labor service used

■ Required periodically of every household

■ Required to work for the state

■ Examples: farming, herding, mining, crafting manufactured goods, construction

■ In return: state provided elaborate feasts for the people



“Gender Parallelism”

- Both the Aztec and Inca Empires used this system with men and women
- Separate spheres and responsibilities, but each one equally valuable
- Each had autonomy in its own sphere
- Did NOT mean total gender equality

