



# Unit 4: The Americas





# South America





## Main Idea

Several early cultures in South America adapted to extreme environmental conditions. One of them, the Inca, built one of the biggest and most powerful empires in the Americas.

## Focus

1. How did early cultures of South America adapt to their environments?
2. How was the Inca Empire organized?

## Key Terms

Pachacuti

Quipu

Census

**What are the gigantic designs in the desert of Peru?** Since the 1920s scientists have studied some mysterious

lines in the Peruvian desert. These lines formed images of plants and animals up to several hundred feet long. Some scholars think the Nazca people created the lines more than 2,000 years ago. But how did the Nazca create them and what purpose did they serve?

Scholars know that the lines were made by removing the top, darker layer of the desert floor to expose lighter ground underneath, but they can only theorize about their purpose. Perhaps the lines pointed to movements of the sun or planets. Or perhaps they were sacred pathways or had other religious functions. ■

# AN Ancient Desert Mystery

▼ Although visible at ground-level, lines in the desert form designs so large they can only be clearly seen from the sky.







# Early Cultures of South America

- The western region of South America is one of environmental contrasts.
- The coastal desert is one of the driest places on earth.
- The Andes, which run almost the length of the continent, form the second-highest mountain range in the world.
- On the eastern slopes of the Andes is a region of steamy rain forests.
- In spite of these geographical extremes, many early peoples learned to adapt to their environments and built advanced civilizations there.





# Chavin

- One early people, the Chavín (chah-veen), lived in the highlands of Peru from about 900 to 200 BC.
- The center of Chavín culture was a site called Chavín de Huantar.
- It was an urban religious and trading center with a population of about 3,000 farmers, craftspeople, and others.





# Chavin

- Because Chavín de Huantar lay on the slopes of the Andes, farmers in the region had access to several distinct ecological zones.
- As a result, they were able to grow several different types of crops.
- In the warmer valleys, they built irrigation systems and grew corn.





# Chavin

- Higher in the mountains, where it was cooler, they grew potatoes.
- In the high-altitude grasslands, they raised animals such as llamas and alpacas.
- These same farming and herding strategies continued in later Andean societies.







# Moche

- In the coastal desert of Peru, the Moche also learned how to adapt to their environment.
- They were able to farm in the desert by building irrigation canals that channeled the flow of streams from the Andes to their crops.
- From about 400 BC to 600 AD the Moche lived in farming and fishing villages.
- They also had an urban capital centered around two great pyramids.





# Moche

- The Moche were probably best known for their skilled metalwork in gold and silver and for their pottery.
- Moche pottery depicted scenes from daily life, such as weaving and hunting.
- Religion and war were also common themes.
- From Moche pottery, archeologists have been able to determine that warrior-priests ruled Moche society and that they expanded their territory through warfare.









# Nazca

- Another desert people, the Nazca, lived from about 200 BC to AD 600.
- The Nazca are best known for the huge designs they made on the desert floor.
- These Nazca Lines show geometric shapes and outlines of animals such as a monkey, a hummingbird, and a spider.
- There are many theories as to why the Nazca created these large-scale drawings and designs.
- One theory is that they may have had something to do with the location of water.





# Nazca

- Water was very important in the desert.
- The Nazca built irrigation canals and also relied on the natural springs and the annual flooding of streams to water their crops.
- This way, they were able to farm in the desert and support a large population.





Homework: Answer the following question  
What problems did the environments of South America create, and how did early cultures solve these problems?





# The Inca Empire



# The Inca Empire

- Many years after the earliest civilizations began in western South America, the Incas brought the entire Andes region into one empire.
- They began as a small tribe in the Andes, but by the early 1500s their empire extended along almost the entire Pacific coast and throughout the Andes.





# Government

- The Incas began their period of rapid expansion in the 1400s.
- From their capital at Cuzco, their leader *Pachacuti* used political alliances and military force to gain control of a huge territory.
- Later Inca leaders continued the expansion.
- At its height, in the early 1500s, the Inca Empire had a population of about 12 million.







# Government

- To rule such a large empire, the Incas needed a strong government.
- The emperor had most of the power.
- However, he needed help to rule areas far from the capital because the Incas did not want people they conquered to gain too much power and rebel.
- To limit the power of various local leaders, the Incas made leaders of conquered areas move out of their villages.





# Government

- They then moved in new leaders who were loyal to the Inca Empire.
- This system of resettlement created stability in the empire.
- The military was also used to protect against internal rebellion and external attacks.



## FACES OF HISTORY

# PACHACUTI

Died 1471



Pachacuti was the most powerful ruler in Inca history. He became emperor in about 1438. Under his rule, the Inca Empire had its period of

greatest expansion. In addition to gaining territory, Pachacuti rebuilt the Inca capital at Cuzco.

Pachacuti was also responsible for many government reforms. For example, he began the policy of sending government officials to rule different areas of the empire. He also established an official religion and an official language, Quechua. These changes brought unity and stability to an empire that governed diverse groups of people.

**Infer** How would Pachacuti's establishing an official religion and language help him govern the Inca Empire?





# Economy

- The government strictly controlled the economy in the empire.
- The common people in the empire were required to “pay” a labor tax called the *mita*.
- Women could fulfill the *mita* by activities such as weaving cloth for the army.
- Men worked on government-owned farms, in mines, or built roads.
- The government said what work would be done.





# Economy

- There were no merchants or markets as we know them in the Inca Empire.
- Instead, government officials distributed goods around the empire.
- This was how the Incas supplied their army and people who were old or sick with the goods they needed.
- Any extra food or goods were stored in government warehouses for use in emergencies.





# Economy

- To keep track of the movement of goods throughout the empire, the Inca used a quipu, or set of colored and knotted cords.
- The colors and knots represented numbers or dates.
- The quipu was the only system of record keeping in the empire because the Incas had no written language.
- The Inca used quipus to record information such as tax records, quantities of livestock, and census, or population, data.
- Only specially trained officials could read and use quipus. Scholars today have not been able to fully decipher these Inca records.







# Economy

- Quipu keepers, officials who distributed tribute goods, the army, and many other people relied on an extensive road network.
- Roads linked cities all over the empire.
- The Inca road system improved communication and helped the government control the economy.





# Society

- In the Central Andes, each family was grouped with others into a cooperative community called an *ayllu* (eye-yoo).
- Members of the *ayllu* worked together in activities such as farming, building canals or terraces, and performing religious rituals.
- Under the Incas, each group of ten *ayllus* had a chief.
- That chief reported to a higher level government official and so on in groups of ten. In this way, the *ayllu* was at the end of a chain of command that stretched from the local level throughout the empire all the way to the emperor.





# Society

- In spite of the cooperation in the *ayllus*, there were still clear class divisions in Inca society.
- There were no slaves in the Inca Empire, but most people belonged to the lower class.
- They were farmers, artisans, or servants.
- Inca laws required that they wear only plain clothes and restricted them from owning any more goods than they needed.
- The lower class had to serve the upper class.







# Society

- The upper class, which included the king, government officials, and priests, lived in Cuzco, the capital.
- These elite, high-ranking members of society had good stone houses and wore fine clothes.
- They did not have to pay the labor tax.
- Sons of Inca nobles attended school where they studied religion, history, law, and the quipu to prepare for lives as government or religious officials.





# Society

- Religion was a key element of Inca society.
- People throughout the empire were allowed to worship local gods, but the sun god was the most important god in the official Inca religion.
- The Incas believed their kings were related to the sun god.
- The mummies of dead kings were kept in Cuzco and worshipped.





# Society

- Priests performed ceremonies for this god at the main temple in Cuzco.
- These ceremonies often included sacrifices of llamas, cloth, or food.
- The Incas only sacrificed humans on rare occasions.







# Achievements

- **The** level of organization of Inca government and society led to significant achievements in the areas of engineering and the arts.
- The Incas were particularly talented builders.
- They built temples, forts, and roads out of huge stone blocks.
- They cut the blocks to fit so precisely that they did not need mortar to hold them together.
- These Inca structures were built so well that many still stand today, and even today it is nearly impossible to slip a knife blade between the stones.





# Achievements

- In the arts, the Incas were especially skilled in metalwork and weaving.
- Artisans made intricate ornaments out of gold and silver.
- They even created a life-sized field of corn out of gold and silver in a temple courtyard.
- Inca weavers worked with both wool and cotton.





# Achievements

- They divided cloth into three categories—plain cloth used for households, finer cloth used for taxes and trade, and special cloth used only for royal and religious purposes.
- The Incas used a variety of patterns for their textiles.
- A particular pattern indicated an Inca's status in society.







# Achievements

- In spite of the high level of organization and achievement, the Inca Empire lasted only about 100 years.
- It began to suffer from internal conflict. The arrival of the Spanish in Peru in 1532 would mark the end of the Inca Empire just as the Spanish arrival had for the Aztecs.





Homework: Answer the following question

What methods did the government use to control the Inca Empire?