

Inca
AP World History
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Like the Aztecs, the Inca built their empire on cultural foundations thousands of years old. Ancient civilizations such as Chavín, Moche, and Nazca had already established a tradition of high culture in Peru. They were followed by the Huari and Tiahuanaco cultures of southern Peru and Bolivia. The Chimú, an impressive civilization of the 1300s based in the northern coastal region once controlled by the Moche, came next. The Inca would create an even more powerful state, however, extending their rule over the entire Andean region.

The Inca originally lived in a high plateau of the Andes. After wandering the highlands for years, the Inca finally settled on fertile lands in the Valley of Cuzco. By the 1200s, they had established their own small kingdom in the valley. During this early period, the Inca developed traditions and beliefs that helped launch and unify their empire. One of these traditions was the belief that the Incan ruler was descended from the sun god, Inti, who would bring prosperity and greatness to the Incan state. Only men from one of 11 noble lineages believed to be descendants of the sun god could be selected as Incan leaders.

The Inca also practiced ancestor veneration and mummification. Mummification was only one type of burial employed by the Incas and was an ancient Andean manifestation of ancestor worship which illustrates a deep reverence for older generations (ayllu) and kinship within communities. Considered a link between the living and the gods, these mummies could also be taken from their resting place and 'consulted' on important occasions so that their knowledge might serve the living community. Given places of honor and offered food and drink, mummies were involved in such ceremonies as marriages, sowing, and harvesting, or when long journeys had to be undertaken by individuals within the community.

At first the Incan kingdom grew slowly. In 1438, however, a powerful and ambitious ruler, Pachacuti, took the throne. Under his leadership, the Inca conquered all of Peru and then moved into neighboring lands. By 1500, the Inca ruled an empire that stretched 2,500 miles along the western coast of South America. The Inca called this empire "Land of the Four Quarters." It included about 80 provinces and was home to as many as 16 million people. Pachacuti and his successors accomplished this feat of conquest through a combination of diplomacy and military force. The Inca had a powerful military but used force only when necessary. They were also clever diplomats. Before attacking, they typically offered enemy states an honorable surrender. They would allow them to keep their own customs and rulers in exchange for loyalty to the Incan state. Because of this treatment, many states gave up without resisting. Even when force was used, the Inca took a similar approach. Once an area was defeated, they made every effort to gain the loyalty of the newly conquered people.

To control the huge empire, the rulers divided their territory and its people into manageable units, governed by a central bureaucracy. The Inca created an efficient economic system to support the empire and an extensive road system to tie it together. They also imposed a single official language, Quechua, and founded schools to teach Incan ways. Certain social groups were identified by officially dictated patterns on clothing. All of these actions were calculated

to unify the variety of people controlled by the Inca.

To exercise control over their empire, the Inca built many cities in conquered areas. The architecture of government buildings was the same all over the empire, making the presence of the government apparent. As in Rome, all roads led to the capital, Cuzco. The heart of the Incan empire, Cuzco was a splendid city of temples, plazas, and palaces. Although Cuzco was the religious capital of the Incan Empire, other Incan cities also may have served a ceremonial purpose. For example, Machu Picchu, excavated by Hiram Bingham in 1912, was isolated and mysterious. Like Cuzco, Machu Picchu also had a sun temple, public buildings, and a central plaza. Some sources suggest it was a religious center. Others think it was an estate of Pachacuti. Still others believe it was a retreat for Incan rulers or the nobility.

The main demand the Incan state placed on its subjects was for tribute, usually in the form of labor. The labor tribute was known as mita. It required all able-bodied citizens to work for the state a certain number of days every year. Mita workers might labor on state farmlands, produce craft goods for state warehouses, or help with public works projects. The Inca had an ambitious public works program. One project that was a focus was the building of raised-bed irrigation systems called waru waru. The most spectacular project was the Incan road system. A marvel of engineering, this road system symbolized the power of the Incan state. The 14,000-mile-long network of roads and bridges spanned the empire, traversing rugged mountains and harsh deserts. The roads ranged from paved stone to simple paths. Along the roads, the Inca built guesthouses to provide shelter for weary travelers. A system of runners, known as chasquis traveled these roads as a kind of postal service, carrying messages from one end of the empire to the other.

Despite the sophistication of many aspects of Incan life, the Inca never developed a writing system. History and literature were memorized as part of an oral tradition. For numerical information, the Inca created an accounting device known as the quipu, a set of knotted strings that could be used to record data.