Chapter 11

The Americas on the Eve of Invasion (500 C.E. – 1450 C.E.)
Toltec Culture

- Around 950, a culture based in northern Mexico at Tula began to dominate Central America.
- They were a war-like people that quickly expanded throughout Mexico, Guatemala, and the Yucatán peninsula.
- They spread the cult of Quetzalcoatl, the “Sovereign Plumed Serpent,” the creator of humanity and a warrior-god driven from Tula, but who would someday return.
The Aztecs

- **Aztec**, or more accurately Tenochca, civilization began in 1168 and in 1248 they arrived in the Valley of Mexico.

- They were originally peaceful, but their practice of human sacrifice offended the surrounding people, who banded together to crush their tribe.

- In 1300, they became vassals of the town of Chulhuacan, but some escaped to build the city of **Tenochtitlan** on an island in the middle of a lake, where they had seen a hawk holding a snake and sitting on a prickly pear cactus – a sign from the god, **Quetzalcoatl**.

- When the remaining Aztecs sacrificed a daughter of the king of Culhuacan, they were chased off to join the others on the island.
The Aztecs Build an Empire

- The Aztec won their freedom under Itzacoatl (1428-1440).

- They built temples, roads, a causeway linking the city to the mainland, established their government & religious hierarchy.

- The Aztecs under Itzacoatl and his successor, Moctezuma I, in the 1400s, conquered most of Mexico and by 1500 the empire numbered 30 million people.

- Later, under Moctezuma II in 1502, the Aztec civilization began to decline.

- Tribute peoples began to revolt.

- Then the Spanish under Cortez invaded, kidnapping and eventually killing Moctezuma in 1524.
Aztec Empire
Aztec Government and Economy

- The empire was governed by a single ruler, or monarch.
- The urban population required high levels of support from the surrounding areas.
- Chinampa, flat reeds placed in shallow areas and covered with soil, were built in the lake to grow crops.
- An extensive trade brought in necessary and luxury items.
- Kinship groups were divided into calpulli, which practiced a specific craft or trade, such as rope-making or pot-making.
- These were arranged in ranks with separate schools for nobility and the rest.
Aztec Society

- There were two social classes: macehualles, or “commoners.” and pilli, or nobility.

- All male children went to school. At 15, male children attended the “house of youth” to learn history, religion, the art of war, the trade or craft, and religious & civic duties of daily life.

- Woman were subordinate to men and were expected to behave with chastity and high moral standards.

- Laws were simple and harsh with the death penalty applying to most crimes.

- Slavery was common, but was not racial or permanent. They could own property and buy their freedom.

- There was little distinction between the religious and secular hierarchy: at the top the “chief of men” dominated religious ceremonies and served as military leaders; below were religious offices and secular functions, including military generals.
Aztec Religion

- The religion was dominated by three gods: Huitzilopochtli ("hummingbird wizard"), the native and chief god, also the war and sun god; Tezcatlipoca ("Smoking Mirror"), chief god of the Aztecs in general; and Quetzalcoatl ("Sovereign Plumed Serpent"), god of civilization, the priesthood, and learning.

- Below these were four creating gods followed by numerous other gods.

- Human sacrifices were preformed at a scale previously unseen, believing the gods gave only if nourished by human beings.

- Priests were astronomers and mathematicians.

The Wall of Skulls, Tenochtitlan
Aztec Achievements

- Aztec had two calendars: an accurate detailed 365-day solar year calendar; a 260-day ritual year calendar.
- Aztecs developed a true system of writing used for calculation, calendrical counts, chronicles, diaries, and history.
- Literacy was widespread among the people.
The Incan Empire

- By the 1500s, the **Incas** established a centralized government in Peru, ruled by a god-king and a powerful class of priests.
- Their empire became the largest in the ancient Americas and consisted of over 1 million people.
- Their capital city was **Cuzco**.
- After conquering people, Incas incorporated local rulers into their imperial system, rewarding those who fought for them and treating well those who cooperated.
Incan Government and Social Structure

**Government**
- The Incan government structure was more of a **confederation of tribes**, with a single people, the Incas, more or less in control.
- Each tribe was ruled by a **council of elders** and gave its allegiance to the “Inca,” or divine ruler.
- The Inca was descendant from the sun-god.
- Conquered people paid a labor tax (**mita**) to the state, which which roads and terraced farmlands were built.

**Social Structure**
- At top was the **Inca**, who exercised absolute power.
- The **royal family**, consisting of immediate family, concubines, and children came next.
- Each tribe had tribal heads.
- Each clan in each tribe had clan heads.
- Common people were grouped in squads of 10 people each with a single “boss.”
# Incan Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Inca</td>
<td>Ruled the entire Incan empire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suyuyuq Apu</td>
<td>Controlled one of four regions of the empire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunu Kamayoaq</td>
<td>Governed a province containing 10,000 families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waranq Kamayoaq</td>
<td>Acted as head of 1,000 families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pichqa Pachaq Kamayoaq</td>
<td>Acted as head of 500 families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pachaq Kamayoaq</td>
<td>Acted as head of 100 families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pichqa Chunka Kamayoaq</td>
<td>Acted as head of 50 families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chunka Kamayoaq</td>
<td>Acted as head of 10 families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pichqa Kamayoaq</td>
<td>Acted as head of 5 families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pureq</td>
<td>Acted as head of 1 family</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Incan Daily Life

- The Incas strictly regulated the lives of millions of people within their empire.
- Government officials arranged marriages.
- Community leaders assigned jobs to each family and organized the community to work the land.
- Farmers had to spend part of each year working land for the emperor and the temples.
- Government officials controlled the harvest.
Macchu Picchu

Close-up of terraces
Incan Achievements

- They created terraced farmlands in the Andes that produced corn and potatoes, and raised llama and alpaca.

- They were brilliant engineers, building massive forts with stone slabs so perfectly cut that they didn’t require mortar and still stand today in near-perfect condition.

- They created one of the great road systems in history with tunnels and bridges, allowing armies and news to travel rapidly around the empire.

- They posted runners throughout the empire to carry news of revolts and soldiers to quickly crush them.

- They prohibited ordinary people from using the roads at all.
Incan Achievements and Beliefs

- They built aqueducts to their cities that rivaled those of the Romans.
- They also had the most advanced medicine and surgery of all the ancient peoples.
- The Incas imposed their own language, Quechua, and religion on the people.
- They had no writing system, but kept records on various colored knotted cords, or quipu.
- The central god was the sun-god, the only god with temples built for him.
- But they had other gods too.
- Incas believed in heaven, hell, and resurrection of the body after death.

Incan quipu, Larco Museum Collection
North American Peoples

- Ten culture groups developed in the Arctic, Subarctic, Northwest Coast, California, Great Basin, Plateau, Southwest, Great Plains, Southeast, and Eastern Woodlands.
- Their diverse ways of life were strongly influenced by geography.
The Desert Southwest

- More than 1,000 years ago, the Hohokams farmed the deserts of Arizona by building a complex irrigation system.

- The Anasazi built large villages, later called **pueblos** by the Spanish. Later on, to protect themselves from invaders, they built and lived in housing complexes in the canyon walls, known as cliff dwellings.
The Mound Builders

The Adena and Hopewell people settled in the Mississippi Valley and build giant earthen mounds. Objects from the Gulf of Mexico and the Great Lakes region were found in the mounds, proving that traders had contact with peoples from distant regions.

Later, Mississippians built clusters of earthen mounds for temples, homes for rulers and nobles creating ever larger towns and ceremonial centers.
North American Culture Areas Around 1450
North American Cultures about 1450

**Arctic/Subarctic**
Beavers, Crees, Inuits, Kutchins Lived as nomadic hunters and food gatherers in cold climate; honored ocean, weather, and animal spirits

**California/Great Basin/Plateau**
Nez Percés, Pomas, Shoshones Lived as hunters and gatherers in small family groups; ate mainly fish, berries, acorns

**Southeast**
Cherokees, Natchez Grew corn, squash, beans, and other crops; held yearly Green Corn Ceremony to mark end of year and celebrate harvest

**Southwest**
Apaches, Hohokams, Hopis, Navajos, Pueblos Lived in villages in homes made of adobe; built irrigation systems to grow corn and other crops; honored earth, sky, and water spirits
North American Cultures about 1450

**Northwest Coast**
Bella Coolas, Coos, Kwakiutls, Tlingits Lived in villages; benefited from rich natural resources in forests, rivers, and ocean; held potlatches, or ceremonial dinners, where host families gave gifts to guests to show wealth and gain status

**Eastern Woodlands**
Algonquins, Chippewas, Hurons, Iroquois, Leni-Lenapes, Miamis, Pequots, Shawnees
Lived in farming villages, but also hunted for food; long houses shared by several families; women held social and political power

**Great Plains**
Apaches, Arapahos, Blackfeet, Cheyennes, Comanches, Crows, Lakotas, Mandans, Osages Lived in tepees; animals hunted by men; crops grown by women; relied on buffalo to meet basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing
Europe's Teachers, Europe's Learners

Visual Source Documents 3 & 4

Document 1

Document 2

The Granger Collection, New York