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☒ BIOGRAPHY Malinche

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Early Civilizations of the Americas

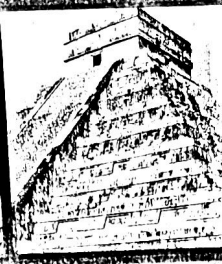
☒ MAP

Civilizations of Mexico and

Central America

The Inca Empire

☒ VOCAB



Lesson 2

Cities and Empires

CENTRAL QUESTION How do civilizations rise and fall?

IT MATTERS BECAUSE

Early Americans developed rich cultures and complex civilizations in several locations.

Great Civilizations of Mexico, Central America, and South America

GUIDING QUESTION What civilizations in Mexico, Central America, and South America predated the arrival of Europeans?

Centuries before the Europeans arrived, great **civilizations** (sih•vuh•luh•ZAY•shuhnz), or highly developed societies, thrived in Mexico, Central America, and South America. The largest and most advanced of these were the Olmec, Maya, Aztec, and Inca.

Each of these civilizations controlled areas covering hundreds of square miles. They included millions of people and lasted for several centuries. The accomplishments of the Olmec, Maya, Aztec, and Inca rivaled any of the great civilizations in other parts of the world. Their people built grand cities in dense forests and on high mountains. They created spectacular works of art and developed advanced tools. They also came up with **complex** methods for tracking time, counting, and writing.

The Olmec

Along the Gulf Coast of what is now Mexico, a people called the Olmec (OHL•mehk) once flourished. Between 1200 B.C. and 800 B.C., the Olmec built stone houses, monuments, and drainage systems. Their farmers grew food for thousands of people. For

Reading HELPDESK



Taking Notes: Listing

As you read, use a chart like this to make note of the features of each of the following civilizations. Include when and where they existed, what they accomplished, and other features of their societies.

OLMEC	MAYA	AZTEC	INCA

Content Vocabulary

- civilization
- theocracy
- hieroglyphic
- terrace

reasons that are not fully understood, the Olmec civilization declined. By about 300 B.C., it had collapsed. Yet the Olmec had a strong influence on the cultures that followed.

The Maya

The Maya (MY•uh) civilization followed the Olmec and reached its peak between A.D. 250 and A.D. 900. Maya farmers planted maize, beans, squash, and other vegetables. These crops helped feed a large population, which may have peaked at 2 million people. These people lived in one of the many large cities the Maya built in the steamy rain forests of present-day Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and Belize.

Maya civilization was a **theocracy** (thee•AH•kruh•see), a society ruled by religious leaders. Powerful Maya priests believed the gods were visible in the stars, sun, and moon. Their understanding of astronomy and their advanced mathematics helped them predict eclipses and develop a 365-day calendar. The Maya also developed a system of writing that used **hieroglyphics** (HY•ruh•glih•fihks), symbols or pictures that represent things, ideas, and sounds.

Maya Transport and Trade

The Maya were active traders. Farmers brought maize and vegetables to city markets. They exchanged their goods for items such as cotton cloth, pottery, deer meat, and salt.

Without wheeled vehicles or horses, the Maya carried goods on their backs. Traders traveled on a network of roads that were carved out of the jungle. They also used canoes to ship goods, such as jade statues, turquoise jewelry, and cacao beans used for making chocolate, up and down Mexico's east coast.

Maya Civilization Declines

In time the Maya civilization declined. By about 1200, its once-great cities were nearly deserted. The reason is a mystery. One theory holds that the soil became exhausted and unable to produce enough food for large populations.

Though their civilization declined, the Mayan people did not disappear entirely. Descendants of this great civilization still live in parts of Mexico and Central America today.

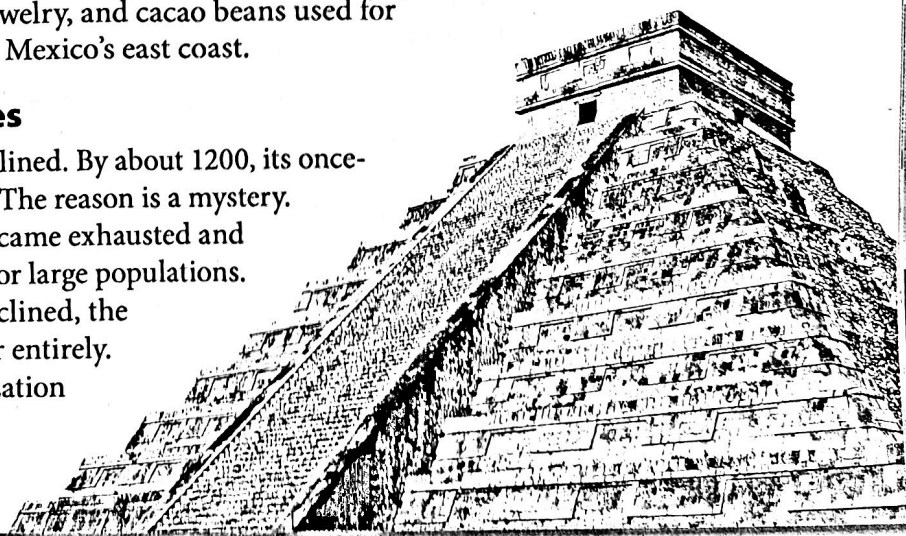


This Aztec calendar played an important role in religious as well as daily life. The Maya also had complex calendars.

Each Maya city had at least one stone pyramid, some of which reached about 200 feet (61 m)—the height of a 20-story building. The temples on top of the pyramids were religious and governmental centers.

► CRITICAL THINKING

Drawing Conclusions What can you conclude about Mayan society based on their ability to build such large structures?



civilization highly developed society
theocracy a society that is ruled by religious leaders
hieroglyphic a form of writing that uses symbols or pictures to represent things, ideas, and sounds

Academic Vocabulary
complex highly detailed

BIOGRAPHY



Malinche (c. 1501–1550)

Much of what we know about individual Native Americans comes from Europeans. Malinche is one example. In 1519 she was enslaved and living under harsh Aztec rule. When the Spanish arrived in 1519, she gave them information about Aztec culture. She also learned Spanish quickly and served as a translator for the Spanish, who called her Doña Marina. Malinche helped build ties between the Spanish and the many unhappy Aztec subjects in the region.

► CRITICAL THINKING

Making Inferences Why might Malinche have been willing to help the Spanish?

The Aztec Empire

In 1325, centuries after the fall of the Maya, a group of hunters called the Aztec (AZ•tehk) were wandering through central Mexico. They were searching for a permanent home for their people. One day, they came upon an island in Lake Texcoco (tehs•KOH•koh). There they saw what they thought was a sign from their god: an eagle with a snake in its beak sitting on a cactus. According to Aztec legend, this sign indicated that the island was to be their home. It was on this site that the Aztec would build their capital city, Tenochtitlán (tay•NAWCH•teet•LAHN). Today it is the site of Mexico City.

At its height, Tenochtitlán was the largest city in the Americas—and one of the largest in the world. The city was a center of trade, attracting thousands of merchants to its outdoor marketplaces.

Tenochtitlán's construction was a marvel of building skill, knowledge, and human labor. Workers toiled day and night under the direction of priests and nobles. They dug soil from the bottom of the lake to make causeways, or bridges of earth. These causeways **linked** the island and the shore. Elsewhere, they used earth to fill in parts of the lake, creating fields for growing crops.

Aztec Culture

The Aztec created a military empire. In the 1400s, the Aztec army conquered many neighboring communities. Conquered people had to pay tribute in food and other goods. Some were also forced to work as slaves in Aztec cities and villages.

Like Mayan culture, Aztec culture revolved around its religious beliefs. The Aztec believed they must perform human sacrifices to please the gods and ensure abundant harvests. They sacrificed prisoners of war by the thousands for this purpose.

A Great City Remembered

The Aztec Empire was still going strong when Europeans arrived in the Americas in 1492. The first Europeans to see Tenochtitlán were awed by its splendor. In 1519 Hernán Cortés led 550 Spanish soldiers into the Aztec capital. Cortés wrote:

PRIMARY SOURCE

“There are forty towers at the least, all of stout construction and very lofty. . . . The workmanship both in wood and stone could not be bettered anywhere.”

—from *Five Letters*

Reading HELPDESK



Academic vocabulary

link to connect

Civilizations of Mexico and Central America



GEOGRAPHY CONNECTION

The civilizations that developed in modern-day Mexico and Central America rivaled those that grew in other parts of the world.

1 PLACE Which of the empires shown covered the largest area?

2 CRITICAL THINKING

Drawing Conclusions

Given what you have read about the Aztec, what do you think is the explanation for the small areas within the Aztec Empire that were not under Aztec control?

Bernal Díaz del Castillo, one of the soldiers, marveled at the “great towers and cues [temples] and buildings rising from the water.” Some of the Spanish soldiers thought Tenochtitlán was more magnificent than Rome and the other great European capitals of the time.

PROGRESS CHECK

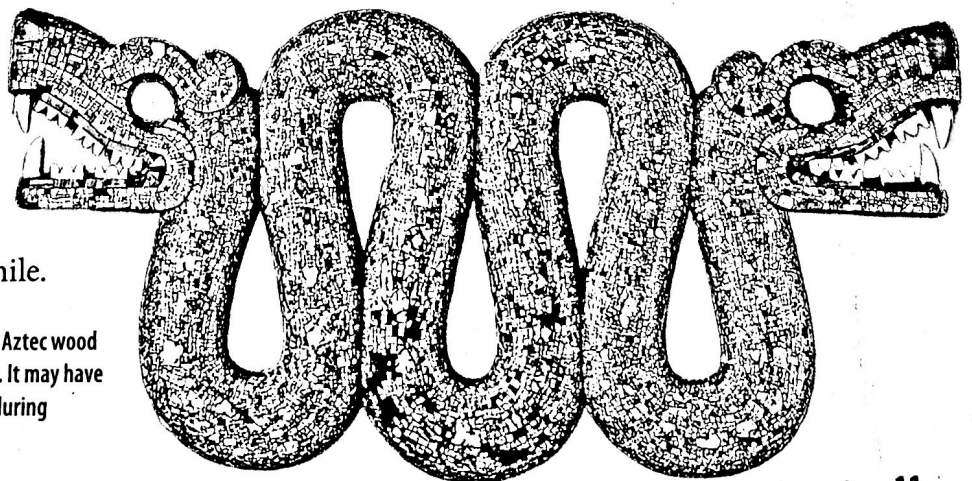
Identifying What was the capital city of the Aztec Empire, and where was it located?

The Great Inca Civilization

GUIDING QUESTION *Why were the Inca considered a highly developed culture?*

In the western highlands of South America, the largest of all early American civilizations grew—the Inca. The Inca people founded their capital city of Cuzco (KOOS•koh) around 1200.

In 1438 the emperor Pachacuti (PAH•chah•KOO•tee) came to the throne. He and his son, Topa Inca, expanded the empire by conquering others with their powerful army. At its peak, the Inca Empire stretched for more than 3,000 miles (4,828 km), from present-day Colombia to northern Argentina and Chile.

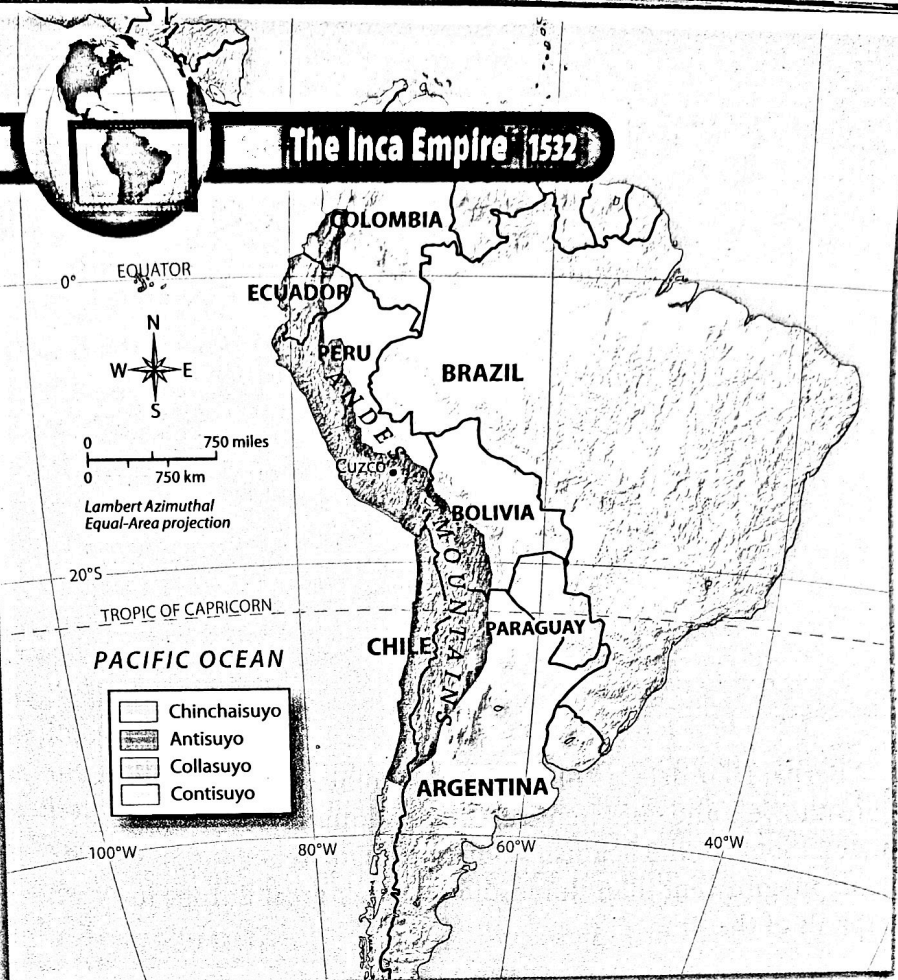


This double-headed serpent is an Aztec wood carving covered in turquoise tiles. It may have been worn as a chest decoration during important occasions.

GEOGRAPHY CONNECTION

The Inca Empire was divided into four provinces along the western coast of South America. Modern-day countries are bordered and labeled in black.

- 1 **LOCATION** In which modern-day countries did the Inca Empire have territory?
- 2 **CRITICAL THINKING**
Analyzing How do you think the Andes Mountains shaped and affected the Inca Empire?



Fearsome Warriors

The Inca state was built around war. All men between 25 and 50 years old could be drafted to serve in the army for up to five years. Their weapons included clubs, spears, and spiked copper balls on ropes. Using slings, Inca soldiers could throw stones 30 yards (27 m).

Rather than fight this fearsome force, many neighboring areas accepted Inca rule. The Inca allowed those who cooperated to take part in the empire's government. Those who resisted or rebelled faced harsh treatment.

Inca Culture

The Inca people believed their emperor was a descendant of the sun god. The Inca made magnificent gold jewelry and temple ornaments as gifts to the sun god. Inca workers also built great cities devoted to religious ceremonies, including Machu Picchu (MAH·choo PEE·choo), a site hidden high in the Andes Mountains.

Reading HELPDESK



terrace a broad platform of flat land cut into a slope

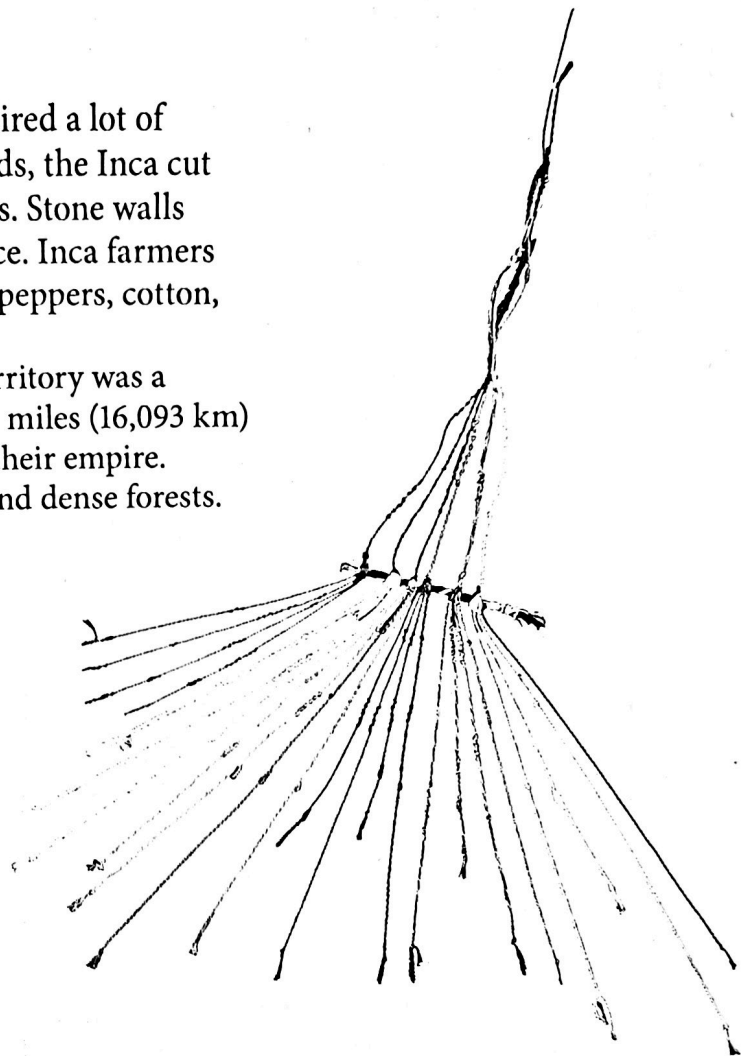
Supporting the large Inca population required a lot of food. In order to farm their mountainous lands, the Inca cut **terraces**, or broad platforms, into steep slopes. Stone walls on the terraces held the soil and plants in place. Inca farmers grew maize, squash, tomatoes, peanuts, chili peppers, cotton, and potatoes.

Managing and ruling over such a large territory was a great challenge. The Inca built at least 10,000 miles (16,093 km) of stone-paved roads to link distant parts of their empire. The roads crisscrossed mountains, deserts, and dense forests. To cross deep canyons or river valleys, the Inca built rope bridges. Runners carried messages to and from the emperor and linked outposts of the empire to Cuzco. The Inca language, Quechua (KEH•chuh•wuh), became the official language for the entire empire. The Inca had no written language, but they did develop a system of recordkeeping using string called quipus (KEE•poos). By knotting different colors of string in special patterns, quipus helped the Inca record and keep track of information about resources, such as grain supplies.

Like the Aztec, the Inca were thriving in the early 1500s. They, too, would soon come face to face with Spanish soldiers and experience a dramatic change in fortunes.

✓ PROGRESS CHECK

Explaining How did the Inca Empire grow so large?



Incas used quipus to keep track of resources, such as food supplies. Different colors and lengths of string and different types of knots made up the system for recording important information.

LESSON 2 REVIEW



Review Vocabulary

1. Use the following terms in a paragraph about the Maya.
 - a. civilization
 - b. theocracy
 - c. hieroglyphic

Answer the Guiding Questions

2. **Sequencing** In what chronological order did the great civilizations of Mexico, Central America, and South America appear?

3. **Describing** What key features did the great civilizations of Mexico, Central America, and South America have in common?
4. **Contrasting** In what ways were the great civilizations of Mexico, Central America, and South America different?
5. **INFORMATIVE/EXPLANATORY** Consider each of the four civilizations detailed in the lesson. Write a short essay discussing what life might have been like in one of these societies. Use facts from the chapter to add details to your writing.