

The Aztec and Inca Empires



Overview

- The Aztecs were a Mexica group of about 10,000 people who expanded their power.
- At its height they controlled an empire of some 22 million people, making it more populous than any kingdom or empire in Europe.
- The Aztecs developed no formal bureaucracy.
- Let some regional leaders remain in power as long as they continued to send tribute!



Aztec city of Tenochtitlan at the time of the Spanish invasion.

Overview

Incas

- The Inca Empire extended for some 3,000 miles making it as long as the lower 48 states of the US.
- The Incas incorporated ideas and culture from many different peoples and fused them into a truly unique society.
- Unlike the Aztecs, the Incas had a very sophisticated and effective bureaucracy.
- Between 9 and 13 million people lived under Incan rule. Truly remarkable when you consider the geography and limited technology of the empire.



Geography

Aztecs



- Lived in central valley of Mexico
- Capital City: Tenochtitlan – in Lake Texcoco by 1345
- Swampy marsh land, islands
- Contained some rivers

Incas



- Lived in Andes Mountains in modern day Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile.
- Capital City: Cuzco- by Lake Titcaca
- Controlled coastline, highlands, parts of rainforest.

Political Systems

Aztecs



Montezuma II

- Aztec Emperors were thought to be gods.
- Absolute power - held both political and religious power.
- They had a strict law code
- Religion was a key element in keeping control of conquered peoples – especially with the sacrifice system.

Incas

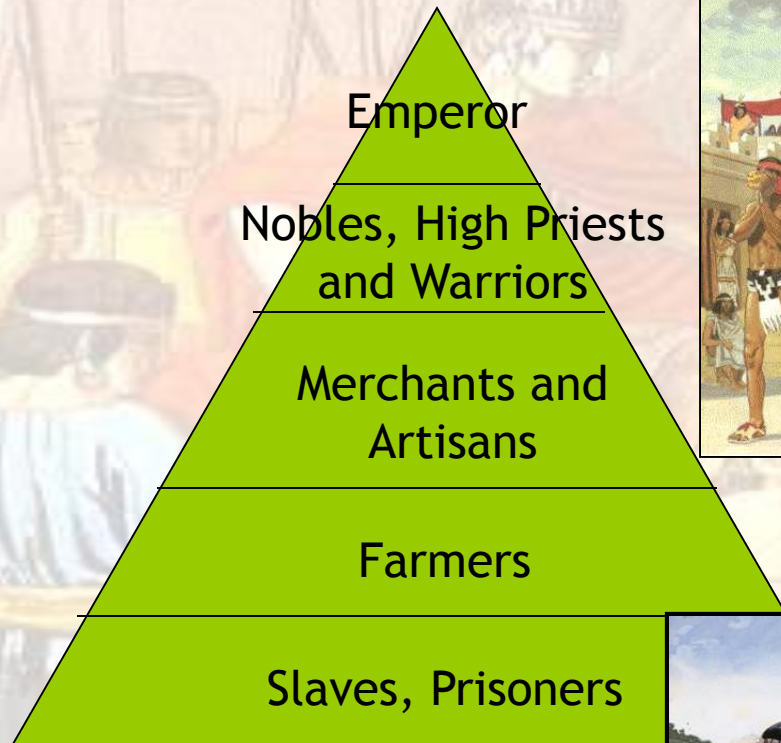


Atahualpa

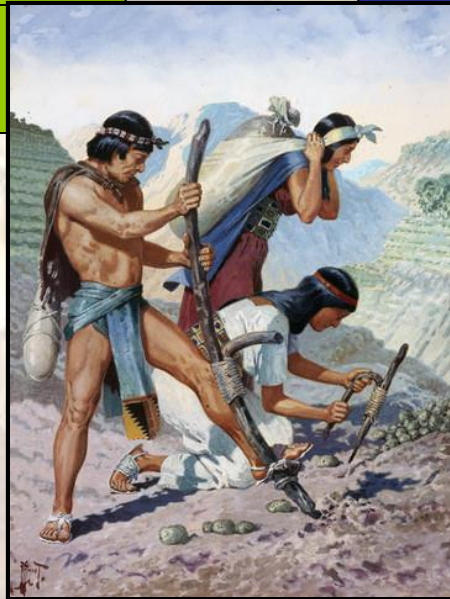
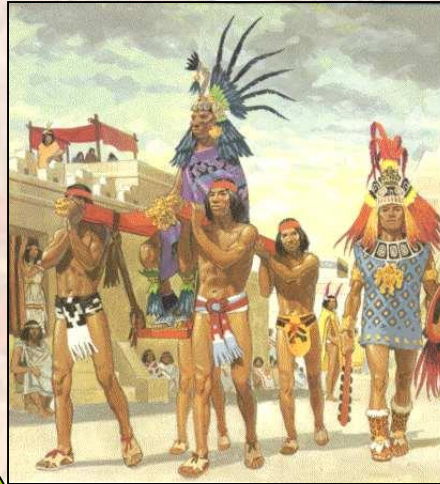
- Led by “Sapa Inca”- Supreme Ruler, seen as a god
- Authoritarian ruler who controlled marriage, movement, produce
- Created centralized bureaucracy – educated elites, Priests were officials
- Used Military force and resettlement to control people

Social Structure

Aztecs



- Dominated by Kings, warriors and priests
- Depended on warfare to acquire slaves
- Subordinate groups forced to pay tax and tribute
- Spoke Nahuatl



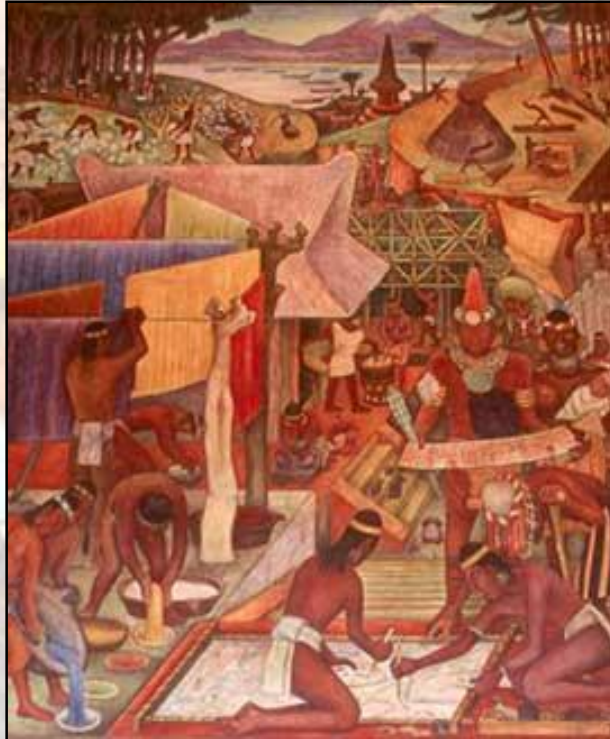
Incas



- Emperor expanded control over regional neighbors
- Relocated conquered people to live in cities dominated by loyal citizens.
- Spoke Quechua

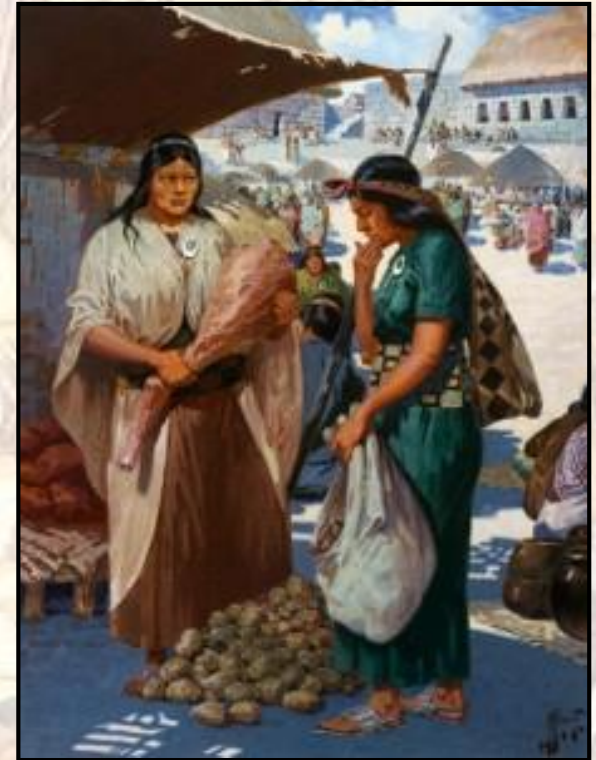
Economy

Aztecs



- Importance of Maize, beans, squash
- Markets in the cities – Regional trade
 - Relied on extensive slave labor, tributes
- Wealth based on strength of military and ability to control others

Incas



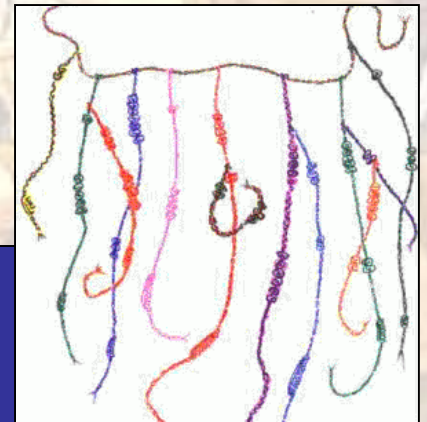
- No money - Collected taxes in form of goods, food, services
 - Very rich in gold and silver
- Stressed self-sufficient communal farming
- Used system of roads for trade and communication.

The Aztec Economy



- Lands of conquered peoples were used to feed the capital city and other important centers.
- Food was sent as a form of tribute by conquered peoples.
- Market days were held every 5 to 13 days to buy, sell and trade goods.
- Cacao beans and gold dust was used for currency.
- The state controlled the markets and redistributed wealth to needy areas. So there was more government involvement than in Europe.
- Chinampas Agriculture was used to supplement the food supply.

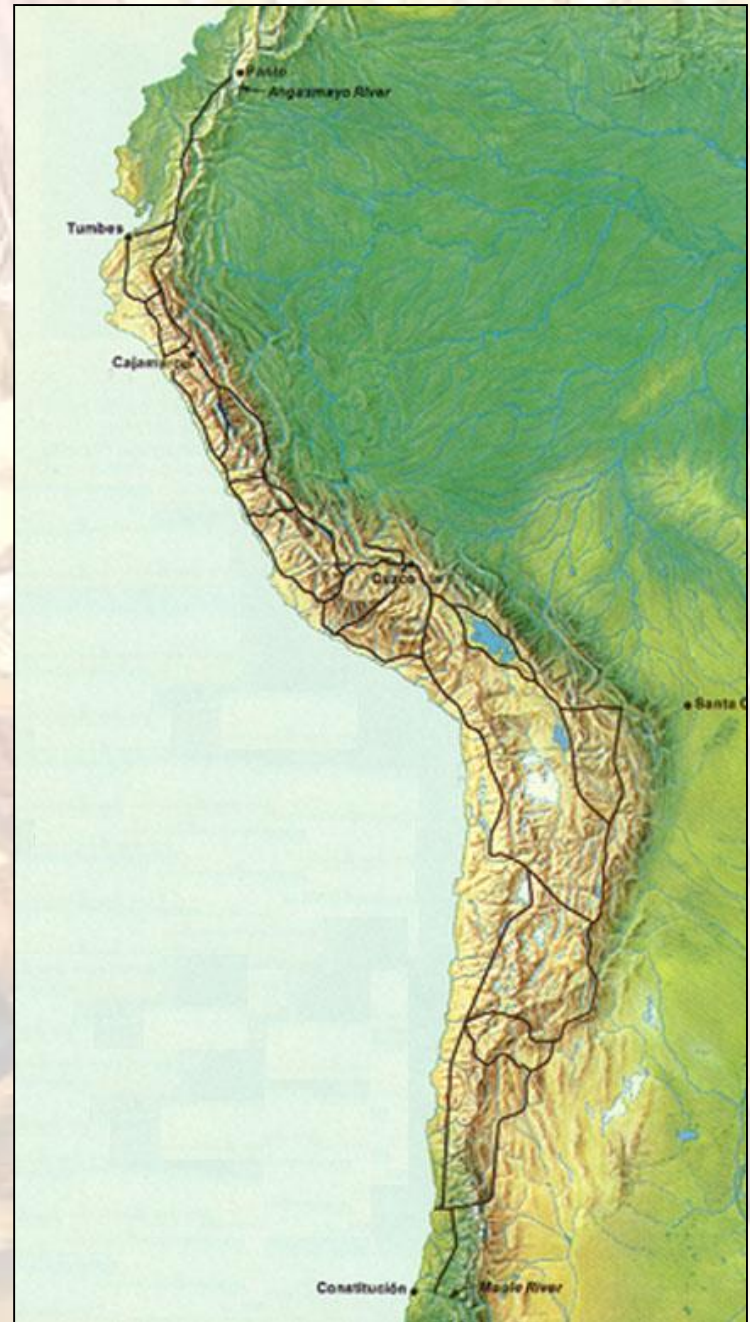
Incan Economy



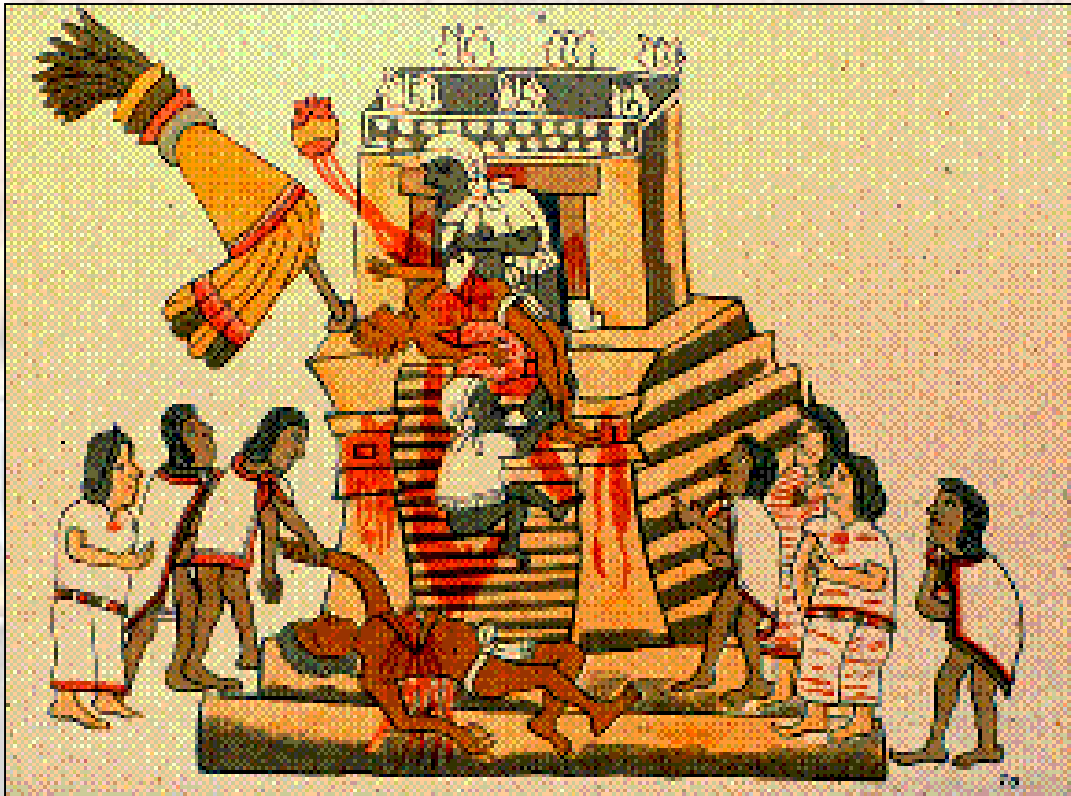
- ROADS: 10,000 miles throughout mountains
- Facilitated communication, trade, troop movements, travel
- Record keeping: “Quipu” System of colored ropes and knots.
- No written language
- Advances in metalworking - especially gold and silver. Also used copper and bronze for tools and weapons.

The Incan Road System

- A complex system of roads was built through out the empire with bridges and causeways.
- Along these roads, way stations were placed about a day's walk apart to serve as inns, storehouses and supply centers for the Inca armies.
- They also served as relay points for the system of runners who carried messages throughout the empire. A message from the extreme south would reach the extreme north in about 9 days.
- The Inca probably had around 10,000 way stations throughout the empire.



Aztec Religion



- 1) Polytheistic
 - 2) Similar to other regional religions
- Pyramids, art, ceremonies, sacrifice.
 - Sacrifice: Up to 20,000 at a time!
 - Sun was created as a result of gods being sacrificed.
 - Needed human blood as nourishment
 - required constant warfare

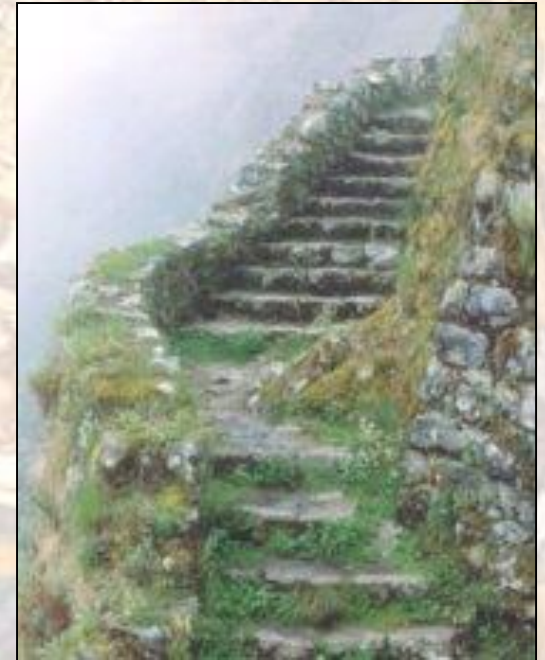
- There were at least 128 major deities in the Aztec religion with many more minor deities as well.
- Each god had a female consort - recognizing duality in all things.
- The gods had different forms or manifestations - like Hindu avatars.
- Asked the really big and important questions in life just like all great religions.

Incan Religion

- Less brutal than Aztecs
- Tolerant of local beliefs
- Royal family descended from sun god.
- Mummification
- Like the Aztecs, the Incas held the sun to be the highest deity.
- As the empire spread, so did the cult of the sun, however, locals were not prohibited from worshiping their local gods as well.
- Viracocha (seen to the right) was a creator god that was a favorite throughout the empire.
- Popular belief was primarily animistic. Mountains, stones, rivers, caves were considered to be 'huacas' or holy shrines.
- Gods could be honored in many ways, including prayers, fasting and animal sacrifice, but the most powerful form was that of human sacrifice, typically children and teenagers.



Incan Rope Bridge

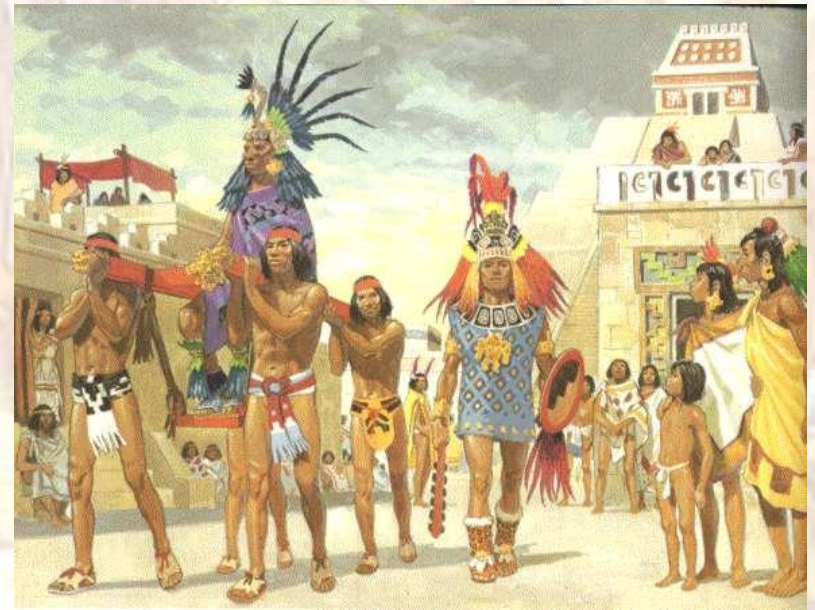


Stone Steps

Aztecs

Decline

- No loyalty from subordinate groups. Resisted whenever possible.
- Spanish - Hernando Cortes, El Conquistador. Overpowered Aztecs with superior weapons and horses.
- Convinced Aztecs the Spanish were gods.
- European disease. Small pox, measles. Americans had no natural immunity. Destroyed pop.



Decline



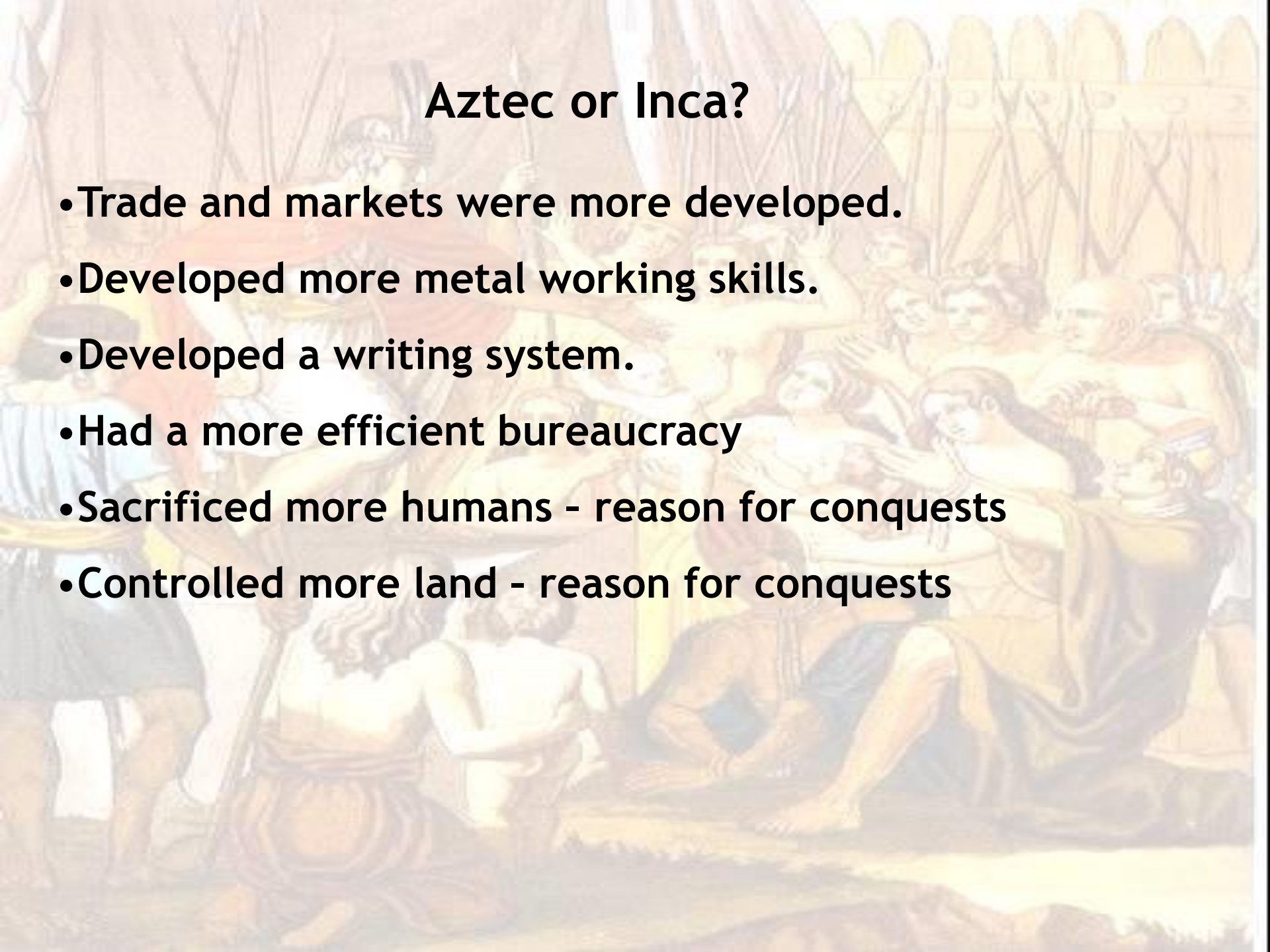
- 1400s. Overextension of territory. Unable to keep subordinate groups cooperative.
- Weakened at the arrival of Spanish in 1500s.
- Francisco Pizarro. Defeated Inca army of over 20,000 with a force of several hundred conquistadors.

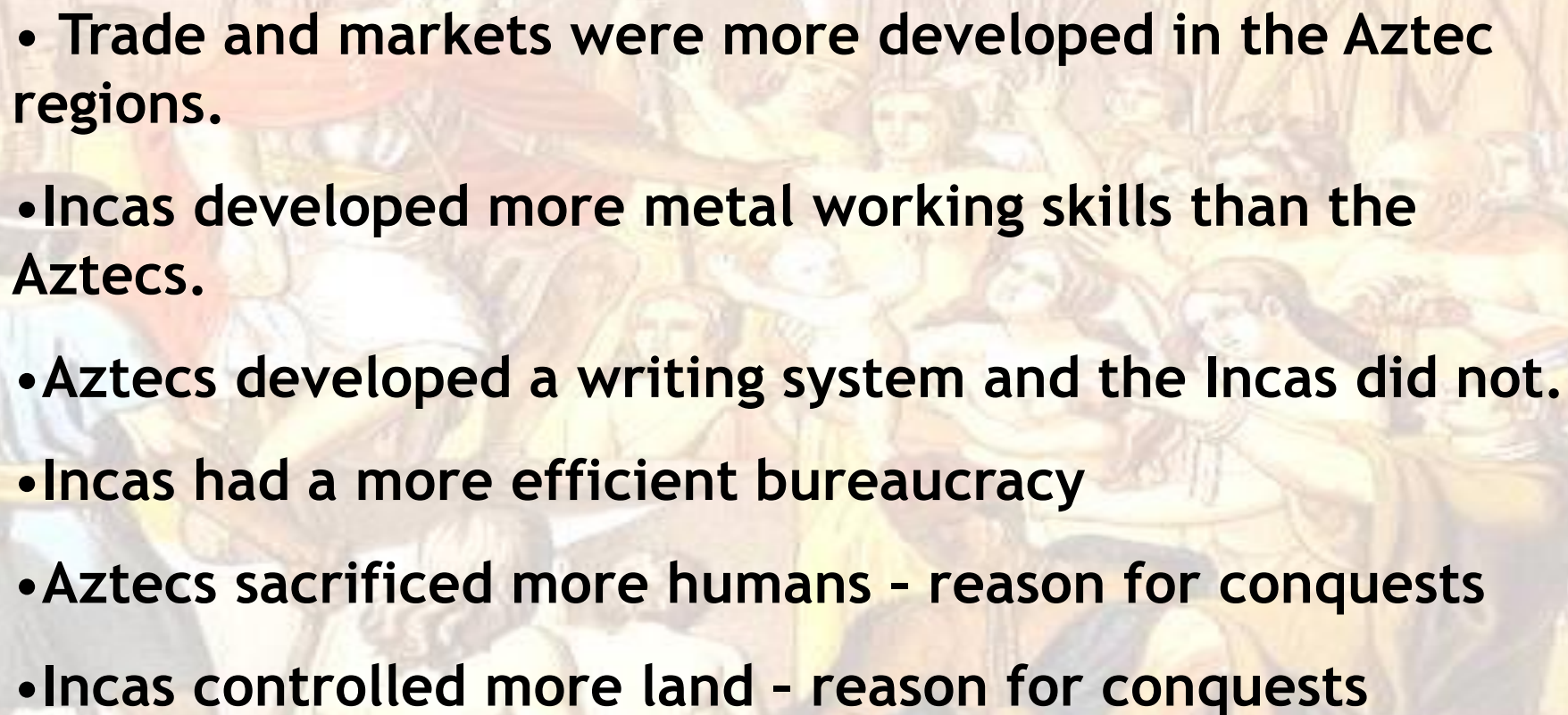
Comparing Inca and Aztec

- Both were successful with imperial and military organization.
- Both had intensive agriculture organized by the state that created a food surplus.
- Both redistributed resources to all classes.
- Both used nobles to run state machinery.
- Both recognized local ethnic groups - although the Inca did spread their culture and language.
- Both developed systems of roads and advanced engineering techniques
- Both were polytheistic and made human sacrifices to the Gods
- Both were defeated by the Spanish

Aztec or Inca?

- Trade and markets were more developed.
- Developed more metal working skills.
- Developed a writing system.
- Had a more efficient bureaucracy
- Sacrificed more humans - reason for conquests
- Controlled more land - reason for conquests

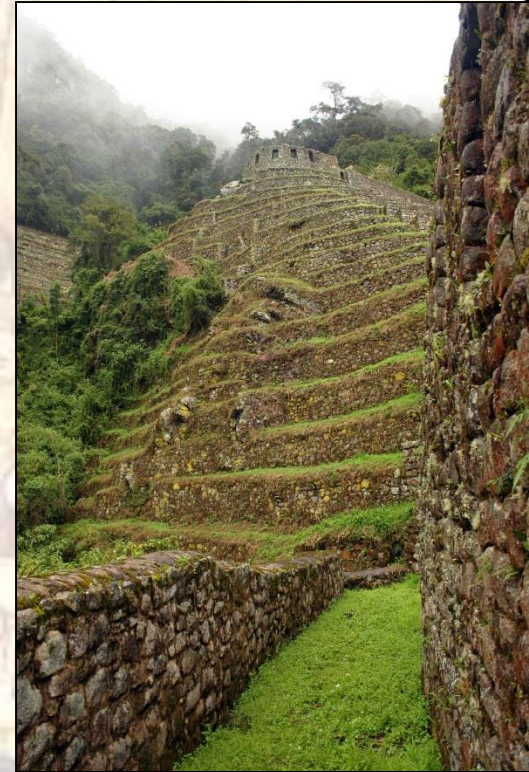


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- Trade and markets were more developed in the Aztec regions.
 - Incas developed more metal working skills than the Aztecs.
 - Aztecs developed a writing system and the Incas did not.
 - Incas had a more efficient bureaucracy
 - Aztecs sacrificed more humans - reason for conquests
 - Incas controlled more land - reason for conquests



Incan Road and Settlement

Incan Engineering





Inca terrace farming



**The Inca Ullo temple of fertility,
Chucuito, Lake Titicaca**



Fortress of Ollantaytambo