

The Aztec and Inca Empires



Overview

- The Aztecs were a group of about 10,000 people who slowly expanded their power till they controlled the most important lands in South Central Mexico.
- At its height the Aztecs controlled an empire of some 22 million people, making it more populous than any kingdom or empire in Europe.
- Unlike their European counterparts, the Aztecs developed no formal bureaucracy.
- Instead, the Aztecs let regional kings and leaders remain in power as long as they continued to send tribute.
- Aztec kings held both political and religious power. They controlled the civil powers and were seen as representatives of the gods.
- Religion was a key element in keeping control of conquered peoples - especially with the sacrifice system.

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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

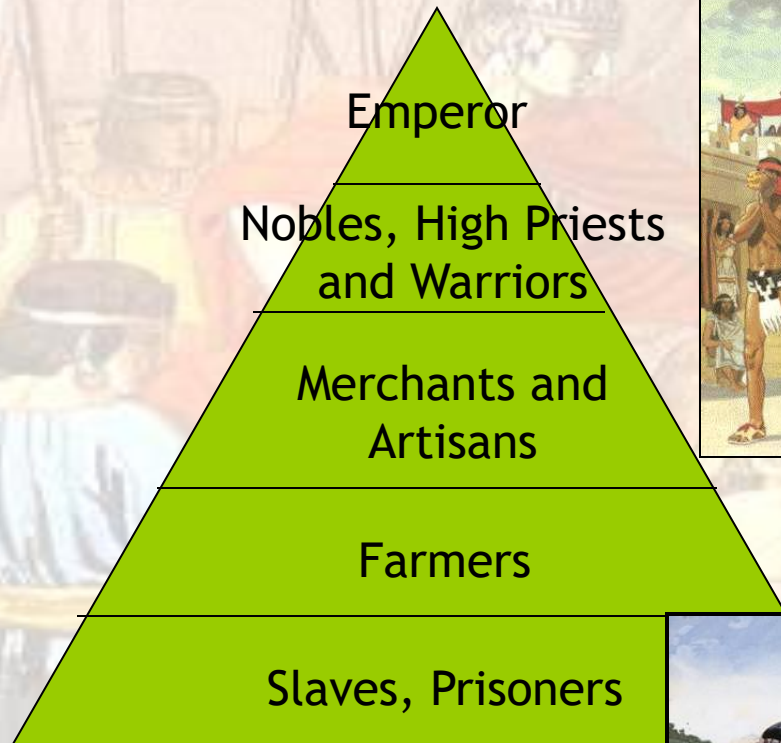


Atahualpa

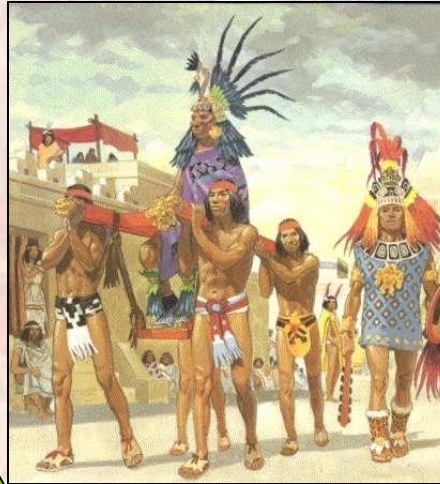
- Led by “Sapa Inca”- Supreme Ruler, seen as a god
- Authoritarian ruler who controlled marriage, movement, produce
- Created centralized bureaucracy – educated elites, Priests were officials
- Used Military force and resettlement to control people

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



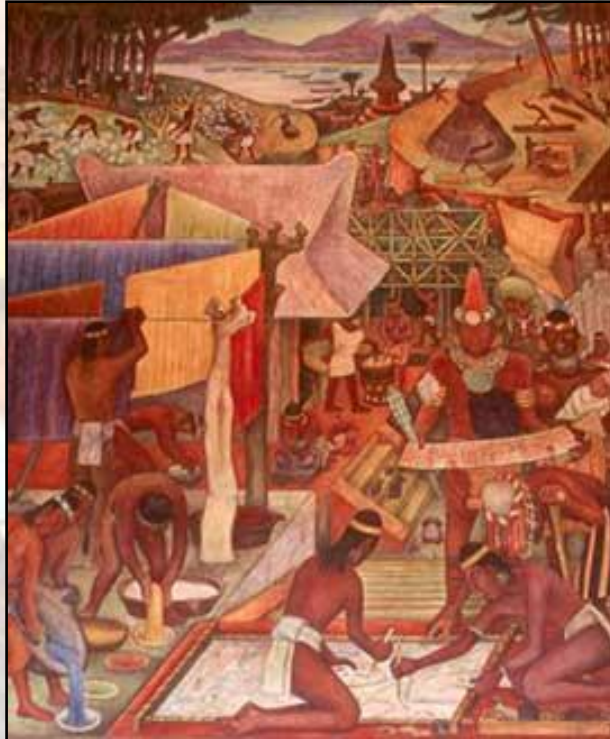
Incas



- 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



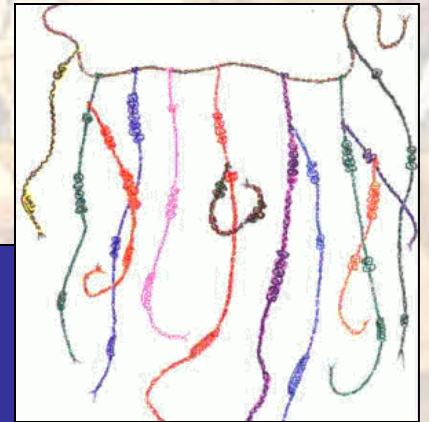
- No money - Collected taxes in form of goods, food, services
 - Very rich in gold and silver
- Stressed self-sufficient communal farming
- Used system of roads for trade and communication.

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.

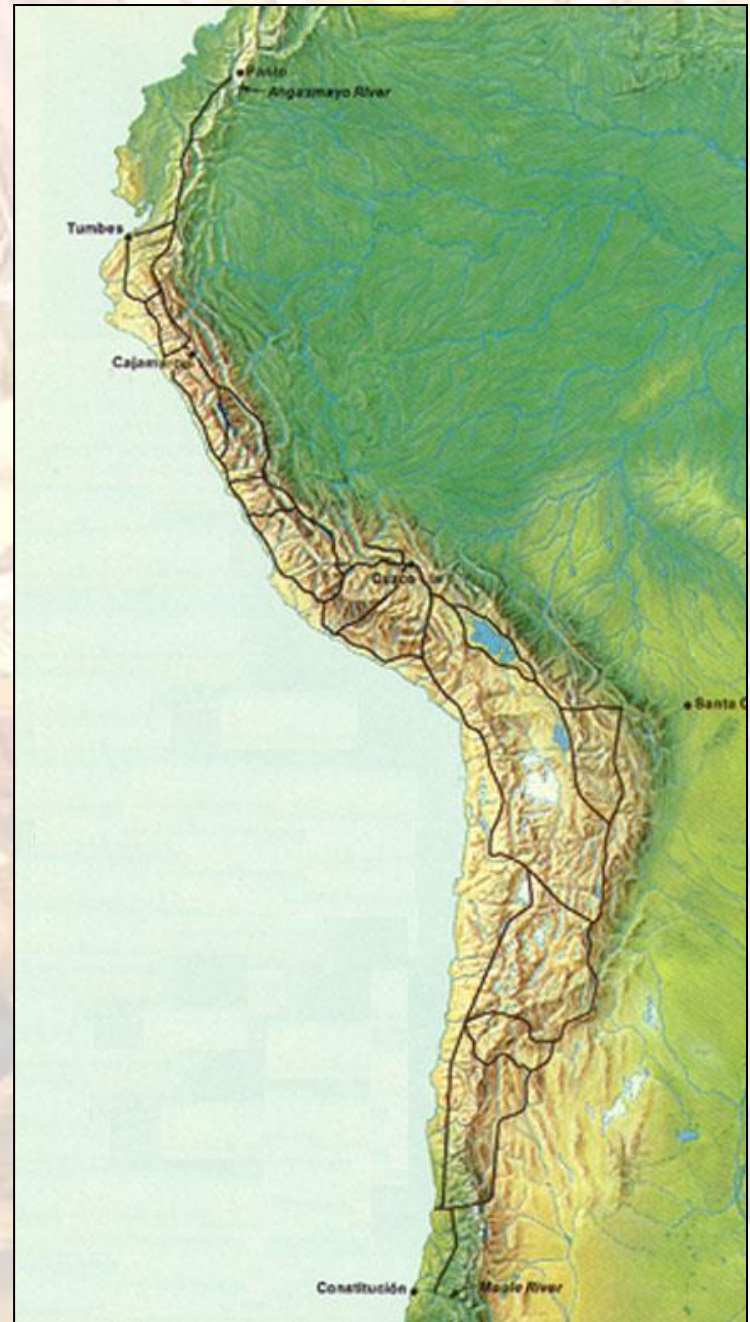
Incan Economy



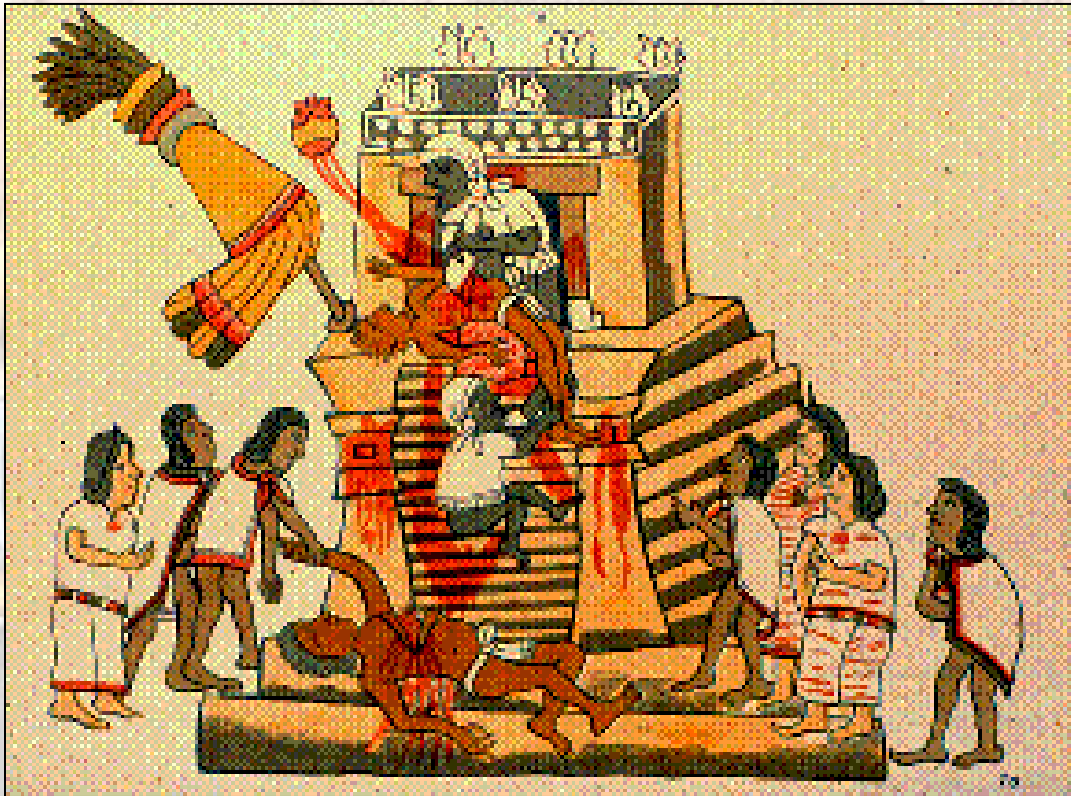
- ROADS: 10,000 miles throughout mountains
- Facilitated communication, trade, troop movements, travel
- Record keeping: “Quipu” System of colored ropes and knots.
- No written language
- Advances in metalworking - especially gold and silver. Also used copper and bronze for tools and weapons.

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.



Other Info

Aztecs

Technology/ Trade

- Markets in cities
- Relied on extensive slave labor, tributes.
- Wealth was based on strength of military and their ability to exploit the resources of surrounding people

Expansion

- Militaristic Empire
- Dominated by warriors, kings, and priests
- Subordinate groups (i.e. Mayans) forced to pay tribute in gold and slaves but could run own internal affairs.
- Depended on warfare as a means to acquire slaves (POWs) for labor and sacrificial purposes

Other Info

Incas

Mummies

- 3 sacrificed teens- volcano shrine (Argentina)
- Maiden → main sacrifice w/boy & girl attendants
- For 1 yr. they consumed maize and dried llama meat
- were drugged with coca leaves and alcohol

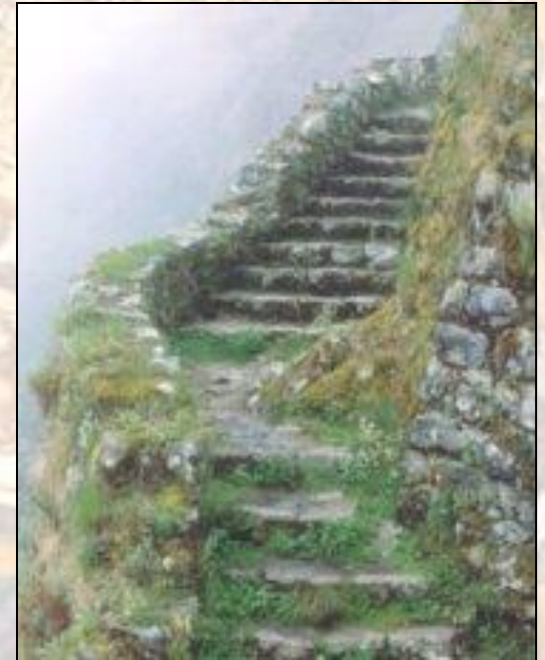
Mummy feeding

- Mummification- important part of funeral rites, even for commoners
- November-“month of carrying the dead”
 - try to feed the mummies (ancestors)
 - take dead out of storehouses, give them food/drink, dress them in rich apparel, sing and dance with them
 - walk with them from house to house & thru the streets
 - mummies of commoners were fed on special occasions
 - royalty received specially prepared meals daily

Food and feasting

- Maize and meat considered the elite food
- Diet includes sweet potatoes, quinoa, beans and chili peppers.
- In exchange for labor, the Inca government was expected to provide feasts to the people at certain times of the year, acting as a form of payment in a society that lacked currency.
- “Inca state-sponsored feasts were held in open plazas, while food preparation was carried out in narrow chambers that flanked them.”

Incan Rope Bridge



Stone Steps

Inca Expansion



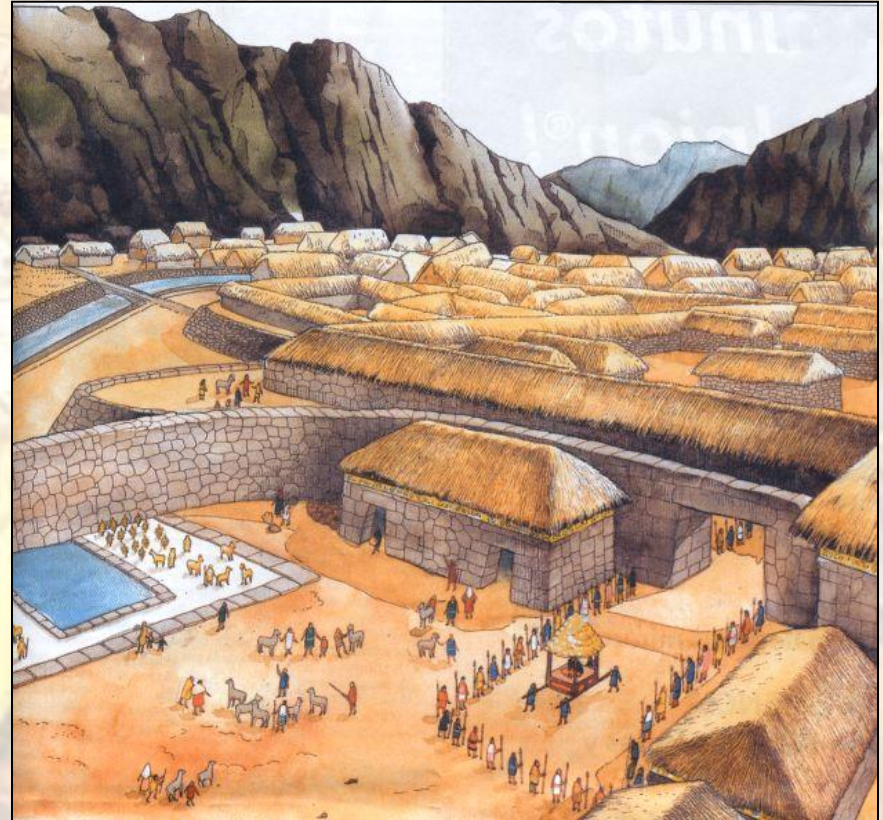
- Exerted control over regional neighbors
- Late 1400s. Empire spanned from Ecuador to Chile.
- Largest governmental unit in the Americas

Citadel at Machu Picchu



- Conquered peoples were enlisted in the Inca armies under Inca officers.
- Subject peoples received access to goods not previously available to them and the Inca state undertook large building and irrigation projects that formerly would have been impossible. Loyalty and tribute were the only requirements.
- The state claimed all resources and redistributed them.
- The Incas divided conquered areas into lands for the people, lands for the state and lands for the sun - that is for religion and to support the priests.
- The kind of tribute exacted by the Incas was labor through the *mita* system.
- Women were required to produce cloth and some women were taken as concubines for the rulers.
- Other women were selected as servants at the temples called “Virgins of the Sun”.

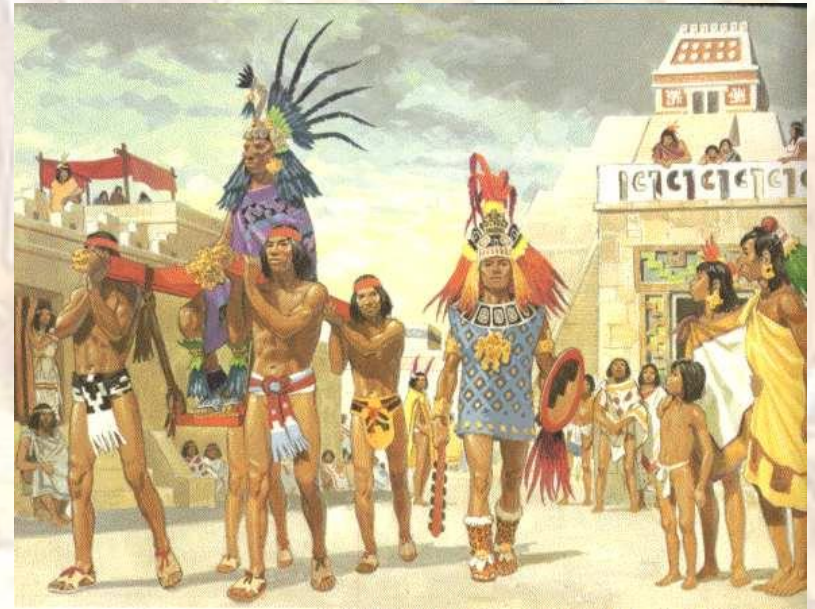
Conquered Peoples of the Inca



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

Incas



- 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.

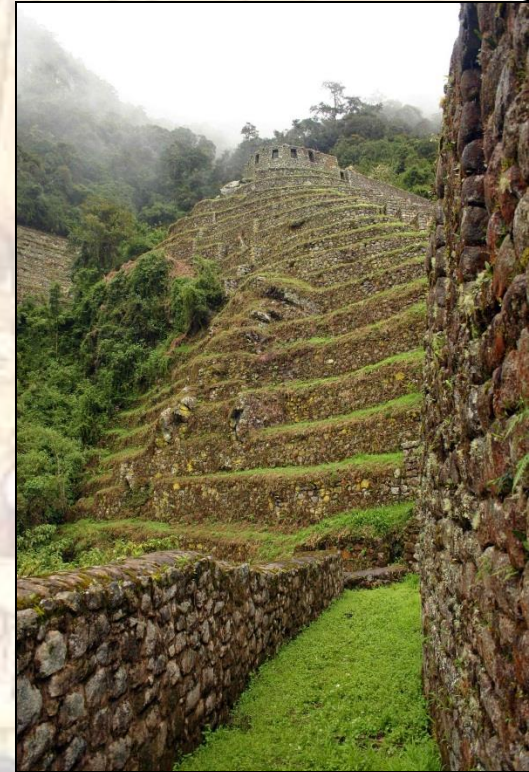
Comparing Inca and Aztec

- 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



Incan Sun Priest and his Family

Incan Engineering





Inca terrace farming