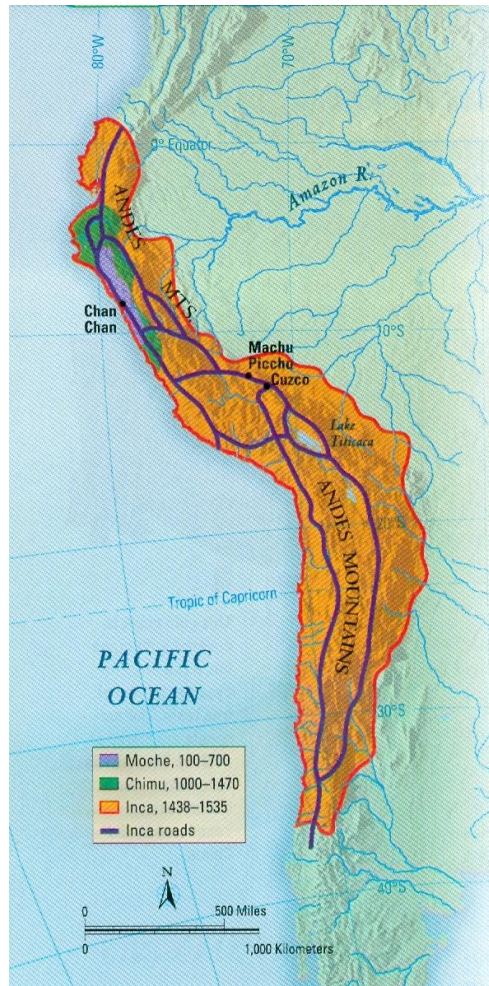


Incan Empire

People have lived in Peru for over 2000 years but the most notable civilization belonged to the Incas. Their reign began in the early 1400s when the army began conquering surrounding lands and creating an empire. By the early 1500s, their empire stretched 2,500 miles along the Andes Mountains and covered an area that stretched from Ecuador to Chile and from the mountain tops to the Pacific Ocean.

South American Cultures 100-1535 A.D.



The Incas were polytheistic and the emperor was considered the son of the sun and the religious leader. Priests were very powerful and their jobs were to make sure that all the Incan people practiced their religion, conduct ceremonies and oversee monthly festivals of religious rituals and sports. They had a creator god called Viracocha and they also worshipped natural gods such as the sun, moon, stars and thunder. Cuzco was the capital city of the empire and the Temple of the Sun was the most sacred of all Incan shrines. It was decorated in gold and silver fauna and flora created by goldsmiths.

The Incas controlled the lives of everyone within the empire. They could only speak one official language called **Quechua**. The government decided what job each person should do and to whom they should marry. All surplus food grown went to the government storage locations where it was kept for hard times.

The empire was ruled by a centralized government who served under the emperor. He was seen as a god-king and had complete control of everyone and everything within the empire. The nobles ruled the provinces and they had officials whose job was to collect taxes from everyone. They even had an accounting device called a **quipu** which was a set of knotted strings to record important data.

To link the empire the government created a **system of roads** that was far superior to any other civilization.

- **The road system covered over 12,000 miles**
- **The Inca built hundred of bridges and tunnels through mountains**
- **Steps were carved in steep slopes to have the roads rise gradually**
- **Ordinary people were forbidden on the roads, they were for military use only**
- **Messengers/runners were used to carry news between the military posts**

The empire began to decline when King Huayna Capac died of disease and the empire entered a civil war. Then, the Spanish began to conquer the Incan empire and force the people into slavery.

Characters of Civilization	Strengths	Weaknesses
Religious Beliefs and Theocracy	United Culture Loyalty to the emperor	Religious activities became more important than the empire
Road System	Connected the entire empire and allowed absolute control	Enemies could also use these roads to move their troops
Welfare State with large government (bureaucracy)	Could care for the entire population during both good and bad times	When the welfare state was eliminated the people could no longer take care of themselves.

In 1912, Hiram Bingham discovered the lost city of **Machu Picchu**. The city could only be reached by a wooden bridge that spanned across a deep canyon. Within the city was a sun temple, public buildings, a central plaza and a water system. The true function of Machu Picchu has not been determined. One suggestion is that it was a private retreat for the emperor and his nobles.

