

## MESOAMERICAN EMPIRES

Mesoamerica: an area extending from central Mexico to Honduras, where several of the ancient complex societies of the Americas developed.

There were four major societies, each is listed below.

### Organization and Contributions

<p><b>ZAPOTEC EMPIRE</b> <b>1000 BC – 700 AD</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advanced society in South West Mexico – today it is Oaxaca State</li> <li>• Started with small villages then formed ancient city of San José Mogote</li> <li>• Civilization is known for their temples, monuments, (made out of stone and carved)hieroglyphic writing</li> <li>• Created their own calendar by 500 BC</li> <li>• Built first urban center in the Americas: Monte Albán which was located on a mountain top</li> <li>• Small civilization, 200BC approximately 15,000 and at their peak about 25,000 people</li> <li>• We do not know why they declined and disappeared!</li> </ul>
<p><b>OLMEC EMPIRE</b> <b>1200 BC – 400 BC</b></p> <p>Southern Mexico El Salvador</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formed the first truly complex Mesoamerican culture</li> <li>• Established civic-ceremonial centers at San Lorenzo and La Venta, with temples and palaces</li> <li>• Built towns with clay building platforms and stone pavements and drainage systems</li> <li>• Traded in raw materials such as jade</li> <li>• Created large stone jade sculptures of human heads</li> <li>• Developed rudimentary hieroglyphic writing</li> </ul>
<p><b>MAYAN EMPIRE</b> <b>50 BC – 1400 AD</b></p> <p>Southern Mexico Yucatan Guatemala Central America</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invented writing system which mixed script with ideographs and phonetics</li> <li>• Wrote historic records on pots, stone slabs and palace walls</li> <li>• Cultivated corn as staple crop</li> <li>• Produced a complex astronomical calendar</li> <li>• Established religious rituals which included human sacrifice, mythology, and ancestral worship</li> <li>• Created a monarchy that united small settlements into larger states</li> <li>• Built flat-topped pyramids as temples and rulers' tombs</li> <li>• Built palaces, shrines, large ball courts (palenque) for ceremonial sport and astronomical observatories</li> <li>• Invented math system, including zero as base number</li> </ul>

<p><b>AZTEC EMPIRE</b>  <b>1300 AD – 1535 AD</b></p> <p>Central Mexico</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Founded island capital Tenochtitlan (Mexico City)</li> <li>• Created a highly specialized, strictly hierarchal society</li> <li>• Conquered and dominated neighbors for tribute (protection payments), not for territory</li> <li>• Elected by nobility, ruler-emperor (tlatoani) had near god status and supreme authority</li> <li>• Formed a powerful priestly hierarchy to administer government</li> <li>• Produced a severe legal code of laws with judgments solely based on generally accepted ideas of reasonable behavior</li> <li>• Developed a sophisticated agricultural economy, carefully adjusted to the land with crop rotation and extensive aqueduct and irrigation systems</li> <li>• Adopted Nahuatl as a language of learning that accompanied a hieroglyphic writing system</li> <li>• Created a 365-day solar calendar divided into 19 months of 20 days each</li> </ul>
<p><b>INCA EMPIRE</b>  <b>1200 AD – 1535 AD</b></p> <p>Andes Mountains</p> <p>Peru, Ecuador, parts of Chile, Bolivia and Argentina</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established largest empire of the Americas – at its height in the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Inca Empire controlled 12 million people, over 100 cultures with 20 different languages</li> <li>• Formed a strong monarchy ruled from Cuzco by using strategic resettlement of loyal “colonists” among rebellious groups</li> <li>• Believed emperors descended from the Sun god and worshipped them as divine beings</li> <li>• Adapted an intricate 12,000 mile road system for traveling messengers and services for traveling bureaucratic officials</li> <li>• Created agricultural terracing and irrigation systems</li> <li>• Adapted various “vertical climates” of the Andes’ elevations for a variety of crops</li> <li>• Built elaborate fortress cities such as Machu Pichu</li> <li>• Developed refined spoken language (Quechua)</li> <li>• Instituted quipu (knot-cord) record keeping system</li> <li>• Developed a religion centered on the worship of the Sun</li> <li>• Mined gold for use by the elite for decorative and ritual purposes</li> </ul>