

Ancient Civilizations of the Western Hemisphere

Chapter 16

The Mayan, Aztec, and Incan civilizations emerged in South America, Central America, and Mexico.



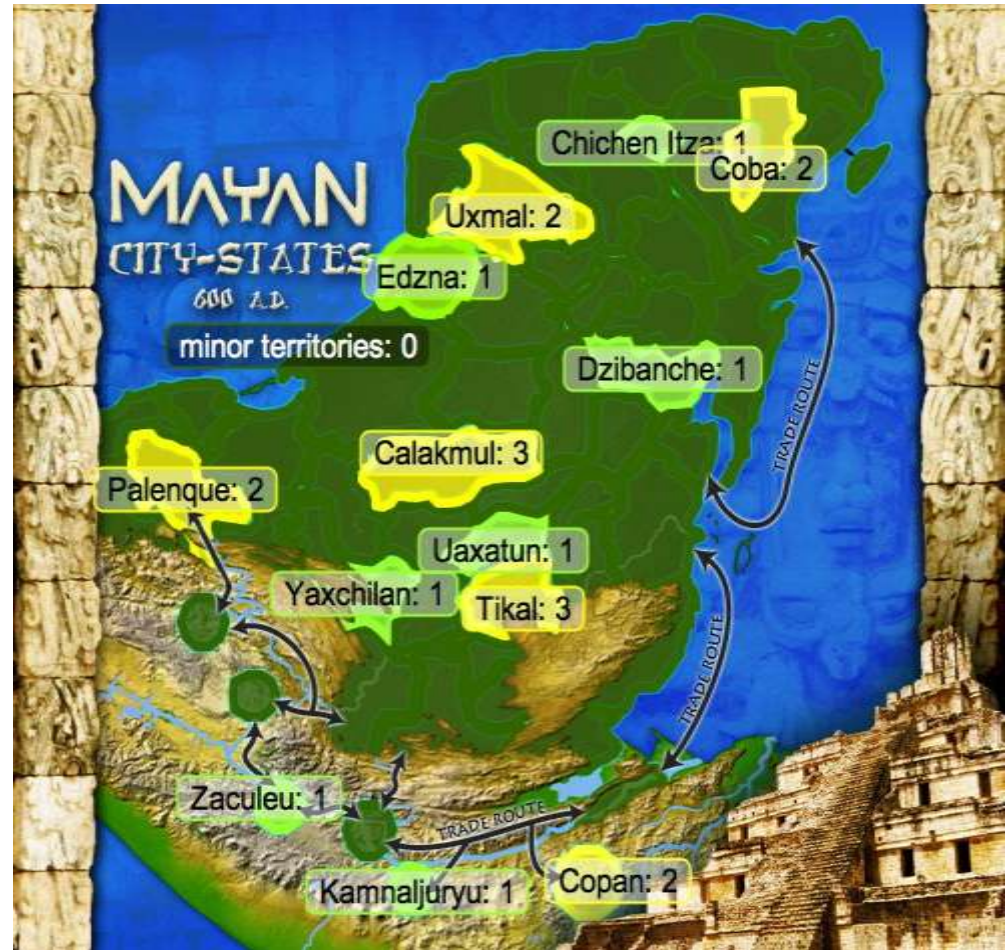
Mayan Civilization

- Located in the Mexican and Central American rain forests



Mayan City-States

- The Mayan civilization was made up of a group of over 50 city-states.
- Each city-state was ruled by a king.
- The kings were considered to be divine.
- Mayan cities were centers of religious ceremonies and trade.



- Mayan culture can be represented by the city of Chichén Itzá, on the Yucatan Peninsula. It had giant structures to honor rulers, warriors and gods.



Mayan Economy

- The Mayan economy was based on agriculture and trade.
- Mayan city-states were linked through alliances and trade.
- Items traded: salt, flint, feathers, shells, honey, and craft goods
- No uniform currency (often used cacao)



- The staple Mayan crops were maize, beans, and squash.
- Used raised beds and terracing



Mayan Religion

- The Maya had a polytheistic religion with gods of corn, death, rain and war.
- They built huge pyramids.
- Worship included blood letting, and sometimes human sacrifice.
- Developed 260 day religious and 365 day solar calendar



Maya Decline

- In the late 800s, the Maya mysteriously abandoned many of their cities.



Aztec Civilization

- Located in arid valley in central Mexico
- The valley had several large, shallow lakes, accessible resources and fertile soil.
- The Aztecs arrived around 1200 A.D.

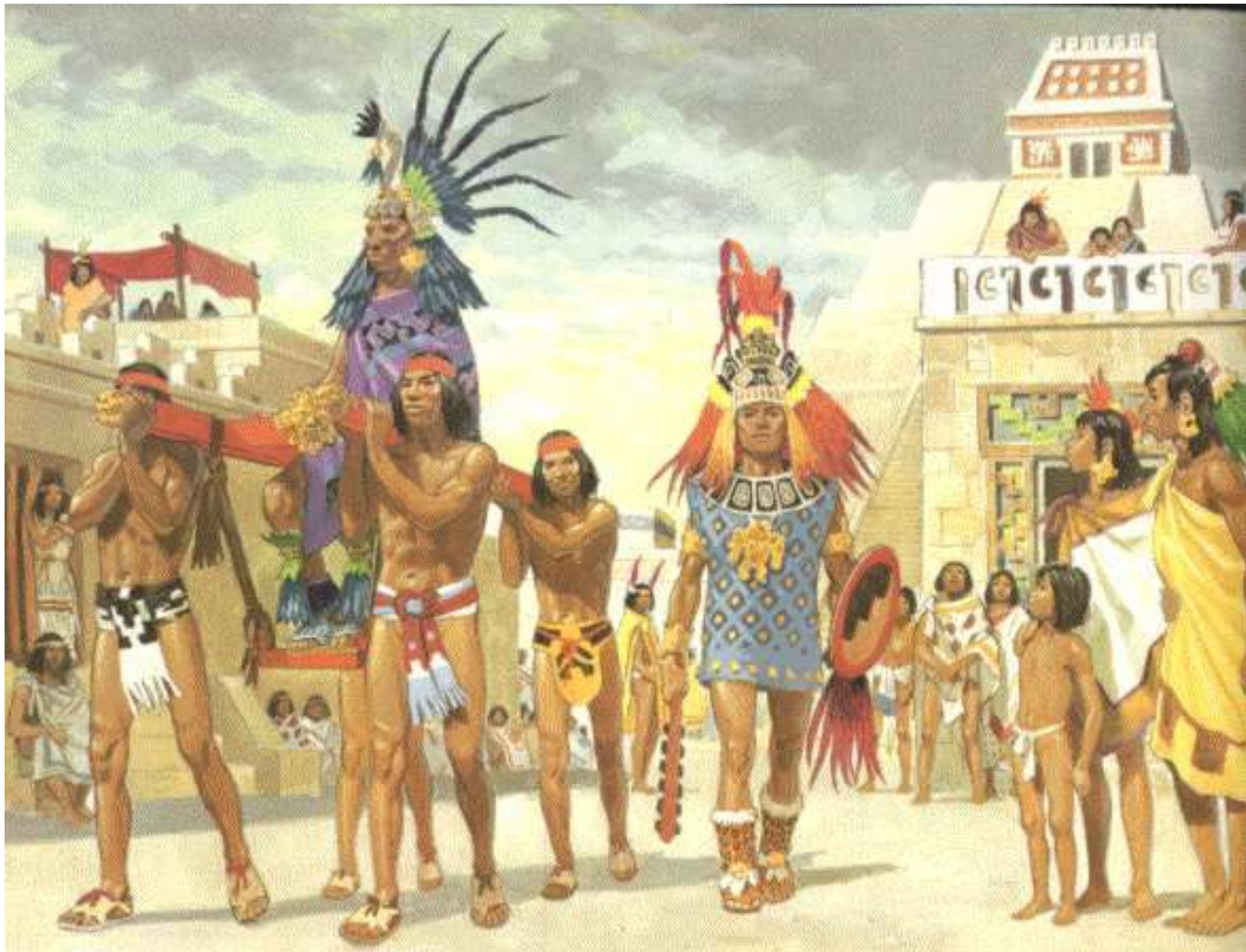


Aztec Empire

- The Aztec civilization can be represented by the city of Tenochtitlan.
- It was located on a small island in Lake Texcoco, and eventually had a population between 200,000 and 400,000.



- The Aztecs were ruled by an emperor with absolute power.



Aztec Economy

- Based on agriculture
- **Chinampas** – raised farm plots on marshy lands, yielded plenty of food



Conquered peoples were forced to pay tribute in the form of gold, maize, cacao beans, cotton, and jade, which greatly strengthened the Aztec economy.

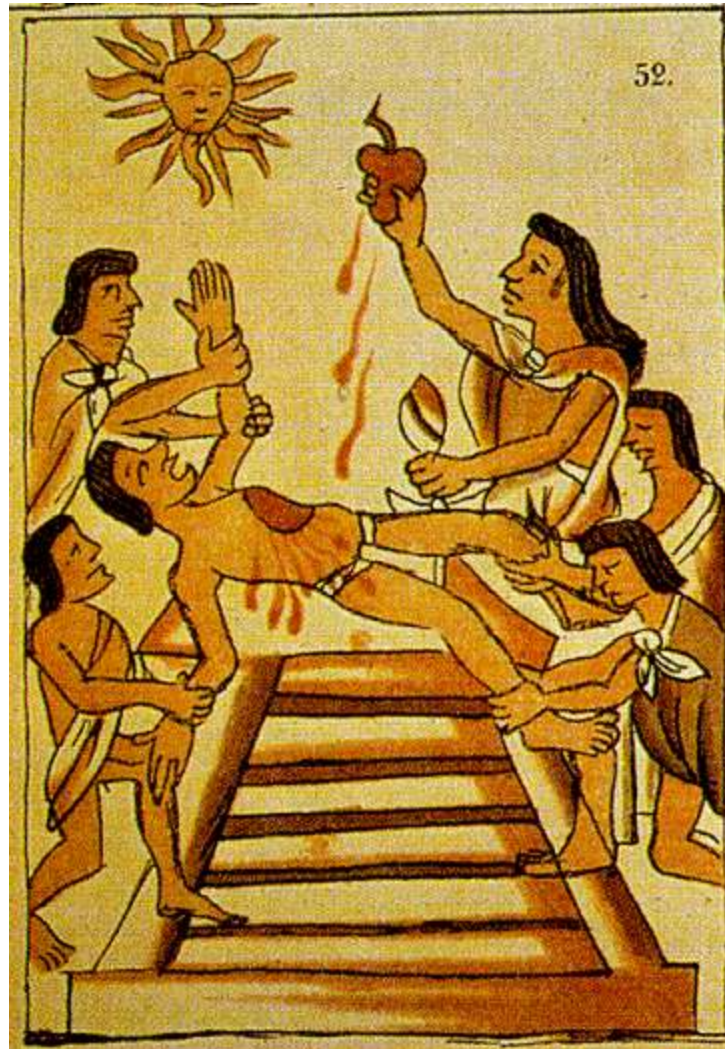


Aztec Religion

- Polytheistic religion played a major role in society.
- Worshiped 1,000 gods with elaborate rituals
- Built huge pyramids.



- Human sacrifice to the sun god was practiced on a massive scale.



Incan Civilization

- Located in the Andes Mountains of South America.
- Incas believed the mountains were sacred.
- By 1500, the Inca ruled an empire that stretched 2,500 miles along the western coast of South America.



Empire of the Incas

- Ruled by an emperor who was believed to be a descendant of the sun god.
- Divided their empire into manageable units governed by a central bureaucracy.
- Created an official language and schools



Road System

- 14,000 miles of roads linked empire
- Paved stone to simple paths
- Enhanced trade and allowed easy movement of troops



Incan Economy

- Based on high-altitude agriculture
- Economy has been compared to socialism
- Incans had to give their labor to public works projects such as roads, irrigation canals and agricultural terraces.
- In return, the state supported it's citizens in hard times.



Incan Religion

- Polytheistic religion that reinforced the power of the state.
- Primary deities were a creator god and sun god (nature spirits)



Machu Picchu

- Incan culture can be represented by the mysterious and isolated city of *Machu Picchu*.
- Excavated by Hiram Bingham in 1912
- Machu Picchu had a sun temple, public buildings, and a central plaza.

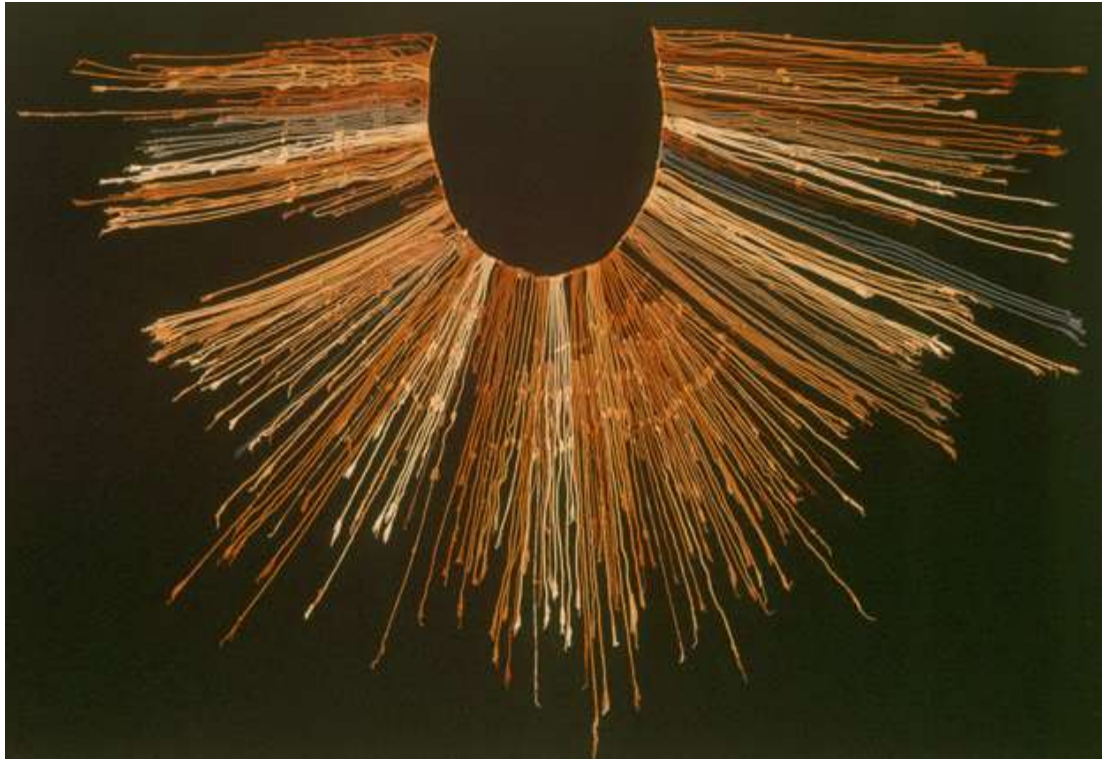


Achievements of Mayan, Aztec, and Incan Civilizations

- The Mayan and Incan civilizations had incredibly accurate calendars.
- Mathematics was used to precisely calculate time and keep records.



- The Inca used a **quipu**, a set of knotted strings, to keep records of warriors, gold and crops.



- The Maya developed the most advanced writing system in the ancient Americas.
- Consisted of about 800 hieroglyphic symbols.



Demise of Ancient American Civilizations

- Spanish conquistadors defeated Aztec and Inca armies with bullets and disease.
- The decline of the Maya is still a mystery.

