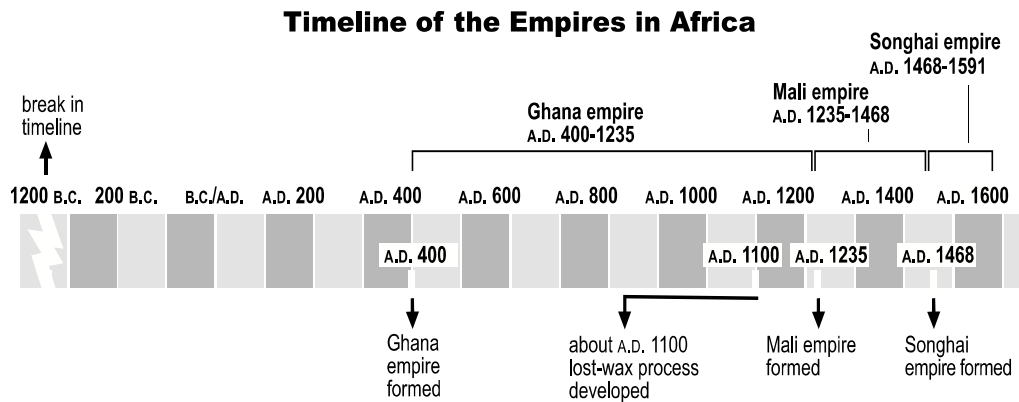


Empires in Africa and the Americas (1200s B.C.-A.D. 1600s)

Africa

Africa is the second-largest continent in the world, covering one fifth of Earth's land surface. It is three times larger than the United States, stretching more than 5,000 miles from north to south. Because of its size and geography, many different civilizations arose there. The Egyptian civilization along the Nile was one of these civilizations (see Unit 2).



Empires of West Africa (A.D. 300-1600)

The three kingdoms of the Niger River Valley in West Africa were the kingdoms of *Ghana*, *Mali*, and *Songhai*. These three kingdoms were powerful between A.D. 300 and 1600.

Ghana (A.D. 400-1235)

The empire of Ghana was ruled by a powerful king. Ghana began its rise to power about A.D. 400. The word Ghana means *chief*. Ghanaian society was made up of **clans**. A clan is a group of people descended from a common ancestor. The king settled arguments between the clans. To rule the lands of the empire, the king appointed governors. The areas ruled by governors had soldiers and workers who were given different jobs.

The **economy** of the kingdom of Ghana was based on agriculture, mining, and trade. The salt mines of the Sahara Desert in the north and the gold mines in the south proved beneficial to its economy. As goods were traded, they passed through the kingdom. The government became rich as

a result of taxation. Every time goods passed through the territory, they were taxed. This wealth enabled Ghana to keep a large army and a **lavish** court for their emperor. Muslim merchants bought goods made in Ghana and sold them throughout the Muslim empire. Muslim traders also brought foreign goods into Ghana. Overall, the economy was controlled by the king to keep the value of gold as high as possible.

Ghana was able to defend itself from attack by Muslims in the north for a long time. By the end of the 12th century, the Muslims were able to overthrow the king. However, the influence of the Muslims did not last long.

Mali (A.D. 1235-1468)

During the 13th century, another African empire was formed—the Mali kingdom. The Mali kingdom was ruled by leaders who became Muslims. The king was very powerful. The economy, built on gold, ivory, cattle, and cotton, was very strong. Gold from Mali's mines was traded for salt from the Sahara. Salt was in short supply in West Africa. The first ruler of Mali was Sundiata. While he was in power, agriculture expanded.

Mansa Musa was probably the greatest ruler of Mali. During his **reign**, the empire had many achievements. For example, he established a system of government and set up a tax system. Mansa Musa also **converted** to Islam and went on a **pilgrimage** to Mecca, the Holy City of Islam. He took with him 60,000 men. As he traveled eastward, a long **procession** of camels was loaded with huge quantities of gold.

Mansa Musa built Timbuktu into a spectacular city known for its burnt-brick architecture and many *mosques* or Muslim houses of worship. A university was established called Sankore, and Timbuktu became a great center of education and scholarship.

Mali declined slowly after Mansa Musa's death in 1337. In the empire were many people who started to protest the Mali rulers. The group which soon gained power were called Songhai.

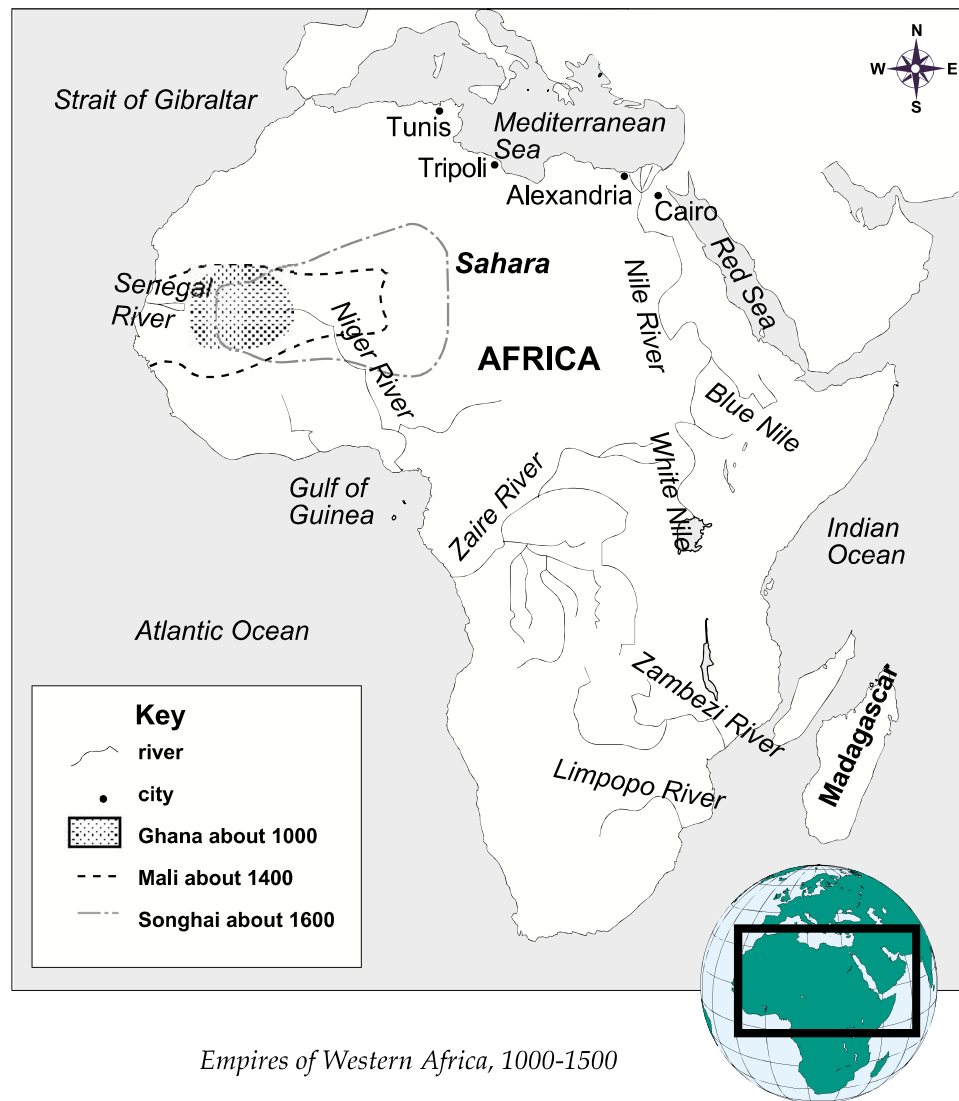
Songhai (A.D. 1468-1591)

Following the rule of the Malis, civil war broke out. It ended when the powerful rulers from the Songhai kingdom took power. The great king of the Songhai empire, Sonni Ali, was extending his empire at about the same time that Christopher Columbus was discovering America.

When the Songhai empire was strongest, its leader was Askia the Great, a Muslim. He ordered that the rule of Islam, the Quran, was to be the law of the land.

Under Askia's rule (1493-1528), the city of Timbuktu became the center of Islamic culture. Islamic scholars from faraway lands were attracted to Timbuktu because of its university, which became a center of learning.

Like many other empires around the world, these three African empires all rose, often due to powerful leaders who were able to unite the people, and fell, due to civil war and outside invasions.



African Contributions to Civilization

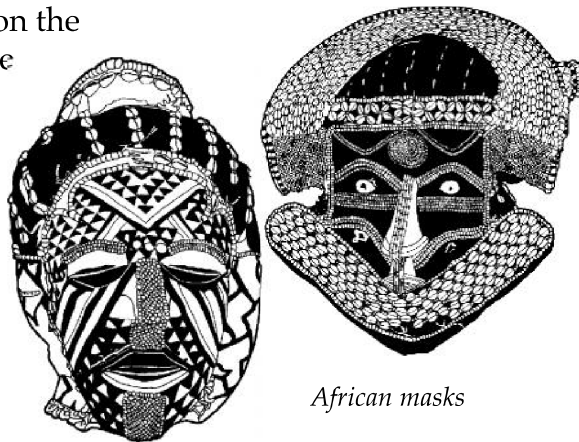
Art, Architecture, Music, and Literary Traditions

In art and architecture, African traditions go far back in time to the ancient rock painting of the Sahara, the pyramids of Egypt and Nubia, the rock churches of Ethiopia, and the stones of Great Zimbabwe.

In about A.D. 1100, sculptors developed a method of bronze casting known as the *lost-wax process*. Because the wax was soft, it could be carved and used as a model. The model was then covered with clay and heated, melting the wax. Bronze was poured into the clay form, and when the bronze cooled, the clay was washed away. The lost-wax process is still used today to make custom jewelry. The sculptors of this time are some of the world's best. The **stylized** form influenced such artists as Pablo Picasso.

The stylized forms of African masks and other works had a dramatic influence on the development of modern art in the western world. Traditional African music was based on intricate and complex patterns of rhythm and has influenced modern forms of western music such as jazz.

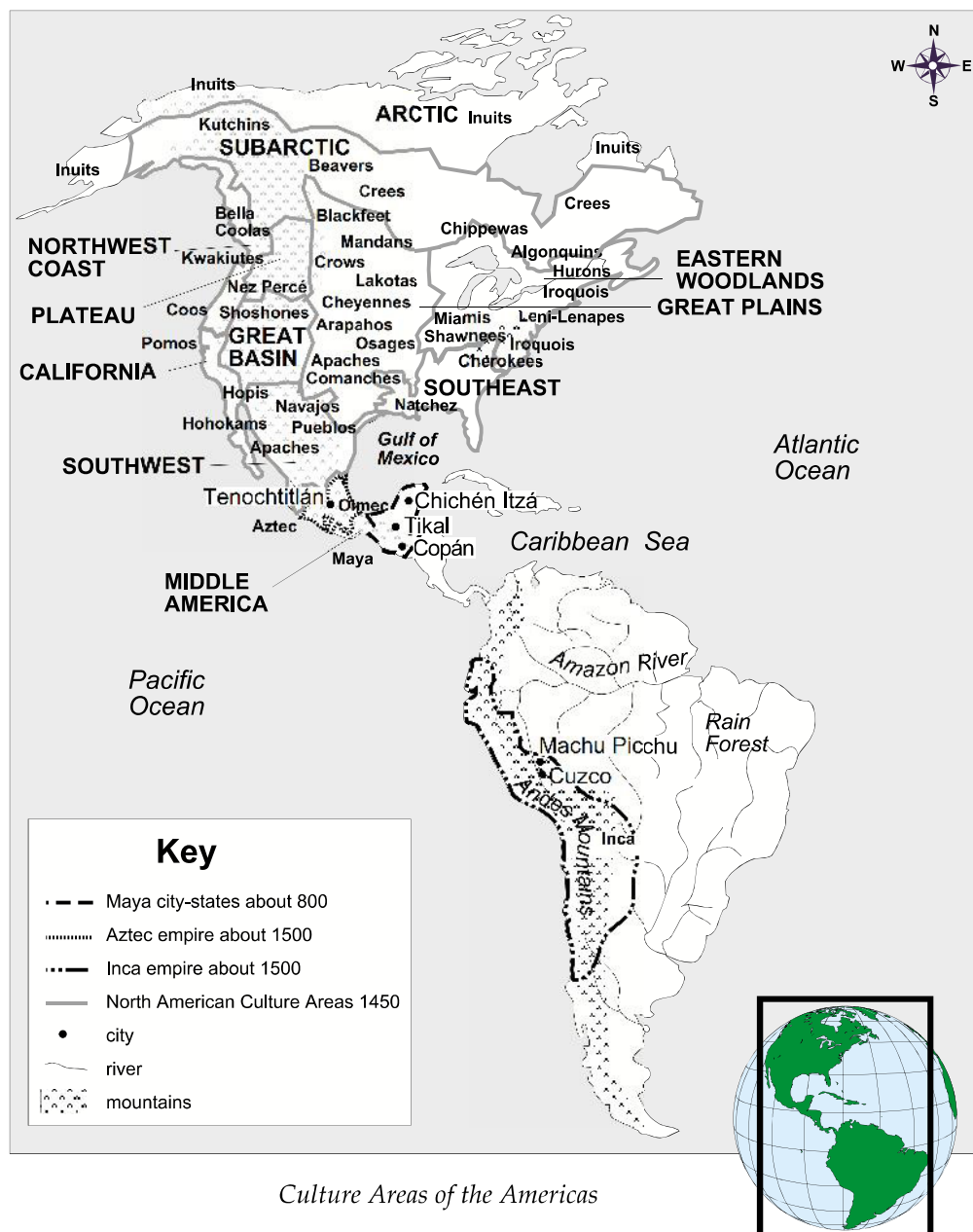
In West Africa, griots, or professional poets, record keepers, historians, and political advisors to chiefs, recited ancient stories to preserve history and folk tales from generation-to-generation. Some griots today can remember detailed family histories that go back more than 200 years and know the brave deeds of kings of 700 years ago. Griots often used riddles to sharpen the wits of the audience. Another popular type of tale told was the story without an ending. It challenged the audience to create a fitting lesson or conclusion. Traditional African storytelling continues to this day.



African masks

The Americas: Civilizations of North, Central, and South America

At about the same time that civilizations were developing in Africa, great civilizations were forming in North America, Central America, and South America. These civilizations were unknown to the Africans and Europeans during the Middle Ages. It wasn't until the late 1400s and early 1500s that Europeans came in contact with these **flourishing** civilizations.



Culture Areas of the Americas

About 25,000 years ago, the glaciers of the Ice Age froze so much of Earth's water that ocean levels dropped as much as 500 feet. Because of this drop in ocean level, a land bridge surfaced across the Bering Strait



Inuit (Eskimo) group kayaking

between Northern Asia and present-day Alaska.

Archaeologists believe that the first Americans migrated to North America from Asia across this bridge, perhaps in search of food. As Earth warmed, the glaciers melted, the land bridge disappeared,

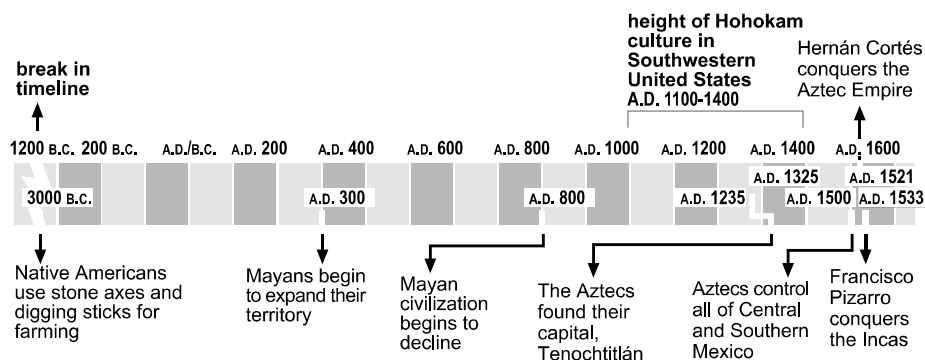
and the Americas became a separate land mass.

Slowly traveling southward over many, many thousands of years, these wandering hunters and gathers eventually reached as far south as the tip of South America. **Diverse** cultural groups developed in North, Central, and South America.

The Americas are made up of the continents of North and South America. In North America, the Rocky Mountains begin in Alaska and continue southward into Mexico. The Andes Mountains run down the length of South America. Both continents are drained by mighty river systems. They are the Mississippi River in North America and the Amazon River in South America.

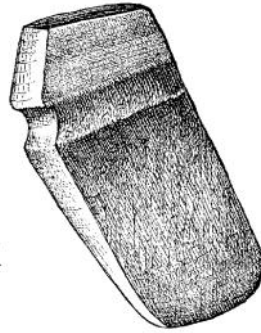
American civilizations had to learn to adapt to the variety of climates and resources in the Americas. In both the far northern and southern parts of the Americas, people learned to survive in icy cold climates. Near the Equator, civilizations had to adapt to a hotter climate and tropical rain forests. The Americas also had deserts, woodlands, and fertile plains. Between these two geographic regions is a region called *Middle America*. Middle America or *Mesoamerica* includes Mexico and Central America.

Timeline of the Americas

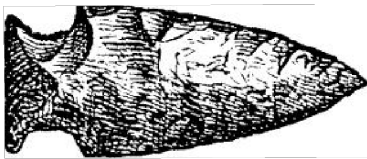


The North Americans (700 B.C.-A.D. 1500s)

Most of what is known about the Native American population of North America comes from the work of **archaeologists**. Archaeological digs have resulted in the discovery of **burial mounds**, pottery, tools, and the remains of the bones of both animals and humans in all parts of North America. Native Americans who settled in a particular area of North America developed a common culture. As these cultural areas flourished, their arts, crafts, and religious customs became distinct or different from those in other areas of North America. In each area of North America, a distinct culture emerged. Each culture reflected the environment in which it developed. Historians call this **cultural differentiation**.



Alaskan grooved axe



flint arrowhead found in the Ohio area

To meet their needs for food, clothing and shelter, early Americans used the resources of their environment. Some early Americans lived near the ocean. Other groups may have fished in streams and rivers, while others were hunters and gatherers. Archaeologists have learned that early Americans throughout North America developed diverse ways of living. They have uncovered such **artifacts** as rounded stones for grinding and bone hooks for fishing. By about 5000 B.C. early Americans discovered farming. This discovery led to the development of permanent farming villages. As food supplies increased, the population of North America grew. By A. D. 1500, when the Europeans arrived in the Americas, about 15 to 20 million Native Americans lived in what is today the United States and Canada.

Native North Americans

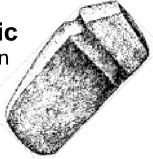


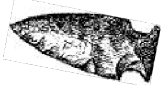

There are 10 culture areas that are based on the environments in which Native American people lived. They include the Arctic, Subarctic, Northwest Coast, California, Great Basin, Plateau, Southwest, Great Plains, Eastern Woodlands, and Southeast. In each of these areas, the people adapted to their



Northwestern Native American leader

environment. Their environment influenced the diverse cultures that developed. Early Americans mainly lived by hunting and the gathering of wild plants and berries. Eventually, Native Americans learned how to plant and harvest corn. Other crops grown by Native Americans included potatoes, squash, avocados, pumpkins, tomatoes, peanuts, and a variety of beans.

Native American Culture Groups of North America

Cultural Group	Selected Tribes	Culture
Arctic/Subarctic cold, northern region of Canada and Alaska; severe climate prohibited farming 	Beavers, Crees, Inuits, and Kutchins	lived as nomadic hunters and gatherers; lived in cold climate; worshipped nature and animal spirits
Northwest Coast thickly forested seacoast of Pacific Northwest; mild winters; fish, sea, and forest animals were plentiful	Bella Coolas, Coos, Kwakiutis, and Tlingits	lived in villages near forests, rivers, or ocean; held ceremonial dinners called potlatches; gave gifts to guest which showed wealth and status of tribe
California/Great Basin/Plateau California coast; warm climate; abundance of food resources: fish, seals, and wild berries 	Nez Percé, Pomos, and Shoshones	lived in small family groups as hunters and gatherers; worshipped nature spirits
Southwest high desert regions of Arizona, New Mexico, southern Colorado, Utah, and northern Mexico 	Apaches, Hopis, Navajos, Pueblos, and Hohakams	lived as farmers in villages in homes of adobe brick; built irrigation systems; lived also in areas unsuitable for farming; hunted and gathered plants; worshipped nature spirits
Great Plains stretching from the Rocky Mountains to the Mississippi River	Arapahos, Blackfeet, Cheyennes, Comanches, Crows, Lakotas, Mandans, and Osages	lived in tepees on Grasslands of the Great Plains; hunted mostly bison or buffalo; used animals for clothing; grew some food along streams
Eastern Woodlands area east of Mississippi from the Atlantic Coast to the Great Lakes 	Algonquins, Chippewas, Hurons, Iroquois, Leni-Lenapes, Miamis, Pequots, and Shawnees	lived in villages as farmers and hunters; lived in longhouses with many families; women had political and social powers in some tribes
	Cayuga, Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, and Seneca form Iroquois League	lived in stockaded villages of longhouses as hunters and farmers; had matrilineal families and an intertribal clan system; had high level of political organization; gathered representatives from each group and discussed and resolved problems
Southeast from the Carolinas to Florida 	Cherokees and Natchez	lived as farmers; grew a variety of crops: corn, squash, beans; celebrated the harvest with Green Corn Ceremony

Civilizations of Middle and South America

Middle America or Mesoamerica are the lands of Mexico and Central America between North America and South America. Many different civilizations flourished in Mexico, Central America, and South America. Most of the people in these civilizations were farmers, but these great nations developed remarkable cultures with outstanding accomplishments in the development of architecture, agriculture, education, and the arts.



Mexican figurines

The Olmecs (1200 B.C.-400 B.C.)

The first American civilization, the Olmecs lived in farm villages in what is today Mexico's Gulf Coast. They raised *maize*, a corn plant native to the Central American rain forest. The Olmecs built pyramid-shaped temples and carved enormous stone heads. It is believed that their cities were the center of religious worship. These advanced people developed a system of writing, a calendar, and a counting system. Through trade, the Olmec culture spread to other civilizations.

Olmec Contributions to Civilization

Art, Sculpture, Technology, and Religious Devotion

Through trade the Olmec influence spread over a large area. Their carvings of grinning jaguars and snakes appear in the art of later peoples. Some of the most dramatic remains of the Olmec civilization are the giant carved 40-ton stone heads found at La Venta. The Olmecs also invented a picture form of writing and developed a number system with a zero. Using these advances, they made remarkably accurate calendars. Their most important contribution may have been the tradition of priestly leadership and religious devotion that became a basic part of later Middle American civilizations.

The Mayas (A.D. 250-900)

The Mayan city-states developed an advanced civilization from the Yucatán Peninsula in southern Mexico through Central America. The Mayans were mainly a farming civilization. They cleared the rain forest and grew both maize or corn and beans. Mayan cities were important religious, government, and trading centers. In the largest city-state, Tikal, the rulers, Mayan priests, and nobles governed. A huge triangle-shaped pyramid served as a religious place of worship. Mayan priests observed the movement of stars and planets. They believed that the heavenly bodies in the sky were gods, who would determine everything that happened on Earth.



Mayan priest



Mayan chief



El Castillo, a temple-topped pyramid with four staircases that rises 75 feet above the jungle floor.

Below the priests and nobles was the merchant class. However, most of the people were in the lower classes. Artisans, peasants, and slaves made up these classes. The Mayans were known to have traded with other civilizations. Trade goods included salt, grain, cloth, bird feathers, jewelry,

and animal skins. For reasons not yet known, the Mayans abandoned most of their cities between A.D. 800 and 900.

Mayan Contributions to Civilization

Science, Mathematics, Books, and Architecture

The Mayans studied and observed the movement of the stars and the heavenly bodies. They recorded eclipses and developed a very accurate calendar. Based on careful observations of the planets, sun, and moon, Mayan astronomers estimated a year contained 365.2420 days. Their calendar was only .0002th of a day too short.

The Mayans developed a writing system and a mathematical system that used zero. Their first writing system used pictures. Later they developed characters called *phonograms* that represented sounds. Phonograms were written on sheets of paper made of tree bark and folded to form pages. These were the first books ever made in the Western Hemisphere.

The advances in architecture are seen in the remains of many of their tall pyramids. The Mayan pyramids were the tallest structures in America until the Flatiron Building, a skyscraper, was built in New York City in 1903.



The Temple of the Warriors, built on top of a pyramid, got its name from decorations on nearby columns that have reliefs of men in battle dress.

The Aztecs (A.D. 1200s-1500s)

The Aztecs were a fierce, warlike people who settled in Mexico's Central Plateau. In the 15th century, they built a great empire by **conquering** other civilizations and forcing them to pay tribute. Borrowing from earlier civilizations, the Aztecs learned to be skilled builders. They built their capital city of Tenochtitlan in the middle of a lake. As many as 300,000 Aztecs lived in this city. Tenochtitlan had great gardens, palaces, and markets. The emperor and his family lived there. Stone bridges known as causeways were constructed to connect their capital city to the mainland. Like other civilizations in the Americas, they built huge stone pyramids as temples in their cities.

Aztec Religion

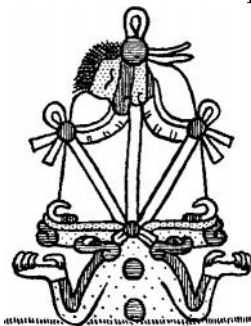
The Aztecs worshipped many gods. Their chief god was the sun god. Aztec priests believed that their sun god demanded

human **sacrifices** in order to survive. Without a

daily diet of a human heart, their sun would

not rise again. To provide enough humans to be

sacrificed to their god, the Aztecs were constantly at war with their neighbors. Most of the human sacrifices were those captured in war, but sometimes families offered one of their family members as a sacrifice to their sun god.



Aztec sacrifice



Aztec sun god and a jaguar

Aztec Society

The emperor and his family were part of the upper class in Aztec society. The priests and noble classes chose him to lead their people in war. Priests were extremely important in Aztec society. They led religious ceremonies, kept historical records, and schooled the children of the nobility. Nobles were the government officials and often governed the conquered provinces in the empire. The warrior class was the next highest class in Aztec society. However, the majority of the people were the common people, most of whom were farmers. At the bottom of society were slaves, prisoners of war, and criminals.

The Conquistadors

After Europeans discovered the Americas, Spanish adventurers known as **conquistadors** (conquerors) began exploring this “New World.” In 1519, Hernán Cortés and a band of soldiers attacked the Aztec capital city of Tenochtitlan. He and his soldiers defeated the Aztec ruler Montezuma. The conquistadors successfully defeated the larger Aztec armies because they had horses, guns, and armor, which were unknown to the Aztecs. Cortés also won the support of the neighboring tribes that had been conquered by the Aztecs. By 1521 the Spanish destroyed the city of Tenochtitlan. The victory of Cortés over the Aztecs marked the end of Aztec rule in Central America and the beginning of Spanish rule in the Americas.

Aztec Contributions to Civilization

Technology, Medicine, Architecture, and Sculpture

The Aztecs were the most advanced civilization in middle America at the time of Cortés. They did not **originate** much of their advanced knowledge. When the Aztecs invaded a region, they took over the culture of earlier advanced people and adopted their ways. From the Mayas, they learned how to determine the solar year accurately.

Religion was of great importance in the life of the Aztecs. Aztec priests used herbs and other medicines to treat fevers and wounds. Aztec physicians could set broken bones and treat dental cavities. They also prescribed steam baths as cures for various ills, a therapy still in use today.



Aztec sun stone

In architecture and sculpture, they gave their best efforts to building and decorating huge temples. They used picture writing and number symbols to record religious events. Although they were excellent traders, they had no money system. Instead, they used a system of barter to trade goods.

The Incas (A.D. 1200s-1500s)

Another advanced American civilization developed far to the south in the Andes Mountains along the Pacific coast. The Incas built their capital city, Cuzco, high in the mountains of what is today the South American country of Peru. The Incan civilization began as a small group of herders who **domesticated** and raised llamas. In 1438, the Incan warrior Pachacuti, conquered the neighboring tribes and declared himself emperor. He extended Incan rule from Ecuador in the north to Chile and Argentina in the south. The empire he created included people of many diverse cultures and 20 different languages. This empire eventually grew to become a powerful empire that stretched over 2,000 miles through coastal deserts, dry highlands, fertile river valleys, and rain forests. Most of the Incas lived in the Andes and had to adjust to living in high altitudes. Their capital city Cuzco was almost 12,000 feet above sea level.



Inca bird motif—a motif is a recurring or repeated shape

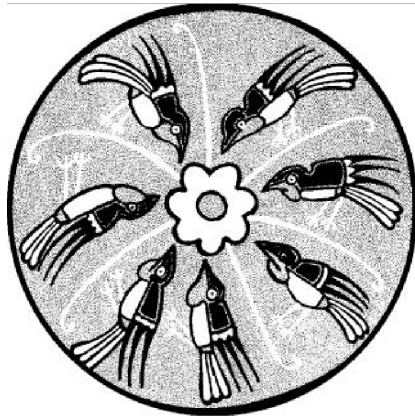
Like other advanced civilizations in the Americas, the Incas were great builders. From earlier civilizations they learned how to build large stone buildings. They also built a 14,000-mile system of roads to connect their

growing empire. Their roads ran through the highest mountains as well as the deserts. The Incas also built hundreds of bridges across rivers and cut tunnels through hillsides. These roads allowed the Incan armies and news to spread quickly through the empire. Runners stationed at various **provinces** in the empire could quickly carry important news from one part of the empire to the other.

Like the Maya and the Aztec, the Incas created a strong government, too. The Incan Empire had as many as 16 million people. This huge empire was divided into provinces. The Incan emperor ruled his empire from the mountain capital of Cuzco. He closely regulated the lives of the common people. The Incan people believed that their emperor was descended from the sun god. All the land and wealth of the Incan empire was owned by the emperor. He distributed the land to the common people in the empire and closely regulated the growing and **distribution** of food. Such foods as potatoes and *quinoa*, a protein-rich grain, were important parts of the Incan diet. To unite his diverse empire, a single language called *Quechua*

became the official language of the Incan Empire. All the citizens of the empire were expected to speak this language and learn Incan ways.

Local rulers were permitted to rule the conquered provinces of the empire as long as they remained loyal to the Incan government. The Incan government demanded **tribute** from its citizens in the form of labor.



Inca bird circle

Citizens were expected to work on public works projects for the government for a certain number of days every year. Citizens were also expected to work on irrigation systems, roads, or palaces.

The Incas had no formal system of writing. Special officials kept records of births, deaths, crop production, and taxes on a **quipu**, a collection of knotted, colored cords. History and literature were memorized and passed down from generation-to-generation.

Inca Religion

Like the other civilizations in the Americas, the Incas were **polytheistic**. They worshipped their ruler as a god, believing he was a descendant of the sun god. The Incas also worshipped nature spirits. Incan priests served the gods by celebrating religious festivals. Young women known as the *chosen women* were selected by the priests to devote their lives to religious service. They were trained in the skills and duties needed to serve the sun god. Food and animals were typical sacrificial offerings, but it is believed that human sacrifices were also made during special events.

Decline of the Inca

Cortés's success in his conquest of the Aztecs inspired other Spanish conquistadors to seek their fortune in the Americas. In 1531 the Spanish explorer Francisco Pizarro discovered the Incas at a time when the Incan Empire was weakened by a civil war. Helped by rival Indian tribes, he and his army captured an Incan city and Atahualpa, the Incan emperor. He and his army killed thousands of Incans. The Spanish demanded a huge ransom for the safe return of Atahualpa. Although Atahualpa gave Pizarro

enough gold and silver to fill up an entire room, the Spanish killed him. Pizarro eventually captured the capital city Cuzco in 1533. The Incas rebelled against the Spanish for many years but were unable to defeat them.

Incan Contributions to Civilization

Agriculture, Architecture, Art, and Medicine

The Incas made use of advanced methods of agriculture. To survive in their dry and mountainous land, they built irrigation systems for watering and developed special methods of farming. To prevent erosion, the Incas also invented a technique known as *terraced farming*. Farmers plant their crops on level strips of land dug into the steep slopes of mountainsides.

The Incas were also master builders. They built temples from huge blocks of stone, some of which weighed up to 200 tons each. They fitted stone blocks together tightly without cement or mortar. Many of their temples and other stone buildings withstood centuries of earthquakes and some still stand today.



Inca bird motif

The Incas were also excellent artisans and craftsmen. The Incas believed that gold and silver were sacred objects that should be used to give glory to their gods.

They designed beautiful gold statues and ornaments of the finest quality and decorated the walls of their temples with sheets of gold. Their gold statues and ornaments are among the finest ever produced.

In the field of medicine, the Incas made many advancements as well. The Incas learned to treat malaria with quinine, a substance made from bark. They performed brain surgery, bone operations, and amputations. They operated on the skull to relieve swelling caused by wounds and used herbs as antiseptics.

Review

Many civilizations arose on Africa, the second largest continent in the world. The African kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai prospered between A.D. 300 and 1600. A powerful king ruled Ghana. Society in Ghana was composed of different clans. The king settled the disputes between the clans and appointed governors to rule different parts of the kingdom. Ghana's economy was based on agriculture and trade. The government became wealthy by taxing goods that passed through Ghana.

The Kingdom of Mali began in the 13th century. It had a strong economy based on gold, ivory, cattle, and cotton. The kings of Mali converted to Islam. One of the greatest rulers of Mali, Mansa Musa, went on a pilgrimage to Mecca with 60,000 men. After Mansa Musa's death in 1337, his empire declined. Among the groups struggling for power was the Songhai.

The Songhai eventually gained power when the Mali rulers were defeated. Their great king, Sonni Ali, was extending his empire at about the same time that Columbus was discovering America. Askia the Great, a Muslim, ruled the Songhai kingdom at the height of its power. The city of Timbuktu became the center of Islamic culture and learning.

Many diverse civilizations also developed in the Americas. In North America many diverse Native American cultural groups flourished. The cultures they developed were influenced by their unique environments. There were 10 culture areas that included the Arctic, Subarctic, Northwest Coast, California, Great Basin, Plateau, Southwest, Great Plains, Eastern Woodlands, and Southeast. Early Americans mainly lived by hunting and gathering and eventually learned to plant and harvest crops.

In Middle America or Mesoamerica (Mexico and Central America), several great civilizations also flourished. The Olmecs developed an advanced civilization best known for building pyramid-shaped temples and enormous carved stone heads. Their cities became the center of religious worship. They developed a system of writing, a calendar, and a counting system. The Mayan civilization developed in Southern Mexico through Central America. Their



*Southwestern Native
American weaving*

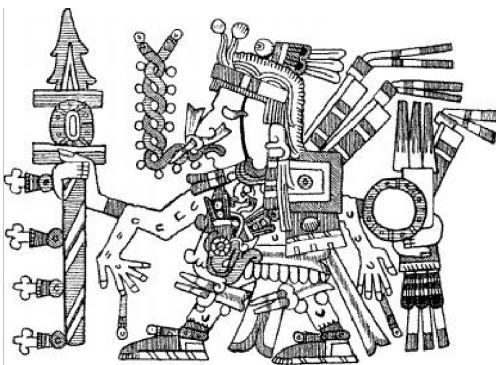
advanced civilization built large cities which became the center of trade, government, and religious worship. They believed that the heavenly bodies in the sky were gods and could determine everything that happened on Earth. The Mayas' main achievements were the development of an accurate calendar, a writing system, architecture, and a mathematical system that used zero.



Mayan pot

The Aztecs were a fierce, warlike people who flourished in Mexico's Central plateau. They conquered rival tribes and forced them to pay tribute. Skilled architects and builders, they built their capital city Tenochtitlan in the middle of a lake. Like other civilizations in the Americas, they built huge stone pyramids as temples in their cities. The Aztecs worshipped a sun god that demanded human sacrifice. The Aztecs used those captured in war as human sacrifices to their sun god.

The Aztecs had a rigid social structure. The emperor and his family and priests were part of the upper class in Aztec society. Nobles governed the Aztec provinces. The majority of the people were farmers and members of the common people. At the bottom of society were slaves, prisoners of war, and criminals. The Aztecs did not



Aztec warrior

originate most of their advanced knowledge. They learned much of their knowledge from the people who they conquered. Hernando Cortés, a Spanish conquistador, conquered the Aztecs. He was able to defeat their armies because he had horses, guns, and armor, which were unknown to the Aztecs.

The Incas were an advanced civilization that developed in the Andes Mountains of South America. The Incas built a huge empire that stretched over 2,000 miles. The Incas created their empire by absorbing rival Indian tribes into their empire. Their capital city Cuzco was located in the Andes Mountains almost 12,000 feet above sea level. The huge Incan Empire was connected by an efficient system of roads. Runners quickly carried news from one part of the empire to the other.

The Incan emperor was a god-king who exercised complete authority over his people. The Incas also worshipped nature spirits. The Incas learned to adapt to their harsh climate by developing irrigation systems and special methods of farming in their mountainous environment. They were also master builders who built massive temples and buildings with huge blocks of stone that weighed up to 200 tons each. The talented Incas were also excellent artisans and craftsmen. They designed beautiful gold and silver ornaments. The Incas were also advanced in the field of medicine.

Francisco Pizarro, a Spanish conquistador, attacked and defeated the Incan Empire. Like Cortés, he was able to overpower the Incan armies with the help of other Indian tribes. He held the Incan emperor Atahualpa for ransom and killed him, even after the Incans gave him a room full of gold and silver. Although the Incas rebelled against the Spanish for many years, they were unable to defeat them. The Spanish eventually conquered most of the Americas and created a Spanish empire.