

MAJOR MESO-AMERICAN CIVILIZATIONS

AZTEC

(Mexico, Late 1100s CE, appeared in the valley of Mexico from Northern Mexico)

LOCATION: Built empire that covered most of what is today central and southern Mexico

POLITICAL STRUCTURE: **Chief of Men** both civil and religious leader; rigid class system, including slaves; exacted tribute from conquered peoples

ECONOMIC SYSTEM: Originally nomads who conquered farming peoples as they moved south; maize a main crop; extensive trade network; trade goods included metalwork and textiles

ARTS/SCIENCE: manuscripts; elaborate irrigation system; hillside terracing for farming; artificial lakes, causeways, island cities; featherwork, textiles; metalwork in gold and silver; jade objects; semiprecious stones as jewelry

MAYAN

Possibly as early as the 2000s BCE, peaking between 300 and 900 CE

LOCATION: rain forests, from the Yucatan peninsula spread into what are now Guatemala, Honduras, Belize, El Salvador.

POLITICAL STRUCTURE: Rules by noble class of warriors and hereditary priests

ECONOMIC SYSTEM: Based on farming, but artisans and traders also existed; trade goods included carved jade products.

ARTS/SCIENCE: Hieroglyphic writing on stele and manuscripts; very accurate calendar; knew the movement of planets; knowledge of sophisticated mathematical concepts; ceremonial centers with temples, pyramids, and monuments of limestone blocks; used brick, mortar, stucco; frescoes; lacked knowledge of the

INCA

C. 1200 CE, began to move out from the central Andes in the 1400s

LOCATION: What is now Peru and parts of Ecuador, Chile, Bolivia, and Argentina

POLITICAL STRUCTURE: **Inca** as ruler, descended from the Sun god, founder of the dynasty; rigid class system; Inca owned all the land and the people worked it for the ruler

ECONOMIC SYSTEM: farming, potato, quinoa (berry), maize

ARTS/SCIENCE: **quipu** for recordkeeping, hillside terracing for farming, extensive system of roads, suspension bridges, ceramics, textiles, metalwork, lacked system of writing and knowledge of the wheel

TOLTEC

Possibly 750 CE, peaked between 900s and 1100s

LOCATION: Central Mexican highlands; invaded Mayan territory; influence widespread through its trade networks.

POLITICAL STRUCTURE: Jointly ruled by a military and a religious leader with the religious leader eventually losing power.

ECONOMIC SYSTEM: Originally nomads who conquered farming people; extensive trading network that stretched from the central Mexican plateau to what became the U.S. southwest; traded goods included copper, turquoise.

ARTS/SCIENCE: Massive buildings, pyramids, ceremonial ball courts; painted ceramics; metalworks in gold and copper.

