Unit 5: Latin America's Cultural Legacy

The Regions
Latin America refers to the region of the Americas where languages derived from Latin (especially Spanish and Portuguese) are primarily spoken. Latin America includes:

- **Mexico**: Refers to present day Mexico
- **Central Am**: Refers to the region from Mexico's southern border to the border of Panama and Colombia in South America. Includes the modern day countries of Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama
- **Caribbean**: Refers to the region of the Americas consisting of the Caribbean Sea and its islands
- **South Am**: Refers to the region south and east of the border of Panama and Colombia

Mesoamerica

- *Meso* means "in the middle"
- Refers to the region extending from central Mexico south and east to Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, and Nicaragua.
- As early as 2000 BC, people migrated into Mesoamerica and developed agriculture.
  - Developed animals
  - Traded with each other
- Cortés wanted gold & silver of the Aztecs

The Aztec

**Origins**
- 1200 - 1521 AD
- Nahua peoples migrated into central Mexico
- Built capital, Tenochtitlan, on island in Lake Texcoco, the site of modern Mexico City

Agriculture
- Built chinampas, or "floating fields", by bunching twigs together then stacking mud on top of the twigs. They were not anchored at first and could be towed until the plant roots anchored into the lake floor.
- Grew maize, beans, squash, sweet potatoes, and peppers
- Meat was scarce (Spanish brought chickens, pigs, and cattle later as part of the Columbian Exchange)
  - Common people ate turkey and dog meat on special occasions
  - Only the rich ate meat and drank chocolate regularly

Commerce

- Market: towns held weekly or daily
- Merchants: farmers, artisans
- Money: Cacao beans, lengths of cotton cloth called quachtli, and hoe or axe money (named for its shape) made of thin copper

Cities
- Central plaza surrounded by government buildings and pyramidal temples
- Adobe homes had two buildings: the main home and a steam bath area
Government
- The supreme leader was the **huay tlatoani**, meaning "**great lord**" or "great speaker"
- Conquered surrounding peoples
  - Allowed local rulers to **stay in power**
  - Forced conquered peoples to pay **tribute** twice or four times a year
    - **Feathers**, adorned suits, greenstone beads, **cloth**, firewood, and food
  - Forced conquered peoples to provide **captives for sacrifices**
- Religion
  - Many gods based on **nature**
  - Believed
    - Huitzilopochtli, **sun god** and **war god**, fought off forces of darkness each night
    - A new day **would not come** if he failed
  - Offered **human sacrifices** to give Huitzilopochtli strength
- Developments
  - **Number system**
    - Four symbols: dots, **flags**, **feathers**, and a bag of incense
    - Used to keep records of **tribute** paid
  - **365-day calendar**
- Impact on Modern Mexico
  - Tortillas are versions of Aztec **cornmeal pancakes**
  - **Million** Mexicans speak Nahuatl, a native **Aztec language**
  - Many **Mexican cities** have Nahuatl names

South America
- People **migrated** to the **Andes Mts.** of modern day **Peru** as early as 12,500 BC
- Developed agriculture
  - Cut **terraces** into mountains in order to grow **crops**
  - Domesticated **llamas** and **alpacas**
  - Wove wool into colorful, patterned **textiles**

The Inca
- 1438 - 1532 **AD**
  - Stretched from southern **Colombia** to central **Chile**
  - **12 million** people by 1500s
- Agriculture
  - Dug **irrigation canals**
  - Built **aqueducts** to channel water from melting snow in the **Andes** to lower fields
  - Grew **maize**, potatoes, sweet potatoes, and **cassava**
- Trade
  - Bartered
    - Government controlled most **trade**, especially of metals, **precious stones**, unusual plants and/or animals, and **scarcity** items
    - Commoners could trade **crafts**, food, and **textiles** at local markets
Name: Key

Period: 

The INCA, continued

Government
• Headed by the Sapa Inca, which means “the only emperor”
  • Had absolute power
  • Believed to be a god, “Son of the Sun”
• Inca Pachacutec
  • Was the Sapa Inca
  • Began period of conquest and expansion
  • Conquered many Andean villages
    • Sent spies to regions he wanted to add
    • Got reports on military strength and wealth
      • Sent messages to ruler about benefits of joining Pachacutec’s empire
      • Offered presents, usually high-quality textiles
      • Promised increased wealth from trade
    • Many rulers entered out of fear
    • Often allowed local chiefs to stay in power
    • Brought local ruler’s children to Cuzco to learn Inca ways, then sent them back to become rulers of native lands
    • Forced conquered people to pay tribute
      • Men had to pay in labor
      • Women had to pay by weaving cloth

Religion
• Many gods representing nature, such as Viracocha, supreme god
• Offered sacrifices to gods
  • Usually cloth, plants, and animals
  • Sacrificed humans, usually kids, only in times of great disaster such as threat of starvation
  • It was considered an honor to be sacrificed!
• Worshipped ancestors as protective spirits

Developments
• Architecture
  • Used stone blocks in Andes but adobe in coastal areas
  • Mortarless construction (no cement)
    • Fit so tightly that not even a razor blade can fit between them
    • Could withstand earthquakes!!!
• Metalwork
  • Metalworkers created spectacular gold and silver objects
  • Few survive because the Spanish melted them down to ship to Spain
Road system
- 1500 miles
- Linked capitals of Curico and Quito
- Paved with stone or cut into rock
- Built for traffic because Incans never discovered the wheel
- Had rest houses, temples, storerooms with food
- Built braided rope bridges across Andean canyons

Communication
- Used quipu instead of writing which was colored strings with knots
  - Colors represented people or items
  - Knots represented numbers

Decline of the Incan
- Emperor Huayna Capac, Pachacutec's grandson, died
- Civil War broke out when his sons, Huascar and Atahualpa fought for throne

Impact on Modern Peru
- 45% of the total population in Peru, 55% in Bolivia, and 25% in Ecuador are indigenous peoples, meaning they and their ancestors are from the area
- Speak Quechua, a native Inca language
- Raise llamas and alpacas for their wool
- Weave traditional textiles
- Still use llamas as beasts of burden in some remote areas