

The Incas

SECTION

3

If YOU were there...

You live in the Andes Mountains, where you raise llamas. You weave their wool into warm cloth. Last year, soldiers from the powerful Inca Empire took over your village. They brought in new leaders, who say you must all learn a new language and send much of your woven cloth to the Inca ruler. They also promise that the government will provide for you in times of trouble.

How do you feel about living in the Inca Empire?

BUILDING BACKGROUND The Incas built their huge empire by taking over village after village in South America. They brought many changes to the people they conquered before they were themselves conquered by the Spanish.

The Incas Create an Empire

While the Aztecs were ruling Mexico, the Inca Empire arose in South America. The Incas began as a small tribe in the Andes. Their capital was Cuzco (KOO-skoh) in what is now Peru.

In the mid-1400s a ruler named **Pachacuti** (pah-chah-KOO-tee) began to expand Inca territory. Later leaders followed his example, and by the early 1500s the Inca Empire was huge. It stretched from modern Ecuador to central Chile and included coastal deserts, snowy mountains, fertile valleys, and thick forests. About 12 million people lived in the empire. To rule effectively, the Incas formed a strong central government.

The Incas lived in a region of high plains and mountains.

What You Will Learn...

Main Ideas

1. The Incas created an empire with a strong central government in South America.
2. Life in the Inca Empire was influenced by social structure, religion, and the Incas' cultural achievements.
3. Francisco Pizarro conquered the Incas and took control of the region in 1537.

The Big Idea

The Incas controlled a huge empire in South America, but it was conquered by the Spanish.

Key Terms and People

Pachacuti, p. 479

Quechua, p. 480

masonry, p. 481

Atahualpa, p. 482

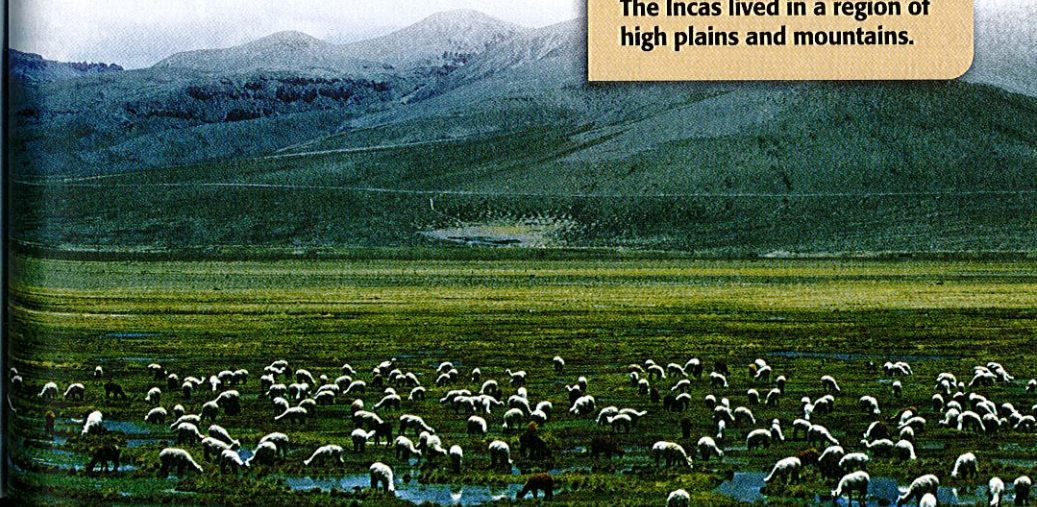
Francisco Pizarro, p. 482



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TAKING NOTES

Use the graphic organizer online to take notes about the geography, government, society, religion, achievements, and conquest of the Inca Empire.



Central Rule

Pachacuti did not want the people he conquered to have too much power. He began a policy of removing local leaders and replacing them with new officials he trusted. He also made the children of conquered leaders travel to Cuzco to learn about Inca government and religion. When the children were grown, they were sent back to govern their villages, where they taught people the Inca way of life.

As another means of unifying the empire, the Incas used **an official Inca language, Quechua** (KE-chuh-wuh). Although people spoke many other languages, all official business had to be done in Quechua. Even today, many people in Peru speak Quechua.

A Well-Organized Economy

The Inca government strictly controlled the economy and told each household what work to do. Most Incas had to spend time working for the government as well as themselves. Farmers tended government land in addition to their own. Villagers made cloth and other goods for the army. Some Incas served as soldiers, worked in mines, or built roads and bridges. In this way, the people paid taxes in the form of labor rather than money. This labor tax system was called the *mita* (MEE-tah).

Another feature of the Inca economy was that there were no merchants or markets. Instead, government officials would **distribute** goods collected through the *mita*. Leftover goods were stored in the capital for emergencies. If a natural disaster struck, or if people simply could not care for themselves, the government provided supplies to help them.

READING CHECK Summarizing How did the Incas control their empire?

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

distribute
to divide among a group of people



BIOGRAPHY

Pachacuti

Died 1471

Pachacuti became the Inca ruler in about 1438. Under his rule the Inca Empire began a period of great expansion. Pachacuti, whose name means “he who remakes the world,” had the Inca capital at Cuzco rebuilt. He also established an official Inca religion.

Drawing Inferences Why do you suppose Pachacuti wanted an official religion for the empire?

hmhsocialstudies.com INTERACTIVE MAP

The Inca Empire



GEOGRAPHY SKILLS

INTERPRETING MAPS

- 1. Place** About how many miles did the Inca Empire stretch from north to south?
- 2. Location** Why was Cuzco a better location for the Inca capital than Quito?



Most Incas were farmers. The Incas in this drawing from the mid-1500s are harvesting potatoes.

Life in the Inca Empire

Because the rulers controlled Inca society so closely, the common people had little personal freedom. At the same time, the government protected the general welfare of all in the empire. But that did not mean everyone was treated equally.

Social Divisions

Inca society had two main social classes. The emperor, priests, and government officials made up the upper class. Members of this class lived in stone houses in Cuzco and wore the best clothes. They didn't have to pay the labor tax, and they enjoyed many other privileges. Inca rulers, for example, could relax in luxury at Machu Picchu (MAH-choo PEEK-choo). This royal retreat lay nestled high in the Andes. Palaces and gardens could be found behind its gated wall.

The lower class in Inca society included farmers, artisans, and servants. There were no slaves, however, because the Incas did not practice slavery. Most Incas were farmers. In the warmer valleys, they grew crops like maize and peanuts. In the cooler mountains, they carved terraces into the hillsides

and grew potatoes. High in the Andes, people raised llamas—South American animals related to camels—for meat and wool.

Lower-class Incas dressed in plain clothes and lived simply. By law, they couldn't own more goods than what they needed to survive. Most of what they produced went to the *mita* and the upper class.

Religion

The Inca social structure was partly related to religion. For example, the Incas thought that their rulers were related to the sun god and never really died. As a result, priests brought mummies of former kings to many ceremonies. People gave these royal mummies food and gifts.

Inca ceremonies often included sacrifices. But unlike the Maya and the Aztecs, the Incas rarely sacrificed humans. Instead they sacrificed llamas, cloth, or food.

In addition to practicing the official religion, people outside Cuzco worshipped other gods at local sacred places. The Incas believed certain mountaintops, rocks, and springs had magical powers. Many Incas performed sacrifices at these places as well as at the temple in Cuzco.

Achievements

Inca temples were grand buildings. The Incas were master builders, known for their expert **masonry, or stonework**. They cut stone blocks so precisely that they didn't need cement to hold them together. The Incas also built a network of roads. Two major highways ran the length of the empire and linked to many other roads.

The Incas produced works of art as well. Artisans made pottery and gold and silver jewelry. They even created a life-sized cornfield of gold and silver, crafting each cob, leaf, and stalk individually. Inca weavers also made some of the finest textiles in the Americas.

THE IMPACT TODAY

The ruins of Machu Picchu draw thousands of tourists to Peru every year.

Inca Arts

Inca arts included beautiful textiles and gold and silver objects. While many gold and silver objects have been lost, some Inca textiles have survived for hundreds of years.

This llama is made of silver. Inca artisans made many silver offerings to the gods.



The Incas are famous for their textiles, which featured bright colors and detailed designs. Inca artists made cloth from cotton and from the wool of llamas.

ANALYSIS
SKILL

ANALYZING VISUALS

What are some features of Inca art that you can see in these pictures?



Inca artisans also worked in gold. They made many beautiful objects such as this mask.

While such artifacts tell us much about the Incas, nothing was written about their empire until the Spanish arrived. Indeed, the Incas had no writing system. Instead, they kept records with knotted cords called *quipus* (KEE-pooz). Knots in the cords represented numbers. Different colors stood for information about crops, land, and other important topics.

The Incas also passed down their history orally. People sang songs and told stories about daily life and military victories. Official “memorizers” learned long poems about Inca legends and history. Eventually, after the conquistadors came, records were written in Spanish and Quechua. We know about the Incas from these records and from the stories that survive in the songs, dances, and religious practices of the people in the region today.

READING CHECK **Contrasting** How did daily life differ for upper- and lower-class Incas?

Pizarro Conquers the Incas

The arrival of conquistadors changed more than how the Incas recorded history. In the late 1520s, a civil war began in the Inca Empire after the death of the ruler. Two of the ruler’s sons, **Atahualpa** (ah-tah-WAHL-pah) and Huáscar (WAHS-kahr), fought to claim the throne. Atahualpa won the war in 1532, but fierce fighting had weakened the Inca army.

On his way to be crowned as king, Atahualpa got news that a band of about 180 Spanish soldiers had arrived in the Inca Empire. They were conquistadors led by **Francisco Pizarro**. When Atahualpa came to meet the group, the Spanish attacked. They were greatly outnumbered, but they caught the unarmed Incas by surprise. They quickly captured Atahualpa and killed thousands of Inca soldiers.

To win his freedom, Atahualpa asked his people to fill a room with gold and silver for Pizarro. Incas brought jewelry,

statues, and other valuable items from all parts of the empire. Melted down, the precious metals may have totaled 24 tons. They would have been worth millions of dollars today. Despite this huge payment, the Spaniards killed Atahualpa. They knew that if they let the Inca ruler live, he might rally his people and overpower their forces.

Some Incas fought back after the emperor's death. In 1537, though, Pizarro defeated the last of the Incas. Spain took control over the entire Inca Empire and ruled the region for the next 300 years.

READING CHECK **Identifying Cause and Effect** What events ended the Inca Empire?

SUMMARY AND PREVIEW The Incas built a huge empire with a strong central government, but they could not withstand the Spanish conquest in 1537. In the next chapter, you will turn to Europe in an earlier age—an age before the Spanish even learned of the Americas.



BIOGRAPHY

Atahualpa

1520–1533

Atahualpa was the last Inca emperor. He was brave and popular with the Inca army, but he didn't rule long. At his first meeting with Pizarro, he was offered a religious book to convince him to accept Christianity. Atahualpa held the book to his ear and listened. When the book didn't speak, Atahualpa threw it on the ground. The Spanish considered this an insult and a reason to attack.

Identifying Bias How do you think the Spanish viewed non-Christians?



BIOGRAPHY

Francisco Pizarro

1475–1541

Francisco Pizarro organized expeditions to explore the west coast of South America. His first two trips were mostly uneventful. But on his third trip, Pizarro met the Inca.

With only about 180 men, he conquered the Inca Empire, which had been weakened by disease and civil war. In 1535 Pizarro founded Lima, the capital of modern Peru.

Predicting If Pizarro had not found the Inca Empire, what do you think might have happened?

Section 3 Assessment

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ONLINE QUIZ

Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People

- a. Identify** Where was the Inca Empire located? What kinds of terrain did it include?

b. Explain How did the Incas control their economy?

c. Evaluate Do you think the *mita* system was a good government policy? Why or why not?
- a. Describe** What social classes existed in Inca society?

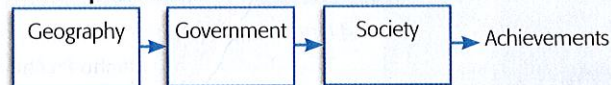
b. Make Inferences How might the Inca road system have helped strengthen the empire?
- a. Recall** When did the Spanish gain full control over Inca lands?

b. Analyze Why do you think **Pizarro** was able to defeat the much larger forces of the Incas?

c. Elaborate What effect do you think the civil war with his brother had on **Atahualpa's** kingship? How might history have been different if the Spanish had not arrived until a few years later?

Critical Thinking

- Analyzing** Draw a diagram like the one below. Using your notes, write a sentence in each box about how that topic influenced the topic its arrow points to.



FOCUS ON WRITING

- Adding Information about the Inca Empire** Your article would also describe the lands where the Incas lived. How would you highlight the diversity of the geography? What specific sites would you describe? Include some comments about how the Incas' building activities related to their environment. You will also want to include information on what happened when the Spanish arrived.