

Chapter 11: The Americas on the Eve of Invasion

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Region

- The Americas
 - The Periphery
- Aztecs: Mesoamerica/ Central America
- Incas: South America (Peru)
- Toltecs: Central Mexico to Guatemala



Postclassical Mesoamerica

- The Change:
 - After collapse of Teotihuacan in Central Mexico and abandonment of the classical Maya cities -> significant political and cultural change in Mesoamerica

Toltecs

- Militaristic empire that succeeded Central Mexico and included the practice of human sacrifice

Toltecs

- Social
 - Poor treatment of women -> they were often used for sacrifice
- Politics
 - Militaristic ethic including human sacrifice
- Interaction
 - Stepped temples and large burial mounds
 - Decline -> Destroyed by nomadic invaders from the north

Toltecs

- Culture
 - Society based on maize and bean agriculture
 - Ritual executions/ sacrifices of servants/ women -> indicates social stratification
 - Art often portrayed sacrifice
 - ✓ Jaguars and Eagles devouring human heart
 - Poor treatment of women

Aztecs

- Social
 - Social Hierarchy based on power, land, and the class born into
 - Like Middle Ages
 - Social Hierarchy
 - Emperor -> 7 Calpulli -> Slaves
 - Became a stratified society under the authority of a king (supreme ruler who served as representative of the gods on earth)
 - Elected by "royals"
 - 7 calpulli (nobles)
 - Become calpulli from military achievement, service to state, marriage
 - ✓ Social Mobility

Aztecs

- Politics
 - Militaristic
 - Conquered peoples -> forced to pay tribute, surrender lands, provide military service
 - Active role in regional politics because they had many allies
 - Divided into 7 calpulli (clans) -> governed by councils of family heads
 - Life was dependent on it -> each group did different things
 - Distributed land to each household
 - Organized labor gangs and military units
 - Helped maintain temple and school
 - Not all calpulli were equal

Aztecs

- Interaction
 - Tenochtitlan was the Aztec capital (present-day Mexico City)
 - Architecture - pyramids used as temples

Aztecs

- Culture
 - Society based on maize and bean agriculture
 - Took Nahuatl language from Toltecs
 - Religion was very important
 - Followers of their gods -> POLYTHEISTIC
 - Gods split into three groups
 - ✓ Gods of Fertility and Agricultural Cycle
 - Examples: God of Rain, Water, Maize, Fertility
 - ✓ Gods Centered on the Creators who Brought the Universe into Being
 - ✓ Gods of Warfare and Sacrifice
 - Little distinction between the gods and the natural world
 - Ritual Cannibalism
 - Human Sacrifice
 - Without sacrifice the gods would bring catastrophe

Aztecs

- Economics
 - **Pochteca** - merchant class specializing in long distance trade
 - Never invented a wheel

Incas

- Social
 - Formalized government
 - Social Hierarchy
 - Emperor -> priest -> governors of regions -> nobles -> chiracas
 - ✓ Chiracas: local Rulers
 - Women were on bottom
 - Required to weave for court and religious purposes
 - Some women were taken as concubines and others as servants of the temple
 - Domestic
 - More rights than Aztec women
 - Women's' rights and property passed on to daughters
 - Yanas: resisted participating in Agriculture = removed from higher class and placed in this group -> served as workers/ servants for nobility

Incas

- Politics
 - Political power went to his successor but possessions, land, wealth and palaces remained with male descendants
 - Did not demand tribute

Incas

- Interaction
 - Mita - each community takes turn working on state and church land
 - Quipu - a system of knotted strings to record information -> used for communication
 - No formal system of writing

Incas

- Culture
 - Very religious
 - Didn't prohibit worship of local gods
 - Worshipped at holly shrines
 - Sacrifice
 - Animals, goods, humans
 - The City of Gold
 - Incan legend about a city built out of gold
 - ✓ Movie El Dorado

Incas

- Economics
 - Metal workers, artisans who worked gold and silver
 - Used copper and bronze
 - Did not make the wheel

Incas vs. Aztecs

- Both based on preceding civilizations
- Both based on agriculture and the social hierarchy with increasingly predominant nobility
- Incas tried to create a single government and Aztecs never tried
- Both used local and ethnic political leaders
- Different climates and environments
 - Incas - Andean Mountains
 - Aztecs - Mesoamerica