

Empires and Alternatives in the Americas

1430-1530

CHAPTER LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, students should be able to:

1. Describe the ways that cultural diversity in the Americas was related to environmental diversity.
2. Explain why large empires emerged in Mesoamerica and the Andes around 1450.
3. Describe which key ideas or practices extended beyond the limits of the great empires.

ANNOTATED CHAPTER OUTLINE

The following annotated chapter outline will help you review the major topics covered in the chapter:

- I. Opening Vignette
 - A. A tomb found atop a mountain peak near the Peruvian city of Arequipa, discovered by Johan Reinhard in 1995, held a fourteen-year-old mummified priestess called an *accha*.
 1. The *accha* was chosen if the person possessed perfect physical qualities and was sacrificed in a ritual called the *capacocha*.
 2. Victims of the sacrifice received some of the highest honors in the Incan Empire.
 - a. The father of the child received reciprocal payment for his child.
 - b. An *accha* was buried with Incan goods.
 3. Death, fertility, reciprocity, and imperial links to sacred landscapes were all features of the *capacocha* sacrifice.
 4. Incans believed that death created a level of higher consciousness and that those whose bodies were preserved after death were able to act as links to deities.
 - B. Aztec and Incan Empires excelled at subduing the neighboring people through violence, marriage, relocation, and religious indoctrination.
- II. Many Native Americas
 - A. The Western Hemisphere reached a population of about 60 million near the end of the fifteenth century.
 1. Outside the empires, the most populated areas were those near the coasts and rivers. Some of these areas are the Amazon and Mississippi river basins, the Pacific Northwest, and North America's eastern seaboard.
 2. Environmental and Cultural Diversity
 - a. Amerindians lived in a wide range of ecological zones and in various types of societies, from bands of hunter-gatherers to an imperialized state.
 - b. Chiefdoms were based on fishing, whaling, or farming such as in the Pacific Northwest or Greater Antilles.
 - c. Mayas lived in independent and culturally vibrant city-states in Central America.
 - d. Central American gold and feathers were traded to the north for turquoise or to the south for seashells, pelts, and salt.

- e. Codes of dress, tattoos, languages, ear piercings, tooth fillings, and many more things were used to distinguish social class, gender, tribe, or age.
3. Shamanism
 - a. Shamanism consisted of a tribe's or chiefdom's reliance on healer-visionaries for spiritual guidance.
 - b. Male and female shamans lived in the priestly class, with duties ranging from fortuneteller to physician and often acting as midwives.
 - c. Most native American shamans were male. The role of shaman was sometimes inherited, or new ones administered after an up-and-coming shaman claimed a vision or lengthy ritual seclusion.
 - d. Some shamans served as village or clan historians and myth-keepers, and most used powerful hallucinogens to communicate with the spirits of predatory animals.
 - e. Shamans also had lengthy knowledge of herbal remedies, some shown to be highly effective, for both physical and emotional illnesses. Remedies were usually administered by complex rituals used to drive out evil spirits.
 4. Range of Livelihoods
 - a. Some Amerindian hunter-gatherers lived in deserts or swamplands where agriculture was impossible and traded with or raided their settled neighbors.
 - b. Hunting, even among settled communities, was esteemed.
 - c. Evidence of small-scale agriculture can be found among some of the less- complex communities, which included staple foods such as maize, potatoes, and manioc.
 - d. Some societies shifted from agricultural back to hunting-gathering when needed.
 - e. Groups like the Kwakiutl were able to live a settled life without farming, thanks to the abundant natural resources in the Pacific Northwest.
 - f. Ecological diversity led to an equally diverse array of native American cultures.
- ### III. Tributes of Blood: The Aztec Empire
- A. Mesoamerica—comprised of southern Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, and western Honduras—was comprised of city- states after 800 CE.
 1. The Aztecs, who called themselves *Mexica* and came from somewhere in the southwestern U.S. desert region they referred to as Aztlan, would unify the region under their rule.
 - B. Humble Origins, Imperial Ambitions
 1. Aztecs did not create a phonetic writing system but did preserve key aspects of their culture through painted and carved forms.
 - a. Carving and painting usually glorified certain individuals and related to Aztec myths, genealogies, tales of conquests (among other things), and were recorded in the Aztec Nahuatl language.
 2. Historical Documentation
 - a. Spanish priests arriving in 1520 promoted the narratives of Aztec glory through the translation of Nahuatl into Latin and Spanish because they believed that the indigenous people would quickly convert to Christianity after knowing Aztec history.
 - b. Through eyewitness accounts, codices, and archeological evidence, there is a substantial record of Aztec life and rule.
 3. Aztec Origins
 - a. Aztecs arrived in the Valley of Mexico in the thirteenth century but did not establish a permanent home until 1325, when they settled on a small island near the southwestern edge of Lake Texcoco and founded Tenochtitlan nearby.
 - b. By 1500, Tenochtitlan held some 200,000 people, ranking among the highest populated cities of the time.
 - c. Aztecs traded their military services and lake products with their neighbors for building materials like stone, lime, and timber.
 - d. Aztecs then formed marriage alliances with the Colhua and began imperial expansion after 1430.
 - e. Aztecs' exposure to new people prompted them to build a 20-story high double temple-referred to by archeologists as the *Templo Mayor*, that honored the Aztec war god Huitzilopochtli and a more well known water god Tlaloc.
 - C. Enlarging and Supplying the Capital
 1. Land Reclamation
 - a. Subsistence and living space became a concern with the growth of Tenochtitlan, so Aztecs reclaimed land in the shallow waters of Lake Texcoco by building chinampas, which were large mounds of mud, rock, and reeds above the water and separated by canals acting as passageways.
 - b. Algae, silt, and water lilies that collected in the canals were used as fertilizer.
 - c. Chinampas eventually turned into housing residencies to ease urban crowding.

- d. Dikes and other complex irrigation techniques helped ease salt content and chronic flooding.
- 2. Long-Distance Trade
 - a. A twin city, Tlatelolco, created alongside Tenochtitlan, was formed sometime early in the fourteenth century.
 - b. Tlatelolco served as an Aztec marketplace with merchants traveling on foot from as far as New Mexico and Guatemala to trade their goods.
 - c. Tlatelolco served as crossroads for all regional trade.
- 3. From City-State to Empire
 - a. Expansion began only after 1430, when the Aztecs used an alliance with Texcoco and Tlacopan to defeat the Atzacapotzalco. Tensions with the Atzacapotzalco extended back to the Aztecs' arrival in the Valley of Mexico.
 - b. Soon after the victory over the Atzacapotzalco, the Aztecs took over their allies and turned them into tributaries.
 - c. The Nahuatl language helped link the state with the people, but newly conquered areas continued to speak local languages.
- D. Holy Terror: Aztec Rule, Religion, and Warfare
 - a. Kingship was chosen through lineage of legendary Toltec warrior-sages, of which marriage to the Colhua people, descendants of the Toltecs, was essential.
 - b. A secret board of elders and a handful of eligible candidates chose the new ruler, or *tlatoani*.
 - c. Link to the Toltec past was marked by three core features: human sacrifice, warfare, and tribute.
- 2. Sacrifice
 - a. Like most Mesoamericans, the Aztecs believed that human origins traced back to sacrifices made by deities for the benefit of mankind.
 - b. Aztecs believed that human sacrifice was needed to renew the power that drove the cosmos.
 - c. Aztecs believed that secular and spiritual forces were inseparable and interdependent. Tenochtitlan served as the foundation for heaven with the large temples as the center of human–divine affairs.
 - d. Priests and astrologers believed that the world was in its fifth incarnation and highly unstable. Human intervention such as sacrifice would keep the world afloat.
 - e. Gods gave humans the gift of warfare. Aztecs believed energetic, strong male captives would better appease the gods.
 - f. Bloodletting was another form of sacrifice. Extremities and genitals were cut using thorns and stone blades. The blood fell onto thin sheets of reed paper, which were burned as an offering to the gods.
- 3. Warfare
 - a. Lacking iron and copper, "stone age" weapons were optimized and made razor sharp.
 - b. Aztecs were noted for their fury on the battlefield, borrowed from their patron deity, Huitzilopochtli.
 - c. The main goal was to capture enemies for sacrifice. Mesoamericans believed death on the battlefield to be the highest honor.
 - d. Live sacrifice was meant to honor gods and horrify enemies. Diplomats were forced to watch the sacrifices.
- 4. Tribute
 - a. Aztecs demanded both sacrificial victims as well as human labor, food, textiles, and craft goods to subsidize the warriors and priests.
 - b. Aztecs redistributed tributes to favored subjects of the lower classes to help cement loyalties.
 - c. Some subjects were forced to collect filth and inedible insects to prove their unworthiness.
 - d. Humiliation, rather than promotion of new subjects, led to increasing resentment against the Aztecs.
- E. Daily Life Under the Aztecs
 - 1. Class Hierarchy
 - a. There were firm class divisions in Aztec society. Commoners were regarded by nobles as beneath contempt.
 - b. Most Aztec art decorates religious temples, not elite households.
 - c. There was a multitiered civil justice system; Aztec nobles received harsher punishment than commoners for similar penalties.
 - d. Dress and speech codes reinforced social class.
 - e. Tlatoani could not be looked at directly in the face except by relatives, consorts, or servants.
 - f. Social advancement was extremely limited, except on the battlefield.
 - g. Peasants mostly consisted of newly conquered peoples after 1430. Slavery existed but was deemed unimportant to Aztec economy.
 - h. Pochteca, long-distance trade merchants, often attained great wealth but ultimately remained outsiders in Aztec society, having little to no impact in politics.
 - 2. Women's Roles

- a. Without animal- or water-driven mills, maize and tortilla preparation remained an arduous and time-consuming task for women. Only the elite escaped the labor associated with cooking.
 - b. Some women achieved shaman status and became midwives—both high- status roles—although those were exceptions to the norm.
 - c. Women were regarded as soldiers in the ongoing war to sustain human life by giving birth to possible sacrificial victims.
 - d. Home was a deeply sacred place. Sweeping, hearth tending, maize grinding, spinning, and weaving were highly ritualized acts accompanied by chants and prayer.
3. Children's Lives
- a. Aztec society emphasized duty and good comportsment rather than rights. Parents were expected to police their children and raise them to become useful members of society.
 - b. Children were given tasks depending on gender; by age 14 all children had adult work.
 - c. Between the ages of 12 and 15 years, both girls and boys were taught to sing and play instruments for religious festivals.
 - d. Women married at 15, men at 20, with marriage ceremonies being multiday affairs.
4. Food and Scarcity
- a. Around harvest times, Aztecs of all classes ate maize, beans, and squash with salt and chili peppers.
 - b. During other times, outside the chinampa zone, food could be scarce. Stored maize was used for tortillas year-round, but two bad harvests would spark a famine.
 - c. Periodic droughts, frosts, plagues of locusts, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and floods were some events Aztecs coped with.
 - d. Warfare was held during off-season harvesting since the lack of labor animals forced all capable hands to farm.
 - e. People in Tenochtitlan raised turkeys and hairless dogs for protein since domesticated animals were few. Beans with maize alone could provide complete protein.
 - f. Famines still occurred. One in the early 1450s forced thousands of people to sell themselves into slavery to avoid starvation.
- F. The Limits of Holy Terror
- 1. Sacrificial debts by the elite began ballooning by the end of the fifteenth century.
 - 2. Underlying Weaknesses
 - a. Aztecs reached their height of power by 1500, and some scholars even claim it had begun to decline by that time.
 - b. Tlaxcalans and Tarascans remained belligerent; tributes were declining; locals were resisting; conquests were blocked by terrain; and agricultural productivity peaked by 1500.
- IV. Tributes of Sweat: The Inca Empire
- A. Incas conquered their neighbors in the Andean Highlands during the 1430s and created an empire that stretched from the equator to central Chile.
- B. From Potato Farmers to Empire Builders
- 1. Inca Origins
 - a. Archeological evidence and post-conquest interviews reveal information about the Incans' rise and fall but Inca's knotted-string records—*quipus*—have not been deciphered.
 - b. Incas probably emerged from a dozen or so regional ethnic groups living in the highlands of central Peru around 1000–1400 CE.
 - c. Andean mountains have clear springs and fertile soils that were subject to periodic frost and droughts.
 - 2. Environment and Exchange
 - a. Inca land use has been called a “vertical archipelago,” where, depending on altitude, different plants could be grown.
 - b. Higher colder altitudes were best suited for potatoes; lower hotter tropical valleys grew cotton, peanuts, chilis, and coca plants.
 - c. Stone paths and llamas were used to travel and carry items from the highlands to the tropics, and vice versa.
 - d. Peru's desert coast has along history of human settlement, matching that of Egypt. Settlers engaged in large-scale irrigation, deep-sea fishing, and long-distance trade.
 - e. Inland routes from the coast to the Amazon rain forest contained pilgrimage sites where salt, seashells, beads, and copper hatchets were exchanged for feathers, gold dust, and pelts.
 - f. Around 1200 CE, Incans established a base near Cuzco deep into the highlands of Peru.
- C. The Great Apparatus: Inca Expansion and Religion

1. Situated two miles above the earth, Cuzco served as Inca's political base and religious center. Incans referred to it as the navel of the world.
 - a. Cuzco housed about 50,000 residents at its peak, with multiple dirt and stone roads spreading in all directions outside the city.
 - b. Massive stone foundations still stand.
 2. Imperial Expansion
 - a. For unknown reasons, during the fifteenth century, Incans began conquering their neighbors. Each new emperor, or *Sapa*, sought to add new land to the empire, called Tawantinsuyu.
 - b. Emperors were thought to be descendants of the sun. People worshipped the sun and emperor as one entity.
 - c. Incas allowed lesser local deities to be worshipped.
 - d. Quechua was the official language of the empire while local languages persisted.
 - e. Expansion was quick; maximum height was reached in four generations.
 - f. Wiracocha Inca (r. 1400–1438) led troops against invading Chankas. After Wiracocha defeated them, he conquered neighboring lands as a defensive strategy to avoid further invasions.
 - g. Pachacuti Inca Yupanki (r. 1438–1471), Wiracocha 's successor, amassed and assembled such an overwhelming number of troops that actual fighting was usually unnecessary to conquer.
 - h. Incas would create huge masonry forts and temples with each new advance, still visible in Ecuador and Argentina.
 - i. Succeeding emperors followed suit and the empire stretched down to Chile and Argentina and eastward to the Amazon River basin.
 - j. Ecuadorian and Columbian highlanders, on the other hand, who fought to the death despite overwhelming odds.
 - k. Incas gave enemies two options: Accept Incan rule and give tribute or face annihilation. Incas occasionally exiled groups who defied them, with some colonies still identifiable today.
 - l. Incas were most interested in dominating people and receiving tribute, although the sun cult did spread as a result.
 3. Inca Religion
 - a. Continuum of life was expected even after death or permanent loss of consciousness.
 - b. Features in the landscape—springs, boulders, peaks—were thought to give off spiritual energy.
 - c. Sacred places—*wakas*—were thought to be alive and received sacrifices of food, drink, and textiles in exchange for good harvests, growth, and other bounties.
 - d. Veneration of images and amulets carved out of wood, shell, stone, metal, or bone were common.
 - e. Incas venerated the human corpse. Mummification was ideal in dry highland and coastal climates. Wetter areas required smoking the corpse, which led outsiders to fear cannibalism. Corpses of family members were usually set up somewhere inside the home and even taken to pilgrimages or feasts.
 - f. Incas rarely sacrificed enemy soldiers, did not cannibalize since they viewed it as barbaric, and followed similar forms of architecture as those of Tiwanaku in Bolivia.
 - g. The sun cult perished after the Incas' fall. The Incan empire was seen by the newly conquered peoples as an exploitation machine rather than an imperial defender.
- D. Daily Life Under the Incas
1. Class Hierarchy
 - a. High stratified society with little means of upward mobility.
 - b. A variety of divisions were maintained depending on sex, age, ethnic, and regional groups.
 - c. The Incan legal system was harsher towards commoners than elites.
The pinnacle of Incan society was the sapa himself, believed by the Incas to be the best warrior in the world.
 - d. Incan rulers had many wives and concubines who exercised considerable behind-the-scenes power over succession.
 - e. No official succession rules existed; violent succession struggles usually ensued after the death of the ruler.
 - f. Nobles—decorated generals and hereditary lords—spoke their own language forbidden among the commoners, while priests and astrologers made up the lower noble class.
 - g. Women who were deemed physically perfect were usually selected for religious seclusion but were sometimes groomed for marriage with noble Incas.
 - h. Bureaucratic officers in charge of collecting tribute usually set aside two-thirds of arable land in the name of the empire.
 - i. Officers were usually in the most hostile environment away from the capital and saw death in battle as a humiliation.
 - j. Incas did not tolerate free traders but chose to distribute goods as a means of exercising power.

2. Subsistence remained the average Andean's most pressing concern.
3. Material Achievements
 - a. Incans produced textiles, metalwork, and pottery, but their most important achievements were civil engineering and architecture.
 - b. Incan roads covered nearly 10,000 miles, linked the coast, highlands, and jungle, and were built by hand.
 - c. Grass weavers created hanging bridges to support packed llamas for years at a time.
 - d. Massive irrigation works and foundations were believed to be charged with religious power.
 - e. Ancient Andean metalworking techniques were older and more developed than in the rest of Mesoamerica.
 - f. Metals were regarded as divine; gold was associated with the sun and the Sapa Inca, silver with the moon-queen and mother goddesses, while copper and bronze were put to practical use.
 - g. Weaving was an ancient tradition predating pottery. Textiles made from native Peruvian cotton and alpaca fibers were of very fine quality and often used as rewards by Incas to cooperative regional lords.
 - h. Fibers from the vicuna, a relative of the llama, are softer than cashmere and woven into cloth used only by the king.
4. The khipu is an abacus-like device that used knots to keep track of tributes, troop movement, ritual cycles, and other important matters.
 - a. The khipu predates the Inca Empire but was still used centuries after Spanish rule, even with the existence of the alphabet.
5. Social Relations
 - a. Andean traditions included reciprocity, complementary gender roles, and viewing social relations through the lens of kinship.
 - b. Rotational communal care for the disadvantaged not seen as burden but as an excuse for parties and festivities.
 - c. Village aggression sometimes vented through ritual fights between clan divisions.
6. Women's Roles
 - a. Women occupied a distinct but not subordinate role.
 - b. Literate Incan descendants described a world where men and women performed complementary agricultural tasks.
 - c. Women exempt from agriculture handled local exchanges of food and goods.
 - d. The power of headmen frequently landed in the hands of sisters or daughters.
 - e. Fertility was respected but not equated to warfare, as it was with the Aztecs.
 - f. Wiracocha, the Andean creator god, had both male and female parts.
 - g. Social hierarchy was determined by proximity of kin relations starting with father or mother, with respected elders referred to as aunt or uncle.
7. Children's Lives
 - a. Parents treated and dressed children as miniature adults and defined roles and duties early.
 - b. Children were not expected to change society but to reproduce and maintain it through balanced relations.
 - c. Children participated in community and state-level projects.
8. Food and Subsistence
 - a. The potato was indigenous staple of the central Andes. Potatoes were usually preserved at high altitude for long periods.
 - b. Potatoes' versatility maintained military campaigns.
 - c. Maize could be stored but was usually used for beer making.
 - d. Lowland dwellers ate maize, manioc, peanuts, beans, and chili peppers.
 - e. Domestication of llamas was unique to the Americas. Llamas were sometimes eaten, alpacas provided cloth fibers, and domesticated guinea pigs were often used for food and wedding ceremonies.
 - f. The Andean diet was overwhelmingly vegetarian. Incas never milked alpacas or llamas.
 - g. Periodic droughts and frosts occurred in the highlands, while the El Nino phenomenon created devastating floods on the coast. Preservation through exploitation of the microenvironments allowed for reliable subsistence.
- E. The Great Apparatus Breaks Down
 1. Religious demands grew more and more urgent, possibly destabilizing the empire.
 - a. Mummified rulers demanded large tributes after their death trying to equal or outdo their predecessor.
 2. Organizational skills and the ability to transport information and goods across distances allowed the Incas to survive until the arrival of the Spanish in 1532.
 3. Rapid growth created discontent among newly conquered peoples. Incan enemies would ally with the Spanish to regain independence after chronically raiding the outskirts of the empire.

4. The Incas never created a nonviolent means of succession, allowing for competent rulers but creating civil war.
 5. The Spanish arrived in 1532 in the midst of a civil war.
- V. Counterpoint: The Peoples of North America's Eastern Woodlands 1450–1530
- A. Several million people inhabited the eastern woodlands, where dense forests provided raw materials for food, cooking, shelter, transportation, and game.
 - B. Inhabitants of mound-building cultures returned to less urban areas and had villages elected by chiefs.
 - C. Most information about these peoples comes through European contact from 1492 to 1750 and archeological studies.
 1. Population Growth and Political Organization
 - a. Maize planting and warrior sacrifice spread into North America from Mesoamerica around the time of the Toltecs, 800–1100.
 - b. Rapid population growth, increased warfare, and political reorganization occurred in the last century before European contact.
 - c. Multi-settlement ethnic alliances, such as the Iroquois of upstate New York and Powhatan Confederacy of Tidewater Virginia, were new.
 - d. Clan divisions were common.
 - e. Hunter-gatherer groups made up a minority of the eastern woodlands population, occupying more challenging niches.
 - f. Given their height, woodland peoples tended to have better nutrition than Mesoamericans and Europeans.
 - g. Metallurgy was limited to simple manipulations of copper, regarded as a sacred substance. Polished seashells were similarly prized.
 - h. Nearly all groups were headed by elected chiefs who were warriors or shamans, with hardly any being hereditary; redistribution of goods was key to staying in power as chief.
 2. Matrilineal Society
 - a. Some groups, such as the Huron of Ontario, Canada, had male chiefs but were built around clans of mothers, daughters, and sisters.
 - b. Groups usually had longhouses that acted as multifamily residential buildings.
 - c. All women played a part in urging men to go to war.
 - d. Agriculture was restricted to women as it had close ties to fertility.
 - e. Male influence lay almost entirely outside the village.
 - f. All eastern woodlanders prized public speech, and only the esteemed could make it to councils.
 3. Children's Lives
 - a. A multitude of vermin and pathogens, poor nutrition, smoky residences, war, and accidents caused relatively few children to survive to adulthood.
 - b. Eastern woodland cultures allowed children much freedom because of this.
 - c. Children were schooled in arts and responsibilities appropriate for their sex before puberty. Girls farmed and cooked while boys hunted and warred.
 - d. Trial marriage rather than arranged marriages was customary in the Americas and divorce occurred. Monogamous relationships survived regardless.
 - D. Warfare
 1. War usually took place during summer and had to do with blood feuds or vengeance cycles and was used to preserve honor and prove courage.
 2. Wars witnessed by Europeans between the Iroquois and Mahicans were usually spurred by some long-forgotten rape or other crime.
 3. Warfare resembled hunting; one party ambushes opposing camp members, brings them to their longhouse, tortures and slaughters them, followed by a ritual consumption.
 4. Opposing camps' female and child captives were adopted into tribe to make up for losses.
 5. Ritual consumption was probably linked to subsistence anxieties.
 - E. Religion
 1. Variations existed among different groups. Matrilineal societies traced origins back to a grandmother spirit whose grandsons were responsible for the technical innovations for human survival.
 2. Climactic events were associated with enormous bird spirits.
 3. Some believed that material things, whether an island, or boulder, or charm, had souls.
 4. Religion was a part of everyday life, not institutionalized. Shamans and elders retained traditions.
 5. Dreams and visions were analyzed for clues to personal and group destinies.
 6. Witchcraft was associated with socially unacceptable impulses such as jealousy and was believed to be responsible for death and illness.

7. Death was seen as an undesirable occurrence. Woodlanders believed in the everlasting spirit but a spirit after death was a suffering one.

VI. Conclusion

- A. By 1492, the Americas were home to some 60 million people. Cities, pilgrimage sites, mountain passes, and waterways served as crossroads for the exchange of ideas between widely dispersed peoples.
- B. Mesoamerican religious beliefs and resources provided the tools for empire growth for both the Aztecs and the Incas, though both empires were in crisis when encountered by technologically advanced Europeans.
- C. The looser structure of chiefdoms and confederacies of the eastern woodlanders proved more resilient to European exposure.

CHAPTER QUESTIONS

Following are answer guidelines for the Chapter Overview, Section Focus, Lives and Livelihoods, Reading the Past, Seeing the Past, and Making Connections questions that appear in the textbook chapter.

Chapter Overview Questions

1. In what ways was cultural diversity in the Americas related to environmental diversity? (See all sections in your textbook.)
 - Different ecological niches supported separate societies well enough to discourage movement between regions.
 - Adaptations were made based on environmental challenges, such as farming in the Andes and following game in the eastern woodlands.
 - Ecological features such as mountains, rivers, and canyons separated groups, and over time these isolated groups developed separate dialects and cultural patterns.
 - Religious traditions related specific localized environmental aspects, such as the sky, rocks, or local animal spirits.
2. Why was it in Mesoamerica and the Andes that large empires emerged in around 1450? (See sections "Tributes of Blood: The Aztec Empire" and "Tributes of Sweat: The Inca Empire" in your textbook.)
 - The carrying capacity of the land was such that it supported large populations.
 - Increasing interaction began through trade, then domination of other polities.
 - Strong religious beliefs propelled Aztec and Inca desire for conquest.
 - With numerous other polities in the region, economic control through tribute was possible.
3. What key ideas or practices extended beyond the limits of the great empires? (See all sections in your textbook.)
 - Maize growing was widespread in the Americas, especially in Mesoamerica and North America.
 - While religious practices varied, all were polytheistic and often stressed links to natural elements.
 - Though trading and interaction was less frequent in the northern areas, this was an element of life throughout the hemisphere in large and small societies.
 - Societies were patriarchal, though some in the Northeast passed authority down through matrilineal systems.

Section Focus Questions

1. What factors account for the diversity of native American cultures?
 - Ecological diversity existed, such as the ability of the land to support large civilizations.
 - In areas with higher population, larger civilizations could rise by dominating others
 - Access to trade routes, which generally ran north to south, influenced cultural change.
2. What core features characterized Aztec life and rule?
 - Ritual practice of human sacrifice
 - Creative use of environmental resources to sustain large populations, such as chinampas terrace farming in Lake Texcoco
 - Highly stratified society, with urban complexity
 - Tightly scripted roles by class and gender

3. What core features characterized Inca life and rule?
 - Dependence on potato as the key crop, with multiple varieties available
 - Environmental management of agriculture at multiple altitudes, through "vertical archipelagos"
 - Rapid imperial expansion in the fifteenth century along the Andes range
 - Complex religion and infrastructure, such as the road system
4. How did the Eastern Woodlanders' experience differ from life under the Aztecs and Incas?
 - Like Mesoamericans, Eastern Woodlanders were maize farmers, but they did not adopt water agricultural systems like the Aztec chinampas.
 - Easterners developed a system of currency based on wampum, while Mesoamericans and Andeans depended more on barter and acquisition of property through tribute.
 - Living structures among Easterners called longhouses defined social relations along the lines of extended families, as opposed to single-family dwellings of the Aztecs and Incas.
 - Some Easterners such as the Huron were matrilineal societies, which were unknown in the Mesoamerican and South American worlds.

Seeing the Past: An Aztec Map of Tenochtitlan

1. What does this map reveal about the Aztec worldview?
 - The Aztecs built their capital at Lake Texcoco because an eagle landed on a cactus there. They took this event as an omen.
 - Their world is well-ordered, balanced evenly by the four cardinal points, with perfect symmetry.
 - As seen in the lower portion of the image, the Aztecs took pride in the conquests they accomplished in their region following their own earlier settlement at Lake Texcoco represented in the middle of the image by the eagle on the cactus.
2. How might this document have been read by a common Aztec subject?
 - This would have been a continuation of the historical memory of their founding myth.
 - Society was organized and structured, with nobles playing appropriate roles.

Lives and Livelihoods: The Aztec Midwife

1. Why was midwifery so crucial to the Aztecs?
 - Spiritual beliefs about the timing of the birth were strong.
 - As in other societies, birthing was a potentially dangerous undertaking.
 - Birthing was a specialized ritual calling for an expert, in this case a midwife.
2. How were boys and girls addressed by the midwife, and why?
 - The birth of a boy was celebrated with simple joy.
 - The birth of a girl was an occasion for warning that life was full of suffering.
 - Besides the notion that life is both joy and suffering, the gendered preparation for life in the statements reveal the recognition by the midwife that women will suffer more, with less glory than men.

Reading the Past: An Andean Creation Story

1. What do the similarities and differences between the Andean and Judeo-Christian flood stories suggest?
 - To the extent that there are similarities, this may be due to the effect of Christian evangelization, which merged the stories.
 - Differences are the product of recalling the original Andean story about the llama and Villca Coto mountain.
2. What do the differences between them reveal?

- The Andean story reveals an understanding about the relationship between mountains and sea in their environment.
- The inclusion of animal spirits (as the llama speaks) reveals a continuation of native beliefs that have not been totally eliminated by Spanish monotheism.

Making Connections

1. Compare the Aztec and Inca empires with the Ming (see Chapter 14). What features did they share? What features set them apart? (See sections "Tributes of Blood: The Aztec Empire" and "Tributes of Sweat: The Inca Empire" in your textbook.)
 - The Ming were unlike previous dynasties in the desire of Yongle to expand and reach out into the world of trade, which made them similar to the Aztecs.
 - The Ming hierarchy depended heavily on their Confucian ministers, just as Aztec rulers depended on their priests, though the Incan religious class was less critical for the continuation of its empire than its military.
 - With the passing of Yongle, China once again looked inward, more so than the Aztecs, and even more than the Incas, whose relatively short-lived empire expanded rapidly along a north–south trajectory.
2. How did Aztec and Inca sacrificial rituals differ, and why? (See sections "Tributes of Blood: The Aztec Empire" and "Tributes of Sweat: The Inca Empire" in your textbook.)
 - Human sacrifice was more common in the Aztec realm, seen as critical for renewal of life.
 - Incan religion revolved more around wakas, which were sacred places or things that did not require human sacrifice.
 - When Incans did conduct human sacrifice, as with the story of the child in the opening of the chapter, this was less about pleasing the gods than it was about continuing a process of communication with deities based more on cooperation than violence.
3. What were the main causes of warfare among native American peoples prior to the arrival of Europeans? (See all sections of your textbook.)
 - War was conducted in the development of empires, especially in the Aztec and Incan realms.
 - The Aztecs in particular, and some Eastern Woodland peoples, conducted wars to obtain live captives for sacrifice.
 - Warfare in the Eastern Woodlands especially, but elsewhere as well, was waged as revenge for past acts, or blood feuds.

LECTURE STRATEGIES

Lecture 1: Visions of Tenochtitlan

Spaniards were amazed when they first encountered Tenochtitlan, the capital of the Aztecs. They had spent several years in the Caribbean and had not encountered complex (or to them, civilized) societies. Their marvel at the wonders of the Aztec capital was captured in print. Bernal Diaz de Castillo, a soldier who traveled with Cortes, provided some of the most detailed descriptions.

This lecture invites students to consider how the great city of Tenochtitlan is remembered prior to the conquest. Though Bernal Diaz was writing over forty years after he first encountered the city, his detailed description is impressive, impressive enough that major chunks of it can be read aloud. Most libraries will have a copy of the text, which has been published in paperback. Find selections that describe the city: the markets, the schools, the zoo, and other juicy details. The practice of reading great literature to one another has been displaced by digital entertainment; this exercise may awaken interest in that again.

After students have heard the words of Bernal Diaz, show them some images of the city. There are some that can be found from the codices, online or in print. More interesting are paintings by Mexican artists such as Diego Rivera. In particular, his rendition of the city that he painted on the walls of the National Palace as part of a much larger mural about Mexican history is worth showing. Find some details of the mural. Rivera's vision of the city was based largely on the writings of Bernal Diaz, though his depiction of Cortes is much less flattering.

Invoke a discussion about the importance of historical memory. Why does Bernal Diaz remember what he does? Why do modern Mexicans, as in the case of Rivera, choose to remember certain aspects of the deep history of Mexico? The

documents in Chapter 16 of *Sources for World in the Making* demonstrate differences in perspective about the conquest. Can these same differences be seen in the artistic depictions of Rivera and the codices?

Lecture 2: The Incan Road

Road systems, and infrastructure generally, reveal a level of complexity in a society. Ask the students which pieces of infrastructure are critical for the functioning of American society. Hopefully, someone will come up with the key answer: trucks on the interstate bringing food and other necessities to all corners of the country.

This lecture examines one piece of the infrastructure of the Incan empire, the road system. Like other pathways in history such as the Silk Road and trans-Saharan routes, the Incan road system carried goods as well as culture between distinct ethnicities. Unlike those other two road systems, the Incan roads were designed to unite a single empire, in the same way that interstates stitch together the United States. The Persian Royal Road provides a parallel.

Show a variety of maps of the road system. If specific ethnic regions can be identified on the map, so much the better. Identify known locations of the storage buildings that dotted the road system.

Discuss the variety of goods that were carried along the system, and the beasts of burden (llamas and alpacas) that were utilized. It is worth pointing out to the students that the wheel would be a relatively useless invention in the Andes.

Next, show a series of images from the present-day ruins of the road system. There is one example in our text (Inca Road, p. 557). The road is kept up in places for cultural tourists to visit, and websites that feature these remnants will have good information to fill out this part of the lecture.

End the lecture by returning to the metaphor of the American interstate system. In this case, however, ask the students to imagine what goods are stored or carried along the road system, and what the impact of these might have been on individual Andean societies under Incan rule. What advantages might these vassal states receive as a result of the Incan road system?

Lecture 3: Nomads and Chichimecs

Everyone has their own "barbarian," or despised "other," it seems. One theme worth further investigation in a lecture is the pejorative attitudes that settled peoples have regarding nomadic peoples in their midst. If this lecture comes at the end of the course, begin by discussing how this prejudice against nomadic peoples has influenced the civilizations studied during the course. This works well as a bookend to a world history survey that ends in 1500, in that it takes a look at the theme of "civilization" from the perspective of those who were not considered "civilized."

This theme continues with the Aztecs, who understood themselves as superior to less complicated cultures that lived nearby. The Nahuatl term for these peoples was *chichimeca*, or "dog people." The Spaniards adopted that term from the Aztecs to refer to one specific ethnic group that lived west of the Aztec capital, but generally the Aztec usage is to describe nomadic or semi-nomadic "tribal" peoples who they looked down upon. Parallels to the Greeks (who coined the term "barbarian") and the Chinese, among others, can be easily found.

Focus some attention on an exploration of the culture of nomadic Mesoamerican peoples. There are some images available that depict these wandering peoples alternately in a romantic or disparaging light. Discuss their political and economic systems, which are based on simpler chiefdom models in comparison with the complexity of the Aztecs. Why did these other groups not develop along the complicated model of the Aztecs (or Incas)? Might there have been actual advantages of maintaining a simpler, nomadic system? These questions are parallel with earlier ones about the advantages and disadvantages of the development of agriculture, a comparison that should be helpful to students in drawing connections with earlier parts of the course.

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS AND DIFFICULT TOPICS

1. **Cannibalism:** Europeans were fascinated, if not shocked, by the evidence of cannibalism they found in the Americas. Some of their writings and illustrations, if taken at face value, would seem to indicate that the practice was rampant. (See "Dog-Faced Cannibal, Chapter 16, p. 579) A few heterodox scholars have even argued that human sacrifice in Mexico was related to protein deficiency in the population. Getting past the alarmist nature of these claims, it seems that cannibalism, though present in different parts of the Americas, was not extremely common. More to the point, the practice was ritualized, an occasional rite that held a variety of spiritual meanings. For example, Iroquois warriors might consume a piece of the flesh of a slain enemy to obtain the strength that lay within the body while alive.

2. **Andeans and Incans:** Students will have heard of the Incas, but it is unlikely that they will know much about other Andean ethnicities. It is important to point out that there were cultural similarities shared between a wide variety of Andean peoples, such as the observance of wakas. The Incas were but one of hundreds of ethnic groups, one that was able, in a quick century, to exert influence over the length of the Andes. They tried to establish their own state religion on those they conquered, to varying degrees of success. In sum, it is important for students to be able to make a distinction between Incas and Andeans more generally.
3. **Aztlan:** The mythical homeland of the Aztecs, Aztlan is thought of as laying somewhere north and west of what is now Mexico City. Some Mexican Americans, especially Latino activists, will refer to Aztlan as the American Southwest, while some Mexicans situate it as far south as the state of Nayarit on the Mexican Pacific coast. The important message is that in the founding myth of the Aztecs, this was where they were before their long migration. Aztecs claimed that their ancestors recognized the appropriate place to halt their migration when they saw an eagle sitting on a cactus with a snake in its mouth. That place is now called Chapultepec Hill, in the heart of Mexico City, the site of numerous events in Mexican history. The myth continues its power today, as can be seen by the same eagle, depicted on the Mexican flag.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Using Film and Television in the Classroom

- *Conquistadors: Fall of the Aztecs*, BBC Films (5 parts, some available on YouTube)
- *Lost Cities of the Inca*, FHS, 2000
- *Mysterious World of the Inca*, ABCD Video, 2009

Class Discussion Starters

1. How did Eastland Indians differ in social structure from the Aztecs and the Incas?
2. Why were the Aztecs motivated to conduct human sacrifice?
3. What place did the khipus hold in Incan culture, given the lack of writing? What does this indicate about the structure of Incan society?

Active Learning Strategies

Comparative Americas: To help students retain information about the variety of societies that make appearances in this chapter, a good exercise would be to construct an information grid. Along the side of the board, run the terms social, political, economic, and cultural. Along the top, make columns for the Aztecs, Incas, and Eastern Woodlands. Divide the students into groups either by the first four terms of analysis or the three regions. Each group should divide the labor between individuals, so that the Aztec group will have students seeking information for each of the four categories. Ask them to search the textbook, Internet, or other sources so that each of the twelve sections of the grid can be filled in (by the students) with three or four bulleted points of information.

Engage the entire class in discussion regarding the similarities and differences between the regions.

College Demographics: This exercise involves students in understanding the value of khipus in Andean society. Begin by referring to a source that depicts the khipu as a counting device. We know very little about how these were used but presume that demographic and tribute data was recorded with some system. The goal of this exercise is for students to imagine how that system might have worked.

Imagine that the khipus were used for record keeping in a college or university. You can invent your own goal for the khipu, such as:

- Grades or other academic records
- Attendance records
- Demographic records, such as student population or ethnicity figures
- Syllabus dates and assignments
- Housing records

Some combination of these can be used. Supply the students with twine and scissors and ask them to work in groups to devise a system to record the data above. They can use varying lengths and attach the cords at various spaces on the main cord or tie multiple knots. Have them then report to the class to explain their system.

Web Quest: American Crops: People have histories, whether these have been written or not. In the same way, individual foods or crops have histories that can be recorded from archaeological, written, and oral sources. This activity asks students to investigate the individual histories of the principal crops of pre-Columbian America.

Using Map 15.1, “Main Settlement Areas of the Americas, c. 1492,” make a list of all or some of the crops that appear on the map. Students should then perform a web quest for basic information about one particular crop. Ask them to pay attention not only to their sources (always good advice on the web!) but also to find out how the information was originally discerned: archaeology or human source? They are to trace the early biological and human-influenced history of the crop, stopping at 1492. Pay attention to the biological changes (such as teosinte to maize) as well as human actions and trading or diffusion within the Americas.

Students should report to the class as a whole, preferably with images.

ADDITIONAL OXFORD RESOURCES FOR CHAPTER 15

ALTERNATIVE COUNTERPOINTS

These questions can be used for discussion, small group or individual research projects, or mini-lectures. The questions try to move beyond the information in the text to continue to explore the complexities of the story of world history. Possible answers have been suggested for one of the counterpoints associated with each chapter.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

How were pre-colonial native cultures in Latin America different in less complex societies outside of the influence of the Aztecs and the Incas?

- The Mapuche and Auracanian of South America pursued a more nomadic lifestyle, similar to many groups in central Asia.
- Native peoples on the frontiers of the Aztec empire were disparaged to as “Chichimecas,” or “dog people,” due to their lack of organized social and political structure.
- At this point in history, the impressive structures of the Mayans fell into disuse, and while small Mayan groups survived, and some oral histories continued and were eventually recorded in the Popol Vuh, the complex social and political structure of Mayan peoples was lost to history.

How did environmental or geographical factors impede or encourage connections between regions in these years?

In terms of connections versus isolation, how was the situation similar or different at this time in the Americas versus Eurasia?

Sources for *World in the Making: A Global History, Volume One*

ISBN 978-0-19-084833-7

The following documents are available in Chapter 15 of the companion reader edited by Bonnie G. Smith, Marc Van De Mierop, Richard von Glahn, and Kris Lane:

15.1, Aztec Sacrifice

Florentine Codex (c. 1540–1560)

15.2, Aztec Child Rearing

Codex Mendoza (c. 1540)

15.3, The Inca Huayna Capac's Final Days

Juan de Betanzos, Narrative of the Incas (1557)

15.4, Andean Religion

Huarochirí Manuscript (c. 1600)

15.5, Jesuit Views on Huron Society

Jesuit Relations (1632–1637)