

Olmec, Maya, Aztec, and Inca Civilizations



EQ:

- **What were the political, economic, religious, social, intellectual and achievement characteristics of the Maya, Aztec, and Inca?**

WARM –UP

- What can you tell me that you already know/ have heard about the Olmecs, Mayans, Incas, Aztecs?

Mesoamerica



Mesoamerica = Mexico & Central America

Mesoamerica

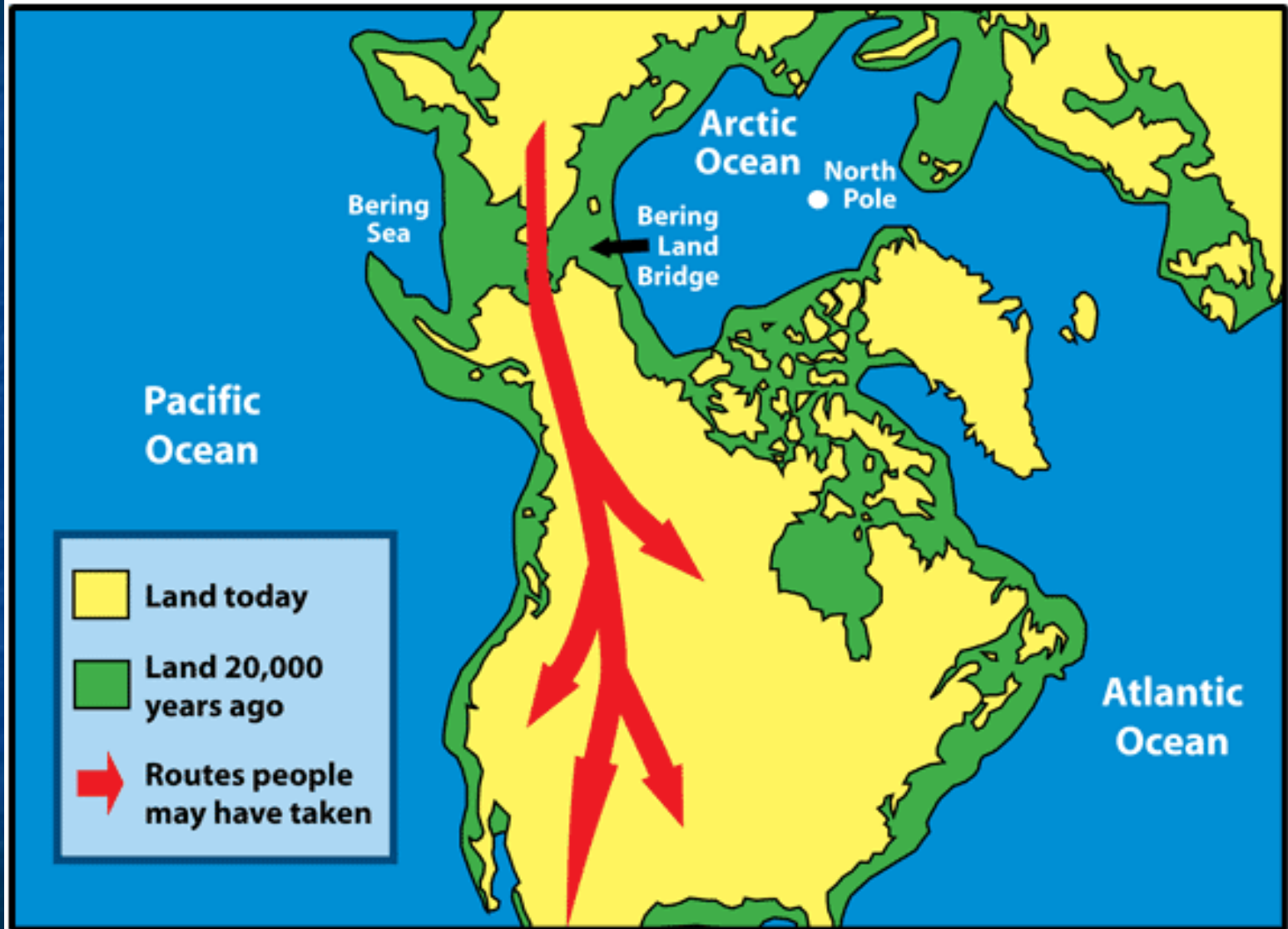
- Some of the greatest civilizations in the Americas developed in *Mesoamerica*
- The **Maya** and **Aztec** lived in the Mesoamerican region

How did people first get to the Americas?

- Theory #1 = **Bering land bridge**

Humans migrated into North America from Asia by crossing over a land bridge between Alaska and Siberia...

Bering Strait Land Bridge



How did people first get to the Americas?

■ Theory #2 = **Coastal migration**

Humans migrated to the Americas by crossing the seas, most likely the Pacific Ocean, and settling along the western coasts of the Americas...

Olmec (1200-400 B.C.)

One of the earliest civilizations in the Americas

Settled along rivers with good soil for agriculture

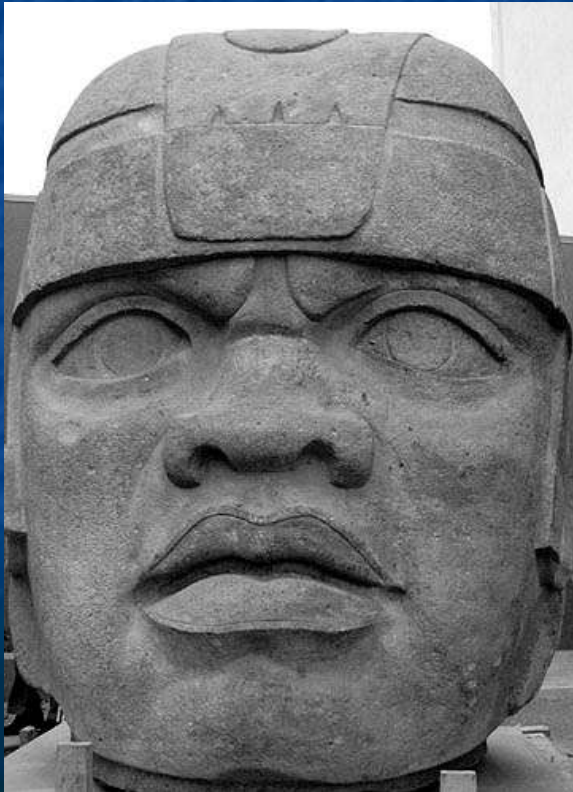
Farming led to the development of towns

The Empire ended due to changes in the soil which led to under production of crops.



Olmec

- Known for their creation of colossal stone heads of their rulers



Where did the ancient Maya live?

C. 200B.C. – A.D 900

- The **Maya** settled on the Yucatan Peninsula in central America.



Maya Political Structure

- The Maya were NOT AN EMPIRE and NOT UNITED politically...
- Maya civilization was made up of city-states, linked by trade and military alliances.
- Each city-state had its own ruler
- The Mayans were influenced by the Olmecs

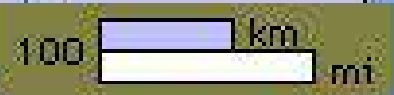


Gulf of Mexico

Caribbean Sea

MAYAN CIVILIZATION

North Pacific Ocean



Microsoft Map

Maya Architecture

- built towering temples and palaces
- Atop the temples, priests performed religious ceremonies and sacrifices while people watched from the plazas below
- Ceremonial platforms, temples, pyramids, observatories, ball courts all built by the Maya

Maya Religion

- The Maya were polytheistic
- The Maya practiced human sacrifice







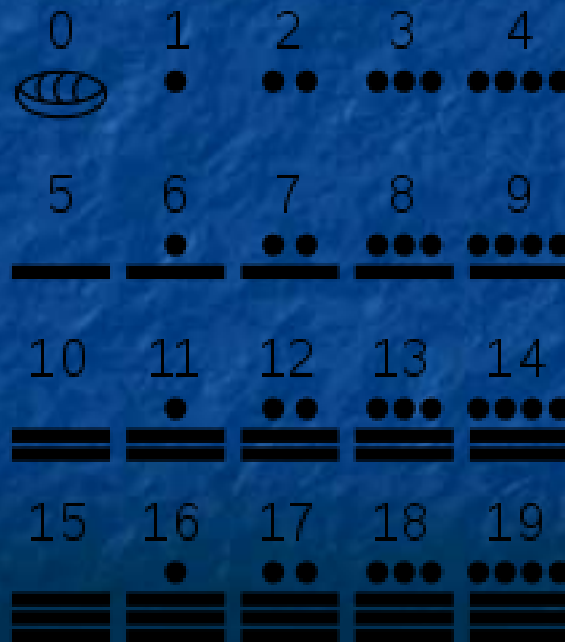
Advances in learning

- The Maya created a writing system of hieroglyphics



Advances in learning

- The Maya created a set of numerals
- Also developed a 365-day calendar



What happened to the Maya?

- The Maya abandoned many of their cities around 900 A.D.
- Archaeologists DO NOT KNOW WHY Maya civilization declined
- War between the city-states, disruption of trade, or over farming may have caused decline
- Theory: Around 900A.D. there was a severe drought. Many died due to starvation others migrated away.

Maya today

...more than 2 million Maya people live in Guatemala and southern Mexico today.



Tixacal Guardia, Mexico 10/94

©www.bruce martin.com



Maya Video Clip

<http://www.watchknow.org/Video.aspx?VideoID=12203>

This National Geographic video shows the Mayan Pyramids. It is part of the series Lost Temples and it tries to give an answer to the question "Why did the Maya abandon their magnificent city of Chichen Itza?" There is reference to Maya culture.

Aztecs



Where did the Aztecs live?

A.D 1400-1521

- The Aztecs lived in what is known as the Valley of Mexico in central Mexico.



Legend of Tenochtitlan

The gods told the Aztecs to search for an eagle holding a snake in its beak perched atop a cactus. This is where they were to build their capital city. The Aztecs saw this sign on a swampy island in lake Texcoco.

Legend of Tenochtitlan



Tenochtitlan

- **Tenochtitlan** was the capital city of the Aztec Empire.

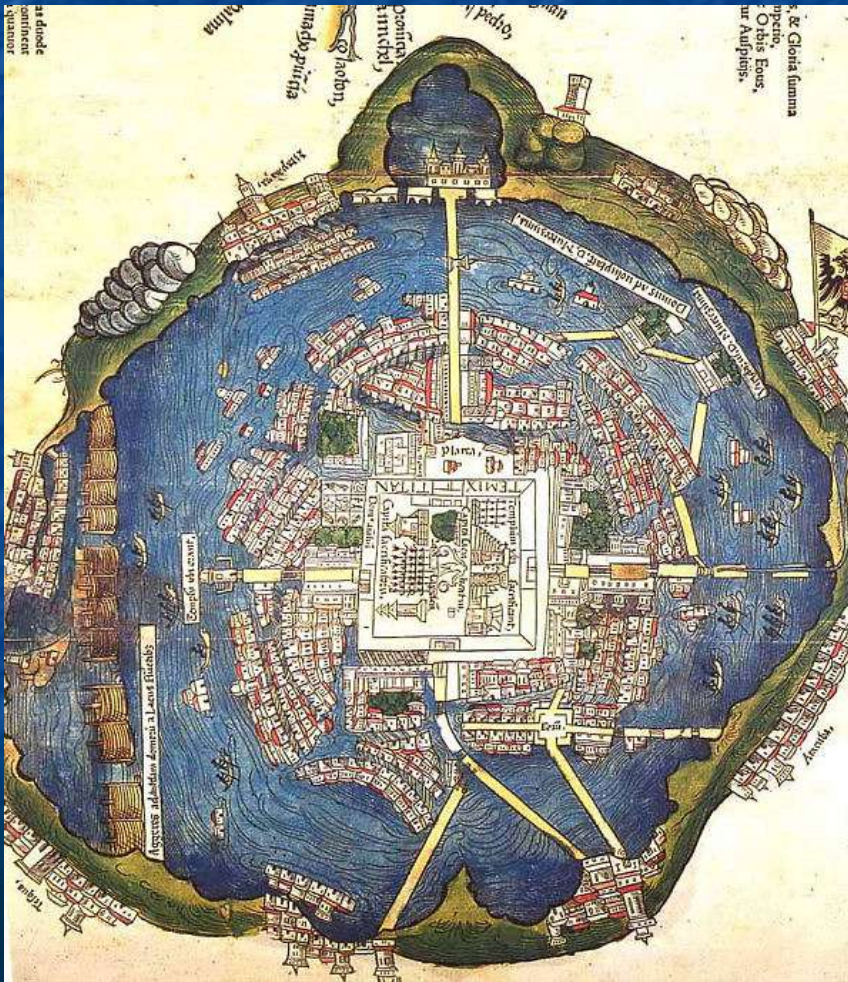


How did the Aztecs build a city in the center of a lake?

- Tenochtitlan was built on an island
- It was connected to the mainland by **causeways** leading north, south, and west of the city.
- The city was interlaced with a series of canals, so that all sections of the city could be visited either on foot or by canoe.

Tenochtitlan

- Today, Tenochtitlan is **Mexico City**



Government

- The Aztecs created an empire through conquest
- Conquered people and local rulers had to pay **tribute** to the Aztecs
- The Aztecs had an emperor
- *The Aztec Emperor's main job was to lead in war*

Religion & Mythology

- Aztecs were polytheistic
- Huitzilopochtli was the main Aztec god.
(weets se lo poch tlee)
- The Aztecs built massive temples and pyramids dedicated to their gods



Religion & Mythology

Pyramid of the Sun



Pyramid of the Moon



Human Sacrifice

- Human sacrifice was a common practice of the Aztecs.
- For the reconsecration of Great Pyramid of Tenochtitlan in 1487, the Aztecs reported that they sacrificed 84,400 prisoners over the course of four days.
- To give the sun strength to rise each day, human sacrifices were offered.



What happened to the Aztecs?

- Spanish conquistadors led by Hernan Cortes conquered Tenochtitlan and defeated the Aztecs in 1521.



Aztec Video Clips

“Engineering An Empire”

<http://www.watchknow.org/Video.aspx?VideoID=6255>

“What the Ancients Did For Us”

<http://www.watchknow.org/Video.aspx?VideoID=10964>

Inca



Where did the Inca live?

- The Inca controlled an empire in the **Andes Mountain** region of South America.



Government

- The **Sapa Inca** (emperor) had absolute power.
- The emperor claimed to be the son of the sun.
- The emperor was also the empire's religious leader.
- The empire was divided into four regions with the capital at **Cuzco**.

Uniting the Empire

- The Inca built a massive road network through mountains and across rivers and gorges.



Stonework

- The Inca constructed stone temples without using mortars yet the stones fit together so well that a knife would not fit between the stones.



Religion

- The Inca were polytheistic.
- The primary god was **Inti**, the sun god.



Religion

- Inca believed in **reincarnation**.
- Inca practice **human sacrifice**.
- The Inca practiced **cranial deformation**.
 - They achieved this by wrapping tight cloth straps around the heads of newborns to alter the shape of their soft skulls into a cone-like shape.

Medical Advances

- The Inca performed successful skull surgery.
- The Inca also used medicines to make patients unconscious during surgery

Organization

- Each family in a community was assigned a specific job.
- Government officials arranged marriages.
- The government organized mandatory public service building projects.

What happened to the Inca?

- Civil war in the empire broke out...

AND

- Smallpox spread, killing much of the Inca...

Fall of the Inca

- BUT ultimately, it was Spanish conquistadors led by **Francisco Pizarro** that brought about the fall of the Inca Empire.





	Government	Economy	Religion	Arts
MAYAN				
AZTEC				
INCA				

Government

Mayans	Independent city-states ruled by a king/priest. Power gained through hereditary means.
Aztecs	Had a central emperor with regional rulers who paid tribute to the emperor.
Incas	Led by a king with the empire divided into units. All towns were connected to the capital by roads. Citizens expected to work a certain number of days for the state

Economy

Mayans	Based on agriculture and trade (salt, feathers, jade)
Aztecs	Based on agriculture and trade. Goods paid as tributes from conquered peoples.
Incas	Based on trade and self-sufficient farming

Religion

Mayans	Central to Mayan life. Worshiped multiple gods. Some human sacrifice—mainly worshiped through prayer and assorted offerings.
Aztecs	Central to Aztec life. Worshiped multiple gods. Large scale human sacrifice to the Sun God.
Incas	Ancestor worship with human sacrifice on special occasions

Arts

Mayans	Developed a religious calendar based on astronomy and an advanced writing system. Carved jade, built pyramids.
Aztecs	Developed a calendar similar to the Mayans. Built pyramids. Paintings and pottery were usually religious or war based in theme.
Incas	Worked metal, pottery and cloth