

# CHAPTER 11: PRE-COLUMBIAN AMERICA

Ms. Sheets  
AP World



# Toltecs: Precursors to the Aztecs

- **Pre-Columbian: before the voyages of Columbus and the conquests of the Spanish**
- **Groups develop in isolation**
- **Toltec Empire (968-1150)**
  - **Central Mexico**
  - **968: Capital at Tula established**
  - **Long-distance trade, even to American SW**
  - **Belief in Quetzalcóatl (feathered serpent; one of the main Pre-Columbian gods)**
  - **Heavily militaristic (sacrifice, war)**
  - **1150: Collapse, probably caused by northern nomadic attacks**



**Toltec Warrior Statues**



# Aztecs (12<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> centuries)

- After Toltecs collapse, political power and people move to shores along Lake Texcoco
  - One of those groups are the Aztecs in the early 13<sup>th</sup> c
  - Lake Texcoco provides fishing, farming, and transportation
  - Valley by Lake Texcoco inhabited by mixture of groups organized into city-states
  - Many vie for control of lakes → winners are Aztecs
- Who are the Aztecs?
  - Speak Nahuatl (Toltec language) and worship Quetzalcóatl; lends legitimacy to rule
  - 1325: Aztecs found Tenochtitlan (city on island in center of Lake Texcoco)
  - 1434: Aztecs dominate central valley; conquer other city-states to make tribute empire (demand financial payments and prisoners to use for Aztec human sacrifices)

# Tenochtitlan: Aztec City



# QUICK REVIEW QUESTION

What helped the Aztecs establish power in the Central Mexican valley?

Describe the newly established Aztec Empire.

# Aztec Society

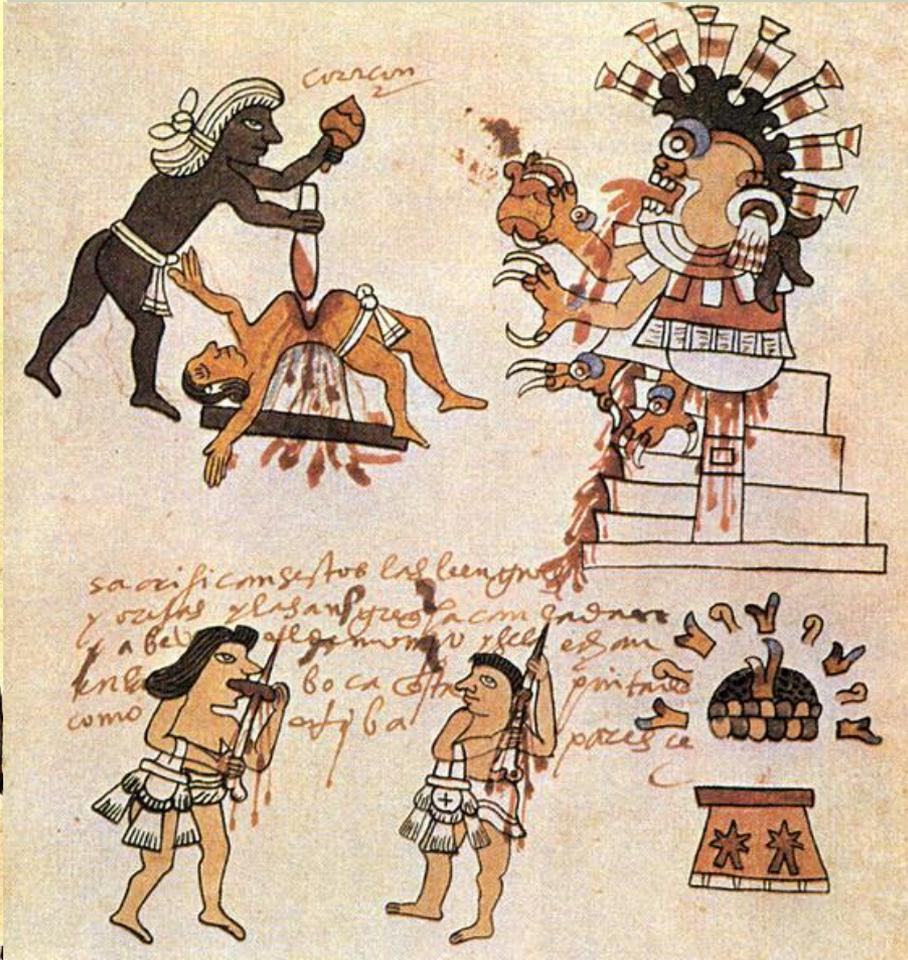
- As the Aztecs became solidified as the most powerful group around Lake Texcoco, Aztec society transformed into a rigidly hierarchical society
  - 1) Ruler
    - Head of state/religion
    - Representative of gods on earth
  - 2) Nobles
  - 3) Peasants
  - 4) Slaves (war captives)
- Clans (*calpulli*) dictate social status
- A large gap emerges between nobility and commoners



# Aztec Religion

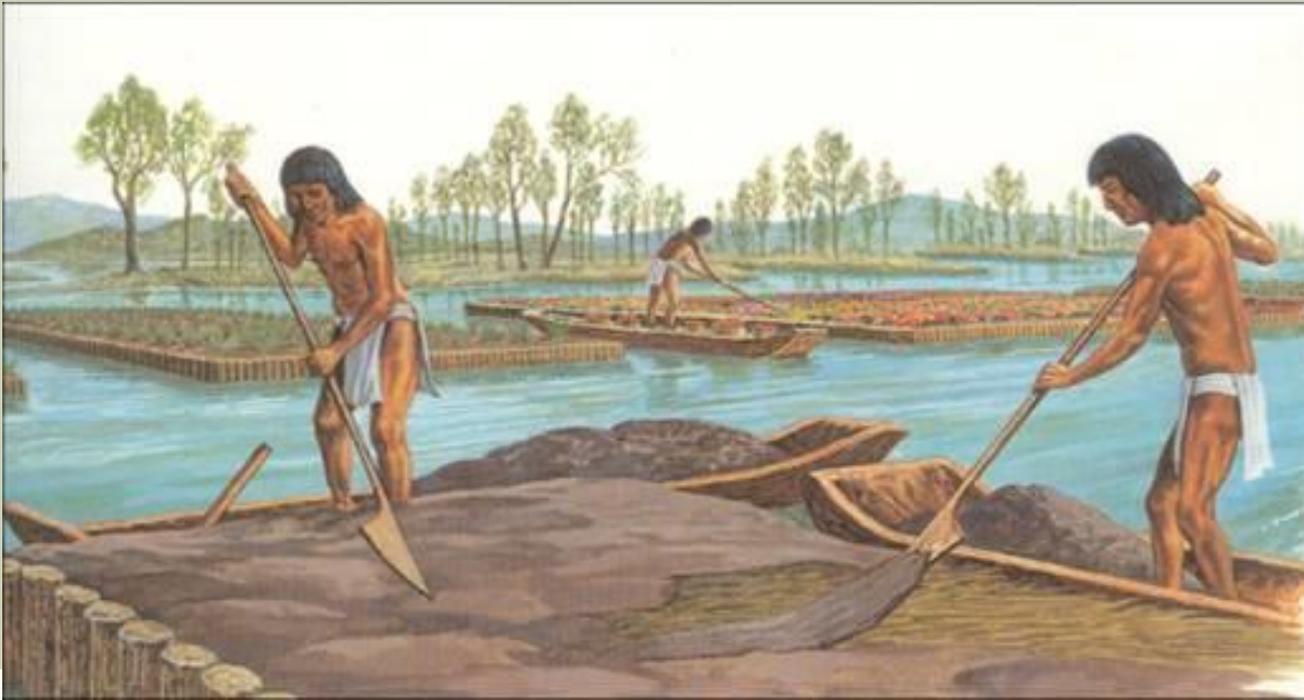
- Highly motivated by religious zeal
- Dedicated to service of gods
- Spiritual and natural world seamless
- Hundreds of deities
  - Mostly focused upon fertility, agriculture, water/rain
  - Aztecs worshipped gods through festivals, ceremonies, feasting, dancing, warfare, and sacrifice
- **Sacrifice: a component of worship**
  - Huitzilopochtli (deity of war, sun, and human sacrifice) needs strength
    - Patron of Tenochtitlan
  - Motivated by religious conviction? Or terror and political control?
    - Includes ritual cannibalism
  - War captives supply Aztecs with sacrificial victims





# Aztec Economy

- Mostly an agrarian community
- *Chinampas*: man-made floating islands that yielded large amount of crops, constructed to provide additional farming land upon the lake
  - Maize, corn, and beans
  - No use of wheel or laboring animals
- Merchants worked in daily markets



# Gender in Aztec Society

- Aztec women's responsibilities: household care, cooking, weaving
- Women had to grind corn by hand on stone boards; time-consuming
  - No wheels or suitable animals for power like Europe
  - Lack of appropriate technology
- Women could own/inherit property and will it to their heirs
- Arranged marriages were common
  - Elite were often polygamous
  - Commoners were monogamous



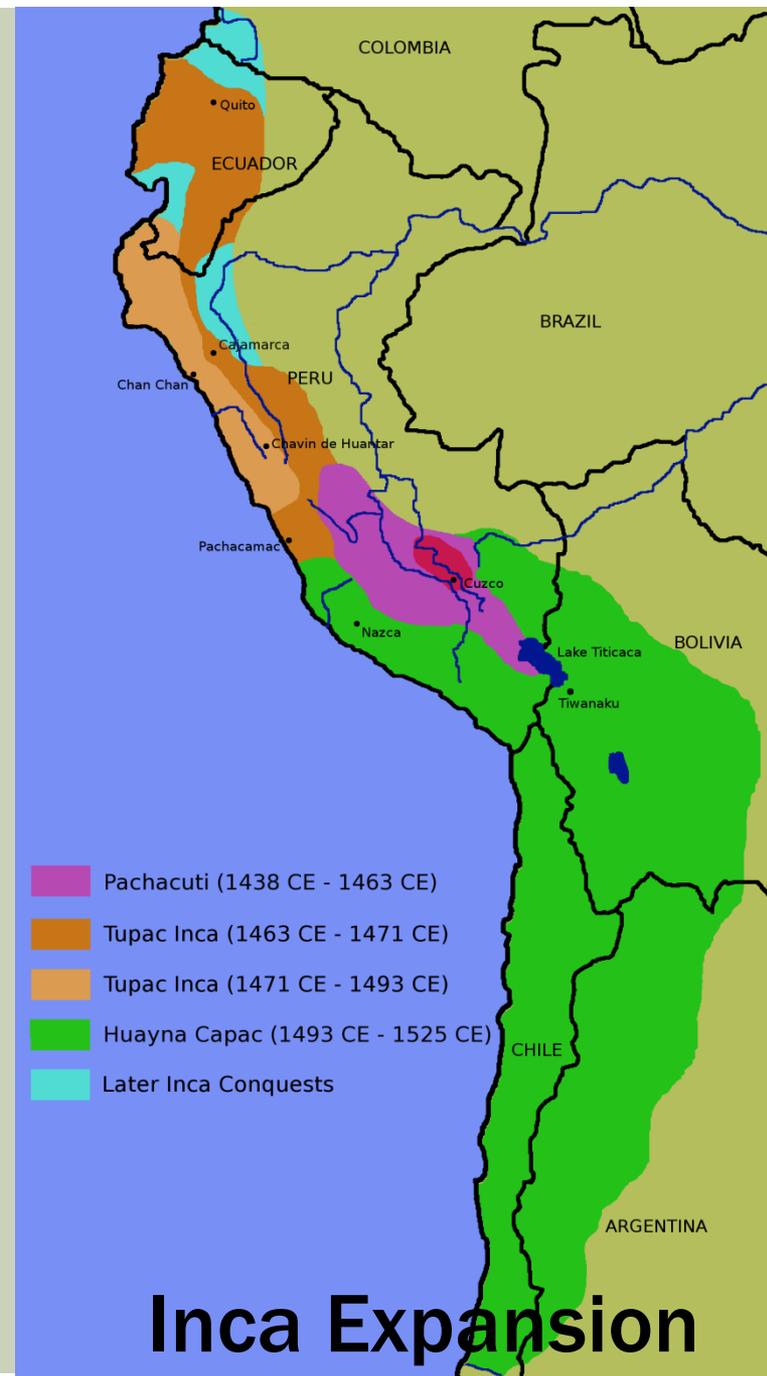
# QUICK REVIEW QUESTION

What belief necessitates Aztec sacrifice?

What is the agricultural innovation the Aztecs use to increase available farmland?

# The Incas (1350-1533)

- **Chimor Kingdom (900-1465)**
  - Control of north coast of Peru
  - Incas conquer Chimors by taking over irrigation systems and cutting off access to water
- **Inca Empire (*Twantinsuyu*)**
  - *Quechua*-speaking clans from southern Andes Mountains
  - By 1350, Incas live centered around and in Cuzco (capital city)
  - Control other regions by 1438,
    - Led by Pachacuti (ruler, or *inca*)
  - Centered around Lake Titicaca
    - Fishing, irrigation, farming
  - Aggressive expansion for 60 years by Pachacuti, his son, and grandson



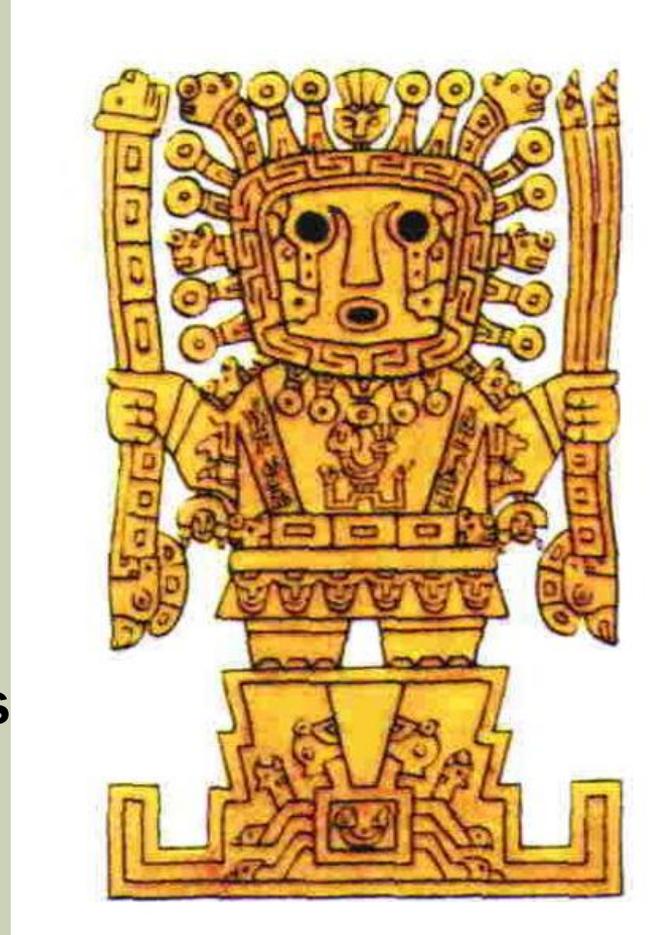
# Techniques of Inca Imperial Rule

- **Highly centralized**
  - **Inca ruler; governors of four provinces; bureaucracy**
  - **Local rulers maintain their positions providing they defer to Inca rule**
- **Integrated various ethnic groups into an tribute empire**
- ***Quechua* is spread as language to unite empire**
- **Military: System of roads, pay stations (*tambos*), storehouses**
- **Extensive irrigated agriculture; large building and irrigation projects**
- **“Split inheritance” necessitates conquest**
  - **Power goes to eldest male; wealth and land to other sons**



# Inca Culture

- Viracocha (creator/sun god) is highest
  - Temple of the Sun at Cuzco is center of state religion
  - Local gods allowed to survive
  - Cult of ancestors, deceased rulers mummified
- Inca gods are animistic
- Cultural Achievements
  - Metallurgy (copper, bronze)
  - No writing system but knotted strings (*quipu*) for accounting
  - Monumental architecture (steep slopes)
  - Farming: potato; maize



# Comparison of Aztecs and Inca

<b>Similarities</b>	<b>Differences</b>
<b>Built on earlier empires that preceded them (Aztecs = Toltecs; Inca = Chimor)</b>	<b>Aztecs have sophisticated traders and markets VS Inca have no specialized merchant class</b>
<b>Excellent imperial and military organizers</b>	<b>Aztecs have a writing system VS Inca do not</b>
<b>Highly organized agricultural sector under state control</b>	
<b>Ethnic groups allowed to survive (Inca incorporate them into empire; Aztecs rule them harshly)</b>	
<b>Animistic religions</b>	
<b>No draft animals for labor</b>	

# Peoples of the Americas

- Great variety; adapt to region
- Only two large states/empires formed
  - Aztecs and Inca
  - Weakened by European contact
- Long distance/regional trade common
- By 1500: 200 languages
- Agriculturalists; nomads
- Communities are technologically behind Europeans, Chinese, Arabs



# QUICK REVIEW QUESTION

What similarities do the Aztecs and Inca have?

What differences?