

Inca civilization

- Was in Andean mountain range
- Here, a number of civilizations emerged before 1500

Adverse climate

- Was unlikely area for civilizations to develop – Andean Mountains themselves were extremely cold during much of the year (about 250 to 300 frosts per year); was arid along Pacific coast; to east of Andes Mountains, climate was hot, tropical in the Amazon River basin; yet in Andes, Amerindians produced some of the most socially complex, most politically advanced societies in the Americas; the Incas were one among many such civilizations
- How did they become success in creating such civilizations? – In meeting major environmental challenges, organizing society, adapting technologies to make use of scarce resources:

New technologies

- making terraces on sides of mountains to maximize use of land
- developing calendar to plan planting, harvest cycles well
- domesticating animals – such as llamas, alpacas – for long distance transportation, meat, wool

AYLLU (aye-you) SYSTEM - organization of human labor:

- record keeping system using knotted colored cords – khipus – to record population, tribute obligations, etc.
- clan system – ayllu (aye-YOU) system – groups of families, not always interrelated, headed by hereditary chief; they held land collectively, were obliged to help one another, help their hereditary chief
- above clan system was the mit'a (MEET-ah) system, set up once territorial states emerged in Andean Mountains after 1,000 BC; was rotational labor draft, which had members of ayllus work fields, care for animals owned by religious institutions, royal court, nobles (each ayllu each year gave certain number of its members to perform such work)
- these mit'a laborers built, maintained roads, bridges, temples, palaces, massive irrigation & drainage projects; also helped make textiles, goods for religious rituals (beer, coca [dried leaves used as a stimulant, sources of today's cocaine])

Mit'a (meet-ah) system

- mit'a system was backbone of Andean society for over 1,000 years
- labor: men & women had certain tasks, divided by gender – women in charge of agriculture, textiles, home; men mostly hunted, served in military, served in government)
- ayllu system – crucial in developing trade among different regions of Andean Mountains range, whose local societies were highly specialized in what they produced (wool and meat in the mountains, potatoes in the valleys, corn & fish on coastal lands)

Inca Empire - Military conquests

- Inca Empire – vast imperial state: emerged in 1430s, had over 6 million people by 1525
- originally, Inca were part of chiefdom based on reciprocal gift-giving, redistribution of food, textiles
- empire that had formed by 1500s was built on earlier states that had connected different regions of the Andes economically, developed system of trade; Inca expanded territory connected by trade through force; result – advanced military development

Benefits from ayllu system

- ayllu system being used to advance state power – mit'a workers building vast system of roads connecting parts of the empire, serving as soldiers, messengers along post roads, working in industries that provided surplus to the old, weak, and the ill
- while relying on the ayllu system to provide labor, local elites to rule regions, Incas enforced obedience by hostage taking, setting up military garrisons in different parts of the empire
- empire served by vast imperial bureaucracy, with the royal family legitimizing its authority by claiming its descent from the Sun, the chief god of the Incas; various rituals enforced their authority (political & religious); kings, to legitimate their rule, were obliged to carry out warfare, conquer new regions
- capital of empire – Cuzco – was 30,000 at empire's height; compared to Aztec capital was small (Tenochtitlan had 150,000 in 1520), but it had impressive network of palaces and temples; chief temple, Temple of the Sun, greatly awed visitors
- Incas succeeded at producing variety of goods – various tools, weapons of copper and bronze; decorative objects in gold, silver, beautiful textiles

Social tensions

- Overall, they advanced the economy of the Andes Mountains region, made it more prosperous
- But elites becoming distanced from commoners, were becoming wealthier
- Commoners treated like dirt – could be executed just for looking at the ruler's Face

Regional and ethnic tensions

- By 1525, empire faced with civil war after its ruler died; had just conquered Ecuador, and bloody struggle for throne ensued; different ethnic groups, regions of the empire took advantage of this situation and chose sides in the struggle, siding with either of two sons of the deceased ruler
- Europeans, when they came, took advantage of resentment by conquered ethnic groups, regions, resentment by commoners