

An aerial photograph of an ancient city, likely Teotihuacan, showing several large pyramids and a grid-like street pattern. The scene is illuminated by the warm, golden light of a sunset or sunrise, with the sky showing soft orange and pink hues. The pyramids are made of light-colored stone and are surrounded by smaller structures and vegetation.

The Great Ancient American Civilizations

1000 Years of True American Cultures

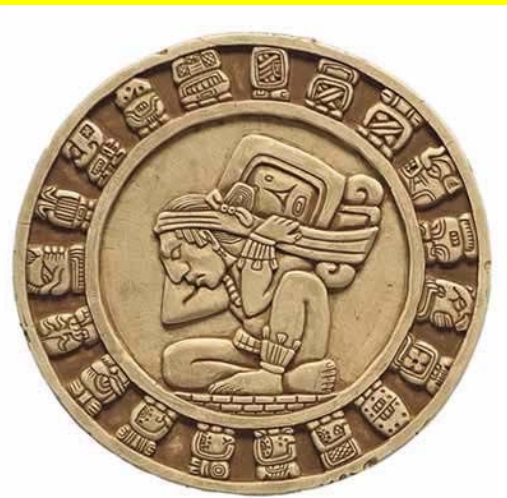
The Olmecs (1400s-500s BC)

- Lived in the southern Mexican rainforest around the Yucatan peninsula
- Strong religious-based society
- They did not live in cities but built ceremonial centers around which farming villages were located
- Built pyramid-shaped stone temples
- Developed a calendar and picture-writing



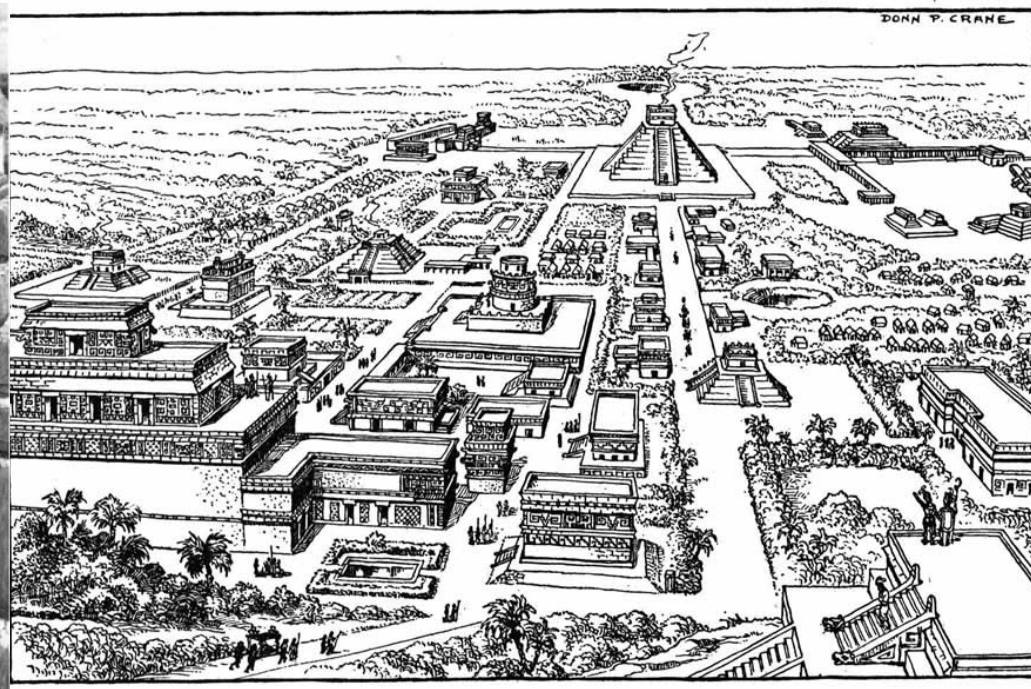
The Mayas (300s-900s A.D)

- Lived in Southern Mexico
- Introduced farming techniques to clear the rainforest and capture rainwater to produce fertile fields
- Grew maize (corn), beans, and squash were staple crops
- Developed a calendar and picture-writing
- Measured time accurately, created hieroglyphics, extremely accurate calendars, and understood the concept of the “zero”

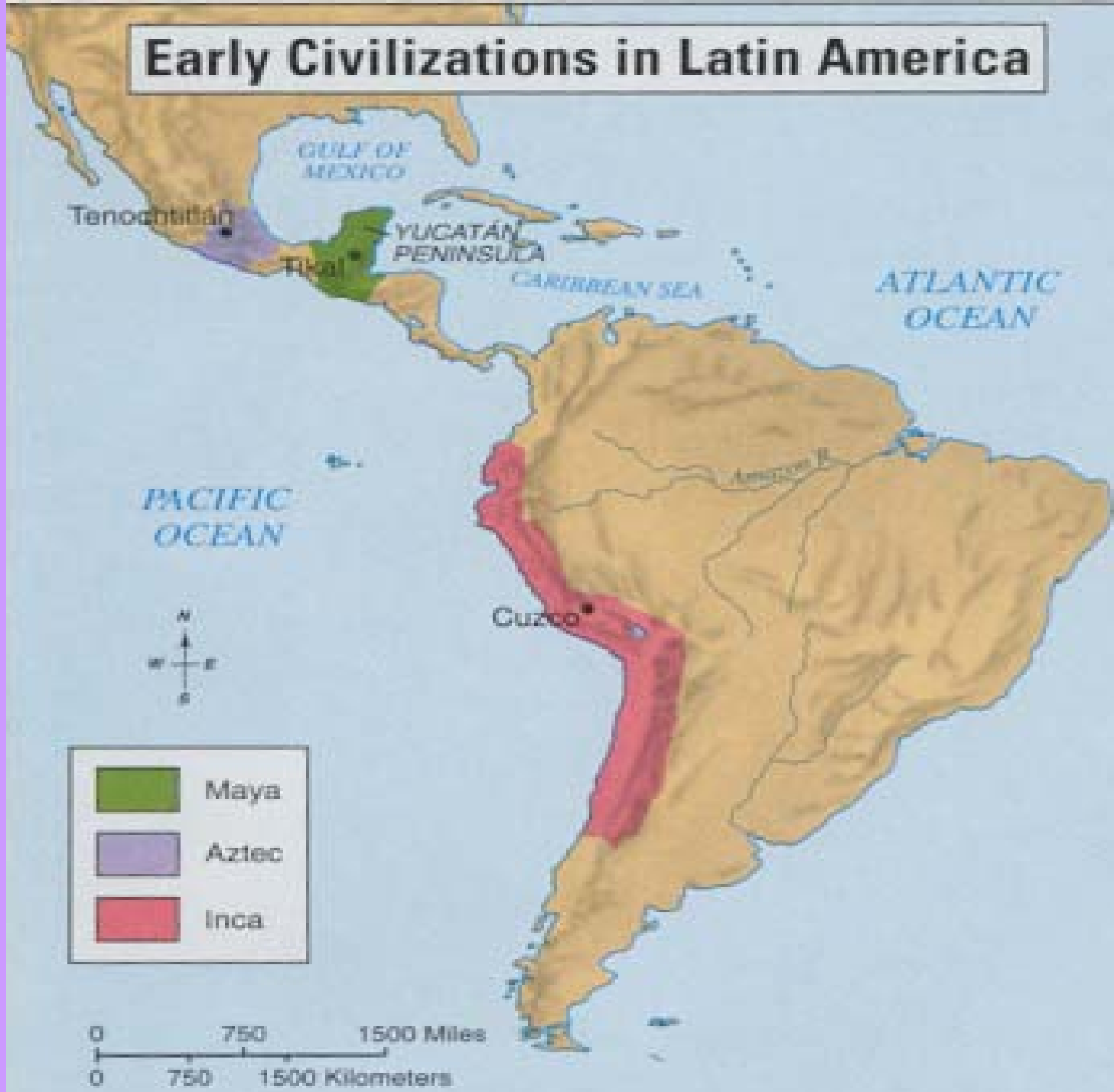


The Mayas (300s-900s A.D)

- Lived in large cities that were centers of trade, wealth, and religion
- Built roads, bridges, and pyramid-shaped stone temples
- Society slowly faded away and their cities were overgrown

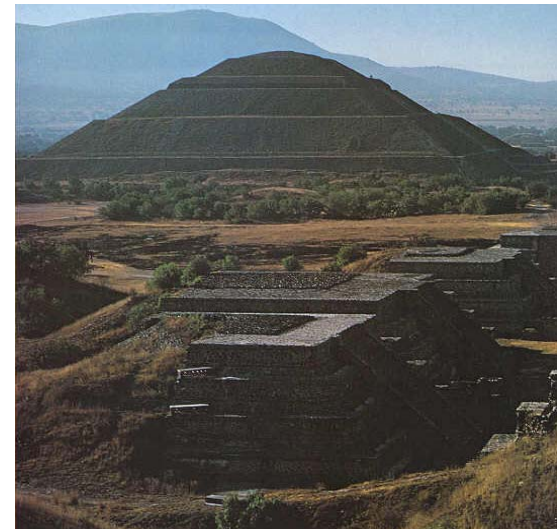


Early Civilizations in Latin America



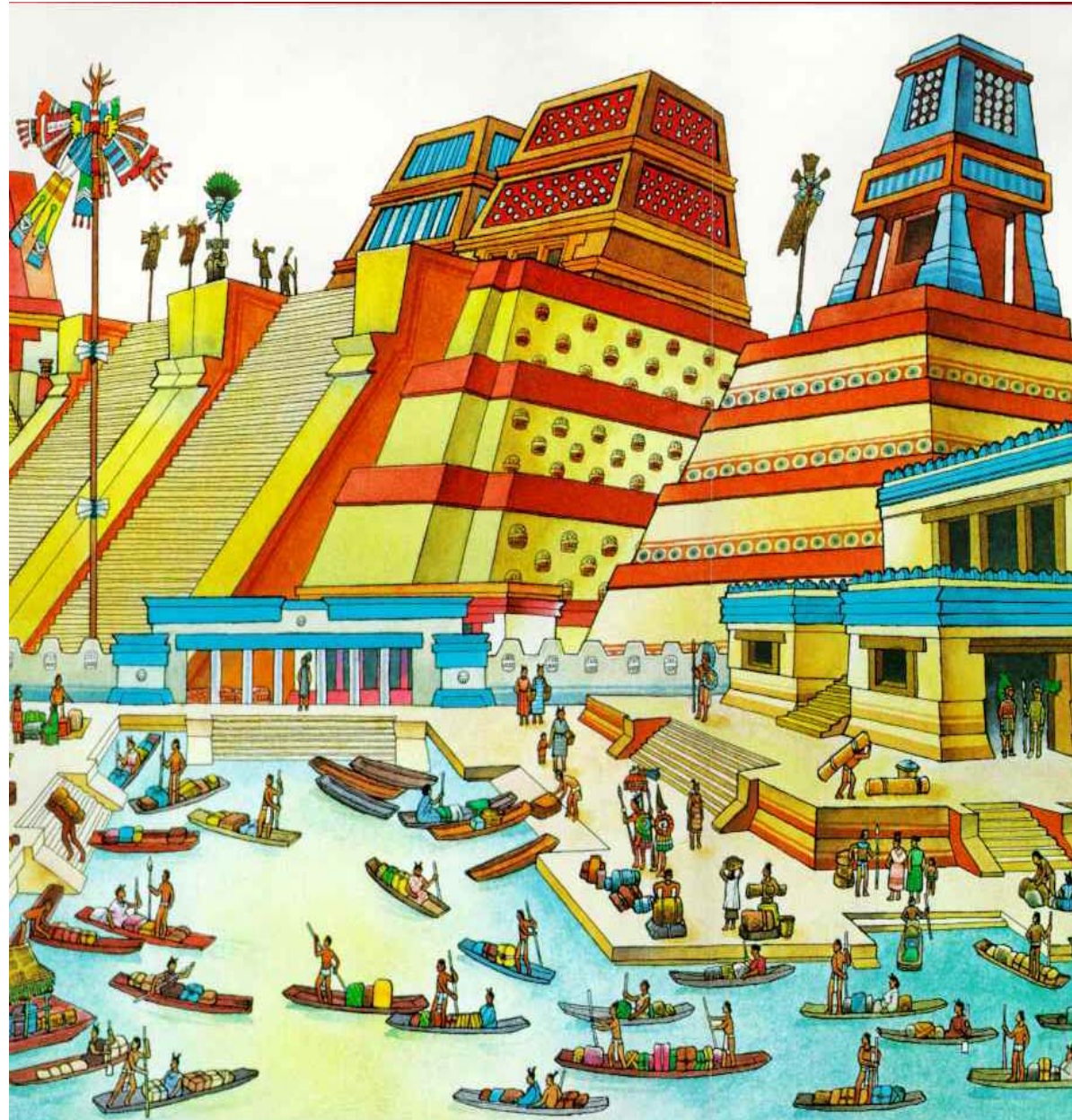
The Aztecs (1200s-1500s AD)

- Lived in Central Mexico. They originally were nomadic hunters but settled down to become farmers.
- Nobles chose the emperor
- Conquered surrounding peoples and demanded tribute (payment) in the form of slaves
- Lived in large cities modeled on Olmec capital Teotihuacan
- Built floating islands (chinampas) and pyramid-shaped stone temples



The Aztecs (1200s-1500s AD)

- Capital city was Tenochtitlan located where modern-day Mexico City is. It was an island in a lake with canals and man-made floating islands
- Had accurate calendars, hieroglyphics, a number system, and herbal medicines



The Aztecs (1200s-1500s AD)

- Religion centered around the sun god Huitzilopochtli
- Mass human sacrifices (often slaves or captives) were held because the Aztecs believed Huitzilopochtli demanded blood or the sun would not shine



An Aztec Sacrifice

First the victim cries over his fate.

Then the victim is killed and his organs removed.

Then the victim is cooked and eaten.



The Incas (1400s-1500s AD)

- Pachacuti founded the Incan Empire and proclaimed himself “Sapa Inca” or emperor
- Incas thought Sapa Inca was the son of the sun and he held absolute power. Gold was his symbol
- Conquered a large amount of territory in the Andes Mts.



The Incas (1400s-1500s AD)

- Built over 12,000 miles of roads to connect the empire
- Roads were used for trade, rapid communications, and swift movement of the army
- Hundreds of bridges built over rivers



The Incas (1400s-1500s AD)

- Farmers terraced the steep mountain-sides to give them more farmland
 - Farmers gave part of their crop to the government to help prevent famine
- Kept records on knotted colored strings called quipu
- Had advanced medicine, including brain surgery and antiseptics
- Built great cities such as Cuzco and Machu Picchu. These cities had running water, stone temples, and planned streets



Machu Picchu





The Incas (1400s-1500s AD)

- Incan religion was polytheistic with the Sun God at its center
- Religion was tied to routines of everyday life
- Priests were very powerful
- Incans built stone temples for worship of the Sun
- Young girls called “Accha” served the Sun God and the emperor



	MAYAS	AZTECS	INCAS
TIME PERIOD	300–900	1200s–1500s	1400s–1500s
LOCATION	Yucatán to Central America	Mexico	Peru
GOVERNMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each city with own ruling chief • Bureaucracy of nobles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emperor chosen by nobles and priests to lead in war 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rule by God-king with absolute power • Efficient government that reaches every village
RELIGION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polytheistic • Powerful priests • Elaborate ceremonies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polytheistic • Priests very powerful • Human sacrifices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polytheistic • Monthly festivals • Offerings to gods • Powerful priests
FARMING METHODS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised fields built in cleared rain forests • Channels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floating gardens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step terraces
ACHIEVEMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hieroglyphics • Number system • Concept of zero • Solar calendar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herbs and medicines, able to set broken bones and treat dental cavities • Steam baths • Accurate calendar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surgery and anti-septics • Extensive system of roads
CAUSE OF DECLINE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theories include: warfare, overpopulation, peasant revolts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spanish invaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spanish invaders