

Developments in South and Southeast Asia

*What the books taught me, I've practised.
What they didn't teach me, I've taught myself.
I've gone into the forest and wrestled with the lion.
I didn't get this far by teaching one thing and doing another.*

—Lal Ded (1320–1392)

Essential Question: How did various beliefs and practices in South and Southeast Asia affect society and the development of states?

The poetry of Lal Ded, known as Mother Lalla, illustrates a major cross-interaction between religious traditions that shaped the history of South and Southern Asia. She was born in Kashmir, a region of northern India. While a Hindu, her emphasis on experience appealed to many Muslims, particularly Sufis. The interaction of Hindus and Muslims, though sometimes violent, created dynamic developments in religious thought, politics, economics, art, and architecture. Despite the strong Islamic presence in the region, local Hindu kingdoms continued to play a major role in India's decentralized political landscape. A third religion, Buddhism, also had a strong presence in the area, particularly in the Sinhala dynasties in present-day Sri Lanka and the great kingdoms of Southeast Asia.

Political Structures in South Asia

South Asia was only occasionally united as a single state in its history. After the Gupta Dynasty that had dominated South Asia collapsed in 550, ending the so-called Golden Age or Classical Era of Indian history, disunity returned to the region for most of the next 1,000 years. Northern and southern India developed separate political structures. However, Hinduism provided some cultural unity throughout the region. Many people combined their own local faith tradition with adherence to the same scriptures and core beliefs respected throughout the region.

Political Structures in Southern India Southern India was more stable than northern India. The first kingdom, the Chola Dynasty, reigned over southern India for more than 400 years (850–1267). During the 11th century,



the dynasty extended its rule to Ceylon, the large island just south of India. (Today it is known as Sri Lanka.)

The second kingdom, the **Vijayanagara Empire** (1336–1646) took its name from the word for “the victorious city.” It began with the arrival of two brothers, Harihara and Bukka, from the Delhi Sultanate in north-central India. They were sent to the area because the Delhi Sultanate wished to extend its rule to southern India. These brothers had been born as Hindus and converted to Islam for the sake of upward mobility. When they left the region controlled by the Delhi Sultanate, they once again embraced the religion of their birth and established their own Hindu kingdom. The Vijayanagar Empire existed from the mid-1300s until the mid-1500s, when a group of Muslim kingdoms overthrew it.

Political Structures in Northern India Northern India experienced a great deal more upheaval than did southern India. After the fall of the Gupta Empire (see Prologue), the **Rajput kingdoms** gradually formed in northern India and present-day Pakistan. These were Hindu kingdoms led by leaders of numerous clans who were often at war with one another. Because of the competition among clans, no centralized government arose, once again demonstrating the diversity and the regionalism of South Asia. The lack of a centralized power left the kingdoms vulnerable to Muslim attacks.

While the Himalayas protected India from invasions from the north and east, mountain passes in the northwest allowed invasions by Muslim armies. Each attack disrupted a region that had been mostly Hindu and Buddhist. Over time, the Islamic presence in the region grew:

- In the 8th century, Islamic armies invaded what is today Pakistan. However, they brought little change to everyday life. Located on the eastern fringes of the Dar al-Islam, the region was isolated from the center of the culture. In addition, the Rajput princes skillfully wielded their power to limit the Muslim conquerors’ influence.
- In the 11th century, Islamic forces plundered northern India’s Hindu temples and Buddhist shrines for their riches. In addition, they erected mosques on Hindu and Buddhist holy sites—much to the anger of followers of those faiths.

In the early 13th century, Islamic forces managed to conquer the city of Delhi and much of the northern portion of South Asia. Bringing Islam into India, the **Delhi Sultanate** reigned for 300 years, from the 13th through the 16th centuries. The interaction of Islam and Hinduism in northern India dominated the political history of the era. While some Hindus converted to Islam, others resented Muslims and considered them foreigners. One factor contributing to this resentment was that the Delhi Sultanate imposed a tax, called the *jizya*, on all non-Muslim subjects of the empire.

Throughout its reign, the Delhi Sultanate never organized an efficient bureaucracy in the style of the Chinese. For this reason, sultans had difficulty imposing their policies in a land as vast and diverse as India. Despite the



strong Islamic presence in the region, local kingdoms continued to play a major role in India's decentralized political landscape.

The sultans wanted to extend their rule southward. Before they succeeded, though, they became focused on defending themselves from an onslaught by the Mongol army from the northwest. The Delhi Sultanate prevented the Mongols themselves from conquering South Asia. However, in 1526, the sultans lost power to a new empire, the Mughals, whose leaders did trace their ancestry to the Mongols.

Religion in South Asia

Religion always held a dominant place in South Asian history. Before the arrival of Islam, most South Asians practiced Hinduism, while a smaller number identified themselves as Buddhists. South Asians encountered a starkly different religion when Islam arrived.

- Hindus pray to many gods, while Islam is strictly monotheistic.
- Hindu temples and artwork are replete with pictures of deities, while Muslims disapprove of any visual representation of Allah.
- Hinduism was associated with a hierarchical caste system, while Islam has always called for the equality of all believers.
- Hindus recognize several sacred texts, while Muslims look to only the Quran for spiritual guidance.

The Arrival of Islam The relationship between Hindus and Muslims shaped the history of South Asia beginning in the 7th century, and it continues to shape regional culture and politics today. Islam initially entered India forcefully yet eventually took on a more peaceful approach. But while Islam was a universalizing religion, one that wanted to **proselytize**, or actively seek converts, Muslim rulers found early in their reign that forcing their Hindu and Buddhist subjects to convert was not successful. Thus, most converts came to Islam voluntarily. Many Muslim merchants in the Indian Ocean trade moved to Indian port cities and married. Their wives often ended up converting to their husband's religion.

With its emphasis on the equality of all believers, Islam also attracted low-caste Hindus who hoped that conversion would improve their social status. In this sense, Islam in India was like Christianity in the Roman Empire. Both appealed to the people who suffered the most under the existing social structure.

The largest numbers of converts to Islam, however, were Buddhists. Corruption among the monks and raids on monasteries by early Muslim conquerors left the Buddhist religion disorganized. The spread of Islam helped make Buddhism a minority religion in its place of birth. (Connect: Make an outline comparing the spread of Islam in South Asia to the spread of Buddhism in China. See Topic 1.1.)



Social Structures in South Asia

The arrival of Islam did little to alter the basic structure of society in South Asia. India's caste system is its strongest historical continuity. While obviously inequitable, it lent stability to a politically decentralized land. The caste system was flexible and able to accommodate newcomers. Muslim merchants and migrants, even though they were not Hindu, found a place for themselves within the caste hierarchy based on their occupation. These subcastes based on occupation operated like workers' guilds, soon becoming absorbed into the social fabric of Indian society. Connect: Write a paragraph comparing the caste system in South Asia to the social structures in China in the period from 1200 to 1450. See Topic 1.1.)

At the same time, most of those who tried to escape the grip of the caste system failed. The low-caste Hindus who converted to Islam as a way to improve their social status usually did not achieve that goal. Individuals required more education and opportunities for better jobs, not just a new religion, to help them escape their low status in life.

As Islam spread, Muslims varied how they applied its core teachings, depending on their culture before converting. For example, Islam did not alter gender relations greatly. In South Asia, women in the Hindu tradition were confined to a separate social sphere, and Islamic women received similar treatment. In Southeast Asia, women enjoyed more independence before the arrival of Islam. This pattern continued as people became Muslims. Thus, converts in South and Southeast Asia found ways to accommodate a new faith, but most people did not reject their traditions in the process.

Cultural Interactions in South Asia

People in South Asia and the Middle East shared their intellectual and cultural achievements with each other. For example, Arab astronomers and mathematicians added to the body of knowledge begun by their Indian counterparts. Indian developments in algebra and geometry were translated into Arabic, and spread throughout Dar al-Islam. One result of this movement of ideas was that the numeral system referred to in the West as "Arabic numerals," actually originated in India.

In India itself, sultans erected buildings melding the intricate artistic details of Hindu art with the geometric patterns preferred by Islamic architecture. The city of Delhi is filled with examples of Islamic architecture built during the Delhi Sultanate. One famous example, the **Qutub Minar**, stands in the southern part of the city. Rulers from the Delhi Sultanate built an elaborate mosque on top of a Hindu temple and used materials for the mosque from nearby Hindu and other religious shrines. Towering over the mosque is the Qutub Minar itself, a gigantic leaning tower, the tallest structure in India today. Historians debate the reason for its construction; one obvious function is its presence as a symbol of Islamic influence and, at one time, dominance of northern India.



An entirely new language developed among Muslims of South Asia: **Urdu**. Urdu melded the grammatical pattern of Hindi (the language of Northern Indians), and with the vocabulary of Arabic and some elements of Farsi (the language of Persians). Today, Urdu is the official language of Pakistan.

The Bhakti Movement Beginning in the 12th century, some Hindus began to draw upon traditional teachings about the importance of emotion in their spiritual life. Rather than emphasize studying texts or performing rituals, they focused on developing a strong attachment to a particular deity. This development, known as the **Bhakti Movement**, started in southern India. It was especially appealing to many believers because it did not discriminate against women or people of low social status. For example, one of the most famous figures of the Bhakti Movement would be a female, the poet Mira Bai, who lived in the 16th century.

Though the bhaktis were Hindus, they were similar in some ways to Sufi Muslims. Both groups were mystical movements, ones that emphasized inner reflection in order to achieve a direct personal relationship with a deity. Because they placed less emphasis on strict adherence to traditional rituals and beliefs, bhaktis and Sufis each appealed to people outside their traditions. Just as the Sufis helped spread Islam, the Bhaktis helped spread Hinduism.



Source: Thinkstock

Religious structures in India often demonstrate syncretism in architecture. Qutub Minar combines towers common in Hindu temples with domes common in Islamic mosques.



Southeast Asia

Like China, South Asia strongly influenced its neighbors, particularly the lands of Southeast Asia—today’s Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam. Indian merchants had contact with these Southeast Asian lands as early as 500 B.C.E. The merchants sold gold, silver, metal goods, and textiles in the region and brought back its fine spices. Trade voyages introduced the Indian religions of Hinduism and Buddhism to Southeast Asia. Much of the region became and remains today mostly Buddhist. The region, like Southwest Asia, was strategically significant. Whoever controlled this region could influence the valuable trade between South Asia and East Asia.

Sea-Based Kingdoms Because Southeast Asia was so important, several kingdoms emerged there. Two were particularly long-lasting:

- The **Srivijaya Empire** (670–1025) was a Hindu kingdom based on Sumatra. It built up its navy and prospered by charging fees for ships traveling between India and China.
- The **Majapahit Kingdom** (1293–1520) based on Java had 98 tributaries at its height. Like Srivijaya, Majapahit sustained its power by controlling sea routes. Unlike Srivijaya, Majapahit was Buddhist.

Land-Based Kingdoms Other kingdoms in Southeast Asia drew power from their control over land. The **Sinhala dynasties** in Sri Lanka had their roots in the arrival of early immigrants, most likely merchants, from north India. Buddhists arrived in the 3rd century B.C.E. and the island became a center of Buddhist study. Monasteries and nunneries flourished. Both men and women found a life of contemplation and simple living attractive.

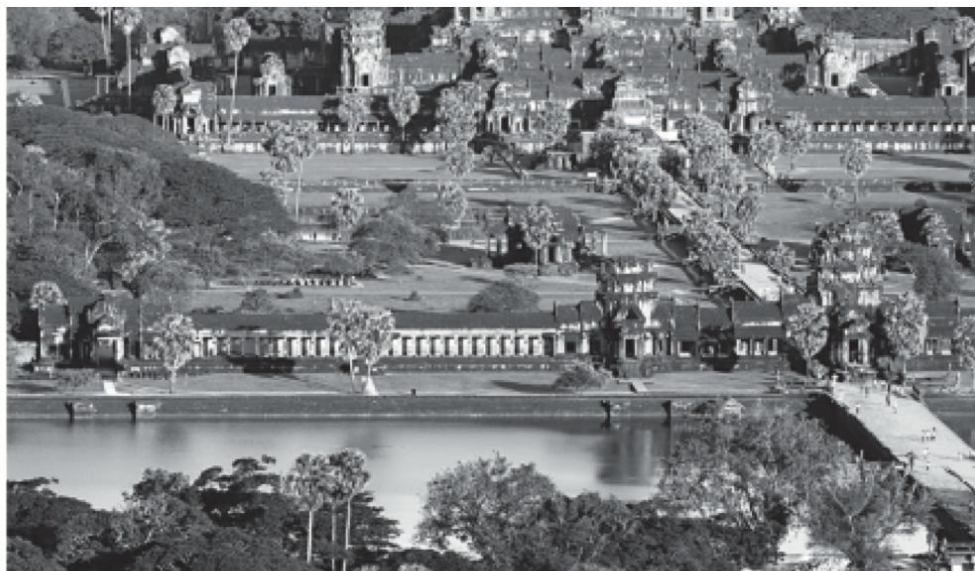
Buddhism was so deeply embedded that Buddhist priests often served as advisors to the monarchs. The government of one of the kingdoms oversaw the construction of a network of reservoirs and canals to create an excellent irrigation system, which contributed to economic growth. However, attacks by invaders from India and conflicts between the monarchy and the priests ultimately weakened the kingdoms.

The **Khmer Empire**, also known as the Angkor Kingdom (802–1431), was situated near the Mekong River and also did not depend on maritime prowess for its power. The kingdom’s complex irrigation and drainage systems led to economic prosperity, making it one of the most prosperous kingdoms in Southeast Asia. Irrigation allowed farmers to harvest rice crops several times a year, and drainage systems reduced the impact of the heavy monsoon rains.

The Khmer capital was at Angkor Thom. The temples there showed the variety of Indian cultural influences on Southeast Asia. Hindu artwork and sculptures of deities abounded. But at some point the Khmer rulers became Buddhist. Starting in the 12th and 13th centuries, they added Buddhist sculptures and artwork to the temples without destroying any of the Hindu artwork.



During the same period and only one-half mile from Angkor Thom, rulers constructed the ornate and majestic Buddhist temple complex of Angkor Wat. In 1431, the Thais of the **Sukhothai Kingdom** invaded the area, forcing the Khmers out. Nevertheless, ruins of the magnificent structures in Angkor Thom and Angkor Wat still stand, testifying not only to the sophistication of Southeast Asian culture but also to the powerful influence of Indian culture on the region.



Source: Rajasthani Painting of Meerabai. https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Meera_Bai#/media/File:Meerabai.jpg.

The great temple complex at Angkor Wat, in both its architecture and its use, reflects the interaction between Hinduism and Buddhism in Southeast Asia.

Islam Islam’s movement into the Indian Ocean region paralleled its expansion elsewhere. The first Southeast Asian Muslims were local merchants, who converted in the 700s, hoping to have better trading relations with the Islamic merchants who arrived on their shores. Islam was most popular in urban areas at the time. Islam spread to Sumatra, Java, and the Malay Peninsula. Today, Indonesia includes more Muslims than any other country.

Sufis Sufis also did missionary work in Southeast Asia. (See Topic 1.2.) Because of their tolerance for local faiths, people felt comfortable converting to Islam. They could be Muslims and still honor local deities.

KEY TERMS BY THEME		
<p>GOVERNMENT: South Asia Vijayanagara Empire (Southern India) Rajput kingdoms (North India) Delhi Sultanate</p>	<p>GOVERNMENT: Southeast Asia Srivijaya Empire (Sumatra) Majahapit Kingdom (Java) Sinhala dynasties (Sri Lanka) Khmer Empire (Cambodia) Sukhothai Kingdom (Thailand)</p>	<p>CULTURE: Religion proselytize Bhakti Movement</p> <p>CULTURE: Blending Qutub Minar Urdu</p>



THINK AS A HISTORIAN: IDENTIFY CLAIMS

A claim is a statement asserted to be true. It differs from provable fact, such as “Baghdad was the largest city in the Abbasid Empire” or simple preference, such as “World history is more interesting than algebra.” Instead, in modern scholarship, a claim expresses a viewpoint with which thoughtful people can reasonably disagree. It forms the basis of an *argument*—reasoning backed up with evidence.

A claim is often a somewhat general statement that reflects a judgment shaped by the point of view of the writer. In some historical texts with a clear bias, the claim may simply be the author’s main idea, and it may be based more on opinion or overgeneralization than rigorous reasoning. In modern scholarship, however, claims should be grounded in facts and informed opinions. While claims are general, the evidence used to support them should be specific.

Reread the excerpt by the Muslim scholar Al-Beruni on page 30. Determine which sentence below best expresses his claim by looking for the most general statement. Then explain whether the claim is based on informed opinions or overgeneralizations.

1. [Hindus] are haughty, foolishly vain, self-conceited, and stolid.
2. The Hindus believe that there is no country but theirs, no nation like theirs, no kings like theirs, no religion like theirs, no science like theirs.
3. The present generation of Hindus is narrow-minded.
4. If you tell them of any science or scholar in Khorasan and Persia, they will think you to be both an ignoramus and a liar.

REFLECT ON THE CHAPTER ESSENTIAL QUESTION

1. In one to three paragraphs, explain how various beliefs and practices in South and Southeast Asia affected society and the development of states.

Developments in the Americas

*I love the song of the mockingbird,
Bird of four hundred voices,
I love the color of jade
And the intoxicating scent of flowers,
But more than all I love my brother, man!*

—Nezahualcoyotl (1402–1472), Aztec poet

Essential Question: What states developed in the Americas, and how did they change over time?

Following the decline of the Olmecs in Mesoamerica and the Chavin in the Andes, new civilizations, such as the Mayans, the Aztecs, and the Incas rose in the same regions. In addition, the first large-scale civilization in North America developed. As in Afro-Eurasia, several of these civilizations developed strong states, large urban centers, and complex belief systems. Current knowledge about these civilizations combines archaeological evidence, oral traditions, and writings by Europeans who came to the Americas after 1492. One poem recorded by the Spanish was the one above from an Aztec writer.

The Mississippian Culture

The first large-scale civilization in North America emerged in the 700s or 800s in what is now the eastern United States. Since it started in the Mississippi River Valley, it is known as the **Mississippian** culture. While other cultures built monumental buildings, Mississippians built enormous earthen mounds, some of which were as tall as 100 feet and covered an area the size of 12 football fields. The largest of these mounds is **Cahokia**, located in southern Illinois.

Government and Society The Mississippian society had a rigid class structure. A chief called the Great Sun ruled each large town. Below the Great Sun was an upper class of priests and nobles and a lower class of farmers, hunters, merchants, and artisans. At the bottom were slaves, who usually were prisoners of war. In general, women farmed and men hunted. The Mississippians had a **matrilineal society**, which means that social standing was determined by the woman's side of the family. For example, when the Great Sun died, the title passed not to his own son, but to a sister's son.



The Decline of Mississippian Civilization People abandoned Cahokia around 1450, and other large Mississippian cities by 1600. Historians disagree on why the Mississippian people moved. One theory posits that flooding or other weather extremes caused crop failures and the collapse of the agricultural economy needed to sustain the populations of the large cities. Another theory suggests that diseases introduced by the Europeans decimated the population.

Chaco and Mesa Verde

Soon after the rise of the Mississippian Civilization, various cultures emerged in what is now the southwestern United States. Living in a dry region, people developed ways to collect, transport, and store water efficiently. In addition, because of the climate, trees were small and scarce, so people had little wood to use to build homes. Two cultures became well-known for their innovations:

- The Chaco built large housing structures using stones and clay, some of which included hundreds of rooms.
- The people of Mesa Verde built multi-story homes into the sides of cliffs using bricks made of sandstone.

Both groups declined in the late 13th century as the climate became drier.

The Maya City-States

Mayan civilization reached its height between 250 and 900 C.E. Mayans stretched over the southern part of Mexico and much of what is now Belize, Honduras, and Guatemala. Most lived in or near one of the approximately 40 cities that ranged in size from 5,000 to 50,000 people. At its peak, as many as 2 million Mayans populated the region.

Mayan Government The main form of Mayan government was the **city-state**, each ruled by a king and consisting of a city and its surrounding territory. Most rulers were men. However, when no male heir was available or old enough to govern, Mayan women ruled. Wars between city-states were common. At times, city-states were overthrown. However, Mayans rarely fought to control territory. More often they fought to gain tribute—payments from the conquered to the conqueror—and captives to be used as **human sacrifices** during religious ceremonies.

Each Mayan king claimed to be descended from a god. The Mayans believed that when the king died, he would become one with his ancestor-god. The king directed the activities of the elite scribes and priests who administered the affairs of the state. Royal rule usually passed from father to son, but kings who lost the support of the people were sometimes overthrown. The common people were required to pay taxes, usually in the form of crops, and to provide labor to the government. City-states had no standing armies, so when war erupted, governments required citizens to provide military service. No central government ruled all Mayan lands, although often one city-state was the strongest in a region and would dominate its neighbors.



Mayan Religion, Science, and Technology The Mayans were innovative thinkers and inventors. For example, they incorporated the concept of zero into their number system, developed a complex writing system, and learned to make rubber out of liquid collected from rubber plants.

Mayan science and religion were linked through astronomy. Based on the calendar, priests decided when to celebrate religious ceremonies and whether to go to war. As a result, keeping an accurate calendar was very important. Although the Mayans had no telescopes, they made very precise observatories atop pyramids such as the one at Chichen Itza. Their observations enabled priests to design a calendar more accurate than any used in Europe at the time.

One task of priests, who could be either male or female, was to conduct ceremonies honoring many deities. Among the most important deities were those of the sun, rain, and corn. Mayans made offerings to the gods so prayers might be answered. War captives were sometimes killed as offerings. (Connect: Compare the political structures of the Mayans with the political structures of South Asia. See Topic 1.3.)



Source: Thinkstock

Mayan pyramids, with steps going up the side, were similar to Mesopotamian ziggurats. Similarly shaped architecture can be found from Spain and Algeria to China and Indonesia.

The Aztecs

The Aztecs, also known as the **Mexicas**, were originally hunter-gatherers who migrated to central Mexico from the north in the 1200s. In 1325, they founded their capital Tenochtitlán on the site of what is now Mexico City. Over the next 100 years, they conquered the surrounding peoples and created an empire that stretched from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean.

Capital City The Aztecs located Tenochtitlán on an island in the middle of a swampy lake in order to protect it from attacks. Tenochtitlán grew to almost 200,000 people, making it one of the largest cities in the world. To provide water for the city, they built a network of aqueducts. At the center of the city, the Aztecs built a pyramid that rose 150 feet into the air. This Great Pyramid and other pyramids, temples, and palaces were made of stone. On Lake Texcoco, the Aztecs built floating gardens called *chinampas* to increase the amount of space for food production. The Aztecs dug ditches to use lake water to irrigate their fields and to drain parts of the lake for more land.



Source: DEQ/G DAGLIORTI/ Granger, NYC

The construction of chinampas in Mesoamerica was one way people expanded the land on which to grow crops.

Government, Economy, and Society As the Aztecs conquered much of Mesoamerica, they developed a tribute system that insured their dominance. Conquered people were forced to pay tribute, surrender lands, and perform military service. Tribute included practical goods such as food, cloth, and firewood, as well as luxury items such as feathers, beads, and jewelry. The Aztecs allowed local rulers to stay in their positions to serve as tribute collectors. This allowed Aztec political dominance without direct administrative control. In exchange, the conquered people were extended Aztec protection.

To administer the empire, the Aztecs grouped city-states into provinces. They moved warriors and their families to each province's capital to make sure the province remained under Aztec control. In addition, an Aztec official was stationed in each capital to collect tribute from local officials.

Aztec government was a **theocracy**, which is rule by religious leaders. At the top was the emperor, known as the Great Speaker, who was the political ruler as well as a divine representative of the gods. Next in the social hierarchy were land-owning nobles, who also formed the majority of Aztec military leadership. Next in rank were scribes and healers, followed by craftspeople and traders. A special merchant class called *pochteca* traded in luxury goods. Below the traders were the peasants and soldiers. Aztec people could be enslaved as well, usually because they did not pay their debts or were being punished for crimes. Besides being used for labor, enslaved people were also offered up as sacrifices in religious ceremonies.

Religion The intricate and complex religion of the Aztecs was central to their society. They worshipped an ever-evolving pantheon of hundreds of deities, many of whom were considered to have both male and female aspects.



Worship among the Aztecs involved a great many rituals and feast days as well as human sacrifices. The Aztecs believed that the gods had sacrificed themselves in order to create the world—thus human sacrifice and blood-letting was a sort of repayment and atonement for human sin. Human sacrifice probably had a political component, in the sense that it demonstrated the great might of the Aztec Empire in dramatic fashion. The number of human sacrifices may never be known. Much of the information about Aztec society comes from Spanish invaders, who may have exaggerated the extent of human sacrifice in order to make the Aztecs seem more deserving of conquest.

Role of Women Women played an important role in the Aztec tribute system since they wove the valuable cloth that local rulers demanded as part of the regular tribute. As the demand for cloth tribute increased, an Aztec husband might obtain more than one wife in order to be able to pay the tribute. While most Aztec women worked in their homes, some became priestesses, midwives, healers, or merchants. A few noblewomen worked as scribes to female members of royal families. Therefore, at least these few women knew how to read and write.

The Decline of the Aztecs By the late 15th century, the Aztec Empire was in decline. The Aztecs' comparatively low level of technology—such as the lack of wheeled vehicles and pack animals—meant that agriculture was arduous and inefficient. The Aztecs' commitment to military victory and the constant desire for more human sacrifices induced the leadership to expand the empire beyond what it could reasonably govern. Finally, the extraction from conquered people of tribute and sacrifice victims inspired more resentment than loyalty. Because of this resentment, many tribes ruled by the Aztecs were ready to rebel if they thought they had an opportunity to succeed. This opportunity would come later, when Spaniards arrived in 1519.

The Inca

In 1438, a tribal leader who called himself **Pachacuti**, which means “transformer” or “shaker” of the earth, began conquering the tribes living near what is now Cuzco, Peru. His military victories, followed by those of his son, combined the small tribes into a full-fledged state, the **Incan Empire**. It extended from present-day Ecuador in the north to Chile in the south. By 1493, Pachacuti's grandson, Huayna Capac, ruled the empire. He focused on consolidating and managing the many lands conquered by his predecessors.

Government, Economy, and Society In order to rule the extensive territory efficiently, the Incan Empire was split into four provinces, each with its own governor and bureaucracy. Conquered leaders who demonstrated loyalty to the empire were rewarded. In contrast to the people living under the Aztecs, conquered people under the Inca did not have to pay tribute. Rather, they were subject to the **mit'a system**, mandatory public service. Men between the ages of 15 and 50 provided agricultural and other forms of labor, including the construction of roads.



Religion The name Inca means “people of the sun,” and Inti, the sun god, was the most important of the Incan gods. Inca rulers were considered to be Inti’s representative on the earth. As the center of two critical elements in Incan religion—honoring of the sun and royal ancestor veneration—the **Temple of the Sun** in Cuzco formed the core of Incan religion.

Royal ancestor veneration was a practice intended to extend the rule of a leader. Dead rulers were mummified and continued to “rule” as they had in life and were thought to retain ownership of their servants, possessions, and property. Thus, Incan rulers could not expect to inherit land or property upon assuming power. This practice was a partial motivator for the constant expansion of the empire.

Priests were consulted before important actions. To the Inca, the gods controlled all things, and priests could determine the gods’ will by studying the arrangement of coca leaves in a dish or by watching the movement of a spider. Priests diagnosed illnesses, predicted the outcome of battles, solved crimes, and determined what sacrifices should be made to which god. Serious events such as famines, plagues, and defeat in war called for human sacrifices—although scholars do not believe that human sacrifice was practiced with the same frequency as it probably was with the Aztecs.

Inca religion included some **animism**—the belief that elements of the physical world could have supernatural powers. Called *huaca*, they could be large geographical features such as a river or a mountain peak. Or, they could be very small objects such as a stone, a plant, or a built object, such as a bridge.

Achievements In mathematics, the Inca developed the *quipu*, a system of knotted strings used to record numerical information for trade and engineering and for recording messages to be carried throughout the empire. In agriculture, the Inca developed sophisticated terrace systems for the cultivation of crops such as potatoes and maize. The terraces utilized a technique called *waru waru*, raised beds with channels that captured and redirected rain to avoid erosion during floods and that stored water to be used during dry periods.

The Inca were especially good builders of bridges and roads. Using captive labor, they constructed a massive roadway system called the **Carpa Nan**, with some 25,000 miles of roads used mainly by the government and military. In a mountainous region, bridges were particularly important.

Decline Upon the arrival of Spanish conquistador Francisco Pizarro in 1532, the Incan Empire was in the midst of a civil war of succession after the death of emperor Huayna Capac. Some scholars believe that the civil war weakened the Incan army, making it easier for Pizarro’s forces to prevail. Others believe that other factors such as diseases introduced by the Europeans led to the decline. In 1533, the Spanish conquered the core of the empire, although outposts held out until 1572. Today, the Inca ruins at Machu Picchu are one of the most-visited sites in the world.



Continuities and Diversity

Historians have debated how closely Mesoamerican cultures are related to one another. Many argue that most are based on the Olmec civilization, since many later cultures adopted some of its features. For example, the Olmecs' feathered snake-god became fundamental in both the Mayan and Aztec religion. The subjects depicted on Olmec pottery have been found in pottery in other civilizations. The Olmecs' ritual sacrifices, pyramids, and ball courts were also continued in other cultures. Other historians argue that different cultures developed complex civilizations more or less independently.

Comparing Three American Civilizations			
	Maya	Aztec	Inca
Region	Mexico/Central America	Central Mexico	Andes in South America
Period	400–1517	1200–1521	1200–1533
Crops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corn • Beans • Squash 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corn • Beans • Squash • Tomatoes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corn • Cotton • Potatoes
Trade	• Moderate	• Extensive	• Limited
Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polytheistic • Some human sacrifice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polytheistic • Some human sacrifice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polytheistic • Some human sacrifice
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organized city-states, each with a king • Wars for tribute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Powerful king • Wars for captives • System of tribute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Powerful king • Wars for conquest • Mit'a system
Technology and Thought	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing • Step pyramids • Accurate calendar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step pyramids • Chinampas • Accurate calendar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waru waru • Roads • Masonry
Reasons for Decline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drought • Deforestation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European diseases • Subjects rebelled • Spanish attacks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European diseases • Civil war • Spanish attacks

KEY TERMS BY THEME		
<p>CULTURE: North America Mississippian matrilineal society</p> <p>TECHNOLOGY: Mound-Building Cahokia</p> <p>CULTURE: Mayan city-states</p>	<p>GOVERNMENT: Aztec Mexica theocracy</p> <p>RELIGION: Aztec human sacrifice</p>	<p>GOVERNMENT: Inca Pachacuti Incan Empire mit'a system</p> <p>TECHNOLOGY: Inca Carpa Nan</p> <p>RELIGION: Inca Temple of the Sun animism</p>



THINK AS A HISTORIAN: IDENTIFY EVIDENCE



Source: Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (neg. no. LC-USZC4-743)

The image to the left is an illustration from a reproduction of the 16th century Codex Magliabecchi, a primary source. The artist is depicting an Aztec sacrifice ritual that offers a human heart to the war god Huitzilopochtli.

Primary sources are those created during the historic period to which they refer. They are the first records of the subject being described and include first-hand or eyewitness reports. Secondary sources, in contrast, are those that analyze primary sources or other secondary sources to draw conclusions on a subject. Historians use both kinds of sources as evidence to support their arguments.

The Codex Magliabecchi from which the above illustration is taken is an ancient manuscript that offers historians a primary source with possible evidence about Aztec society. If you were developing an argument about the Aztec population's attitude toward human sacrifice, what evidence might you use from this illustration, and what argument might it support?

REFLECT ON THE TOPIC ESSENTIAL QUESTION

1. In one to three paragraphs, identify the states that developed in the Americas and explain how they changed over time.