The Inca Civilization
Historical Background

- Rise of the Inca Civilization:
- **A.D. 1200 - 1532**

**Early Inca:** 1200-1438
**Late Inca:** 1438 – 1532

- Manco Capac founded the capital of Cuzco (as he was instructed by deity Viracocha)
- 8 emperors succeeded him
The Early Inca
1200-1438

- 2nd, 3rd, 4th emperors not credited with any state building

- The 5th, 6th, and 7th emperors began a series of conquest but didn’t get too far.

- **The 8th emperor Vircacocha** was highly successful.
  - He formed alliances with neighboring kingdoms
  - Conquered a large territory surrounding Cuzco.
  - First ruler to title himself **Sapa Inca or “Supreme Inca”**
The Late Inca
1438-1532

- The Late Period marks the beginning of the Empire.
- Viracocha’s son Pachacuti developed policies to incorporate/integrate the people of conquered areas.
- Pachacuti’s son Topa Inca that led to the expansion of the Inca empire.
- He began conquering the north toward Ecuador and expanded as far south as Chile.
Decline by 1532

- Topa Inca’s son **Huayna Capac** continued expansion but he contracted a **disease that led to his death**.

- He was unable to name his successor so his two sons fought for imperial supremacy.

- The empire was eventually torn by **civil war**.

- The Spaniards led by Pizarro found the Incan state in this **political chaos** and so they were at an advantage.

- The civil war along with the Spanish conquest led to the decline of the Incan Empire.
Architecture
Great Masonry Skill

• The Incas are famous for their stonework.

• Huge beautiful walls of stones – each stone was perfectly and precisely cut that mortar was not needed.
Machu Picchu
• The Incas also built elaborate temples for their deities.

• The most important structure in Cuzco was **The Temple of the Sun** – dedicated to Inti, the Sun God.

• The exterior walls were covered with heavy **gold** plates. The inside was also coated with gold (thought to symbolize the sun).

• Inside the temple, you could find idols of gold and silver as well as the mummified bodies of past rulers and their wives.
The Inca Road System

- Very important to transport goods and information along the empire.
- Without good communication, the empire could collapse at any time.
- Stretched from Ecuador to Chile.
- Covers about 22,500 km (14,000 miles!)
- Included woven suspension bridges
- Could not be traveled without an imperial directive
- Mostly for political/administrative purposes
  - Government Messengers
  - Incan Armies and government officials
- Many *Tampus* scattered along the roads
The Incas adopted Quechua as their official language.

Quechua is still spoken by many indigenous populations all over South America.

There are many dialects.

Quechua is an oral language and there is a lack of written material.
The Quipu

- **The Quipu** - an elaborate recording system using **knots**.

- Sometimes the knots were **color coded** to mean different things.

- Though simple at first glance, the quipu could transmit **intricate messages**.

- **The quipu could record:**
  - Population including Birth/death rates
  - Food supply: harvest/livestock
  - Military strength/casualties/deaths
  - Dates / Important Events
Pottery and Weaving

- Symmetrical pottery
- Jars with faces
- Textiles
Entertainment and Dress

- Instruments
- Dances
- Simple attire
  - Men
  - Women
Precious Cloth

- The most important craft for the Incas was cloth

- Nobles wore elaborate tunics

- There was a specialized house Aqllahuasi ‘House of Chosen Women’ for the purposes of spinning and weaving cloth

- Inca rulers, govt. officials, and nobles wore stylized tunics that symbolized their status
Family

- Children given names during a haircutting ceremony

- Young children are incorporated into society – taught daily routines by parents

- The sons of the elite would have the privilege of going to *Yachahuasi*, or ‘teaching house’

- There, wise men would teach them matters related to: agriculture, warfare, arts and crafts, and how to read and record on the quipu strings.
Rites of Passage

- Boys and girls were formally initiated into adulthood by ceremonial rites
- Girls – private ceremony called a Quicochico:
  - Girls’ first menses
  - 3 day fast
  - Gift from mother (woven garment)
  - New expectations of women
- Boys received a collective public ceremony called a Huarochico
- Marriage – certain expectations of newlyweds
Origin Myths

- **Four Origin Myths**
  - Manco Capac was ordered by his father Inti and Mama Ocllo to look for a place to build an empire.
  - He was given a special rod
  - He was told he would find the right place if the rod sank into the soil – Cuzco

- **Important Deities:**
  - *Viracocha* – Creator of all things
  - *Inti* – Sun God, father of first emperor
  - *Chiqui Illapa* – thunder God, worshipped for rain
  - *Mama Quilla, Mother Moon*
  - *Pachamama, Mother Earth* - worshipped by farmers
Ideology
Inca Understanding of the Universe

- View of the cosmos:
  - World divided between earth and sky
    - Things of space
    - Things of the earth
  - Humans as the mediating element between earth and the sky
  - Also, world divided between all things male and all things female.

- Feminine aspects – moon, earth, sea, women
- Male aspects – sun, lightning, thunder, men

- Relations between men and women
  - Cooperative roles
Leadership & Divination

- **Imperial Hierarchy**
  - The Sapa Inca
    - the ‘supreme’ head of civil, religious & military branches of the state
  - His Council
  - Cuzco’s Highest Priest – Uillac Uma
  - Governors of the provinces (over 100!)
  - Curacas — local community leaders

  - Note: Sapa Inca’s main wife “Coya” had a respectful and powerful role as well.
  - Complementary role as the head of the Moon religion.
  - Ruled over the empire if ever her husband left Cuzco on a military campaign.
Social Stratification

- The Inca royalty in Cuzco “direct descendants of Int” thus ruled the empire by **divine right**

- All of society was divided into **three basic groups:**
  - **Collama** – royalty & loyal kin
  - **Payan** – servants with Incan roots
  - **Cayao** – commoners of the state not related to royalty
Ritual Sacrifices

- Capac Hucha – integrative ritual

- Each province would send young boys and girls ages 6-10, to Cuzco – traveled by the road system

- Symbolical child marriages

- Children sent back home – not allowed to travel the roads

- Sacrificed to the local deities on the Mt. tops

- For the local people, this promoted health and well-being and ensured fertility of the land

- For the state, this strengthened the ties btwn Cuzco and the provinces.
• Most farms were in the highlands
• Incas practiced terrace agriculture
• Three main staples: corn, dehydrated potato, pigweed (seeds)
• They domesticated llamas & guinea pigs
• Coastal Incan populations relied on seafood – lots of fishing!
• Sacred chicha beer derived from corn – used by priests for ceremonial purposes
Terraces in Machu Picchu
Coca Leaves
Medicinal Plant

- Coca – became a cash crop
- Mostly used by the Royalty, nobles to dull pain and hunger
- Heavily used by government messengers who suffered from altitude sickness.
- Also gave them the energy to travel the road systems by foot.
Social Control

• Several methods were needed to control the vast and diverse populations:

• They forced people to:
  • accept Incan Rule and Authority
  • accept Inti (Sun God) as their main deity
• Also, every adult male citizen was required to pay taxes in the form labor – mit’a

• Practiced Mitmaq – relocation of whole communities as a form of social control
  • (to break up rebellious groups & to assimilate)

• [Note: The State allowed some level of religious and individual freedoms]
The Mit’a System

- **Tax payment** was in the form of a labor tribute called mit’a.
- Required of adult male citizens
- Heavily organized and structured.
- Projects varied:
  - fields/mines
  - Construction of ceremonial/administrative buildings
  - Road system
- Inevitably, this system allowed for the rapid expansion of the empire.
Trade

• Unlike the market in Mesoamerican Civilizations, the market in Cuzco was relatively small and outside the city.

• **The state** had a central role in the collection and redistribution of goods.

• As a result, private trade and marketing occurred at very low levels of the empire.
Decline

• Civil War between two brothers

• Pizarro arrives during this chaos with 200 Spaniards
  *Inca population at that time: more than 6 million!

• His men are driven by greed and lust for gold

• Pizarro kidnaps Atahuallpa, holds him for ransom, and eventually executes him.

• 1532-1560 – Struggle for the Inca

• By 1560, Spaniards have dominant control of what is left of the great Incan Empire.