Chapter 14: Andean South America and the Inka Empire

# Chapter Summary [Copied from Olszewski 2019, Chapter 14]

* South American groups had subsistence economies that used domesticates by the Early/Middle Preceramic (Archaic) periods. These included native plants such as potatoes, peanuts, cotton, manioc, and quinoa, with maize and squash introduced from Mesoamerica. Domesticated animals eventually included llama, alpaca, and guinea pig.
* By the Late Preceramic period, a number of sites in the Pacific coastal areas of Ecuador and Peru had monumental architecture. This same trend occurred in the Andean highlands. Many of the features of these sites in both regions suggest ceremonial or ritual uses.
* During the Initial Period, sites in the coastal and highlands regions became much larger. Some features, such as U-shape architectural layouts for sites, likely indicate long-term continuity with earlier traditions. There is no evidence, however, that any one site or area exerted political control over large territories.
* Large pilgrimage sites that had the same sets of artistic motifs, such as jaguars, crocodiles, snakes, and eagles, were found in the northern Andes and the coastal areas during the Early Horizon period. Exotic goods in burials suggest social differences between individuals. These sites were part of the Chavín Horizon and appear to document a widely shared religious system rather than a political entity such as a state or kingdom.
* In the coastal region of southern Peru, the Nasca lines were constructed by exposing the lighter-colored sediment under the rock-strewn desert. These enormous geoglyphs included geometric designs, animals, fish, and birds, among other images. They may have been part of a ritual landscape that was walked by Nasca Culture peoples.
* The early part of the Middle Horizon period (sometimes called the Early Intermediate period) was characterized by the Moché in the coastal region. The southern part of this area appears to have been a state, whereas the northern coastal area may have been a set of smaller political entities. The Moché polities engaged in relatively frequent raiding of or warfare with each other, which was depicted in their imagery. Elite rulers were buried with lavish grave goods and sacrificed humans.
* The Middle Horizon saw the rise of two contemporary complex political systems in the Andean highlands, the Wari and the Tiwanaku Empires.
* The Wari Empire was located in the central Andean highlands and positioned itself to control lucrative trade routes. Wari iconography included an individual wearing a headdress and holding staffs. This image was similar to one from the earlier Chavín Horizon. The Wari were involved in raiding and warfare, with a number of instances known of sacrificed humans and human trophy heads.
* The Tiwanaku Empire was located in the southern-central Andean highlands and shared a border with the Wari Empire. It was centered in the area of Lake Titicaca. Unlike many other empires both contemporary and later, the Tiwanaku Empire was unusual because it was not a contiguous region. Rather, the Tiwanaku Empire strategy was to establish colonies far outside its borders. These colonies controlled strategic resources. Massive ceremonial complexes for public ceremonies were built at the capital (Tiwanaku), although they were never completely finished.
* During the succeeding Late Intermediate period, the coastal region was the home of the Chimú Empire. In the Andean highlands, there were no comparable political entities. Instead, there were many groups, including the Inka, who competed against one another.
* The Inka Empire emerged during the Late Horizon period in the Andean highlands. Before the arrival of the Spanish, it was the largest state-level polity anywhere in the Americas.
* Unlike a number of other early politically complex entities, the Inka did not have a written language. Instead, they used a system of knotted strings called the *khipu* as a memory device to keep track of information. Much of this was devoted to accounting records, but new evidence suggests that the system, in some cases, may be a logosyllabic record that includes stories.
* The Inka were excellent managers, which can be seen in the vast network of storehouses and the road systems that they built throughout the empire. They also controlled the trade and exchange networks within the empire and with regions outside its boundaries.
* Inka society was based on kinship and was highly stratified. The king, who was considered divine, enjoyed the highest rank, with members of his family and other royal elites involved in the government and administration of the empire. There also were non-Inka elites who held hereditary offices in the provinces within the empire and commoners who staffed nonhereditary offices in the administration and control of agricultural products, crafts, and taxes.
* The Inka, like many other South American groups, believed in the sacredness of the landscape. Their architecture, religious structures, and ideology reflected these features of their religious system.
* Archaeology provides much evidence about the Inka and their empire; however, we also have access to information about them from the records that the Spanish made. These not only describe what the Spanish saw and interpreted (which can include biases) but also include accounts given by the Inka to the Spanish.
* Whether the Inka Empire would have continued long term or whether other South American polities would have eventually succeeded the Inka are questions for which we will never know the answers. This is because the arrival of the Spanish and their subjugation of South American polities was a game-changer.

# Key Terms

**Casma Valley**: a Peruvian coastal valley system with several large sites during the Initial Period. These sites have U-shaped architecture, pyramids, plazas, residential areas, and military theme images. The imagery may represent stories from myths.

**Chan Chan**: the capital of the Chimú Empire in the northern coastal region of Peru during the Late Intermediate period. The kings ruled from this administrative and ceremonial center, which controlled trade and exchange routes. The city had U-shaped architecture, large pyramids, and palace compounds for royal elites.

**Chavín de Huántar**: this site in the northern Andean highlands of South America represents one of the best known of the Chavín Horizon pilgrimage centers. Its architecture includes U-shaped complexes with sunken courts/plazas, large terraced platforms, and platform mounds. Exotic goods and craft workshops suggest different social classes.

**Chavín Horizon**: a widely shared set of imagery found in the northern Andean highlands and the Pacific coastal region of South America during the Early Horizon period. Examples of images used are jaguars/felines, snakes, crocodiles, eagles, bats, and crabs. It is interpreted as a representing a probable religious tradition.

**Chimú Empire**: a complex political entity during the Late Intermediate period. It was situated in the northern coastal region of Peru and ruled by a dynasty of kings.

**Cuzco**: the capital city of the Inka Empire in the Andean highlands of South America. The Inka considered it to be the center of the world. It had impressive temple, pyramid, fortress, and plaza areas, as well as incorporating significant sacred places in the landscape. Non-Inka ethnicities were not allowed to live within the city boundaries.

**El Paraíso**: a Late Preceramic period site situated inland from the coastal region in Peru in South America. It has a large U-shaped architectural layout interpreted as a ceremonial complex. The central portion of the U-shaped area was a large plaza.

**Huacas of Moché**: this site was the Moché center in the Moché Valley of Peru in South America during the Early Intermediate (Early Middle Horizon) period when the Moché states were present. Its monumental architecture includes two large terraced pyramids with ramps leading to the top. These are interpreted as areas where ritual sacrifices of war captives occurred. Other features of the city include plazas, residences, craft workshops, and cemeteries.

**Huánuco Pampa**: an administrative city built to the north of the Inka capital at Cuzco in the Andean highlands of South America. Huánuco Pampa has a large central plaza where feasting rituals appear to have occurred. Such activities were important in helping integrate the many different ethnic groups that lived within the boundaries of the Inka Empire.

***Khipu***: a recording system used by the Inka during the period of the Inka Empire in South America. It was a complex set of twisted and knotted strings of different colors that primarily was used to keep track of material goods, agricultural products, and taxes owed and paid.

**Kotosh**: a Late Preceramic site in the Andean highlands of Peru in South American. It has 100 temples, many of which are superimposed on each other (that is, built on top of each other).

**“Kotosh Religious Tradition”**: a shared set of architectural features and images (for example, a serpent painted on a staircase leading into a temple) in the Andean highlands of South America that are interpreted as a widely shared set of religious beliefs.

**Machu Picchu**: this site was part of the estate of the Inka ruler, Pachakuti, in the Andean highlands of South America. It was used as a royal residence away from the capital at Cuzco.

**Moché State**: situated in the northern coastal area of Peru in South America. There was a southern Moché state and either a series of valley-based northern states or perhaps a single northern state during the early Middle Horizon (Early Intermediate) period.

**Nasca Lines**: enormous figures (geometrics, animals, fish, lines, birds, spiders, other lines) created on the desert plateau surface by the Nasca Culture (100 BC to AD 700) in the coastal area of southern Peru.

**Pampa de las Llamas-Moxeke**: an Initial Period site in the Casma Valley of Peru. It had pyramids, plazas, administrative buildings, and a residential area. Artistic designs included people holding two-headed snakes with forked tongues.

**Real Alto**: a Late Preceramic (Valdiva period) site in coastal Ecuador (South America) with evidence for maize, squash, and manioc agriculture. Cotton also was grown.

**Sipán**: this early Middle Horizon (Early Intermediate) period Moché center in the northern part of the Moché states region of coastal Peru (South America) yielded a rich burial of an individual identified as the “Lord of Sipan.” In addition to exotic goods such as copper sandals, gold jewelry, and feathered ornaments, he also was buried with several sacrificed animals and humans.

**Site 80**: an Archaic period site in coastal Ecuador in South America, where hunter–gatherer–forager groups exploited both marine and land food resources. They also had small gardens where they grew domesticated maize and squash.

**Tawantinsuyu**: the Inka name for their empire in South America. It translates as “land of the four quarters.”

**Tiwanaku**: the capital city of the Tiwanaku Empire in South America in the Middle Horizon period, it was situated near Lake Titicaca in the Andean highlands. The city had large ceremonial complexes (unfinished) with temples and pyramids, where large-scale feasting rituals took place.

**Tiwanaku Empire**: a Middle Horizon period politically complex polity in the southern central Andean highlands of South America. The territory it controlled was not contiguous, but consisted of a central region near Lake Titicaca and colonies in more remote areas. The colonies controlled strategic resource regions.

**Valdiva Period**: an interval during the Late Perceramic period in coastal Ecuador (South America). Some sites have evidence for ritual or ceremonial constructions (mounds and plazas).

**Wari**: the capital of the Wari Empire in the Andean highlands of South America during the Middle Horizon period. It has a central stone walled section with restricted access points. This is thought to be an area only for elite members of society.

**Wari Empire**: a Middle Horizon period complex political entity situated in the central Andean highlands of Peru (South America). It controlled an area about 1300 kilometers (807 miles) long North-South, and its iconography has links back to the earlier Chavín Horizon.

**Zaña Valley**: a region in the Andes Mountains in Peru in South America. Archaic period sites here have evidence for hunter–gatherer–forager groups who grew cotton, coca, and peanuts and who had begun to invest in the building of small, village-like settlements.