The Pre-Columbian Empires of Central and South America

The Inca and the Aztecs
Thought Question

What types of institutions and infrastructure would you need to develop in order to control a large empire?
The Incan Empire
Incan Governmental Structure

- Divine Kings
  - Owned all land in empire
    - Divided it out among aristocracy
- Aristocrats
  - Access to land and possessions
  - Hereditary titles
Ruling the Empire

- Developed system of roads
  - Allowed connections between parts of empire
- Incorporated conquered peoples into empire
- Used record keeping system
  - Quipu
    - Series of strings with knots in them
Incan Religious Structure

- Natural based religion
  - Inti – Primary Deity (Sun God)
- Use of sacrifices
  - Llamas and Guinea Pigs
    - Humans in extreme cases
- Priests
  - Devoted to worshiping gods
Peasant life in the Incan Empire

• Lived in ayllu
  – Small rural communities
  – Consisted of a couple families
  – Communal

• Worked land of aristocrats
  – Men did manual labor
  – Women produced crafts
The Aztec Empire
Establishing the Empire

• Militant Society
  – Migrated to area around Lake Texcoco around 1325 C.E.
    • Had complete control of area by 1434 C.E.
  – Fierce warriors
    • Used defeated in Human Sacrifices
Religious Structure

• Over 120 deities
  – Each city had a patron (similar to the Greeks)

• Three major cults
  – Fertility
  – Creator
  – Warfare

• Sacrifices
  – Gods required blood
Social Stratification

Class Society

King or High Priest (ahaw)

Council (Priesthood) - often part of the Royal Family

Nobles

Merchants & Artisans

Commoners - Farmers (and Slaves)
Social Stratification

- The Great Speaker
  - Selected from sons of nobility
- Prime Minister
  - Ran matters of state
- Advisory Council
  - Rulers of conquered cities
  - Allowed to stay in charge as long as they paid tax
Social Stratification

- Nobility
  - chosen from *calpulli*
    - Ancient ruling families of Aztecs
- Peasants
  - Farmers
    - Tied to the land like feudalistic society