

NATION PROFILE: THE INCA (1)

The Inca created a major civilization in South America. Their empire extended almost 2,000 miles from Southern Columbia, Bolivia, and Ecuador to central Chile and in the Andes Mountains. After fighting and defeating many neighboring people, they became the rulers of one of the longest lasting empires in history (1200–1500 C.E.)

The Inca had an excellent system of roads and bridges. They built thousands of miles of roads over difficult rocky land to protect and control their empire.



Messengers carried news from all the major towns. Armies used the roads to reach dangerous areas quickly.

Because of the vast size of their territory, there were many different people in the Inca Empire. Each had their own customs and by law had to wear their own unique style of costume. This way they could be identified easily. However, all Incas (both men and women) wore large ear ornaments.

The organization of the Inca society was pyramid-shaped. At the top was the **Sapa Inca**, the emperor. Below him were the governors who were counselors to Sapa Inca. Below these were the local rulers: temple priests, architects, and military

commanders. Next were artisans and army captains who were leaders of 10–50 families. At the very bottom were the ordinary people—farmers and herders—who paid taxes to the higher classes. This system kept order. Individuals also passed information from one level to the next within the pyramid.

Many Inca were farmers and weavers. In the mountains where the land was steep, they cut terraces to make flat fields. They built canals to direct water down the slopes to dry areas. They grew different crops at different heights on the terraces. Fruits and vegetables like squash and tomatoes grew in the lower levels. Corn, white and sweet potatoes, peanuts, coca, etc., grew in the higher levels. They used a **digging stick** for planting. They raised guinea pigs, ducks, llamas, alpacas, and dogs. The Inca made their clothing from llama wool and cotton.



The Incas were also skilled engineers and architects. They built **stone cities** on high steep slopes in the mountains. They used hand tools made of **bronze**. Their buildings were so well built they are still standing today despite many earthquakes. They built their houses using stone or adobe mud. The houses had thick

NATION PROFILE: THE INCA (2)

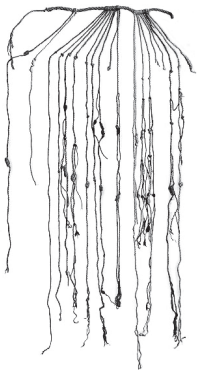
walls and thatched roofs. There were no windows and just one room. There was little furniture since Incas spent most of the time outside.

Most Incas had to pay taxes in form



of food, cloth, and/or work. For their tax payments they received some benefits. Old people, widows, and orphans were cared for. Food and goods from large storehouses were supplied if needed.

The Inca had a system to record events.



It was **quipu**—a special way of arranging knotted and colored strings. Only trained people called **quipucamayocs** could read them. They also passed their history through stories, songs, and poems.

The Inca believed in **many gods**. They thought the gods

helped increase crops and animal herds. To please the gods, they held important religious festivals. They made offerings of animal and sometimes human sacrifice.



There were large mines of **copper,**

gold, and silver in the Inca territory. They kept these mined metals in large storehouses. Often they used copper, gold, and silver to make jewelry, ornaments, and statues of their gods. This rich supply

of precious metals attracted the Spanish explorers. The Spanish conquerors forced the Inca to become **slaves**. Many died from overwork and disease.

