

South american latin culture and its archaeology



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South America is characterized by its rich diversity of cultural heritage all throughout its region that presents its captivating civilization and history prior to the arrival of the Spaniards in that place. Some of the famous ancient cradle of ethnicities that emerged in this part of the world was Aztec, Maya, Toltec, and Olmec in the northern part, while the southern region contained cultures of Inca, Moche, Nasca, and Tiwanaku.

Despite their richness of cultures, most of these people's way of life had vanished, leaving only few traces that remain today because of the Spanish invasion of the land that infused western culture including religion and language, while exploiting their mineral resources for Spain. Inca Civilization
The Inca civilization is believed to have developed thousands of years ago but because there were no traces of history, historians could not detect its exact origin.

However, the remains that serve as the only historic record used today are through oral tradition, stone, pottery, gold and silver, jewelry, and woven of the people. Inca civilization flourished as most of the European countries were, during that period. It had evolved as an empire, which they called 'Land of the Four Quarters' that lasted for almost hundred of years covering key cities of the region such as Ecuador, Peru as the center of the civilization, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina (Crystalinks. om). It was even recognized as " the largest nation on Earth and... the largest native state to have existed in the Western hemisphere" because of its riches and sophistication in terms of advanced way of life (Crystalink. com). The Incans lived in mountainous Andes range and had developed an incredible system of roads, which was as long as the South American Pacific coast. The roads

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were carefully built with engineering and architectural skills that exist in good condition until today.

Incans were about six million during its peak composed mainly of clans of families, which they called ayllus who lived together in one house made of stone and mud. Overall, Incan empire was ruled by Sapa Inca and his wife who lived in a palace and the high priest, the army commander, and the regional army commander, all identified as Apus, were among the recognized leaders of the empire. The central government was based in Cuzco, the richest city in the New World. The city had its own metalworkers, carpenters, and crafters who build edifices, temples, and other buildings.

For them, gold and silvers were used for ornament purposes usually for decoration in walls, garden, temples, edifices, and paved roads. Foods and clothing were the form of payment made to the laborers of the land. There were two main reasons for the defeat of Inca Empire in the battle against Spain: the infectious diseases brought by the invaders that killed about one-third of its population, and the treacherous tactic employed by the Spanish against Atahualpa, the last king of Inca.

Their defeat caused the lost of their culture and wealth, and change in civilization as the people began to adopt the new way of life. Moche Civilization Moche civilization was one of the earliest and largest of the pre-Columbian America, which began to exist in the eight century until the six hundred century BC. Most of its people were rulers, warriors, artisans, and farmers. They lived down the Northern Peruvian Coastline wherein they

settled along the lower river valley, which was rich with clay, and metals, that enable them to produce wide-ranging artistic cultures and traditions.

Unfortunately, these cultures and traditions were the sole remainder with which to understand the Moche Culture as no written records were kept that would further help to understand their cultures. However, according to a web article entitled Moche most of the historical and cultural records of the Moche can be traced within their expressive artistic styling, which represents ceremony, daily life, and mythology. It depicts everything about their society from sexual acts to sick humans, warriors, deities, and so forth.

Archeological findings suggest that their common medium was clay although copper, silver, and gold were also in used. Archeological discoveries revealed that standard ceramic artwork and pottery existed during the Moche period such as in the pictures at the end of this paper. According to the article, these artworks and potteries were found in the numerous gravesites, which suggest that they were used for ceremonial functions. Archeological findings further suggest that Moche burial site nearer the Huancas (Temple) were lavishly furnished with such artworks and potteries indicating their high social status.

Other purpose of the pottery aside from burial functions was for drinking bottles such as the picture presented in section D. Raine, Speridon, and Gastellum mentioned the collapse of the kingdom, which due mainly on the natural disasters that struck the land, although some source cited that the land had experienced thirty-years of drought and thirty years rains. Though it was not really clear what was the reason of the abrupt decline of the

Moche culture, but web article noted that it was the rise of Chimu culture, which was perhaps connected, to the Incan people. Tiwanaku Civilization

Tiwanaku civilization flourished in the south central Andes between ca. AD 400-1000 after coexisting in the formative period with other indigenous people such as Pukara, the Sillumoco, and Chiripa. The peak population of this people was about 20-40, 000. According to Alexei Vranich, Tiwanaku was situated in a Bolivian highland some 13, 000 feet above sea level. Tiwanaku occupied the middle of the valley marking the center of the Tiwanaku city. Vranich noted that dense monuments of ash and pottery and other piece of arts reveals that a huge population at one time lived in these areas.

Artifacts and relics found in these areas according to archeologist were mostly religious indicating that the Tiwanaku civilization was peace loving as evidenced by their coexistence with other group of peoples during this period. Tiwanaku traced its beginning at approximately around 200 BC as a tiny agricultural village as these people were engaged in agriculture, having irrigated fields, terraced fields, pasture, and cocha farming. Their extensive farming aided by a canal filled with water has led this people to flourish not only economically but in their population as well.

Thus in AD 600- 800, this community has grown to urban ratio becoming a significant regional power in the southern Andes. Unlike the Moche, Tiwanaku's architecture is characterized by large stone of excellent workmanship as can be seen in the pictures section E and F at the end page. Among the contribution of the Tiwanaku civilizations were the construction of

their monumental temples, the outstanding structure of the Akapana pyramid built above the existing geological configuration.

It envelops 16 square meters at its base with sunken oval area, which according to some archeologist was used, for water storage. The remains of the Kalasasaya temple, which were located north of the pyramid, are seen in the section F in the pictures. The Nasca People Naska was actually a Peruvian desert with a mysterious picture of a desert lines covering an area of about 530 square meters. Situated in the Ica and Nasca valley, the ancient Nasca culture subjugated a large part of southern Peru between 100 BC and AD 700. According to F. Townsend (2004), these people lived in a dry desert environment.

This people, like the Moche, and other indigenous people during these times practiced agriculture and utilized marine and other natural resources to live. Townsend pointed out that Nasca activities were dedicated to the spiritual powers that controlled the nature's forces. One of the Characteristic of this people was the practice of ritual beheading as depicted in their arts in section G of the pictures. The Nasca people revered birds such as condor and pelican, believing that they are the manifestation of the mountain gods as depicted in the other picture of the Nasca art in section G.

As many archeologist were puzzled by the Nasca lines, there were attempt to explain the reason of the extinction of this people was the big drought that happened on this area. According to Jack Mc Clintock a number of scholars are persuaded water is the key to solving the Nasca lines, which they associated to the people's quest to commune to the mountain deities

for water. The Nasca lines were the remains of the vanished culture that are now coming into light through the archeological discoveries.