

Brazil political system
that existed in the



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Brazil and the Andean Highlands The similarities between the societies found in Brazil and those found in the Andean Highlands are relatively few. The Andean Highland dwellers were mostly Incas, found in greatest numbers in Peru. The inhabitants of Brazil were mainly concentrated around the Amazon River Basin area. The Andean Highland people consisted in large part of the Inca civilization (the name of the ruling family, not an ethnicity). However, the geographic location of these societies is not the only disparity that exist between these groups of people.

Perhaps the most striking of the differences is the characteristics of these societies and the advancements, or lack of, that were achieved in each. With each group having distinct characteristics in the way of life, government, and labor, this affected the colonizing groups in significantly different ways and ultimately led to the prosperity or decline of the colony at that specific time. The forms of rule in the Amazon Basin and the Andean Highlands were of great contrast.

At the time of European discovery of the New World, there existed very little political hierarchy in the areas of the Amazon River Basin. At most, and this was fairly uncommon; there was a local tribal chief. However, the government did not extend any further. There was no network of higher ruling. This may have stemmed from the fact that villages were scattered around the Amazon, divided by dense forest. The tribal chiefs would make some village decisions and be a liaison with other local villages. Still, territorial war was a major aspect of the Amazon Basin dwellers' lives. This is in sharp contrast to the political system that existed in the Inca civilization.

The Inca had a profoundly intricate political system that was based on rule that was inherited through bloodlines. There were local, regional, and empire ruling leaders. These statesmen demanded tribute from the lower classes and also force labor upon them, but they did provide services for the good of the people and the empire.

The leaderships had relatively few physical duties other than overseeing the domain that he ruled. Territorial war was also a characteristic of the Inca society. This society has often been labeled either a socialist empire or a welfare state.

Specifically, the people of the Amazon Basin lived in small villages around the Amazon River and relocated often (when the soil became fallow). They were a tribal society maintained through shifting agriculture and hunting and gathering. The staple of their diet was of the tuber variety, a kind of potato.

The society had no classes that differentiated between the rich and poor because the people had very little or no private property. However, gift giving was very common in this culture. The Inca had communities that ranged all the way from small villages to thriving cities. The main city of political and civil culture was called Cuzco. This is where the ruler of the entire empire lived. Much like the dwellers of the Amazon Basin, communities were often formed among groups of relatives, which were known as ayllu.

In contrast with those of Brazil, classes divided the Incas, and individuals did own property. The lower classes were essentially often used as slave labor and they also paid taxes and tribute to their local and regional rulers through

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food, materials, and general gifts that were not reciprocated. Land and human labor power was a main source of wealth in the Inca civilization. The types of labor that took place were vastly different between these societies. In Brazil, the labor was very much communal. Everyone worked together for the good of the village and its people. They worked together to build dwellings as well as for the cultivation and care of the crops. They used a slash-and-burn style of farming and relocated once the nutrients of the land were used up.

The Incas were much more advanced. In many areas, labor specialization was common, especially in the large densely populated areas like Cuzco. Many of the people were forced to work building or repairing paved roads, irrigation channels, fortresses, and mines in a system called mita. The Inca took part in labor-intensive agriculture. They employed much more advanced agricultural production methods also.

They developed irrigation systems, terracing, and other advanced agricultural techniques. With the arrival of the European colonists, many of these existing institutions and practices were destroyed and replaced with the Europeans' system of rule and social customs. However, these clashed with what was practiced before the arrival of the Europeans and this soon became evident. There was much turbulence and revolt against the European ways. In the Andean Highlands, the Incas' power was totally lost to the Spanish through force. Every pre-existing class was driven into slavery.

The Spanish also employed the ruling-class' system of mita to suit their purposes. The lower classes were already used to this type of treatment from

the ruling class, but the upper classes resisted and were forced to somewhat reform their policies on the strict ruling of the Incas. The Amazon Basin dwellers essentially suffered the same fate as the Incas.

Captaincies were developed along the Atlantic coast of Brazil and the indigenous people of Brazil were forced into working there. There were many attacks against these captaincies by the indigenas, which strained their success. Also, these indigenous people were not used to organized work that the captaincies used. Many of the workers tried to escape or commit suicide. This eventually led to their replacement with African slaves. Because of pre-existing conditions, European colonists were forced to deal with enigmas that were ingrained in the culture.

Force alone could not override the conditioning of hundreds or thousands of years. This called for the Spaniards and Portuguese to amend their methods of governing the people of this foreign land. Bibliography Hansis, Robert. *The Latin Americans: Understanding Their Legacy*. New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1997.

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