

## DBQ 9: Civilizations of the Americas

### **Historical Context:**

Between 300 and 1500, three advanced civilizations developed in Central and South America. Ruins from the Mayan civilization remain even today in southern Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras. The Aztecs, who conquered most of Mexico, built a highly-developed civilization in the 1400's. At the same time, the Incas were building an empire in Peru.

◆ **Directions:** The following question is based on the accompanying documents in Part A. As you analyze the documents, take into account both the source of the document and the author's point of view. Be sure to:

1. Carefully read the document-based question. Consider what you already know about this topic. How would you answer the question if you had no documents to examine?
2. Now, read each document carefully, underlining key phrases and words that address the document-based question. You may also wish to use the margin to make brief notes. Answer the questions which follow each document.
3. Based on your own knowledge and on the information found in the documents, formulate a thesis that directly answers the question.
4. Organize supportive and relevant information into a brief outline.
5. Write a well-organized essay proving your thesis. The essay should be logically presented and should include information both from the documents and from your own knowledge outside of the documents.

**Question:** *How advanced were the Mayan, Aztec, and Incan civilizations? What were their major accomplishments?*

◆ **Part A:** Examine each document carefully and answer the questions that follow.

### **Document 1**

This Mayan pyramid temple in Tikal was the tallest structure in the Americas until the twentieth century.



(continued)

Document-Based Assessment  
Activities for Global History Classes



## DBQ 9: Civilizations of the Americas *(continued)*

Describe the significance of Mayan architecture evidenced in this temple at Tikal. \_\_\_\_\_

### Document 2

This is a glyph from the Mayan calendar.



What is the significance of this glyph (symbol)? \_\_\_\_\_

### Document 3

When he arrived in 1519, the Spanish conqueror Hernán Cortés described the magnificent Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán with these words.

The city has many squares where markets are held and trading is carried on. There is one square . . . where there are daily more than 60,000 souls, buying and selling, and where are found all the kinds of merchandise produced in these countries, including food products, jewels of gold and silver, lead, brass, copper, zinc, bones, shells, and feathers.

Why was Cortés impressed when he arrived in Tenochtitlán in 1519? \_\_\_\_\_

### Document 4

This description of farming in the Incan empire in 1539 was provided by Garciasco de la Vega, a son of an Incan princess and a Spanish explorer.

As soon as the Incan ruler had conquered any kingdom and set up his government, he ordered that the farmland used to grow corn be extended. For this purpose, he ordered irrigation channels to be constructed. The engineers showed great cleverness and skill in supplying water for the crops, since only scattered sections of the land could grow corn. For this reason, they endeavored to increase its fertility as much as possible.

What engineering technique was described by this sixteenth-century author? \_\_\_\_\_

Why was this a significant achievement? \_\_\_\_\_

*(continued)*



New Imperialism

## DBQ 9: Civilizations of the Americas (continued)

### Document 5

This map shows the Incan Empire in 1565.  
How did the Incan government unite its empire in the Andes Mountains?

---

---

---

What is the significance of this accomplishment?

---

---

---

### Document 6

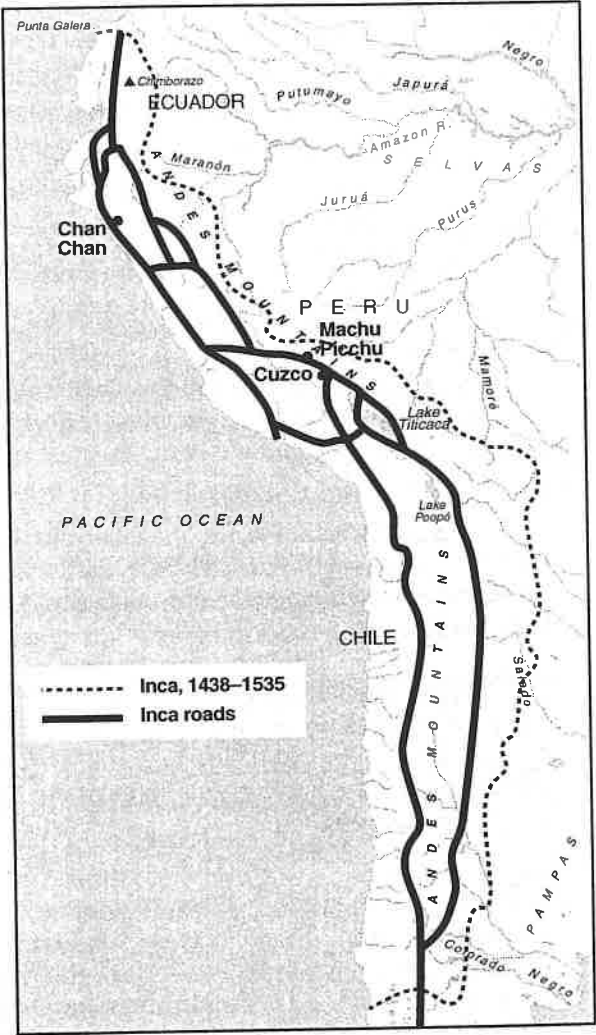
This photo of the ruins of Machu Picchu provides evidence of the superior building design and farming techniques of the Inca in Peru.



What specific farming and building techniques were used by the Incas? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---



### ◆ Part B—Essay

*How advanced were the Mayan, Aztec, and Incan civilizations? What were their major accomplishments?*