



Ancient Civilizations of the Americas

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In ancient North and South America extraordinary civilizations rose, flourished, and fell. The Mayan pyramids and the ruins of Machu Picchu in Peru and Teotihuacan in Mexico remain a testament to these cultures. *Ancient Civilizations of the Americas* tells this remarkable story--beginning when humans first ventured from Asia to Alaska more than 13,000 years ago and ending with the Indian Wars of the nineteenth century. The book traces the migration of people across North and South America, and investigates the impressive artistic and architectural achievements that followed. Civilizations emerged with well-established religions and economies, proven agricultural methods and trade routes, and craftsmen capable of producing gold, silver, and pottery artifacts of sublime beauty. By 500 BC sophisticated societies had developed as far south as Peru and by AD 500 these cultures, including the Maya of modern Mexico and Guatemala, had reached an age of maturity. The late fourteenth century saw the rise of the great imperial powers of the Aztecs in Mexico and the Inca in the Andes -- both highly organized societies with efficient bureaucracies, capable of casting the net of imperial rule over huge swathes of territory. In the end, however, the civilizations of the Americas faced a challenge different from any they had met before: the arrival of European colonists, starting with the Spanish conquistadors in the sixteenth century. Much was swept away in the often brutal encounters that followed. Yet much also survived -- ancient crafts and customs and the remains of engineering and architectural marvels, all speaking unforgettably of these cultures' astonishing skills and organization.

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