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Early Civilizations in the Americas

Sonia G. Benson



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The three-volume "Early Civilizations in the Americas Reference Library" provides a comprehensive overview of the history of the regions of the American continents in which two of the world's first civilizations developed: Mesoamerica (the name for the lands in which ancient civilizations arose in Central America and Mexico) and the Andes Mountains region of South America (in present-day Peru and parts of Bolivia, northern Argentina, and Ecuador). In both regions, the history of civilization goes back thousands of years.

"Early Civilizations in the Americas: Almanac" presents the story of the development of early American civilizations from the earliest known societies to the Spanish conquest---the dates, locations, sites, history, arts and sciences, religions, economies, governments, and eventual declines of the great ancient American civilizations. Volume 1 features an overview of ancient civilization in general and a brief summary of modern theories about the earliest immigrants and early life in the Americas. The remainder of the volume focuses on the rise of the Andean civilization from the early urban centers to the Inca empire. Volume 2 focuses on the rise of the Mesoamerican civilizations from the Olmecs through the Aztecs.

"Early Civilizations in the Americas: Biographies and Primary Sources" presents a collection of twenty-three biographies and primary sources---both text and photographs of artifacts---that provide detailed and focused views of the people of the early American civilizations, the artifacts they left behind, and the sources upon which the history of the early American civilizations are based. The volume is divided into three chapters: the Incas, the Mayasand their Ancestors, and the Aztec Empire. Each chapter is arranged loosely by topic and chronology. The biographies include Inca emperor Pachacutec, Maya king Pacal, and Aztec emperor Montezuma II. The primary sources feature artifacts such as the Inca quipu, or knotted counting cords, the Maya sacred calendar, and the Aztec Sun Stone. Also included are excerpts from the memoirs and histories compiled by indigenous writers and Spanish missionaries and conquerors in the decades following the conquest.

For table of contents, sample pages or other volume specific information see the entry for the "Almanac" or "Biographies and Primary Sources."

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