

## 2.1 The Inca

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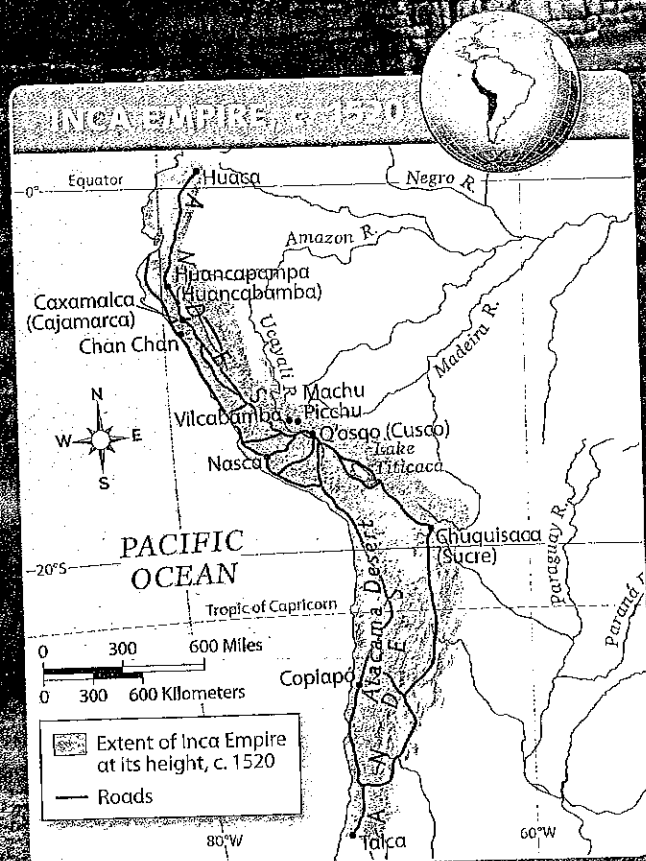
**Main Idea** The Inca ruled a vast empire in a difficult, mountainous environment.

The Inca Empire in South America stretched along the Pacific coast. The empire included parts of present-day Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina. From 1438 until the Spanish conquest in the 1530s, the Inca Empire was one of South America's largest and most advanced civilizations.

### Workings of the Empire

The Inca built the capital of their empire in Cuzco, in what is now Peru. Inca government and society were highly organized. The emperor—called the Sapa Inca—was considered a **descendant**, or a relative of, the sun god, Inti. At its high point, the empire included 80 provinces and about 12 million people.

Within Inca society, families were organized into groups based on **kinship**, or blood relationship, and common land ownership. Inca married within their kinship groups. They also worked together and shared land and resources. The leader of each family worked for the empire for a few months of the year as builders, farmers, craftsmen, or foot soldiers.



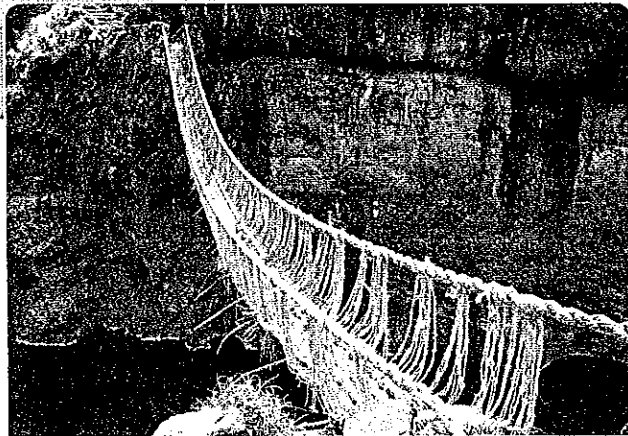
**Critical Viewing** The ancient ruins of Machu Picchu are located in Peru, at an elevation of 7,710 feet. Based on what is shown in the photo, what do you think might have been the challenges of building a city at high elevations?

## Achievements of the Inca

The Inca **utilized**, or made practical use of, their advanced engineering skills to adapt to the mountainous environment. For example, the Inca farmed on **terraced** fields, or flat fields cut into slopes or mountainsides. They also built irrigation canals to water their crops because the climate was arid.

The Inca adapted to their mountainous surroundings in other ways. They built suspension bridges using vines and wood. A **suspension bridge** is a bridge used to cross canyons or water. The Inca also built a system of roads that helped keep the empire unified.

Another example of the Inca's engineering skills is **Machu Picchu** (MAH choo PEE choo), built in the 1400s. The Inca built this complex city on a mountain by constructing giant walls, terraces, sloping ramps, and steep stairways.



**Visual Vocabulary** Suspension bridges are bridges used to cross canyons or water. This rebuilt suspension bridge in Peru is modeled after the bridges the Inca built.

Some archaeologists believe it served as a royal estate. Today it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site because of its historical and archaeological significance.

By the 1530s, the empire faced internal problems that included a weak economy and civil war. A much smaller but better-equipped Spanish force conquered the Inca in 1532. Today, the descendants of the Inca, the Quechua, live in the Andes of Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia.

### Before You Move On

**Make Inferences** In what ways did the Inca maintain control of their empire?

#### ONGOING ASSESSMENT

### PHOTO LAB

- Analyze Visuals** Based on the photos and text, in what ways did the Inca utilize advanced engineering skills in their empire?
- Describe** How would you describe the Inca Empire based on the photo of Machu Picchu?
- Monitor Comprehension** What factors made it possible for a small force of Spanish conquerors to overcome the large Inca Empire?

