I. Classic-Era Culture and Society in Mesoamerica, 200-900

A. Teotihuacan

1. Teotihuacan was a large Mesoamerican city at the height of its power in 450-600. The city had a population of 125,000 to 150,000 inhabitants and was dominated by religious structures, including pyramids and temples where human sacrifice was carried out.

2. The growth of Teotihuacan was made possible by forced relocation of farm families to the city and by agricultural innovations, including irrigation works and chinampas (“floating gardens”) that increased production and thus supported a larger population.

3. Apartment-like stone buildings housed commoners, including the artisans who made pottery and obsidian tools and weapons for export. The elite lived in separate residential compounds and controlled the state bureaucracy, tax collection, and commerce.

4. Teotihuacan appears to have been ruled by alliances of wealthy families rather than by kings. The military was used primarily to protect and expand long-distance trade and to ensure that farmers paid taxes or tribute to the elite.

5. Teotihuacan collapsed around 650. The collapse may have been caused by mismanagement of resources and conflict within the elite, or as a result of invasion.
B. The Maya

1. The Maya were a single culture living in modern Guatemala, Honduras, Belize, and southern Mexico, but they never formed a politically unified state. Various Maya kingdoms fought each other for regional dominance.

2. The Maya increased their agricultural productivity by draining swamps, building elevated field and terraced fields, and by constructing irrigation systems. The Maya also managed forest resources to increase the production of desired products.

3. The largest Maya city-states dominated neighboring city-states and agricultural areas. Large city-states constructed impressive and beautifully decorated buildings and monuments by means of very simple technology - levers and stone tools.

4. The Maya believed that the cosmos consisted of three layers: the heavens, the human world, and the underworld. Temple architecture reflected this cosmology, and the rulers and elites served as priests to communicate with the residents of the two supernatural worlds.

5. Maya military forces fought for captives, not for territory. Elite captives were sacrificed; commoners were enslaved.

6. Maya elite women participated in bloodletting rituals and other ceremonies, but they rarely held political power. Non-elite women probably played an essential role in agricultural and textile production.

7. The most notable Maya technological developments are the Maya calendar, mathematics, and the Maya writing system.
8. Most Maya city-states were abandoned or destroyed between 800 and 900. Possible reasons for the decline of Maya culture include the disruption of Mesoamerican trade resulting from the fall of Teotihuacan, environmental pressure caused by overproduction, and increased warfare.

II. The Postclassic Period in Mesoamerica, 900-1500

A. The Toltecs

1. The Toltecs arrived in central Mexico in the 10th century and built a civilization based on the legacy of Teotihuacan. The Toltecs contributed innovations in the areas of politics and war.

2. The Toltec capital at Tula was the center of the first conquest state in the Americas. Dual kings ruled the state- and arrangement that probably caused the internal struggle that undermined the Toltec state around 1000. The Toltecs were destroyed by invaders around 1156.

B. The Aztecs

1. The Aztecs were originally a northern people with a clan-based social organization. There migrated to the Lake Texcoco area, established the cities of Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco around 1325, and then developed a monarchical system of government.

2. Gender division of labor was distinct yet complementary. Though warfare increased male power, females maintained control over household and market.

3. The Kings increased their wealth and power by means of territorial conquest. As the Aztec Empire increased in size, commoners lost their ability to influence political decisions and inequalities in wealth grew more severe.
4. The Aztecs increased agricultural production in the capital area by undertaking land reclamation projects and constructing irrigated fields and chinampas. Nonetheless, grain and other food tribute met nearly one-quarter of the capital's food requirements.

5. Merchants who were distinct from and subordinate to the political elite controlled long-distance trade. The technology of trade was simple: no wheeled vehicles, draft animals, or money was used. Goods were carried by human porters and exchanged through barter.

6. The Aztecs worshiped a large number of gods, the most important of whom was Huitzilopochtli, the Sun god. Huitzilopochtli required a diet of human hearts, which were supplied by human sacrifice that increased through time.

III. Northern Peoples

A. Southwest Desert Cultures

1. Irrigation-based agriculture was introduced to Arizona from Mexico around 300 B.C.E. The most notable Mexican-influenced civilization of the area was the Hohokam, who constructed extensive irrigation works in the Salt and Gila valleys around 1000 C.E.

2. The more influential Anasazi developed maize, rice, and bean economy and constructed underground buildings (kivas) in the Arizona/New Mexico/Colorado/Utah region around 450-740 C.E.

3. The large Anasazi community at Chaco Canyon had a population of about 15,000 people engaged in hunting, trade, and irrigated agriculture. Chaco Canyon people seem to have exerted some sort of political or religious
dominance over a large region. The Anasazi civilization declined in the 12th
and 13th centuries as a result of drought, overpopulation, and warfare.

B. Mound Builders: The Mississippian Cultures

1. The Hopewell culture developed out of the earlier Adena culture around 100
C.E. It was based in the Ohio Valley, but its trade and influence extended as far
as Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, New York, and Ontario, and south to Florida.
Like the Adena, the Hopewell economy was based on hunting and gathering
and was supplemented by agriculture.

2. The major Hopewell centers were ruled by hereditary chiefs. Chiefs served as
priests and managed secular affairs such as long-distance trade. The Hopewell
people built large mounds both as burial sites and as platforms upon which
temples and residences of chiefs were constructed.

3. Hopewell sites were abandoned around 400 C.E., but the Hopewell technology
and mound-building are linked to the development of the Mississippian culture
(700-1500 C.E.). Urbanized Mississippian chiefdoms were made possible by
increased agricultural productivity, the bow and arrow, and expanded trade
networks.

4. The largest Mississippian center was Cahokia, with a population of about
30,000 around 1200 C.E. Cahokia was abandoned around 1250 perhaps
because of climate changes and population pressure.
IV. Andean Civilizations, 600-1500

A. Cultural Response to Environmental Challenge

1. The harsh environment of the high-altitude Andes, the dry coastal plain, and the tropical headwaters of the Amazon forced the human inhabitants of these areas to organize labor efficiently and thus produce enough food to live.

2. The basic unit of Andean labor organization was the clan (ayllu). Clans held land collectively, and clan members were obligated to assist each other in production and to supply goods and labor to the clan chief.

3. The territorial states organized after 1000 C.E. introduced the institution of the mit’a, which required each ayllu to provide a set number of workers each year to provide labor for religious establishments, the royal court, or the aristocracy.

4. Work was divided along gender lines. Men were responsible for hunting, war, and government; women wove and cared for the crops and the home.

5. The Andean region is divided into four major ecological zones: the coast, mountain valleys, higher elevations, and the Amazonian region. Each region produced different goods, and these goods were exchanged among the various regions through a network of trade routes.

B. Moche

1. The Moche culture emerged in the north coastal region of Peru in about 200 C.E. The Moche used the mit’a labor system to construct an extensive irrigated agriculture that produce maize, quinoa, beans, and manioc.

2. Moche society was stratified and theocratic. Wealth and power were concentrated in the hands of an elite of priests and military leaders who lived
atop large platforms and decorated themselves with magnificent clothing, jewelry, and tall headdresses.

3. Moche artisans were skilled in the production of textiles, portrait vases, and metallurgy. Gold and silver were used for decorative purposes; copper and copper alloy were used for farm tools and weapons.

4. The decline and fall of the Moche civilization may be attributed to a series of natural disasters in the 6th century and to pressure from the warlike Wari people in the 8th century.

C. Tiwanaku and Wari

1. The civilization of Tiwanaku, in Bolivia, experienced increased agricultural productivity and urbanization in the years following 200 C.E. Tiwanaku cultivated potatoes and grains on raised fields reclaimed from marshland.

2. Tiwanaku’s urban construction included a large terraced pyramid, walled enclosures, and a reservoir. Construction was done with large stones quarried, moved, and laid by thousands of laborers working with simple technology and copper alloy tools.

3. Tiwanaku society was highly stratified, ruled by a hereditary elite. Some scholars believe that Tiwanaku was the capital of a vast empire, but archeological evidence suggests that it was only a ceremonial and political center for a large regional population.

4. The Wari culture was located near the city of Ayucucho, Peru. Wari had contact with Tiwanaku but was a separate culture; the city was built without
central planning, with different techniques, and on a much smaller scale than Tiwanaku. Both Tiwanaky and War decline to insignificance by 1000 C.E.

D. The Inca

1. The Inca were a small chiefdom in Cuzco until their leaders consolidated political authority and began a program of military expansion in the 1430s. By 1525, the Inca had constructed a huge empire.

2. The key to Inca wealth was their ability to develop a strong military and to use it to broaden and expand the traditional exchange system that had linked the various ecological zones of the Andes region together. The Inca used the mit’a labor system to form their armies; build their capital city; maintain their religious institutions; and provide for the old, the weak, and the ill.

3. The Inca generally left local rulers in place, controlling them by means of military garrisons and y taking their heirs to Cusco as hostages. At the central level, the Inca create dan imperial bureaucracy led by a king. Each king was required to prove himself by conquering new territory.

4. The capital city of Cuzco was laid out in the shape of a puma, and its buildings were constructed of stone laid together without mortar. Cuzco’s palaces and richly decorated temples were the scene of rituals; feasts; and sacrifices of textiles, animals, other tribute goods, and the occasional human.

5. The cultural attainments of the Inca Empire include astronomical observation, weaving, copper and bronze metallurgy, and gold and silver working. The Inca did not introduce new technologies but made more efficient use of existing
technology to increase the profits gained by the trade among the ecological zones of the Andean region.

6. Inca domination resulted in increased wealth but also in reduced levels of local autonomy. When the elite fell into civil war in 1525, Inca control over its vast territories was weakened.

V. Comparative Perspectives

A. Political and Economic Comparisons

1. The Aztecs and Inca Empires shared similarities in the use of powerful armies, strong economies based on large workforces, and their dependence on organized government and religious practices that connected secular rulers to the gods.

2. Distinctions between the two empires were in their systems of distributing goods in their management of the empire.

3. The Aztec used local leaders, while the Inca created a strong central government administered by trained bureaucrats.

B. Imperial Comparisons

1. Both the Aztec and Inca were the last in a line of successive indigenous populations organized into strong empires from former collapsed civilizations.

2. The arrival of Europeans ended the cycle of crises and adjustment in both regions.