

was easy. Do you think this is a convincing explanation? What do you think the Moche and the Maya hoped to gain from human sacrifice?

• What do you think it is about the pyramidal shape that gives it such an impressive appearance when created on a colossal scale? How do you think ancient people might have interpreted the pyramid's triangular shape? Can you think of any natural models that might have inspired the pyramid? What modern structures exhibit simple shapes on a large scale?

Internet Resources

<http://www.ifao.egnet.net/> – An excellent site from the Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire (IFAO). In French, it has a useful interactive map of Egypt and other features.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/pyramid/> – From the PBS science series “Nova,” an excellent site that lets you explore the pyramids of Egypt online.

<http://guardians.net/egypt/pyramids.htm> – A fine site on Egyptian pyramids with links to many other sites.

<http://ce.eng.usf.edu/pharos/wonders/pyramid.html> – From the engineering department of the University of South Florida, a useful site on “The Great Pyramid of Giza.”

<http://www.anthroarchaeology.org/moche.htm> – Site containing color photos of the Moche pyramids of Peru.

<http://web.mae.u-paris10.fr/recherche/aamoche.htm> – Although it's in French, a good site on the “Project international Moche.”

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/archaeology/research/huancaco/> – Excellent site entitled “The Huancaco Project” that explains archaeological research at the Moche capital in Peru.

<http://www.unitru.edu.pe/arq/hluna.html> – A valuable site on the ceremonies at the Huaca de la Luna (in Spanish).

http://www.gorp.com/gorp/location/latamer/arc_maya.htm – A good survey, with a map, of Mayan ruins in Mexico and Central America.

http://www.differentworld.com/mexico/places/chichen_itza/chichen_itza.htm – Pictures of Chichen Itza with lengthy, informative captions.

<http://hawk.hama-med.ac.jp/dbk/chnpyramid.html> – A site entitled “Chinese Pyramids.”

<http://www.caa-archeology.org/-caamicp/parkerjr/cahokia2.html> – A page on “The Mounds of Cahokia.”

http://www.museum.state.il.us/muslink/nat_amer/pre/htmls/m_sites.html – Information on Cahokian archaeological sites.

<http://emuseum.mnsu.edu/archaeology/sites/northamerica/cahokia.html> – From Minnesota State University a good site on “Cahokia,” with links to other sites.

Other Resources

For students:

Arnold, Caroline. *City of the Gods: Mexico's Ancient City of Teotihuacan*. Clarion, 1994.

Clare, John D., ed. *Pyramids of Ancient Egypt*. Harcourt Brace, 1992.

MacAulay, David. *Pyramid*. Houghton Mifflin, 1982.

Deedrick, Tami. *Maya*. Raintree/Steck Vaughn, 1998.

Martell, Hazel Mary. *The Great Pyramid*. Raintree/Steck Vaughn, 1998.

For adults:

Bruhns, Karen Olson. *Ancient South America* (Cambridge World Archaeology). Cambridge Univ Press, 1994.

Castaneda, Quetzil E. *In the Museum of Maya Culture: Touring Chichen Itza*. Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1996.

Davies, Nigel. *The Ancient Kingdoms of Peru*. Penguin, 1998.

Lehner, David. *The Complete Pyramids: Solving the Ancient Mysteries*. Thames & Hudson, 1997.

Lepre, J.P. *The Egyptian Pyramids: A Comprehensive, Illustrated Reference*. McFarland, 1990.

Mink, Claudia G. *Cahokia: City of the Sun: Prehistoric Urban Center in the American Bottom*. Cahokia Mounds Museum Society, 1992.

Moorehead, Warren King. *The Cahokia Mounds* (Classics in Southeastern Archaeology). Univ. of Alabama Press, 2000.

Paszatory, Esther. *Teotihuacan: An Experiment in Living*. Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1997.

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WORLD ALMANAC[®] VIDEO

P R E S E N T S

MUMMIES AND PYRAMIDS: EGYPT AND BEYOND

Pyramids and mummies—for nearly everyone, the words evoke images of ancient Egypt. And yet those intriguing cultural artifacts are by no means unique to the Land of the Pharaohs. As *Mummies and Pyramids: Egypt and Beyond* vividly demonstrates, mummies and pyramids are to be found in the Americas. Indeed, the oldest mummies in the world—and some of the most sophisticated anywhere—come not from the Nile Valley but from the Atacama Desert in Chile. As archaeologists have begun uncovering the mysteries of the New World pyramids and mummies, they have brought to light heretofore underappreciated or misunderstood cultures—societies whose creations and customs inspire awe, shock, and wonder.

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO PYRAMIDS

What is it about the shape of a pyramid that so fascinated ancient peoples? Although pyramids are associated with Egypt, they are actually found on four continents. And they are so massive that the societies that built them had to be able to produce precise architectural designs, to organize huge labor forces, and to perfect great engineering skills. This episode shows how the ancients aligned their pyramids, how they may have moved the blocks, how they used the structures to track the movements of stars, and how pyramids ultimately became the sites of one of history's most gruesome rituals.



Pyramids Around the World

Ancient massive structures of pyramidal shape can be found on four continents – Africa (Egypt), Asia (China), South America (Peru) and North America (the U.S. Midwest, Mexico, and Central America). Clearly, this shape had some powerful meaning, elusive to us today, for a wide range of ancient societies and peoples. Some pyramids, like those in ancient Egypt and Nubia, served as burial chambers, although in some cases, their incredible size suggests that they served other functions as well—such as, perhaps, reminding the populace of the immense power of the person who was able to build such a thing. Other pyramids served what to us is a more sinister function—they were sites devoted to human sacrifice. Understanding why these societies practiced human sacrifice remains a challenge for anthropologists—did the harshness of the environment compel these peoples to take drastic measures in the hopes of propitiating angry deities?

Vocabulary

Aztecs – Also known as the Mexica, the Indian people who dominated central Mexico at the time of the Spanish conquest. They founded their capital, Tenochtitlan, around 1325.

Cahokians – Indigenous North American people who flourished in the Mississippi Valley of Illinois c. 1000 A.D. and built large flat-topped earthworks of pyramidal shape.

conquistador – Name given to leaders of the Spanish forces who conquered Mexico and Peru in the 16th century.

El Niño – Weather phenomenon in which unusually warm surface water appears along the western coast of South America, resulting in abnormally heavy rainfall, especially in dry areas.

“House of Eagles” – In Tenochtitlan (see Important Places), the holiest of the Aztec temples.

Huaca de la Luna – “Pyramid of the Moon”; sacrificial site built by the Moche people of ancient Peru.

Maya – An indigenous people of southern Mexico and Central America. The high point of their classic civilization dates from around 300-900 A.D., but more than 4 million Maya still live in the region.

Moche – Also known as Mochica and previously called the Early Chimú, a civilization that flourished on the coast of northern Peru c. 100-800 A.D.

Pharaoh – Title given to the rulers of ancient Egypt.

pyramid – A huge ancient structure that usually has a square ground plan and four triangular walls that meet at the top—although some pyramids have flat tops with structures on them.

“Shining Pyramid” – The world’s first true pyramid. Built by King Sneferu of Egypt c. 2550 B.C.

Important People

Barta, Miroslav – Egyptologist from Charles University, Prague.

Bourget, Steve – Archaeologist from the University of East Anglia who studies the society of the Moche in Peru.

Brady, James – Archaeologist from California State University, Los Angeles, who studies the pyramids and building complexes of ancient Mexico.

Dobrev, Vassil – Archaeologist with IFAO (Institut français d’archéologie orientale), Cairo.

Dreyer, Gunter – Archaeologist with the German Institute of Archaeology in Cairo and excavator of the tomb of King Khazekhemwy.

Djozer – Egyptian ruler (c. 2600 B.C.) who built the first pyramid. Also spelled Zoser.

Khafre – One of the sons of Sneferu; builder of one of the world’s biggest pyramids.

Khufu – Another of the sons of Sneferu; also builder of one of the world’s biggest pyramids.

Parry, Dick – Archaeologist who theorized that the ancient Egyptians moved building blocks by rolling them.

Perez, Carlos – Expert on Mayan archaeology with the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia in Mexico.

Sneferu – Egyptian ruler who built the first true pyramid.

Weeks, Kent – Egyptologist with the American University, Cairo.

Important Places

Abydos – Site in Egypt that contains the tombs of Egypt’s earliest rulers.

Cahokia Mounds – A national historic landmark in southwest Illinois containing some 85 earthworks built by the Cahokians.

Chichen Itza – Site in southern Mexico that contains some of the most important Mayan remains, including a huge pyramid.

Giza – Suburb of Cairo, the capital of Egypt, and site of three great pyramids and the Great Sphinx.

Nubia – An ancient state in northeast Africa that came under the influence of Egypt. The Nubian kings built great numbers of pyramids.

Tenochtitlan – Capital city of the ancient Aztecs; now Mexico City.

Teotihuacan – Site near Mexico City; the largest pyramid city in the

Americas.

Thebes – Capital of Egypt’s New Kingdom.

Important Dates

3000 B.C. – Egypt’s earliest rulers construct tombs in Abydos.

2600 B.C. – King Djozer (Zoser) of Egypt constructs the world’s first pyramid, a six-stepped structure.

2550 B.C. – King Sneferu of Egypt builds the “Shining Pyramid.”

2500 B.C. – Construction of the Great Pyramid at Giza.

1850 B.C. – Egyptian society undergoes what is called “religious democratization,” in which ordinary members of Egypt’s upper and middle classes begin to build their own pyramids of a much smaller size.

500 B.C. – The Maya develop an accurate 365-day calendar.

300 B.C. – The Maya develop a form of hieroglyphic writing.

200 B.C. – The first emperor of China is buried beneath an immense earth pyramid.

100 A.D. – Emergence of the pyramid-building Moche civilization in Peru.

800 – Rise of the Mayan civilization.

900 – High point of the Mayan civilization at Chichen Itza (see Important Places).

1000 – The Cahokians construct a vast pyramid mound in the Mississippi Valley of Illinois. Decline of the Moche civilization.

1250 – The Aztecs (Mexica) arrive in the Valley of Mexico.

1519 – The Spanish arrive in Mexico.

1532 – The Spanish arrive in Peru.

Things to Think About

• In the episode, the narrator says that pyramids were meant “to cow the masses.” What exactly do you think is meant by that? How could a pyramid act as a form of social control?

• James Brady, one of the archaeologists interviewed in the episode, said that he considered the pyramid as a symbol of the fusion of religious and political power. In what way were the church and state combined in such societies as ancient Egypt or among the Moche and the Maya? Why do modern societies strive to keep the two separate? What are some ways in which religion still influences politics?

• According to the episode, the Egyptians, unlike the Maya and the Moche, generally did not practice human sacrifice. According to archaeologist Kent Weeks, the main reason was that in Egypt the land was bountiful and life