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Inca Empire

The Inca Empire was a highly organized and efficient pre-Columbian civilization controlling a vast territory from modern-day Colombia to Chile. With a sophisticated administrative system, impressive architectural and engineering feats, and a complex social and economic structure, the Incas built an empire that flourished for centuries. Their society was based on the principles of reciprocity and cooperation, with a strong emphasis on collective labor and the common good.

The Incas were skilled farmers, engineers, and builders, constructing elaborate road systems, terraced fields, and impressive stone structures like Machu Picchu. Despite their strengths, the Inca Empire ultimately fell to the Spanish conquest in the 16th century, marking the end of one of the most impressive civilizations in the Americas.

If Spanish explorers had arrived in Peru 50 or even 100 years later than their arrival in 1532, the Inca Empire would likely have had more time to develop and expand. They may have continued to strengthen their administrative system and expand their territory, potentially even reaching beyond the borders of South America. With more time to innovate and refine their building techniques, the Incas may have constructed even more impressive structures than the ones we see today. Their agricultural practices could have advanced, potentially leading to food production that could sustain a growing population. However, it is also possible that the Inca Empire could have faced other challenges and conflicts that could have weakened or toppled

their empire, as no civilization was entirely invincible. Ultimately, we can only speculate on what could have happened if the Spanish arrival had been delayed.

If the Spanish arrival had been delayed by 50 or 100 years, several potential counterfactual histories could emerge for the Inca Empire: The Inca Empire could have continued to expand and solidify its hold on the Andean region. Without the Spanish arriving to disrupt their society, the Inca could have continued to build their administrative systems and expand their territory. The Inca Empire could have faced other challenges and conflicts that could have weakened or toppled their empire. Without the Spanish as a common enemy to unite against, the Inca may have been more vulnerable to internal conflicts or external threats.

The Inca Empire could have developed further technologically, as they had already demonstrated an impressive ability to engineer and build large-scale infrastructure like roads and irrigation systems. With more time to innovate and experiment, the Inca could have made even more remarkable advances in engineering or medicine.

The Inca Empire could have encountered other civilizations through expansion or exploration and exchanged ideas and technologies with them. This could have led to a different cultural and technological mix for the Inca, potentially altering the trajectory of their society. It is difficult to predict precisely what counterfactual history would have emerged for the Inca Empire without the arrival of the Spanish at their historical moment. However, their society was highly sophisticated and innovative, and given more time to develop, they could have made even more impressive strides in areas like engineering, agriculture, and administration.

Our model of networks and hierarchies can provide some insights into how the Inca Empire might have developed if the Spanish had yet to arrive when they did. One way to think about the Inca Empire is as a hierarchical network, with power and resources concentrated in the

hands of the emperor and his elite advisers. This hierarchical structure allowed the Inca to maintain control over a vast territory and coordinate complex projects like the construction of Machu Picchu or the road network.

If the Spanish had not arrived, this hierarchical network could have continued to evolve, with the emperor and his advisers consolidating more power and resources while allowing for some degree of local autonomy. Alternatively, the Inca Empire could have become more decentralized over time, with regional leaders gaining more power and influence. In terms of networks, the Inca Empire had an impressive road network that connected different parts of the empire and allowed for efficient transportation of goods and people. This network could have expanded and improved with more time, linking the Inca with other civilizations and cultures.

Our model of networks and hierarchies suggests that the Inca Empire was a complex system that balanced centralized control with local autonomy and decentralized networks. Without the Spanish arrival, this system could have continued to evolve and adapt in new and unexpected ways.

Reference:

Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Inca". Encyclopedia Britannica, 11 Nov. 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Inca>. Accessed 31 March 2023.