

to the south. Cuzco, located in the southern Montana, was the capital of this vast empire. The Incas are known for their handicrafts and mammoth architectural works: for example, Machu Picchu and Sassahuaman. They were also very knowledgeable in agriculture, astronomy, metallurgy, mining, and in the construction of roads and bridges.

**Spanish Conquest.** Following the discovery of the Pacific Ocean by Vasco Nuñez de Balboa in 1513, the Spanish, attracted by stories of great wealth, began the conquest of Peru. Francisco Pizarro led the Spanish forces in the conquest of the Incas. The Inca empire was rapidly subdivided by the Spanish and on January 18, 1535, the city of Lima was founded.

**Colonial Period.** Peru became the richest and most powerful colony of Spain in South America. Class divisions were very important during this period. The "Criollos" (Spaniards born in America) were excluded from all official positions of influence. The "Mestizos" (mixed races) occupied social positions lower than the Criollos, and the Indian population was reduced to slavery in the mines. Immense pieces of land held by the Indians were given to the Spanish aristocracy.

The resentment of the Criollos and Mestizos grew over a period of 300 years, giving birth to a revolutionary movement for independence.

**Independence.** In 1780, the first major revolt against Spanish rule was headed by an Indian chief, José Gabriel Condorcanqui. In 1821, Bolivar and San Martin took Lima from the Spaniards. Peruvian independence was clearly established on December 9, 1824, with the victory of Bolivar's army at Ayacucho.

**Republican Era.** Peru was very poorly prepared for independence. Various factions within the government struggled for power, causing political instability and wars with neighbouring countries. The most famous and progressive president of this period was Ramon Castilla, who held the presidency from the mid-1840s until the early 1860s. In 1862, Spain tried unsuccessfully to reconquer Peru. It was not until 1879 that Spain officially recognized Peru's independence.

The War of the Pacific between Chile and its neighbours, Peru and Bolivia, was fought from 1879 to 1883. Peru lost the province of Tarapacá to Chile, and Bolivia lost its passage to the sea.