

## **Aidan Sharpe - Sequent Occupance of the South American Realm**

Broadly speaking, the South American realm can be broken into three periods of sequent occupance: pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial. Each subsequent period is influenced by, yet distinct from, the previous periods.

The pre-colonial period was dominated by indigenous cultures, the largest of which was the Inca. The Inca settled the altiplanos of the Andes mountains, and through large-scale infrastructure efforts, including bridges between mountains and roads, they were able to create a well-connected, unified empire. The Incan empire was one of the most technologically advanced of all indigenous peoples in the Americas. Other, small tribes, existed, some of the most isolated ones exist to this day deep within the Amazon rainforest.

However, upon the arrival of the colonizers in the sixteenth century, much of the indigenous culture was lost, and the Inca empire fell. During the colonial period, two European powers dominated: the Spanish, and the Portuguese. The Spanish dominated the west and north of the continent, while the Portuguese controlled the eastern region, now modern-day Brazil.

Eventually, the peoples of the South American realm gained independence from their colonizers, and formed the modern landscape. Today, the influence of the colonial powers is seen in both the religious and language of the populations. The vast majority of people are Roman Catholic, the religion brought by both the Spanish and Portuguese colonizers. Additionally, the majority language in the areas once controlled by the Spanish is still Spanish, and in Brazil, which was controlled by Portugal, the majority language is still Portuguese. In the last few decades, however, the indigenous population in South America has grown. In some areas, the indigenous population makes up a majority.

In the near future, we may see a new period marked by the dominance of indigenous people in power. In fact, it could be a much needed change of pace, as corruption and poverty plague the region. With indigenous leadership, we may even see reduced deforestation of the Amazon.