**Chapter 13**

*Chapter Summary*

As seen in Mesoamerica, farming societies in South America developed the ability to produce a food surplus. This surplus supported larger populations and enabled the development of social complexity and increased inequality. Some of these complex societies developed into states, with densely populated cities, formal government, and power invested in an elite class. The Inka and their predecessors in western South America developed independently of the civilizations of Mesoamerica and the Old World. Through their concentration of wealth and power, and as members of an elite social class in a stratified society, rulers were able to organize the labor of the many to produce the spectacular monuments—the pyramids and temples—that dominate the ancient landscapes of the Moche, Tiwanaku, Wari, Chimu, and the Inka. Like the civilizations of Mesoamerica and the Old World, the complex societies of South America eventually collapsed. Theories for the collapse of civilizations focus on variables such as resource depletion, environmental catastrophes, and invasion. As elsewhere, no single cause appears to be enough. In each instance of collapse, the inability of a society to respond adequately to a challenge, whatever that challenge may be, appears to be the key variable in its demise.