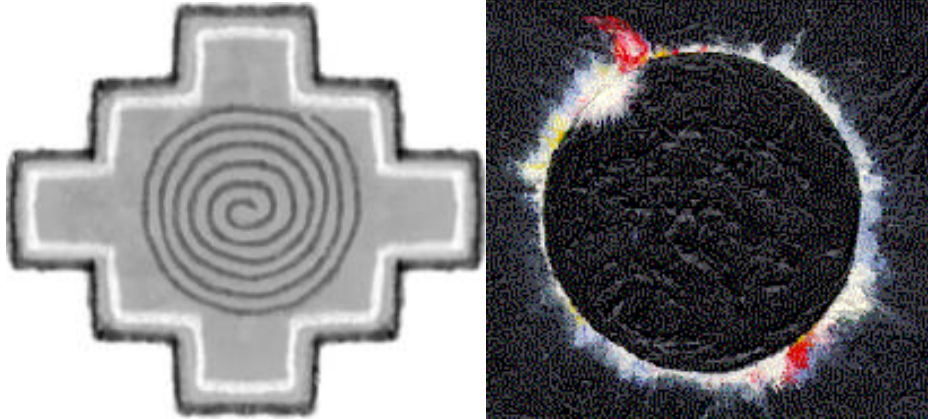


History of the Inca Empire



In legend, the Inca sun god Inti brought forth the first Inca rulers Manco Capac and Mama Ocllo from the waters of Lake Titicaca to establish Cusco and civilize the people of the Andes Mountains. Manco Capac taught men how to live and worship the Inca gods. Mama Ocllo taught women how to spin wool and weave textiles with geometric designs.

For one hundred years an Inca king, called Sapa Inca, ruled the Andes in an empire that stretched from Quito to Argentina and from the Andes to the Pacific Coast. The Sapa Inca maintained his empire with a vast army and a network of roads called Capaq Nan. Two main roads extended hundreds of miles with many crossroads in between. One main road began in Quito and traversed the mountains and valleys while the other followed the shores of Mama Cocha, the goddess of the sea, where conquered coastal people traded fish and spondylus shells for food grown in the mountains. The Sapa Inca forbade anyone to travel on his roads except for his own troops, chaski runners, and tribute laborers who traveled the roads for the king's building projects. The conquered peasants of the Andes rarely left their hamlets called ayllus. The people of the Inca empire believed that Sapa Inca was the son of Inti who people worshipped more than the creator god Viracocha. The ayllus paid tribute to Sapa Inca with their goods and labor.

Along the Inca roads were rest stations called “runner’s houses” or tambos. A message from Cusco to the coast took three days and gave the Sapa Inca enough time to quell a rebellion. At the rest stations were storage houses called Cullas, named for the Pleiades which the Incas considered as guardians of their storage houses. The Cullas stored food for troops and the chaski runners who relayed the king’s messages recorded on quipus. The quipus were knotted strings that recorded tributes and messages to the Sapa Inca from even the smallest social unit of family and farm.

The main temple complex in the Inca capital city, Cusco, was the stone and brick Coricancha. Sacrificial fires perpetually burned inside temples dedicated to the Pleiades, to Venus, to Viracocha the creator of everything, to Illapa the god of thunder, and to Cuichu the god of the rainbow bridges into the afterworld. In the temple to the moon goddess Mamakilla, the Incas lined the walls with silver and in the temple dedicated to Inti, they lined the walls with gold which they believed was sweat from the sun. The Golden Temple of Inti was the most sacred huaca in the Inca empire. For the Incas, huacas were sacred places and centers of energy connected by invisible lines called ceques that extend into the three worlds of their cosmology—Hanan Pacha was the place of heaven; Mother Earth was Kay Pacha; and the world below was Ukhu Pacha. Forty-one roads started at the Golden Temple of Inti and lead to all the huaca sites on Earth, in hell, and across the Milky Way in Hanan Pacha. During the solstice, Sapa Inca sat on a golden throne inside the Golden Temple and Inti’s rays streamed through the windows and illuminated him as son of Inti and the axel of Tawantinsuya.

Two-hundred male priests at the Coricancha tended the sacred huaca sites and objects. Willaq Umu was high priest and astronomer and the king’s spiritual advisor. He led the llama sacrifices to the gods Inti, Illapa, Mamakilla, Viracocha, and Pachamama, the Mother Earth

goddess. Willaq Umu abstained from sex, alcohol, and meat. Under him were ten high priests called hatun wilka. They were from ten noble families called the Panaca Incas who represented the four quarters of the kingdom. Like Sapa Inca, people believed the Panacas were descendants of Manco Capac and Mama Cora Ocllo, the first Inca king and queen of legend.

Also, inside the Coricancha compound was the sanctuary for royal mummies who were called mallquis. The Incas believed that these mummified kings and queens communicated between the living and dead and were closely linked to the gods and continued to reign and serve Tawantinsuyu, the Inca empire. Noble families called Awkapacas dressed the royal mallquis in textiles, feathered headdresses, and gold, turquoise, crystals, and emeralds. In their sanctuary the mallquis were surrounded by their weapons and possessions and they sat on golden palanquins with their knees to their chests, arms crossed, faces ashen, and eyes looking downward. The Awkapacas interpreted the mallquis' advice to Sapa Inca.

The House of the Chosen Maidens, the acllahuasi, was a sacred cloister inside the Coricancha. Every year the Sapa Inca sent his agents to search the empire for beautiful, smart and well-mannered maidens between eight and twelve to live in the acllahuasi. Four hundred chosen virgins, called acllas, lived in the acllahuasi and maintained the sacred temple fires, cooked the king's food, made his chicha beer for his sacred rites, and wove his garments from vicuna wool. Sapa Inca wore his clothing only one time then his priests burned his clothes as an offering to Inti.

After a girl's quicuchicuy, when she first bled, Sapa Inca gave her a name and the choice to return to her parents' home or remain in the cloister as a mamacuna, a teacher of the chosen maidens. The king betrothed some of his acllas to warriors and Panaca noblemen. Sometimes Sapa Inca took a chosen maiden as his own concubine. When the king won a great victory or

commemorated an important date, or when a cataclysmic force of nature caused chaos on Earth or when omens appeared in the sky, the king selected the most beautiful accha for a capacocho sacrifice. Some capacochochas were Inca boys. From the temple plaza in Cusco, a procession of soldiers and priests traveled the Inca roads and carried the child to a mountain top where he or she was sacrificed to the gods. Only Sapa Inca could appease angry gods who cause a mountain to erupt, the Earth to shake, the river to flood or the sun and moon to eclipse.

People called the ninth Sapa Inca Pachacuti, the Earth Shaker, because they believed he shook the Earth with his powers. Pachacuti rebuilt Cusco to resemble a puma. He conquered other Andean people and established the Inca Empire called Tawantinsuyu, el cima del mundo, the top of the world. Pachacuti spread Inca culture and religion throughout the Andes. When building his temple to Inti, Earth Shaker buried many live children inside.

The Plaza de Armas in modern Cusco has been a public gathering place since the Inca kingdom. In the 1600's the Spanish built St. Dominican Cathedral that fronts the plaza. It is called Our Lady of Assumption of the Virgin. In the plaza's center is a bronze statue of King Pachacuti on a three-tiered fountain.

Tupac Inca, the son of Earth Shaker, was a warrior king and considered a son of Inti like his father. He was a benefactor of the poor and of all the people of the Inca empire who were called "Children of the Sun," Intip Churi. Tupac Inca commanded a vast army. In the tradition of his father, he further conquered the Andes. When he took power, he established a new Panacas line. His Coya or Inca queen was Occlo Mamancilt, the Moon's incarnation on earth; she was the head priestess of the empire and oversaw the Moon Temple, the acclahuasi, and the mamacunas.

Tupac Inca's son was Huayna Capac, whose son Atahualpa was the last Inca king. He reigned until Francisco Pizarro conquered the Incas and stole all their gold. The Spanish betrayed

Atahualpa and executed him before the St. Dominican Cathedral. The conquistadors destroyed the Inca empire. Their diseases alone killed ninety percent of the Incas then they forced those who survived to convert to Christianity.

Two-hundred and forty years ago, the old stone wall of acllahuasi became part of the Dominican Sanctuary for nuns of Santa Catalina. These nuns exalt Dominic, the patron saint of astronomers. Today's nuns live a cloistered life like the aclla maidens before them. But Dominican nuns are mostly old women who embroider and use rosary beads when they pray for the salvation of others.

These days the Quechua people live in the Andes where the Inca reigned six hundred years before. The Quechua culture is as ancient as the pyramids of Egypt. The Incas adopted the Quechua language. Like the Inca, the Quechua of today are herders of llamas and alpacas, farmers of potato, quinoa, squash, beans, and the mainstay of the Americas, maize and they still pray to the Inca gods and keep some of the Inca traditions.