Encyclopedia of Prehistory

Volume 7: South America

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Published in conjunction with the Human Relations Area Files
at Yale University

Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers
New York  Boston  Dordrecht  London  Moscow
Inca

**Absolute Time Period:** c. 800-468 B.P.

**Relative Time Period:** Follows the Andean Regional States tradition and precedes the historic period ushered in by the Spanish Conquest in 468 B.P.

**Location:** The Andean highlands. The original Inca homeland was the Cuzco valley of south-central Peru, but the Inca empire eventually encompassed the Andean highlands and much of the Pacific coastal zone from northern Ecuador at the Colombian border, to north-central Chile and northwestern Argentina, in the vicinity of Santiago and Mendoza.

**Diagnostic Material Attributes:** Megalithic architecture and fine cut-stone masonry. Rectangular structures, often with gabled roofs and trapezoidal doors and niches. Limited repertoire of highly standardized polychrome pottery vessels typically decorated with geometric design, the tall-necked jar known as the *ariballo* being the quintessential Inca vessel form. Planned provincial administrative centers with standard architectural features, including a central ceremonial platform (*ushnu*), storage facilities (*qollka*), a house for “chosen women” (*aqllawasi*), and large rectangular halls (*kallanka*). Carved or otherwise modified natural rock outcrops. Large-scale agricultural terracing, hydraulic systems, and road networks. Miniature human and camelid forms cast in metal. *Tocapu* (geometric design blocks).

**Regional Subtraditions:** Imperial Heartland (Cuzco basin and Urubamba valley), Antisuyu (eastern flanks and foothills of Andes), Chinchaysuyu (northern highlands), Collasuyu (southern highlands), Cuntisuyu (south coast).

**Important Sites:** Cuzco, Hatux Xauxa, Huánaco Pampa, Incallacta, Ingapirca, Island of the Sun, Machu Picchu, Ollantaytambo, Pachacamac, Rumicucho, Samaipata, Tomebamba.

**Cultural Summary**

**Environment**

**Climate.** The Inca empire encompassed the area from the equator to approximately 34° south latitude along the spine of the Andes. In this mountainous environment, climate varies more with elevation than with distance from the equator. Consequently, hot low-lying valleys are found relatively close to the cold plateaus of the highlands. The higher elevations are characterized by coldness and aridity with perpetual snows beginning at approximately 4500 m. Rainfall is light in the highlands and usually confined to a 3-month season annually. The coastal zone dominated by the Inca includes one of the driest deserts on earth. Arid conditions prevail nearly the entire length of the Pacific coast, except for parts of Ecuador where the tropical forest reaches the sea.
Coastal temperatures are moderated by winds off the cold Humboldt current, a phenomenon that also contributes to the low-lying clouds that hang perpetually over much of the Pacific coast. The eastern flanks of the Andes, or the montaña zone, is tropical in character. The upper portion of this zone, called the ceja de montaña, is a permanent cloud forest where relative humidity typically exceeds 90 percent.

**Topography.** The Inca empire, which extended some 3500 km along the mountainous backbone of South America, encompassed some of the world’s most rugged terrain. The Andean range, which runs the full length of the continent, is characterized by tall peaks, many of which are between 5000 and 7000 m tall, and deep valleys. At its widest, the Andean massif spans 900 km from east to west. From its central girth, the Andes divide into a series of parallel ranges. To the south, the eastern and western cordilleras diverge to frame the altiplano, an immense high-altitude plateau some 800 km in length, the central feature of which is Lake Titicaca. The Andes also bifurcate to the north and eventually splinter into a series of narrow parallel ranges in Colombia. The intermontane valleys and high plateaus of the Andes were the homeland of the Inca proper.

In addition to the highlands, the Inca also succeeded in dominating two other distinct physiographic provinces: the Pacific coast and the eastern Andean slopes. In Peru, the relatively narrow coastal strip is dissected at intervals by westward-flowing rivers that descend from the highlands to create a series of narrow green oases perpendicular to the shore. To the east, the Andes drop off sharply, the terrain of the montaña zone being deeply dissected by the fast-moving streams that ultimately drain into the Amazon river.

**Geology.** The Andean range extends 7500 km along the Pacific boundary of South America. As part of the circumpacific mountain system, the Andes are a region of great seismic and volcanic activity. The orogenic history of the western edge of the continent extends back to the Precambrian period. Subsequent tectonics of the Paleozoic era were characterized by intense folding; activity during the later Mesozoic and Cainozoic periods involved violent fracture faulting. Large sections of the Andean range are intersected by deep fractures that can be regarded as tectonic grabens. The great plutonic batholith that underlies the Andean range is made up of granodiorites, tonalites, gabbros and diorites. It is because of this plutonic formation that the Andes are referred to as a magmatic mountain range. The igneous rock is intercalated with various metamorphic and sedimentary formations. The Andes contain some of the richest ore deposits in the world, from which enormous quantities of copper, tin, silver, lead, zinc, and gold are extracted.

**Biota.** The flora and fauna of the highlands follow the pattern of vertical stratification created by the abrupt changes in elevation. A series of three vertically arrayed ecozones is generally recognized in the highlands: yunga, quechua, and puna. The yunga zone lies below 1500 m, is warm and dry, and has a natural xerophytic vegetation. The quechua, an intermediate zone dissected by valleys and quebradas, ranges from approximately 1500–3500 m above sea level. This was the principal zone of human settlement in the Andes. Prior to the advent of agriculture, this zone likely supported dense forests, although little evidence of these stands remain today. The puna zone above extends from approximately 3500 m to the snow fields, which begin between 4500 and 4800 m. The puna is characterized by a cold, dry climate and rolling grassy plains that serve as pastureage for the flocks of llamas, alpacas, and vicuñas native to this zone. In the northern Andes, where elevations are somewhat lower, rainfall more abundant, and the grasses thicker and coarser, this upper zone is known as the páramo.

On the dry Pacific coast, terrestrial fauna is limited, but the marine resources of this zone are exceptionally rich, the cold coastal waters supporting huge numbers of fish, shellfish, sea mammals, and seabirds. The only plant life native to the coastal desert is the unique “fog vegetation” of the lomas, low-lying hills, which are shrouded in fog banks several months per year. The semitropical montaña zone of the eastern Andean flanks is home to numerous animal species, including monkeys, jaguars, snakes, bears, and colorful birds whose feathers were highly prized. Plants of particular economic importance from the montaña include the hardwood chonta, medicinal herbs, chili peppers (aji), and hallucinogenic plants. Coca, a plant of considerable ritual importance for the Inca, is also native to this zone.

**Settlements**

**Settlement System.** The Inca empire, known in Quechua as Tawantinsuyu or the Kingdom of the Four Quarters, was centrally administered from the capital city of Cuzco. Inca Cuzco had two principal sectors: a sacred inner core inhabited by the Inca nobility, priests, and government officials, which functioned as the center of religious and political activity, and the outlying residential districts, inhabited by lower nobility, ethnic lords, craft specialists, and other mitinquara populations.
Other types of settlements in the Inca heartland included rural villages, of from 5 to 20 households, and the royal estates of the Inca elite. The rural agricultural villages undoubtedly existed much as they had prior to the Inca’s meteoric rise to power. From these communities, residents would leave daily to farm surrounding agricultural fields or depart for longer periods to exploit the resources of more distant ecozones. The royal estates of the Inca elite were lavishly constructed sites that served as country retreats for the ruling elite. Examples include the sites of Ollantaytambo, Machu Picchu, Chinchero, and Pisac, all of which are located in the fertile Urubamba valley below Cuzco. Such palatial estates typically encompassed the best agricultural lands and displayed the finest Inca masonry.

During their short period of imperial rule, the Inca also constructed numerous planned settlements. These provincial administrative centers served as the nodes that connected the hinterlands to the capital of Cuzco. Common features of these Inca administrative centers included buildings of fine stone masonry, quantities of Inca polychrome pottery, and a central plaza typically flanked by large rectangular structures, or kallanka. In addition to housing military personnel and state.corvée laborers, the kallanka also served as the focus of civic-ceremonial and public feasting events. Other buildings, known as aglawasi, functioned as warehouses for the state’s “chosen women.” The central plazas of the provincial sites often contained an ushnu, or royal dais, as well. Other common elements of the Inca administrative centers were rows of round, towerlike structures known as qollka, which served as state storage facilities.

Special religious sanctuaries or oracle sites, such as Tambo Machay near Cuzco or the coastal huaca (shrine) of Pachacamac, were a kind of special-purpose site in the Inca settlement system. Hilltop fortresses, or pucaras, were another type of special-purpose site. As the Inca empire expanded into frontier zones, pucaras were often constructed to garrison the military, control the movements of the local population, and/or for surveillance purposes.

Community Organization. Most native villages in the Andes grew organically with little evidence of planning. There were no regular streets or public plazas, and houses were widely spaced rather than concentrated. Towns and administrative centers constructed by the state, however, displayed a considerable degree of planning, although no two sites were identical. Each settlement was adapted to the particular topographical, social, astronomical, and economic conditions of its location. There were no universal rules that dictated the precise form of a settlement, but Inca builders drew on a common set of elements and principles. State settlements were typically laid out following either an orthogonal (uneven grid) or a radial pattern. The large architectural blocks that resulted each contained a number of enclosed rectangular compounds (kanchas). A division of the site into two parts, representing the idea of upper (hanan) and lower (hurin) halves, is also often visible in the layout. Large public plazas are another common element of state sites and could be either centrally or laterally located. These plazas were often astronomically aligned and contained an ushnu. The kallanka, or great halls, typically lined the perimeter of the main plaza.

Housing. The basic architectural unit of the Inca was the rectangular room with no internal divisions. Humble peasant homes and kingly palaces alike were based on this fundamental building block. The simplest structures, including domestic residences, had unworked fieldstone or adobe walls and a hip roof made of wooden poles covered with thatch. Although single-story structures were the norm, two-story buildings were not uncommon. Both doors and wall niches were typically trapezoidal in shape. Double or triple jamb doors were indicative of elite residences or sacred structures.

If the rectangular room was the basic architectural unit of the Inca, the basic composite form was the kancha, a group of three or more rectangular structures arranged symmetrically around a central patio. These complexes were probably inhabited by the extended family.

Beyond the Inca heartland, house forms varied as the conquerors did not require subjects to adopt a uniform state style. Consequently, houses of Inca subjects followed regional traditions and were as likely to be round as rectangular or constructed of sod blocks as of stone.

Population, Health, and Disease. Most Andean villages contained fewer than 100 families. The number of residents at the planned Inca settlements probably did not normally exceed that of other Andean villages, although the size may have fluctuated periodically with the arrival of state officials or military forces. The population of the capital city of Cuzco is estimated to have been between 15,000 and 20,000 and climbs to 100,000 if residents of the surrounding “suburban” areas are included. Ethnohistoric information suggests that the entire population of the Inca state may have numbered between 6,000,000 10,000,000 prior to the
Spanish invasion in 1470. Epidemics of smallpox and measles which swept the Andes following the Spanish invasion, decimated the region, reducing highland populations by as much as 75 percent and eradicating many of the coastal communities.

Economy

Subsistence. The subsistence base of Tawantinsuyu was agricultural, and production was tightly controlled by the state. Land improvements, which included the construction of terraces, irrigation canals, and dams, were undertaken by the state on a massive scale and intended to increase agricultural yields. Once a region was conquered by the Inca, all lands were declared to be the property of the state. A portion of these agricultural lands was "returned" to the community for its own support; another portion was set aside for the Inca state, and another dedicated to the state religion. Inca subjects were required to work the confiscated lands and forward the produce to state coffers. Labor was the only form of tribute demanded by the state of its citizens. Both men and women engaged in agricultural activities. Land was not owned by individuals but rather by the ayllu, the traditional Andean corporate group.

Wild Foods. The collection of wild plants, particularly greens and fruits, and the occasional hunting of deer and guanaco supplemented the Andean diet but was generally of minor importance. All game was declared the property of the state by the Inca and hunting was allegedly strictly controlled. Fishing was important on the coast and on the shores of Lake Titicaca.

Domestic Foods. The two most important crops in the Andes were maize, which can be grown up to 2300 m above sea level, and potatoes, which can be cultivated to almost 4000 m. Maize held considerably more ceremonial and symbolic significance for the Inca than did potatoes. Other important high-altitude crops included quinoa, tarwi, oca, ulluca, and legumes. Camelid herding also figured prominently in the state economy. Although llamas and alpacas were of principal importance for their wool, they also served as pack animals and occasionally as sources of meat. Large herds were claimed as the exclusive property of Inca rulers. Other Andean domesticates included guinea pigs (cuyes), Muscovy duck, and dogs.

Industrial Arts. Inca built on the technological achievements and knowledge of the Andean civilizations that preceded them. Cloth, being of both ceremonial and practical significance in Inca society, was one of the most important manufactures. Textiles were woven primarily of wool, although cotton from the coast was also utilized. Weaving was undertaken by both men and women, using backstrap and upright looms. Metal artifacts included knives, axes, and chisels of bronze; items of personal adornment, such as tupu pins, made of copper; and luxury and ceremonial objects such as cups, plates, ear plugs, and figurines made of gold and silver. Production techniques included smelting, alloying, casting, cold hammering, and repoussé. Inca state pottery was highly standardized in terms of both form and decoration and was likely produced by specialists. Stoneworking was highly advanced, employing techniques of hammering and abrasion. Monumental architecture was the enduring achievement of the Inca. The great public structures were built by professional architects and master masons with the aid of a massive labor force supplied by the state. Using only simple tools to shape the huge stone blocks and rollers and ramps to haul and place them, the Inca created structures of lasting beauty.

Utensils. Cooking, eating, and serving utensils were typically made of clay, gourds, or wood. The state ceramic assemblage was confined to a few basic vessel shapes that included the tall-necked jar (aribalo), the smaller pedestal-based cooking pot, and the bird-handled plate. Special-purpose or high-status vessels were sometimes manufactured in stone or precious metal. A unique type of grinding implement consisting of a heavy lunate-shaped rocker stone paired with a flat stone slab was common to most Andean households. The fundamental agricultural implement was the wooden foot plow (chaquitaclla). The main hunting implements were the sling and the bola. In warfare, the Inca military utilized clubs with star-shaped stone heads, battle axes, spears, slings, and bolas.

Ornaments. Both men and women wore jewelry. Males of the elite class wore large cylindrical ear plugs of metal or wood, bracelets of gold and silver, and metal pectorals that denoted military prowess. Women used large metal pins (tupi) to fasten their shawls and wore necklaces of bone or shell beads. Small squares filled with repeating geometric designs (tocacu) were the fundamental decorative device of Inca clothing. Cranial reshaping was practiced by a number of ethnic groups in the Inca empire, and face paint was used in battle and in mourning. Ornamentation of buildings beyond the structural beauty of their design and construction was rare. Bas-relief carvings are occasionally observed on building exteriors, and double and triple jambed doorways were used to mark the importance of certain structures.
Trade. Neither trade nor markets figured in the Inca economy. Nonlocal goods were normally acquired through direct access to or control over the zones of production. Following an ancient Andean pattern involving the permanent deployment of community members to vertically stratified ecozones (the vertical archipelago model), colonies of state subjects known as mitmaqkuna could be relocated to special resource zones to extract desired goods. Such products were funneled to the imperial capital or local administrative centers, from which they were subsequently redistributed by the state.

In the Inca empire, taxes were paid in the form of labor rather than in kind. Each community was required to cultivate the lands appropriated by the state in its district. The produce from these lands went to state storage facilities and was used to support state activities. In addition, each community contributed a designated number of individuals to perform specific tasks for the state on an annual basis (mit'a). Such tasks could include military duty, construction of state facilities, and service to nobles.

Division of Labor. Specific goods associated with the Inca state, including pottery, cloth, and metal artifacts, were produced by full-time craft specialists who were retained by the state. Within the family, clearcut differences existed in the types of work performed depending on age and sex. Most family members typically shared in the agricultural labor, although men and women were responsible for different aspects of this work, as for instance, in the case of sowing, where men broke the ground and women planted the seed. Children helped their parents, guarded fields before harvest, tended flocks, and collected firewood. Adult males were responsible for fulfilling the family's labor tribute obligations and also made the family footwear. Women were responsible for the maintenance of the household, child rearing, food preparation, and domestic cloth production.

Differential Access to Resources. The Inca controlled production of state polychrome pottery, fine cloth (cumbi), and precious metals. Such items were distributed as gifts by the Inca ruler to the nobility or to those who had distinguished themselves through service to the state. The Inca claimed exclusive access to hunting territories and game such as deer and waterfowl. The state also exerted control over its female subjects and, thus, to some extent, over the reproduction of society. Young women chosen for their physical perfection were periodically removed from their families and sent to live in state-run convents. These chosen women (aqllakuna) were distributed as gifts by the Inca to deserving warriors, select nobility, and political allies.

Sociopolitical Organization

Social Organization. The traditional Andean system of social organization rested on the notion of ayllu, a corporate group whose members exchanged labor and were often related through kinship. An Andean community was typically made up of several distinct ayllus, each of which constituted an endogamous entity. Inheritance was reckoned bilaterally, with daughters inheriting from their mothers, and sons from their fathers.

The Inca recognized a series of age groups for purposes of census taking and taxation. Marriage marked the transition to full adulthood. Polygyny was practiced by the Inca elite. The wives and offspring of the emperor formed a royal ayllu known as a panaga, which lived off the wealth produced by the ruler during his reign and which maintained his mummy, after death. The principal wife of the Inca ruler, the Coya, was his sister. There was no standard of succession to the throne although customarily the emperor selected his heir from among his most competent sons.

Inca society was highly stratified with the "Incas-by-blood" of the Cuzco lineages making up the uppermost echelons of the status hierarchy. Below them were the "Incas-by-privilege," a class made up mainly of the original, non-Inca inhabitants of the Cuzco valley, individuals who had distinguished themselves through outstanding service to the state, and all those whose native language was Quechua. Males of the Inca elite distinguished themselves physically through the use of large ear ornaments. It was this practice that gave rise to the Spanish term orejones ("big ears") to refer to the Inca aristocracy.

The provincial nobility made up the next tier in the sociopolitical hierarchy of the state. Members of this class were typically the local ethnic elite who had ruled their provinces prior to the Inca conquest. Below the ethnic elite were the commoners, the backbone of the Inca state, who made their living through agricultural labor.

Political Organization. The Inca empire was centrally administered from the capital city of Cuzco. Conceptually the empire was divided into four great quarters, hence the Quechua name Tawantinsuyu, or "Kingdom of the Four Quarters." Each of these was subdivided into provinces, many of which corresponded to the territories of the indigenous tribes and states subsumed by the empire. These provinces were further subdivided into an upper (hatun) and a lower (hurin) half, with the upper
division taking precedence over the lower in public ceremonies. Each moiety had a varying number of ayllus.

The Inca governed their empire through a highly formalized hierarchical system. At the apex stood the Inca sovereign, who ruled by divine right and claimed direct descent from the sun. Below him were the lords of the four sectors (suyus) of the empire, who oversaw the imperial governors of each of the provinces within their sector. The provincial governors purportedly each had responsibility for 10,000 families. Following a decimal system of organization, there were two tiers of Inca officials below the governor, the higher of which supervised two subordinates responsible for the management of 500 families each. Local ethnic leaders, known as curacas, served as intermediaries between the imperial hierarchy and the local populace. Theoretically, each curaca had under his control 100 families.

Social Control. Although the Inca state managed its subjects with a firm hand, it was not generally abusive. Typical punishments included public rebuke, exile, and loss of office. Seemingly minor crimes could draw harsh penalties. Adultery, for instance, was punishable by torture or death. Crimes, in general, seemed to have been relatively rare. Imperial laws were upheld and enforced by regular state officials; there was no special class of state police.

Conflict. One of the key factors in the rapid rise of the Inca state was the military. The Inca army consisted of men drawn from around the empire, who served in fulfillment of their rotational labor obligations (mit'a) to the state. Soldiers on active duty were fully supported by the state. Like other elements of the state apparatus, the army was hierarchically organized according to a decimal system. Most military operations involved either hand-to-hand combat or assaults on hilltop fortresses to which the local combatants often retreated. Military prowess was the chief way for commoners to improve their social status within the state, and individuals sought distinction in warfare. Weapons used by Inca forces included the sling, the bola, the star-headed mace, spears, and clubs. Protective gear, including helmets and quilted body armor, was worn in battle.

Religion and Expressive Culture

Religious Beliefs. Inca state religion has been characterized as more pragmatic than mystical, concerned more with food production and the curing of disease than spiritual salvation. The Inca recognized the existence of a supreme deity known as Wiranqocha, who was understood to be the creator of the world. The second most important deity in the Inca pantheon was Inti, the sun and father of the Inca sovereign. Other deities included Illapa (lightening), Killa (moon), Chinchay Qoyllur (the constellation of Orion), and Chasqa Kayllur (Venus). The earth (Pachamama), water (Mamacocha), and mountains (Apus) were also understood to possess supernatural qualities.

The Inca portrayed himself as the direct descendant of the sun. The first Inca, Manco Capac, was said to have emerged from a cave together with his three brothers and four sisters. The eight siblings set out in search of an appropriate site to settle. They eventually arrived in the valley of Cuzco, defeated the local population, and founded what would become the capital of the last indigenous empire in the Andes.

Inca religion was fundamentally animistic insofar as inanimate objects were understood to have a spiritual content. The sun and moon, certain stars, the sea, the earth, rivers and springs, hills, snow-capped peaks, caves, and outcrops all had special significance for the Inca. Rocks were particularly laden with symbolic meaning; numerous Inca myths reference the transformation of men into stones or vice versa. Special boulders or outcrops of particular importance were often integrated into Inca architecture. Small unmodified stones were carried as personal charms; other stone objects carved in the shape of camelids were objects of domestic ritual. The mummified remains of ancestors were also venerated by the Inca. Viewed as the sacred progenitors of the lineage, the mummies of ancestors were consulted on important matters and served as the focal points of both state and family ritual.

Religious Practitioners. All religious shrines (hucas) had at least one resident attendant, and the larger had sizeable staffs. Such individuals, including both men and women, were full-time ritual specialists. The women were selected from the larger corps of chosen women (aqllakuna) maintained by the state. They formed their own order presided over by a priestess of the highest nobility. Besides tending the shrine, making appropriate sacrifices, and praying, the priests and priestesses also engaged in interpreting oracles, hearing confessions, and diagnosing illnesses. Because consultation with the supernatural was considered an imperative prior to the undertaking of any important action, divination was also a central activity of ritual specialists, who employed coca, guinea pig and llama entrails, dreams, and direct questioning of the oracles to this end.

Ceremonies. Within Andean society, ritual was an essential aspect of daily life. People engaged in private
acts, such as the sharing of coca or praying to the snow-capped peaks (apu), which expressed deeply held religious beliefs everyday. Public ceremonies of the Inca were elaborate, highly formal affairs. The state ceremonial calendar corresponded closely to the agricultural cycle of the highlands, with many rituals explicitly linked to crop productivity. Public ceremonies were also performed during times of crisis and to mark important historic events such as the coronation or death of the emperor. Most such ceremonies involved the exhibition of sacred idols and images, dancing, feasting, oratory, and the heavy consumption of corn beer (chicha). Sacrifices accompanied nearly every religious rite and typically involved guinea pigs, llamas, coca, or chicha, although children were sometimes immolated as well. Public ceremonies were typically conducted outdoors in one of the central plazas.

**Arts.** Song and dance were important elements of most public ceremonies. Dance costumes could be elaborate and often involved masks and animal skins. Instruments were simple and included small flutes of cane and bone, ceramic panpipes, skin drums, gourd and shell trumpets, and metal bells. The affluence and pageantry associated with the Inca court led to the production of large quantities of beautiful objects. The most common design elements in Inca art involved simple geometric patterns. Other common motifs included plants, flowers, insects, humans, llamas, and pumas. The possession of luxury items or goods produced in the state style signified the status and rank of the individual.

**Death and Afterlife.** The dead were generally considered a source of protection for the family. They were guardians (mallki) to whom descendants could appeal for special favors or requests. Inca rulers were typically mummiﬁed on death and retained as valued state advisers and lineage patriarchs in the sacred temple of the Sun (Coricancha) in Cuzco. Common people were normally buried in caves or rock shelters with offerings of food, pottery, and clothing. Beyond the Inca heartland, burial practices followed traditional norms and varied considerably, although the interments of ethnic elite not infrequently contained Inca-style items.

**Suggested Readings**


**SUBTRADITIONS**

**Imperial Heartland**

**TIME PERIOD:** 800–468 B.P.

**LOCATION:** Cuzco basin and Urubamba valley, south-central highlands of Peru.

**DIAGNOSTIC MATERIAL ATTRIBUTES:** Fine (Cuzco-style) masonry consisting of well-ﬁtted coursed or polygonal stone blocks; high density of monumental structures exhibiting fine cut-stone masonry; elaborate agricultural terracing; specialized mortuary architecture typically involving underground passages, tunnels, and modiﬁed caverns to house ancestral mummies of royal families;
high density of carved rock outcrops and other huacas (shrines) making up nodes on lines of the ceque system, lack of ashu at sites outside of Cuzco proper; lack of qollka storage facilities; orthogonal site plans; use of perforated stones such as eye bonders and ring stones in architecture; triple-jambed niches and windows; asymmetrical, steeply sloped gabled roofs; formal water reservoirs; high density of Inca polychrome pottery.

CULTURAL SUMMARY

Environment

The imperial heartland of the Inca empire, encompassing the Cuzco basin and the nearby Urubamba river valley, is found in the south-central highlands of Peru. It is a rugged region of high mountain valleys and snow-capped peaks. The climate, tempered by the proximity of the eastern jungles, is relatively mild, with the lower Urubamba valley being a few degrees warmer than the Cuzco basin. Rainfall is limited and confined to a 4-month period between December and April. The vegetation consists primarily of grasses, low bushes, and cactuses.

Settlements

The city of Cuzco was as much the hub of the imperial heartland as it was the sacred center of Tawantinsuyu, or the Kingdom of the Four Quarters. Various Inca policies and practices gave the capital city a cosmopolitan character, effectively creating a microcosm of the empire (Cieza de León 1962: 243; Hyslop 1990: 63-65; Rowe 1967; Zuidema 1983). Inca Cuzco had two principal sectors: the sacred inner core inhabited by the Inca nobility, priests, and government officials, and the outlying residential districts inhabited by lower nobility, ethnic lords, craft specialists and other mita popula
tions. Cuzco was further divided into quarters and halves by four main roads that intersected in the central plaza and led to the four great sectors of the empire (Hyslop 1990: 57-59). Each quarter of Cuzco was associated with one of the four imperial quarters of the empire, Chinchaysuyu and Antisuyu being associated with the upper (hanan) half of Cuzco, and Collasuyu and Cuntisuyu being associated with lower (hurin) Cuzco. The population of the metropolitan area at the time of the Spanish conquest is estimated at approximately 100,000 (Rowe 1967; Ruiz de Arce 1933; Sancho 1917).

The land surrounding Cuzco, including the immediately adjacent Vilcanota-Urubamba valley, was intensively developed by the Inca. This region, which constitutes the imperial heartland, contains almost continuous tracts of finely built agricultural terraces, paved roads, hydraulic works, and Inca residences (MacLean 1986; Niles 1982, 1993). Nearly every Inca ruler maintained an estate in the sacred Urubamba valley (Niles 1987; Rowe 1985). These properties were lavishly constructed and served as country retreats for the ruling elite. Examples include the sites of Ollantaytambo, Machu Picchu, Chinchero, Calca, Huayllabamba, Yucay, Quispiguan

Other types of settlements in the imperial heartland include planned residential communities, which typically contained from 15-70 single-room rectangular structures with fieldstone foundations arranged in rows (Bouchard 1983; Gasparini and Margolies 1980; Hef
ceman 1996; Kendall 1974, 1985; Niles 1984, 1987). Such towns are normally found on hillsides between 200-500 m above the valley floor, affording easy access to the valuable agricultural lands below (Niles 1987: 44-46). Niles (1987: 24-58) suggests that the standardized structures at these sites were built to house nuclear families and that they were probably utilized by agricultural workers fulfilling their labor tribute obligations to the state.

Architectural elements that appear to be exclusive to the imperial heartland include the use of perforated stones such as eye bonders and ring stones in construction (Kendall 1985: 262); triple-jamned niches and windows (Kendall 1985: 264); and asymmetrical, steeply sloped gabled roofs (Kendall 1985: 272). The widespread use of fine-cut stone masonry in constructions and higher densities of Inca polychrome pottery (Lunt 1984, 1987) are other characteristics of the heartland. Interestingly, the region contains few examples of qollka or kallanka (Gasparini and Margolies 1980: 67-68).

Economy

The subsistence base of the Inca was agricultural, and production was tightly controlled by the state (Morris 1982, 1985; Murra 1980; Rowe 1946). Land improvements, which included the construction of terraces, irrigation canals, and dams, were undertaken
by the state on a massive scale and intended to increase agricultural yields (Malpass 1987; Morris 1982; Niles 1982; Sherbondy 1982). Such works are especially evident in the imperial heartland. The two most important crops in the Andes were maize, which can be grown up to 3500 m above sea level, and potatoes, which can be cultivated to almost 4000 m. Of the two, maize held considerably more ceremonial and symbolic significance (Murra 1960). The fertile soils and warmer temperatures of the sheltered Urubamba valley made it particularly well suited to the production of maize and other valued items such as aji (hot pepper) (Niles 1993; Rostworowski 1962). Hunting and fishing also figured in the local economy (Villanueva 1970). The produce from the royal estates supported the ruler and his court during his lifetime and was used to maintain the ruler’s descendants and his mummy cult after his death (Cobo 1964, bk. 12, ch. 4, 3:155; Conrad and Demarest 1984; Niles 1987, 1993).

The Inca state economy was a redistributive one that exploited ancient principles of reciprocity to its own benefit (D’Altroy and Earle 1985; Morris 1982, 1985; Murra 1980; Wachtel 1977). Morris describes this system as “institutionalized reciprocity.” Taxes were paid in the form of labor rather than in kind, and each community was required to cultivate the lands appropriated by the Inca state in its district (Murra 1980; Rowe 1946). The produce from these lands went to state storage facilities and was used to support imperial activities (D’Altroy and Earle 1985; LaLone 1982; Morris 1967). Specific goods associated with the Inca state, including pottery, cloth, and metal artifacts, were produced by full-time craft specialists who were retained by the state and often lodged in the vicinity of Cuzco (Julien 1993; Morris 1974). Neither trade nor markets figured prominently in the Inca economy (Murra 1980, 1995). Nonlocal goods were normally acquired through direct access to or control over vertically differentiated zones of production (Murra 1975, 1985). Such products were funneled to the imperial capital and subsequently redistributed by the state (D’Altroy and Earle 1985; Murra 1980).

Sociopolitical Organization

The imperial heartland constituted the core of the Inca empire. As such, it served as a model of social, political, cosmological, and spatial organization. The Inca built upon the traditional Andean system of social organization, which rested on the notion of ayllu. The ayllu was a corporate group whose members exchanged labor and were often related through kinship. An Andean community was typically made up of several distinct ayllus, each of which constituted an endogamous entity. Polygyny was practiced by the Inca elite, and the wives and offspring of the emperor formed a royal ayllu known as a panagua (Rowe 1946; Zuidema 1990). The principal wife of the Inca ruler, the Coya, was his sister. Inheritance was reckoned bilaterally, with daughters inheriting from their mothers, and sons from their fathers (Silverblatt 1987).

Inca society was highly stratified with the “Incas-by-blood” of the Cuzco lineages making up the uppermost echelons of the status hierarchy. These were the occupants of the sacred central precinct of Cuzco. Each Inca ruler, whether living or mummified, maintained a palatial residence within the imperial center for his wives, children, and retainers. Below the royal lineages were the “Incas-by-privilege,” a class consisting mainly of the original, non-Inca inhabitants of the Cuzco valley, individuals who had distinguished themselves through outstanding service to the state, and all those whose native language was Quechua (Rowe 1946; Zuidema 1990). Members of this class, together with the provincial nobility, who were the next tier in the sociopolitical hierarchy of the state, maintained residences in the perimeter districts surrounding the capital (Agurto 1980; Chávez Ballón 1970; Hyslop 1990: 35). The latter were typically ethnic elite who had ruled their provinces prior to the Inca conquest. Below this stratum were the commoners, the backbone of the Inca state, who made their living through agricultural labor (Bauer 1992a; Murra 1980; Rowe 1946; Zuidema 1989, 1990).

In the imperial heartland, members of this class occupied the planned residential communities that lay beyond the suburban perimeter of Cuzco (Hyslop 1990: 49–50; Niles 1984).

Religion and Expressive Culture

As the sacred center of the Inca empire, Cuzco served as the focal point of state ceremonial and religious activity. Most Inca ceremonies and ritual were conducted in the open air, the great plaza of Huaca­pata serving as one of the principal sites of state religious activity (Rowe 1946). Inca state ceremonies typically involved elaborate sacrifices, dances, drinking, and recitations. State rituals were attended by the emperor and the entire royal court as well as the mummies of former rulers, which were brought out from their temples together with the images of religious deities (Conrad and Demarest 1984; Pizarro 1921 [1571]; Rowe 1946; Zuidema 1973).

The Coricancha, a temple dedicated to the cult of the sun god Inti located in hurin Cuzco, was the most
sacred shrine in the empire. Inti was the most powerful deity in the imperial pantheon next to the creator god Wiracocha. The Inca emperor, who fashioned himself as the son of the sun, claimed linear descent from the solar deity to legitimate his power. The cult of the sun was the official religion of the Inca state, and it was imposed throughout the empire. Although the deities of the subject populations were not eradicated, the images of these gods were taken to Cuzco where they were essentially held hostage (Conrad 1981; Rowe 1946).

The Coricancha was the origin point of the 41 vectors making up the Inca ceque system (Zuidema 1964, 1977, 1983). The ceque system represented a unique form of spatiotemporal organization that integrated the agricultural cycle, astronomy, calendrics, religious ritual, kinship, and social divisions with the physical landscape of the surrounding area through a series of conceptual lines defined by specific landmarks (Zuidema 1964, 1983, 1990). The imperial heartland contains a high density of these landmarks, which were considered to be huacas or holy places. Over 350 huacas are located within a 20-mile radius of Cuzco (Bauer 1992b; Coboo 1964, bks. 13, 14; Rowe 1979; Zuidema 1964). These include temples and other buildings, cult objects, tombs, battlefields, hills, caves, springs, forts, lookout points, and rock outcrops (Rowe 1946: 296, 1979; Zuidema 1964).

References

Inca


Rowe, John H. (1967). "What Kind of a Settlement was Inca Cuzco?" Nawa Pacha 5: 59-76.


Antisuyu

TIME PERIOD: c. 530-468 B.C.

LOCATION: Eastern slopes and foothills of the Andes, encompassing the tropical montane forest zone known as the ceja de montaña ("eyebrow of the jungle"), stretching an indeterminate distance to the northwest and southeast from Cuzco into Ecuador and Bolivia.

DIAGNOSTIC MATERIAL ATTRIBUTES: Lack of formal Inca road; use of local fieldstone for constructions; lack of fine cut-stone masonry; agricultural terraces associated with sites.

CULTURAL SUMMARY

Environment

The eastern quarter of the empire, known as Antisuyu, incorporates the montane forest zone of the eastern slopes of the Andean cordillera. The swift rivers and deep canyons characteristic of this zone region create an extremely broken topography. It is a region of high rainfall and dense vegetation with temperatures ranging between 0-15 °C. The upper portion of this zone, known as the ceja de montaña, is a permanent cloud forest where relative humidity typically exceeds 90 percent. The eastern montane forest is home to numerous animal species including monkeys, jaguars, snakes, bears, and colorful birds whose feathers were highly
prized. It is a zone of unparalleled ecological diversity. Plants of particular economic importance from the montaña include the hardwood chonta, medicinal herbs, chili peppers (aji), and hallucinogenic plants. Coca, a plant of considerable ritual importance for the Inca, is also native to this zone. The eastern tropical montane forest has traditionally been considered a cultural and ecological transition zone between the highlands and the Amazonian lowlands. The imperial boundaries of this rugged sector have never been clearly defined. It was generally viewed as an inhospitable environment by highland dwellers, was difficult to access, and is sparsely populated even today.

Settlements

Hyslop (1984: 265) notes that Antisuyu was never furnished with a primary Inca road. Hence there was no direct linkage to the imperial capital or internal connections between the different provinces of this quarter. Most entries into this region were made via side roads that branched north or east off the main imperial highway. Hyslop suggests that road construction in this sector was particularly difficult because of the dense vegetation and steep slopes. What roads are found in the Antisuyu quarter are necessarily narrow and required considerable effort to engineer.

Few Inca sites have been identified in the Antisuyu district. Those present appear to be small scale and primarily residential in nature, generally conforming to local settlement patterns and utilizing similar construction techniques. The primary distinguishing feature at sites believed to have an Inca component is the presence of rectangular structures; these contrast sharply with the circular forms favored by the local population (Bonavia and Ravines 1968; Isbell 1968; Schjellerup 1992: 359-360; Thompson 1971, 1973). In the case of Abiseo (also known as Gran Pajaten), for instance, both structural types exhibit the same construction technique and utilize the same locally available schist slabs for construction material (Bonavia 1968a; Bonavia and Ravines 1968: 156; Rojas Ponce 1967). Most of the late prehistoric period sites in the Antisuyu district typically have large tracts of agricultural terracing associated (Bonavia 1967–1968: 276–278, 1968b; Bonavia and Ravines 1968: 157; Isbell 1968; von Hassel 1965: 301, 305).

Cochabamba, in the Chachapoyas province of northeastern Peru, is one of the only reported sites with obvious Inca architecture and pottery within the Antisuyu quarter (Bandelier 1907, 1940; Schjellerup 1979–1980, 1984, 1998). Several compounds at Cochabamba are outfitted with doors and baths exhibiting fine cutstone masonry, although the main construction technique involves low picchu-style wall foundations supporting toqto or adobe upper walls (Schjellerup 1984: 164–169). Imperial Inca polychrome pottery has also been recovered at the site (Schjellerup 1984: 169). In addition, numerous rectangular storage structures (qollka) have been documented in the vicinity of Cochabamba (Schjellerup 1984: 172–176).

There are no major Inca administrative centers in Antisuyu (Bonavia 1978, 1981). Lyon (1981: 4) suggests that much of the intent of Inca settlement in Antisuyu was defensive, although cultivation of specialty crops such as coca, cotton, and chili pepper, and access to valued resources were also likely to have been important considerations. Gade (1979) conjectures that the minimal Inca presence in Antisuyu was related to the threat of tropical disease. He points out that the few Inca sites found in this region are all situated above 2700 m, well beyond the range of the flies that carried the dreaded leishmaniasis pathogen endemic to the region below 2400 m. Lyon (1981) believes that the limits of imperial expansion in Antisuyu may have been tied to transportation considerations, noting that Inca sites seem to terminate at the point along any given river system where canoe transport becomes imperative (see also Renard-Casevitz and Saignes 1988: 52, who make a similar point with respect to the range of llamas).

Based on historical information, it has generally been assumed that numerous military installations existed along the eastern border of the empire for defense against marauding hordes of tropical forest dwellers. The Ortiz inspection of 1567 (1972: 25–50), for example, mentions that there were three or four Inca fortresses positioned east of Huánuco to guard the frontier, Saignes (1985: 18–28) notes early reports of such fortifications in the upper Beni river region of northeastern Bolivia (see also Denevan 1966: 23). The archaeological evidence amassed to date, however, does not substantiate the ethnohistoric reports (Hyslop 1990: 157–160). A high concentration of military sites has been documented in eastern Bolivia near the boundary of the Andean-Amazonian macroregions (Byrne de Caballero 1978; Nordenskiöld 1917, 1942, 1956–1957), but the evidence for Inca fortifications diminishes as one proceeds northwest along the edge of the eastern frontier into Peru and Ecuador (Hyslop 1990: 157–160). For all the historical speculation, there is remarkably little archaeological evidence of Inca fortifications along the eastern frontier.

The eastern montane forests were traditionally viewed as a zone of refuge by highland peoples
The subsistence base of the Inca was agricultural, and production was tightly controlled by the state (Morris 1982, 1985; Murra 1980; Rowe 1946). Land improvements, which included the construction of terraces, irrigation canals, and dams, were undertaken by the state on a massive scale and intended to increase agricultural yields (Malpass 1987; Morris 1982; Niles 1982; Sherbondy 1982). The two most important crops in the Andes were maize, which can be grown up to 3500 m above sea level, and potatoes, which were cultivated to almost 4000 m. Of the two, maize held native to the montaña zone of Antisuyu, where it grows between 500 and 1800 m elevation (Plowman 1981). The terracing found at Inca sites in Antisuyu was likely dedicated to coca and/or maize production (Bonavia and Ravines 1968; Donkin 1984: 122–125; Ishell 1974; Raymond 1988: 296–297).

The Inca state economy was a redistributive one that exploited ancient principles of reciprocity to its own benefit (D’Altroy and Earle 1985; Morris 1982, 1985; Murra 1980; Wachtel 1977). Morris describes this system as “institutionalized reciprocity.” Taxes were paid in the form of labor rather than in kind, and each community was required to cultivate the lands appropriated by the Inca state in its district (Murra 1980; Rowe 1946). The produce from these lands went to state storage facilities, such as those reported at Cochabamba in the Chachapoyas district, and was used to support imperial activities (D’Altroy and Earle 1985; LaLone 1982; Morris 1967). Specific goods associated with the Inca state, including pottery, cloth, and metal artifacts, were produced by full-time craft specialists who were retained by the state and often lodged in the vicinity of Cuzco (Julien 1993; Morris 1974).

Although in general markets and trade did not figure prominently in the Inca economy (Murra 1980, 1995), there may have been somewhat more emphasis on trade and exchange on the eastern frontier (Gade 1972; Lyon 1981; Myers 1981; Renard-Casevitz and Saignes 1988: 70–73; Uhle 1909). The tropical forests east of the Andes were the source of a number of important products, including hardwoods, coca, feathers, wax, honey, medicinal herbs, and hallucinogens, but the Inca never succeeded in completely dominating this important resource zone. Rather, the imperial boundary seems to have remained fairly porous along the this frontier, with the Inca trading back and forth across it.

### Economy

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### Sociopolitical Organization

One of Pachacuti’s first imperial gestures after defeating the Chanca and securing the Cuzco basin was to annex the lower Urubamba valley, portions of which came to be associated with Antisuyu (Cabello Balboa 1951: 300–301; Sarmiento 1943: 100–110). Additional campaigns were undertaken in this quarter by Pachacuti’s heir, Topa Inca, to expand Inca control of the region (Cabello Balboa 1951: 334–335; Cobo 1979: 142; Sarmiento 1943: 128–130). Huayna Capac, who succeeded Topa Inca c. 507 B.C.E., also fought a number of battles along the eastern frontier, subduing the rebellious Chachapoyas of northeastern Peru and the Chiriguano of northeastern Bolivia during his reign (Cabello Balboa 1951: 361; Cieza 1973: 226–228; Cobo 1979: 154; Sarmiento 1943: 142). In general, the eastern edge of Tawantinsuyu seems to have been a fluid frontier against which the Inca expanded and receded several times in the face of strong resistance from the local population.

The archaeological evidence indicates that the eastern flanks of the Andean cordillera were densely occupied during the Regional States (Late Intermediate) period (Bonavia 1967–1968; Church 1996; Hastings 1985; Onuki 1983; Schjellerup 1992). The inhabitants of this region lived in nucleated settlements located in readily defensible positions on hilltops or ridges. Each village seemingly operated as an independent political entity with a structure based on the Andean model of the ayllu (Espinoza 1967; Oberem 1980; Renard-Casevitz et al. 1988; Schjellerup 1998). There is no evidence that the ethnic groups of Antisuyu were ever politically unified. The residents of this region maintained extensive contacts with both Amazonian and Andean groups and were participants in a vast exchange network (Myers 1981; Reeve 1994).

The Inca generally regarded the inhabitants of Antisuyu as unpredictable savages and cannibals, the antithesis of civilized society (Cieza 1962: 439; Renard-Casevitz and Saignes 1988). Yet there was also a certain respect accorded the inhabitants of this region as masters of an environment that highland dwellers
perceived as dangerous. The most powerful shamans and sorcerers hailed from this realm. Various scholars have suggested that the eastern slopes were colonized by highlanders as early as the Middle horizon (Bonavia 1964; Bonavia and Ravines 1967: 62, 1968; Hastings 1985; Kaufman 1987; Lyon 1981: 9; Raymond 1976). The Inca may have relocated some relatively compatible mitmaq populations to Antisuyu (Cieza de León 1962: 393; Lyon 1981: 7; Rostworowski 1963), it does not appear that they required highland subjects to live there except on a temporary basis to perform labor service (Gade 1979: 275) or that they themselves ever resided in this region.

Inca society was highly stratified with the “Incas-by-blood” of the Cuzco lineages being the uppermost echelons of the status hierarchy. Below them were the “Incas-by-privilege,” a class consisting mainly of the original, non-Inca inhabitants of the Cuzco valley, individuals who had distinguished themselves through outstanding service to the state, and all those whose native language was Quechua. The provincial nobility was the next tier in the sociopolitical hierarchy of the state. Members of this class were typically the ethnic elite who had ruled their provinces prior to the Inca conquest. Below this stratum were the commoners, the backbone of the Inca state, who made their living through agricultural labor (Bauer 1992; Mura 1980; Rowe 1946; Zuidema 1989, 1990).

The Inca governed their empire through a highly formalized hierarchical system. At the apex stood the Inca sovereign, who ruled by divine right and claimed lineal descent from the sun. Below him were the lords of the four sectors (suyu) of the empire, who oversaw the imperial governors of each of the provinces within their sector. The provincial governors purportedly each had responsibility for 10,000 families. Following a decimal system of organization, there were two tiers of Inca officials below the governor, the higher of which supervised two subordinates responsible for the management of 500 families each. Local ethnic leaders, known as curacas, served as intermediaries between the imperial hierarchy and the local populace. Theoretically, each curaca had under his control 100 families (Julien 1982; Rowe 1946).

Religion and Expressive Culture

Inca religion was fundamentally animistic insofar as inanimate objects were understood to have a spiritual content. The sun and moon, certain stars, the sea, the earth, rivers and springs, hills, snow-capped peaks, caves, and outcrops all had special significance for the Inca. Rocks were particularly laden with symbolic meaning; numerous Inca myths reference the transformation of men into stones or vice versa. Special boulders or outcrops of particular importance were often integrated into Inca architecture or became the focal points of imperial sites around the empire (Cobo 1990; Rowe 1946; Zuidema 1990).

Within Andean society, ritual was an essential aspect of daily life. People engaged in private acts, such as the sharing of coca or praying to the snow-capped peaks (apu), which expressed deeply held religious beliefs everyday. Public ceremonies of the Inca were elaborate, highly formal affairs. The state ceremonial calendar corresponded closely to the agricultural cycle of the highlands, with many rituals explicitly linked to crop productivity. Public ceremonies were also performed during times of crisis and to mark important historic events such as the coronation or death of the emperor. Most such ceremonies involved the exhibition of sacred idols and images, dancing, feasting, oratory, and the heavy consumption of corn beer (chicha). Public ceremonies were typically conducted outdoors (Rowe 1946; Zuidema 1990).

Sacrifices accompanied nearly every religious rite and often involved guinea pigs, llamas, coca, and chicha, although children were sometimes immolated as well. Guaman Poma (1936: 268–269) depicts residents of Antisuyu offering a small child and a plate of burning fat to several hilltop huacas and an anthropomorphized jaguar. He indicates in the text that the people of Antisuyu worshiped the jaguar (uwurunqo), the great snake (amaru), and the coca plant, and that they made sacrifices of children, white guinea pigs (conejo blanco), coca, maize, mullo (Spondylus shell), feathers, and blood to the hilltop dieties.

Ethnic groups in the Andes typically had their own distinctive style of dress. Guaman Poma (1936: 167) depicts the captain from Antisuyu clothed in a feather garment wearing a crownlike headdress, and holding a bow and arrow. A sheaf of arrows is arrayed on his back like a large halo. Rowe (1946: 275) notes that the principal weapon of the Indians of Antisuyu was the bow and arrow and that this was a device used exclusively by the lowland tribes. Guaman Poma (1936: 175) represents a female from this region wearing only a short skirt and a bead necklace. She is depicted barefoot, appears to have a stomach tattoo, and is attended by a bird and a monkey. In his illustrations of people from Antisuyu, Guaman Poma usually represents them half-naked (1936: 291, 322), a convention likely intended to signal their uncivilized character.
The dead were generally considered a source of protection in the late pre-Columbian era. They were guardians (mallki) to whom descendants could appeal for special favors or requests. Inca rulers were typically mummified on death and retained as valued state advisers and lineage patriarchs in the sacred temple of the Sun (Coricancha) in Cuzco. Common people were normally buried in caves or rock shelters with offerings of food, pottery, and clothing. In the imperial provinces, burial practices followed traditional norms and varied considerably, although the interments of ethnic elite frequently contained Inca-style items. Guaman Poma (1936: 291-292) suggests that the Indians of the Anti-suyu region typically buried their dead inside hollow tree trunks in the jungle.

References


Chinchaysuyu

**TIME PERIOD:** 537–468 B.P.

**LOCATION:** Central and northern Andean highlands from the imperial capital of Cuzco to the Ecuadorian-Colombian border, stretching from the Pacific coast to the eastern montaña.

**DIAGNOSTIC MATERIAL ATTRIBUTES:** Large administrative centers; stand-alone monumental platforms as seen at Huánuco Pampa and Ingapirca; royal highway more formally elaborated; use of stone superstructure and fiber suspension bridges.

**CULTURAL SUMMARY**

**Environment**

Chinchaysuyu, as the northern quarter of the Inca empire was known, was the second largest in size, encompassing all of modern Ecuador and more than two-thirds of Peru. Stretching from the Pacific coast of northern Peru to the tropical slopes of the eastern Andes, it embraced the spectrum of Andean ecozones from desert coastal plains to intermontane valleys and plateaus to the steamy jungles of the eastern slopes. Moving from south to north, the Andes drop in elevation, and the climate becomes correspondingly moister, with the dry puna of the central highlands giving way to the wetter páramo grasslands of the Ecuadorian sierra. Given that many of the major drainages in this sector flow north and cast, there was greater opportunity for contact between highland Andean and tropical eastern lowland groups. The ecological and ethnic diversity of this sector of the empire engendered a very heterogeneous approach to imperial Inca rule.

**Settlements**

The capital city of Cuzco was linked to the provinces of Chinchaysuyu through a highland and a coastal road. The Cuzco-Quito segment of the **capac nisn**, or royal Inca road, was the most elaborate and elegantly constructed in the entire empire (Hyslop 1984: 257). Unlike other stretches of the Inca highway, this 2000-km-long segment evidences formal construction consisting of stone pavement, sidewalks, stairs, and bridges along its entire length. The coastal road was not nearly as elaborate, many of the barreño sections between irrigated valleys consisting of little more than a footpath (Hyslop 1984: 260–262). On the north coast, in particular, the Inca appeared to have simply adapted the preexisting road network of the conquered Chimú. No other sector of the empire had as many large Inca administrative centers situated along the **capac nisn** as the Cuzco-Quito route of Chinchaysuyu (Hyslop 1990: 257, 279). Examples of such centers include Hatun Xauxa (Costin et al. 1989; D’Altroy 1981, 1877, 1992; D’Altroy and Hastorf 1984; Earle et al. 1987; Hastorf 1983, 1990, 1993), Pumé (Brown 1991; Matos 1994), Huánuco Pampa (Morris and Thompson 1983), and Ingapirca (Fresco 1983, 1984). Common features of these Inca administrative centers include buildings of fine stone masonry, quantities of Inca polychrome pottery, and a central plaza typically flanked by large rectangular structures, or **kallanka** (Gasparrini and Margolies 1980; Hemmings and Rainey 1982; Hyslop 1984, 1990). In addition to housing military personnel and state corvee laborers, the **kallanka** also served as the focal point of civic-ceremonial and public feasting events.

Other buildings at these sites known as **aqllawasi** functioned as warehouses for the state’s ‘chosen women’ (Silverblatt 1987). The central plazas of the provincial sites typically contained an **ushnu**, or royal dais, as well. Another common element of the Inca administrative centers in this sector of the empire were rows of round, tower-like structures known as **qollka**, which served as state storage facilities (D’Altroy and Hastorf 1984; Morris 1967). These are particularly prevalent at the sites of Huánuco Pampa and Hatun Xauxa. Inca administrative centers were typically built on unoccupied land. As these were the principal state constructions, Inca occupation of this sector had relatively little impact on existing settlement patterning.

In the far northern highlands of Ecuador, the Inca constructed a variety of different site types including **pucaras**, or hilltop fortresses (Almeida 1984; Bray 1991, 1992; Oberem 1969; Plaza Schuller 1976); tambos, or roadside facilities (Meyers 1976; Oberem 1988); administrative centers (Fresco 1983, 1984; Hyslop 1984: 19–34; Salomon 1986); and **huacas**, or shrines (Dorsey 1901; Hyslop 1984: 19–34; McEwan and Silva 1989). Tome-
bamba, located in the southern highlands of Ecuador, was the most important Inca center in the northern Andes (Alicia Franck 1982; Bumps 1887; Idrovo 1988, 2000; Uhle 1923). Various ethnographic and historic sources describe Tomebamba as a second Cuzco, suggesting that the site was deliberately created in the image of the sacred capital of the Inca empire (Cabello 1951; Cieza 1962: 142–147). Coyocotur is a finely carved rock outcrop located in the same Cañari territory. The tambu of San Agustín de Callo, approximately 65 km south of Quito, is the northernmost known example of fine Inca masonry (Bedoya 1978: 193–204; Hyslop 1984: 284).

Whereas the Inca presence in the far northern highlands is well attested, there is little to no Inca architecture on the north coast (Hyslop 1990: 40). Sites situated along the royal highway on the north coast show no characteristics of Inca architecture. Archaeological investigation at several of these sites, including Farfan (Keating and Conrad 1983), Chiquitoy Viejo (Conrad 1977), and Tambo Real (Helsley 1980), demonstrate, rather, that the architecture was quite varied. As Lumbreras (1974: 221) suggests, where urbanism and its attendant infrastructure were extant, as in the case of Chimú, the Inca apparently preferred to continue using local administrative centers, architecture, and engineering works (also Hyslop 1990: 40–54, 250). As a consequence, settlement patterns changed little on the north coast with the imposition of Inca rule (Ramirez 1990). The chief evidence of Inca influence in this area is the presence of Inca polychrome pottery and Inca local hybrid wares (Bonavia and Ravines 1971; Hayashida 1994, 1999; Hyslop 1990: 40).

The same is true for the northern Peruvian highlands in the vicinity of Cajamarca and Huamachuco (Hyslop 1984: 56–67). Various archaeological investigations have failed to produce any significant evidence of Inca occupation, although it is known that this region was incorporated into the empire early on (Pineda 1980; Reichlen and Reichlen 1970: 498; Thatcher 1972; Topic and Chiswell 1992; Topic and Topic 1993).

**Economy**

The subsistence base of the Inca was agricultural, and production was tightly controlled by the state (Morris 1982, 1985; Murra 1980; Rowe 1946). Land improvements, which included the construction of terraces, irrigation canals, and dams, were undertaken by the state on a massive scale and intended to increase agricultural yields (Malpass 1987; Morris 1982; Niles 1982; Sherbondy 1982). The two most important crops in the Andes were maize, which can be grown up to 3500 m above sea level, and potatoes, which can be cultivated to almost 4000 m. Of the two, maize held considerably more ceremonial and symbolic significance (Murra 1960). Coca, another highly valued crop in the pre-Columbian world with a limited production range, was known to have been cultivated in the coastal valleys of this sector (Plowman 1984: 133; Rostworowski 1970, 1973, 1988).

The Inca state economy was a redistributive one that exploited ancient principles of reciprocity to its own benefit (D’Altroy and Earle 1985; Morris 1982, 1985; Murra 1980; Wachtel 1977). Morris describes this system as “institutionalized reciprocity.” Taxes were paid in the form of labor rather than in kind, and each community was required to cultivate the lands appropriated by the Inca state in its district (Murra 1980: Rowe 1946). The produce from these lands went to state storage facilities such as those found at Hatun Xauxa and Huáñaco Pampa and was used to support imperial activities (D’Altroy and Earle 1985; LaLone 1982; Morris 1967). Specific goods associated with the Inca state, including pottery, cloth, and metal artifacts, were produced by full-time craft specialists who were retained by the state and often lodged in the vicinity of Cuzco (Julien 1993; Morris 1974).

Although in general trade and markets did not figure prominently in the Inca economy (Murra 1980, 1995), there appears to have been somewhat more emphasis on commerce and exchange in the Chinchaysuyu district. The importance of long-distance traders (mindaláes) comparable to the pochicaca of the Aztec world is well documented in the far northern highlands (Rappaport 1988; Salomon 1978, 1986). Long-distance exchange was also an important aspect of several coastal economies within the Chinchaysuyu province as well (Morris 1988; Ramirez 1990; Rostworowski 1970, 1975; Sandweiss 1992). It is interesting to note that the zones where commercial activity has been documented are generally located at the outer edges of imperial Inca control (Patterson 1987).

**Sociopolitical Organization**

The annexation of Chinchaysuyu was initiated during the northern campaigns of Pachacuti and Topa Inca, which began c. 537 C.E. The far northern reaches of this sector were consolidated by Huayna Capac during the last decade of that century (Rowe 1945, 1946). Many different ethnic groups occupied this region prior to the Inca expansion. These ranged in level of political development from the statelike organization of the Chimú on the north coast of Peru, to the smaller chiefdoms of northern Ecuador, to the bellisico tribes of the Cañari region. The
politics of the northern and central highlands offered varying amounts of resistance prior to capitulating to the Inca invaders. The Wanka groups of the upper Mantaro valley of the central highlands fell rather rapidly to Inca forces (D’Altroy 1992: 77-79); the Caranqui of northern Ecuador were said to have defended their territory against the Inca for 17 years (Bray 1991, 1992; Sijón y Caamaño 1914; Oberem 1969, 1981). The northernmost reach of Tawantinsuyu was extended almost to the Colombian border during the reign of Huayna Capac.

The Kingdom of Chimu, which encompassed the entire coast of Peru north of the Chincha valley, rivaled that of the Inca in the mid-16th century in terms of size and wealth. But the Chimu were defeated by Inca forces under the command of Topa Inca (Rowe 1946). The Chimu king was subsequently exiled to Cuzco and a puppet ruler installed in his place (Cieza 1973: 206; Davies 1995: 132-136). The Inca admired the accomplishments of the Chimu and the skill of their artisans. Large contingencies of Chimu potters and metal workers were deported to Cuzco and pressed into service for the state (Cieza 1973: 206; Netherly 1988).

Inca society was highly stratified with the “Incas-by-blood” of the Cuzco lineages, the uppermost echelons of the status hierarchy. Below them were the “Incas-by-privilege,” a class consisting mainly of the original, non-Inca inhabitants of the Cuzco valley, individuals who had distinguished themselves through outstanding service to the state, and all those whose native language was Quechua. The provincial nobility was the next tier in the sociopolitical hierarchy of the state. Members of this class were typically the ethnic elite who had ruled their provinces prior to the Inca conquest. Below this stratum were the commoners, the backbone of the Inca state, who made their living through agricultural labor (Bauer 1992; Murra 1980; Rowe 1946; Zuidema 1989, 1990).

The Inca governed their empire through a highly formalized hierarchical system. At the apex stood the Inca sovereign, who ruled by divine right and claimed lineal descent from the sun. Below him were the lords of the four sectors (suyus) of the empire, who oversaw the imperial governors of each of the provinces within their sector. The provincial governors purportedly each had responsibility for 10,000 families. Following a decimal system of organization, there were two tiers of Inca officials below the governor, the higher of which supervised two subordinates responsible for the management of 500 families each. Local ethnic leaders, known as curacas, served as intermediaries between the imperial hierarchy and the local populace. Theoretically, each curaca had under his control 100 families (Julien 1982; Rowe 1946).

Religion and Expressive Culture

Inca religion was fundamentally animistic insofar as inanimate objects were understood to have a spiritual content. The sun and moon, certain stars, the sea, the earth, rivers and springs, hills, snow-capped peaks, caves, and outcrops all had special significance for the Inca. Rocks were particularly laden with symbolic meaning; numerous Inca myths reference the transformation of men into stones or vice versa. Special boulders or outcrops of particular importance were often integrated into Inca architecture or became the focal points of imperial sites around the empire (Cobo 1990; Rowe 1946; Zuidema 1990). The Inca typically sought to arrogate the sacred power of local luacas and holy places to themselves by installing state constructions at these sites, as seen, for example, in the case of Pachacamac, Ingapirca, and La Plata island in Chinchaysuyu.

Within Andean society, ritual was an essential aspect of daily life. People engaged in private acts, such as the sharing of coca or praying to the snow-capped peaks (apu), which expressed deeply held religious beliefs everyday. Public ceremonies of the Inca were elaborate, highly formal affairs. The state ceremonial calendar corresponded closely to the agricultural cycle of the highlands, with many rituals explicitly linked to crop productivity. Public ceremonies were also performed during times of crisis and to mark important historic events such as the coronation or death of the emperor. Most such ceremonies involved the exhibition of sacred idols and images, dancing, feasting, oratory, and the heavy consumption of corn beer (chicha). Public ceremonies were typically conducted outdoors in one of the central plazas (Rowe 1946; Zuidema 1990).

Sacrifices accompanied nearly every religious rite and typically involved guinea pigs, llamas, coca, and chicha, although children were sometimes immolated as well. Guaman Poma (1936: 266) depicts residents of Chinchaysuyu offering the lord of Pachacamac a child and a plate of food. He indicates in the text that different ethnic groups within Chinchaysuyu made different types of offerings, the Wanka, for instance, sacrificing dogs, conejo (guinea pig), food, coca, and mullu (Spondylus shell), while the Yauyos presented chicha, mullu, food, and conejos (Guaman Poma 1936: 267).

Ethnic groups in the Andes typically had their own distinctive style of dress, with affiliation most often signaled through headgear. Guaman Poma (1936: 165) depicts the war captain from Chinchaysuyu wearing a traditional uncu, or knee-length shirt, with fringed leggings and sandals. A large, double-ringed headdress envelopes his face, and he holds a club and a spear.
Guaman Poma represents a woman from this district wearing a typical floor-length dress with a waistband composed of individual design squares and a long shawl fastened in front by a tupu pin (1936: 173). The Chinchaysuyu damsel wears a skullcap for headgear and holds a small coca purse in one hand and a possible weaving implement in the other.

The dead were generally considered a source of protection in the late pre-Columbian era. They were guardians (mallbacki) to whom descendants could appeal for special favors or requests. Inca rulers were typically mummified upon death and retained as valued state advisers and lineage patriarchs in the sacred temple of the Sun (Coricancha) in Cuzco. Common people were normally buried in caves or rock shelters with offerings of food, pottery, and clothing. In the imperial provinces, burial practices followed traditional norms and varied considerably, although the interments of ethnic elite frequently contained Inca-style items. Guaman Poma (1936: 289-290) indicates that the norm for residents of the Chinchaysuyu district was to bury the dead in smaller-sized domed towers that may have served as family crypts.

References


Binghamton. University Microfilms.


Collasuyu

TIME PERIOD: 570-468 B.P.

LOCATION: Southern Andean highlands, encompassing the Titicaca basin and most of Bolivia, northwestern Argentina, and northern Chile.

DIAGNOSTIC MATERIAL ATTRIBUTES: Lack of large administrative centers; large burial towers of fine cut stone; use of the corbeled arch; decorative stepped motif associated with earlier Tiwanaku culture incorporated into Inca niches, doors, and lintels; lack of cut-stone masonry south of the Titicaca basin; rectangular rather than trapezoidal wall apertures south of the Titicaca basin.

CULTURAL SUMMARY

Environment

Collasuyu was the largest quarter of the Inca empire. Lying to the south of Cuzco, it stretched from the desert shores of the Chilean coast to the edge of the tropical eastern lowlands in Bolivia and south into the highlands of northwestern Argentina. The most salient aspect of the Collasuyu environment was the altiplano, an immense high-altitude plateau some 800 km in length, the central feature of which is lake Titicaca. This enormous body of water mitigates the severity of the alpine environment, permitting the cultivation of potatoes and quinoa around its perimeter from 3500-3900 m above sea level. Above these limits, the dry puna grasslands support immense herds of llamas and alpacas. The lands around lake Titicaca were densely settled by Aymara-speaking peoples and was highly productive, making them an early target of Inca expansionism.

Settlements

The Collasuyu road was less elegant than that of the northern quarter, but this does not imply that it was any less utilized or important (Hyslop 1984; Stehberg and Carvajal 1988). As Hyslop (1984: 264) suggests, it may well have been a function of the more level terrain in this sector, which only would have required less engineering effort. There is a curious lack of large-scale Inca administrative centers in the Collasuyu district (D'Alt-
Inca

ry et al. 1999; Davies 1995: 139; Fock 1961; Gasparini and Margolies 1980: 118; Hyslop 1990: 279; Ryden 1947; Tschopik 1946). Probable imperial centers in Collasuyu rarely exceed 5 ha in size, which is considerably smaller than similar sites in the northern quarter (Hyslop 1990: 279). There is, however, a high density of _qollkas_ in Collasuyu, according to Hyslop (1990: 95), though they are typically smaller in size than those found elsewhere.

On the _altiplano_, the Inca appeared to have modified preexisting settlement patterns by forcing people to relocate from fortified hilltop sites to new towns situated around the lakeshore (Cieza 1973: 83; Hyslop 1990: 119; Julien 1983). Hyslop's (1976, 1977, 1979) survey work in this region offers some confirmation of this imperial strategy. Late prehistoric-period habitation units in the Collasuyu district were usually round (Hyslop 1984: 306; Ryden 1947; Tschopik 1946). The use of the corbeled arch, an ancient architectural tradition in the _altiplano_, was incorporated into Inca structures in the Collasuyu province, as seen in the _chulpas_ at Sillustani and the Pico Kayma palace on the Island of the Sun (Gasparini and Margolies 1980: 153–156). The Inca also used the stepped motif derived from the antecedent Tiwanaku culture as a decorative device in some of their constructions in this region (Kendall 1985: 39).

No certain Inca storage facilities have been identified in the entire area around lake Titicaca (Hyslop 1984: 291), although there are large numbers of _qollkas_ in the Cochabamba district of Bolivia (Wachtel 1982). Numerous rectangular enclosures have been found in association with Inca tambos in Collasuyu, however, particularly in Northwest Argentina (Hyslop 1990: 292). These features have been interpreted as corrals for camelids, one of the principal resources of this region. If they served as state holding pens, these structures might be viewed as the functional equivalent of _qollkas_ for animals (Hyslop 1990: 180–185).

There is little evidence of fine Inca masonry south of the central part of Bolivia (Dillehay and Gordon 1988; Hyslop 1990: 4; Iriarte 1978; Niemeyer 1986; Niemeyer and Schiapacassee 1988; Santoro and Muñoz 1981). Rather, the Inca seem to have adapted existing settlements to suit their own residential and administrative needs. This is especially true in Argentina and Chile, where, despite obvious evidence of Inca occupation (Caldererari and Williams 1991; Williams 1991), there are no good examples of planned settlements or fine stone masonry constructions (González 1983). A construction technique involving the use of either double rows of fieldstones or partially worked stones bonded with mud mortar was an important attribute of Inca construction in this region (Lynch 1993: 132, Raffino 1981: 77).

Square or rectangular wall apertures are found almost to the exclusion of the trapezoidal form south of lake Titicaca (González 1983: 341; Hyslop 1990: 10, 285). There is also a notable lack of carved boulders and outcrops south of central Bolivia (Hyslop 1990: 125). Hyslop (1990: 285) suggests the possibility that the southernmost portion of Collasuyu was ruled indirectly by the Inca via the indigenous polities of the Titicaca basin.

The southern border of the Inca empire is not entirely clear but likely reached to the Maipo river just south of Santiago, Chile (Hyslop 1984: 212, 1990: 156; Silva 1977–1978, 1983). Unlike the northern frontier, which was heavily fortified, there is little evidence of military installations or defensive features along the southern border (Hyslop 1990: 155–163).

**Economy**

The subsistence base of the Inca was agricultural, and production was tightly controlled by the state (Morris 1982, 1985; Murr 1980; Rowe 1946). Land improvements, which included the construction of terraces, irrigation canals, and dams, were undertaken by the state on a massive scale and intended to increase agricultural yields (Malpass 1987; Morris 1982; Niles 1982; Sherbondy 1982). The two most important crops in the Andes were maize, which can be grown up to 3500 m above sea level, and potatoes, which can be cultivated to almost 4000 m. Of the two, maize held considerably more ceremonial and symbolic significance (Murr 1960).

The chief resource of Altiplano region was the extensive camelid herds that grazed in the higher puna zone west of lake Titicaca (Murr 1965). Fishing also figured prominently in the economies of the ethnic groups that inhabited the shores of lake Titicaca (Julien 1983; Ramos Gavilán 1976). Several scholars have suggested that the principal reason for the Inca occupation of the far southern reaches of Collasuyu (Northwest Argentina and Chile) was the exploitation of mineral wealth (González 1983; Llagostera 1976).

The Inca state economy was a redistributive one that exploited ancient principles of reciprocity to its own benefit (D’Altroy and Earle 1985; Morris 1982, 1985; Murr 1980; Wachtel 1977). Morris describes this system as “institutionalized reciprocity.” Taxes were paid in the form of labor rather than in kind, and each community was required to cultivate the lands appropriated by the Inca state in its district (Murr 1980; Rowe 1946). The produce from these lands went to state
storage facilities such as those found at Cochabamba in Bolivia and was used to support imperial activities (D’Altroy and Earle 1985; LaLone 1982; Morris 1967; Wachtel 1982).

Specific goods associated with the Inca state, including pottery, cloth, and metal artifacts, were produced by full-time craft specialists who were retained by the state (Julien 1993; Morris 1974). In the Collasuyu district, for instance, the Inca established a large community of specialized weavers, feather workers, and potters dedicated to full-time production for the state near Huancane at the north end of lake Titicaca (Murra 1978; see also LaLone and LaLone 1987; Lorandi 1984). Neither trade nor markets figured prominently in the Inca economy (Murra 1980, 1995). Nonlocal goods were normally acquired through direct access to or control over vertically differentiated zones of production (Murra 1975, 1995). Such products were funneled to the imperial capital and subsequently redistributed by the state (D’Altroy and Earle 1985; Murra 1980).

Sociopolitical Organization

The Collasuyu region, birthplace of the much admired Tiwanaku civilization, held special significance for the Inca. The sanctuaries of the Copacabana peninsula and the islands of the Sun and Moon in lake Titicaca were among the holiest shrines in the Andean world. The conquest of the lord of this region, the Colla Capac Zapana, and the annexation of his kingdom was purportedly one of the first objectives of Inca expansionism under Pachacuti (Cieza 1962, ch. 41-43; Cobo 1979: 141; Sarmiento 1943: 109). According to historical sources, Bolivia, Northwest Argentina (Tucuman), and Chile were subjugated during the independent reign of Topa Inca (529–507 B.P.) (Rowe 1946), although there is some evidence of contact prior to imperial consolidation (Muñoz and Chacana 1990; Pärsinnen and Siirtäinen 1997).

The altiplano was originally the home of the Aymará, a large Andean population sharing a common language distinct from Quechua (Cieza de León 1962: 260–263; Diez de San Miguel 1964 [1567]: LaBarre 1948). Important ethnic divisions included the Qolla, Lupaqa, and Paejas (Julien 1983: 42). Murra (1968, 1970) provides an analysis of an Aymará kingdom as it existed in the mid-16th century. The Inca classified the people of the Titicaca basin into two groups: the Aymará and the Uru. The Aymará were the wealthier, higher-status group that had a herding and farming economy; the Uru, who were poorer and considered lower-status, lived on reed islands in or at the edges of lake Titicaca and made their living through fishing and weaving (Julien 1982, 1983).

In the altiplano region, the Inca built on the indigenous political organization, which was based on hereditary dynasties (Julien 1983). Hyslop (1977, 1979) suggests that the strength of some of the local leaders was enhanced and underwritten by the Inca, as in the case of the Lupaqa leader Cari. In Northwest Argentina and Chile, pre-Incaic social organization was more on the order of tribes than chiefdoms, which may, in part, account for the Inca’s more minimal investment in these areas (González 1983).

Inca society was highly stratified with the “Incas-by-blood” of the Cuzco lineages making up the uppermost echelons of the status hierarchy. Below them were the “Incas-by-privilege,” a class consisting mainly of the original, non-Inca inhabitants of the Cuzco valley, individuals who had distinguished themselves through outstanding service to the state, and all those whose native language was Quechua. The provincial nobility was the next tier in the sociopolitical hierarchy of the state. Members of this class were typically the ethnic elite who had ruled their provinces prior to the Inca conquest. Below this stratum were the commoners, the backbone of the Inca state, who made their living through agricultural labor (Bauer 1992; Murra 1980; Rowe 1946; Zuidema 1989, 1990).

The Inca governed their empire through a highly formalized hierarchical system. At the apex stood the Inca sovereign, who ruled by divine right and claimed lineal descent from the sun. Below him were the lords of the four sectors (suyu) of the empire, who oversaw the imperial governors of each of the provinces within their sector. The provincial governors purportedly each had responsibility for 10,000 families. Following a decimal system of organization, there were two tiers of Inca officials below the governor, the higher of which supervised two subordinate responsible for the management of 500 families each. Local ethnic leaders, known as curacas, served as intermediaries between the imperial hierarchy and the local populace. Theoretically, each curaca had under his control 100 families (Julien 1982; Rowe 1946).

Religion and Expressive Culture

Inca religion was fundamentally animistic insofar as inanimate objects were understood to have a spiritual content. The sun and moon, certain stars, the sea, the earth, rivers and springs, hills, snow-capped peaks, caves, and outcrops all had special significance for the
Inca. Rocks were particularly laden with symbolic meaning; numerous Inca myths reference the transformation of men into stones or vice versa. Special boulders or outcrops of particular importance were often integrated into Inca architecture or became the focal points of imperial sites around the empire. The Inca typically sought to arrogate the sacred power of local huacas and holy places to themselves by installing state constructions at these sites, as seen, for example, in the case of the Islands of the Sun and Moon in lake Titicaca (Cobo 1990; Rowe 1946; Zuidema 1990).

Within Andean society, ritual was an essential aspect of daily life. People engaged in private acts, such as the sharing of coca or praying to the snow-capped peaks (apu), which expressed deeply held religious beliefs everyday. Public ceremonies of the Inca were elaborate, highly formal affairs. The state ceremonial calendar corresponded closely to the agricultural cycle of the highlands, with many rituals explicitly linked to crop productivity. Public ceremonies were also performed during times of crisis and to mark important historic events such as the coronation or death of the emperor. Most such ceremonies involved the exhibition of sacred idols and images, dancing, feasting, oratory, and the heavy consumption of corn beer (chicha). Public ceremonies were typically conducted outdoors in one of the central plazas (Rowe 1946; Zuidema 1990).

Sacrifices accompanied nearly every religious rite and typically involved guinea pigs, llamas, coca, and chicha, although children were sometimes immolated as well. Guaman Poma (1936: 270) depicts residents of Collasuyu offering the lord of the mountain a black llama and bundles of coca. He indicates in the text that different ethnic groups within Collasuyu made different types of offerings, the Puquipasquilla, for instance, sacrificing white llamas, chicha, mullu (Spondylus shell), and fish, while the Pumacanches presented gold and silver and children of 12 years of age (Guaman Poma 1936: 271).

There seems to have been a disproportionately large number of mountaintop offertory shrines in Collasuyu. Of 35 such high-altitude sites identified by Beorchia, 32 were found in Chile, Argentina, and Bolivia (see also McEwan and Silva 1989: 177–181; Reinhard 1996; Schofberger 1966). Most of these contain buildings or enclosures of low stone walls and small platforms (González 1983: 351). Beyond these mountaintop imitations, no important Inca religious sites have been identified south of Samaipata in southwestern Bolivia (Meyers 1993; Meyers and Ulbert 1998).

Ethnic groups in the Andes typically had their own distinctive style of dress, with affiliation most often signaled through headgear. Julien (1983: 43) reports that the diagnostic element of dress among the Qolla proper was the man’s headdress, which consisted of a tall brimless hat that narrowed at the top. Guaman Poma (1936: 169) depicts the war leader from Collasuyu sporting a truncated conical headdress bearing a lunate emblem on the front and a distinctive necklace that may relate to the hat. The captain holds a spear in one hand and a bolaslike object in the other. Rowe (1946: 275) states that the Collasuyu were experts in the use of the multisranded bolas as a weapon. Guaman Poma represents an elite female from this region wearing a floor-length skirt, a long shawl fastened in front by a tupu pin, and a distinctive cowl-like head cover (1936: 177). With her one exposed hand, she points to a small dog standing near her feet. The Aymaras of the Collasuyu district practiced cranial deformation through the application of pressure to the infant’s skull (Rowe 1946: 236–237). The hat shapes represented by Guaman Poma (1936: 169, 177, 324) may correspond to the distinctive modified head shapes of the Collasuyu.

The dead were generally considered a source of protection in the late pre-Columbian era. They were guardians (mallik) to whom descendants could appeal for special favors or requests. Inca rulers were typically mummified on death and retained as valued state advisers and lineage patriarchs in the sacred temple of the Sun (Coricancha) in Cuzco. Common people were normally buried in caves or rock shelters with offerings of food, pottery, and clothing. In the imperial provinces, burial practices followed traditional norms and varied considerably, although the interments of ethnic elite frequently contained Inca-style items. Guaman Poma (1936: 293–294) suggests that the Collasuyu typically buried their dead in stone towers known as chulpas. Under Inca influence, some local elite constructed chulpas with Cuzco-style fine masonry (Hyslop 1990: 119).

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Cuntisuyu

TIME PERIOD: 524-468 B.P.

LOCATION: Southwest quarter of the empire extending from Cuzco to the Pacific coast, the northern boundary intercepting the coast in the vicinity of the Chinchua valley, and the southern limit located near the Moquegua valley.

DIAGNOSTIC MATERIAL ATTRIBUTES: A suite of architectural features in the coastal sector, including the use of rectangular adobe bricks in architecture, plastered and sometimes painted wall surfaces, structures with joined rooms, flat rather than gabled roofs, and the occasional use of friezes as a decorative device; lack of formal road construction in much of the quadrant.

CULTURAL SUMMARY

Environment

The small southwestern sector of the Inca empire known as Cuntisuyu includes the region around Arequipa and the near south coast of Peru. This quarter is dominated by the dry western slopes of the cordillera and the desert coastal plain. Normally no rain falls
below approximately 1800-m elevation in this region, leaving the western flanks and coastal plain barren of vegetation. The coastal zone of Cuntisuyu is minimally watered by a number of rivers that exit the mountains during the highland rainy season. Because the coastal plain is wider in this region than it is farther north, several of these rivers, including the Ica and the Nazca, expire well before reaching the sea. For this reason, most population centers are found several kilometers inland. The coastal climate is conditioned by the effects of the Humboldt current, a cold flow that sweeps north along the coast, producing moderate air temperatures ranging between 66-73° F.

Settlements

The Inca road system within the Cuntisuyu district is not well documented (Hyslop 1984: 222). From Cuzco, the royal road to Cuntisuyu apparently exited the south side of the central plaza and passed through the ancient parish of Belén on the outskirts of the city (Urton 1990: 24). It continued through the province of Paruro, proceeding south to a point at which it crossed the Apurimac river over a famous suspension bridge spanning a 45-m gorge (Bauer 1990: 54-58; Urton 1990: 24, 92-93). From the Apurimac, the royal road likely proceeded south toward the region of Arequipa, although the exact route has not been documented (but see Stanish and Pritzker 1983). Bauer’s (1990: 58) survey of the region south of Cuzco suggests that the Inca relied heavily on preexisting road networks in this area. In the coastal zone of Cuntisuyu, Hyslop (1984: 262) notes that there is a lack of formally constructed Inca roads. This is particularly noteworthy insofar as the Inca ruins in this sector are more pronounced than elsewhere on the Pacific coast.

Relatively few Inca sites have been identified in the highland sector of Cuntisuyu. The largest known is that of Maucaullacta, located approximately 20 km south of Cuzco (Bauer 1990: 142-160, 185-200; Kendall 1985: 377-383; Muelle 1945; Pardo 1946). This site features fine cut-stone masonry, a U-shaped plaza, and a series of triple-jamb niches (Bauer 1990: 143-144). Maucaullacta is an exceptional site for a number of reasons: it has a unique, fan-shaped layout that ignores common principles of Inca site planning (Hyslop 1990: 219-220); it is located well off the main Inca highway; its central plaza lacks an ushua; and there are no quilla associated with it (Bauer 1990: 151-160). Based on the archaeological and ethnohistoric evidence, Bauer (1990: 154) suggests that Maucaullacta was an Inca religious center intimately linked to the Inca origin myth (also Urton 1990: 32-37).

One of the few other Inca sites reported from the highland sector of Cuntisuyu is Torata Alta, located in the upper Moquegua valley (Stanish and Pritzker 1983). This site, one of the southernmost in the empire, evidencing an orthogonal layout (Hyslop 1990: 197), has been interpreted as a small Inca administrative center.

Although essentially uniform, Inca architecture admitted some local variation to allow for the availability of different building materials and to accommodate local conditions. This is especially apparent in the case of coastal Cuntisuyu, where the Inca adapted their state architecture to the traditions of the local cultures and the hot, dry climate (Gasparini and Margolies 1980: 4; Hyslop 1990; Menzel 1971; Rowe 1946: 229; Wallace 1971). Fine Inca masonry is rare on the coast, having been observed at only a handful of sites, including Paredones in the Nazca valley (Hyslop 1990: 284, 328, n.13) and Huaytará in the upper Pisco valley (Gasparini and Margolies 1980: 255-259). One of the best preserved Inca sites on the south coast is Tambo Colorado in the Pisco valley (Engel 1957; Menzel 1959, 1971; Urteaga 1938-1939). With its great trapezoidal plaza, laterally positioned ushua, tapia walls, and remnant polychrome paint, it constitutes a good example of an Inca installation that integrates Inca principles of organization with coastal technical traditions (Gasparini and Margolies 1980: 178).

Hyslop (1990: 267) suggests that the south coast shared a sufficient number of unique features to merit recognition as a distinct architectural subarea. These included the use of rectangular adobe bricks (Hyslop 1990: 267; Menzel 1959: 130); plastered and sometimes painted wall surfaces that utilized yellow, black, red, and white pigment (Kendall 1985: 52; Menzel 1959: 131); agglutinated rooms, flat roofs, the intermittent use of rectangular rather than trapezoidal niches and doors, and the occasional use of friezes as decorative devices (Hyslop 1990: 267, 285-286; Menzel 1959: 131). Unlike other parts of the empire, there is little evidence that sacred stones or rock outcrops affected the placement or organization of state facilities on the south coast (Hyslop 1990: 125).

Menzel (1959: 232) contends that where centralized authority and its attendant infrastructure were extant, as in the case of the Ica and Chincua valleys, the Inca preferred to utilize local centers, often adding no more than a few imperial-style structures (Hyslop 1990: 266-267; Menzel 1971; Menzel and Rowe 1966). Where the political infrastructure was lacking, as in the case of the Nasca, Acari, and Yauya valleys, the Inca established administrative centers apart from existing sites, leaving
the local villages essentially intact (Menzel 1959: 232). Consequently, local settlement patterns appear to have changed little with the imposition of Inca rule on the south coast (Hyslop 1990; Menzel 1959). The chief evidence of Inca influence in some sectors of the coast is the presence of imperial polychrome pottery and Inca-local hybrid wares (Kroeber and Strong 1924; Menzel 1971, 1976; Uhle 1924b).

Economy

The subsistence base of the Inca was agricultural, and production was tightly controlled by the state (Morris 1982, 1985; Murra 1980; Rowe 1946). Land improvements, which included the construction of terraces, irrigation canals, and dams, were undertaken by the state on a massive scale and intended to increase agricultural yields (Morris 1982, Niles 1982; Sherbondy 1982). Such state efforts are exemplified in the Coles valley, located to the northwest of Arequipa, which was extensively terraced (Malpass 1987; Shea 1987). The two most important crops in the Andes were maize, which can be grown up to 3500 m elevation in some cases, and potatoes, which can be cultivated to almost 4000 m. Of the two, maize held considerably more ceremonial and symbolic significance (Murra 1960). Fishing was an important component of the local economy on the south coast as was the extraction of guano (Cieza 1962: ch. 55; Julien 1985; Rostworowski 1974, 1977; Watanabe et al. 1990).

The Inca state economy was a redistributive one that exploited ancient principles of reciprocity to its own benefit (D’Altroy and Earle 1985; Morris 1982, 1985; Murra 1980; Wachtel 1977). Morris describes this system as “institutionalized reciprocity.” Taxes were paid in the form of labor rather than in kind, and each community was required to cultivate the lands appropriated by the Inca state in its district (Murra 1980; Rowe 1946). The produce from these lands went to state storage facilities and was used to support imperial activities (D’Altroy and Earle 1985; LaLone 1982; Morris 1967). Specific goods associated with the Inca state, including pottery, cloth, and metal artifacts, were produced by full-time craft specialists who were retained by the state and often lodged in the vicinity of Cuzco (Julien 1993; Morris 1974).

Although in general trade and markets did not figure prominently in the Inca economy (Murra 1980, 1995), there appears to have been considerable emphasis on commerce and exchange in the coastal sector of Cuntisuyu. The importance of long-distance exchange has been well documented for the Chincha valley of the south coast, and the Ica valley, with its tradition of fine pottery production, is implicated as well (Menzel 1976; Morris 1988; Rostworowski 1970, 1974, 1975; Sandweiss 1992).

Sociopolitical Organization

The highland sector of Cuntisuyu nearest Cuzco was home to several ethnic groups that came into the orbit of the Inca early on (Bauer 1990). Given their proximity to the imperial capital, they were among a number of surrounding groups designated as “Incas-by-privilege” by the state (Rowe 1946: 261). Archaeological and ethnohistoric evidence suggests that the Cuntisuyu quadrant was associated with the ancestral origins of the Inca people and thus held special significance (Bauer 1991; Urton 1990: 57-59). The indigenous people of this district were assigned to the lower status (hurin) moiety of the Inca and constituted eligible marriage partners for the Inca nobility (Urton 1990). Archaeological research suggests that this region was annexed rather than conquered by the Inca and that local settlement patterns were little affected by the change (Bauer 1990, 1992). The Arequipa region further to the south was likely brought under imperial control by either Pachacuti or his son Topa Inca by 529 B.P. (Julien 1991; Rowe 1945: 272-273).

The south coast was initially raided by Pachacuti’s general, Capac Yupanqui, c. 560 B.P., but not conquered (Menzel 1959; Rowe 1945: 270). A later campaign directed by Topa Inca c. 524 B.P. brought the south coast firmly under imperial control (Menzel 1959; Rowe 1945: 271-272). Although the Ica, Nazca, and Acari valleys reportedly submitted peacefully to Inca forces, there is some disagreement as to whether the Chincha yielded without a struggle or resisted (Davies 1995: 70-71).

The valley of Chincha, which lay almost due west of Cuzco, was one of the most powerful kingdoms on the coast during the Regional States (Late Intermediate) period. The lord of Chincha reportedly commanded 30,000 tributaries, ruled over a complex society organized according to occupational specialization, and maintained ties with distant lands through a vast network of seafaring merchants (Menzel and Rowe 1966; Rostworowski 1970, 1974, 1977). Rather than dismembering the Chincha polity, the Inca entered into a political alliance with this valley and bestowed on the lords of Chincha many privileges (Menzel and Rowe 1966; Morris 1988; Rostworowski 1970).

Inca society was highly stratified with the “Incas-by-blood” of the Cuzco lineages making up the uppermost echelons of the status hierarchy. Below them were the
“Incas-by-privilege,” a class consisting mainly of the original, non-Inca inhabitants of the Cuzco valley, individuals who had distinguished themselves through outstanding service to the state, and all those whose native language was Quechua. The provincial nobility was the next tier in the sociopolitical hierarchy of the state. Members of this class were typically the ethnic elite who had ruled their provinces prior to the Inca conquest. Below this stratum were the commoners, the original, non-Inca inhabitants of the Cuzco valley, outstanding service to the state, and all those whose individuals who had distinguished themselves through social stratification was already present, such as the Ica and Chicha valleys, evidence of Inca influence was concentrated among the elite. This suggests that local elite manipulated their relationship with the state to amplify preexisting social differences. In valleys like Acari, where the social hierarchy appears to have been less elaborated, Inca influence appears to more evenly distributed among the local population (Menzel 1959; Rowe 1956).

The Inca governed their empire through a highly formalized hierarchical system. At the apex stood the Inca sovereign who ruled by divine right and claimed lineal descent from the sun. Below him were the lords of the four sectors (suyu) of the empire who oversaw the imperial governors of each of the provinces within their sector. The provincial governors purportedly each had responsibility for 10,000 families. Following a decimal system of organization, there were two tiers of Inca officials below the governor, the higher of which supervised two subordinates responsible for the management of 500 families each. Local ethnic leaders, known as curacas, served as intermediaries between the imperial hierarchy and the local populace. Theoretically, each curaca had under his control 100 families (Julien 1982; Rowe 1946).

**Religion and Expressive Culture**

Inca religion was fundamentally animistic insofar as inanimate objects were understood to have a spiritual content. The sun and moon, certain stars, the sea, the earth, rivers and springs, hills, snow-capped peaks, caves and outcrops all had special significance for the Inca. Rocks were particularly laden with symbolic meaning; numerous Inca myths reference the transformation of men into stones or vice versa. Special boulders or outcrops of particular importance were often integrated into Inca architecture or became the focal points of imperial sites around the empire (Cobo 1990; Rowe 1946; Zuidema 1990). An example of this tendency in the Cuntisuyu quadrant is seen in the case of Puma Orca, an elaborately modified rock outcrop decorated with twin carved pumas, which is within visual proximity of the large Inca center of Maucallanca (Bauer 1990, 1991; Pardo 1946; Urton 1990: 57–61).

Within Andean society, ritual was an essential aspect of daily life. People engaged in private acts, such as the sharing of coca or praying to the snow-capped peaks (apu), which expressed deeply held religious beliefs everyday. Public ceremonies of the Inca were elaborate, highly formal affairs. The state ceremonial calendar corresponded closely to the agricultural cycle of the highlands, with many rituals explicitly linked to crop productivity. Public ceremonies were also performed during times of crisis and to mark important historic events such as the coronation or death of the emperor. Most such ceremonies involved the exhibition of sacred idols and images, dancing, feasting, oratory, and the heavy consumption of corn beer (chicha). Public ceremonies were typically conducted outdoors in the large central plazas (Rowe 1946; Zuidema 1990).

Sacrifices accompanied nearly every religious rite and frequently involved guinea pigs, llamas, coca, and chicha, although children were sometimes immolated as well. Guaman Poma (1936: 270) depicts residents of Cuntisuyu offering a child and a guinea pig to a small figure on a hilltop. He indicates in the text that the people of Cuntisuyu sacrificed guinea pigs (conuiri), silver, feathers, coca, mullu (Spondylus shell), raw meat, and children of 12 years of age to the sea, the hills, and the vapas (Guaman Poma 1936: 273).

Ethnic groups in the Andes typically had their own distinctive style of dress, with affiliation most often signaled through headgear. According to Uhle (1903: 39), the inhabitants of Cuntisuyu wore braided cords (lluaut’a) of different colors coiled around the head. Guaman Poma (1936: 171) depicts a war captain from Cuntisuyu wearing a rolled headband, a probable lluat’a, holding a spear in one hand and a bladedike object in the other. The coastal tribes were reportedly experts in the use of spear throwers and darts as weapons (Rowe 1946: 273). Guaman Poma (1936: 179) portrays an elite female from Cuntisuyu, wearing a calf-length dress and a shawl pinned by a tupu, holding a small bird on her finger. The woman wears no headdress, calling attention to the broadly flattened shape of her head. Rowe (1946: 236–237) notes that cranial deformation was widely practiced among coastal tribes.

The dead were generally considered a source of protection in the late pre-Columbian era. They were guardians (mallki) to whom descendants could appeal
Inca rulers were typically mummified on death and retained as valued state advisers and lineage patriarchs in the sacred temple of the Sun (Coricancha) in Cuzco. Common people were normally buried in caves or rock shelters with offerings of food, pottery, and clothing. In the imperial provinces, burial practices followed traditional norms and varied considerably, although the interments of ethnic elite frequently contained Inca-style items (Menzel 1959, 1966, 1976, 1977; Uhle 1924a, 1924b). Guaman Poma (1936: 295–296) suggests that the Indians of the Cantusuy region had mortuary customs similar to those of the Collasuyu people, although the archaeological evidence indicates that coastal burials usually involved deep tombs (Cieza 1962: ch. 53; Menzel 1971, 1976, 1977: 8–10; Uhle 1924a, 1924b).

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SITES

Cuzco

TIME PERIOD: 562-468 B.P.

LOCATION: Cuzco is located in the south-central highlands of Peru at approximately 13° S latitude.

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Local Environment

Cuzco is situated at an elevation of 3400 m above sea level on an alluvial fan at the head of a high mountain valley surrounded by snow-capped peaks. The climate, which is tempered by the proximity of the eastern jungles, is relatively mild with a mean annual temperature of 40° F. Although there is little seasonal variation in temperature, there can be extreme differences between day and night. The region experiences a marked rainy season between December and April. The environment is classified as moist puna, and the vegetation consists primarily of grasses, low bushes, and cactus.

Physical Features

The Inca empire was centrally administered from the capital city of Cuzco. The founder of Cuzco was the first Inca king, Manco Capac, who, according to legend, conquered the earlier inhabitants of the valley and settled there with several brothers and sisters (Betanzos 1968; Rowe 1944; Valcarcel 1939; Zuidema 1990). Cuzco was subsequently rebuilt by Pachacuti during
the mid-15th century, to mark his miraculous defeat of the Chancas and to signal the imperial aspirations of the Inca (Betanzos 1968; Sarmiento de Gamboa 1943). With Pachacuti, Cuzco was transformed into a monumental representation of the power of the state, becoming both the symbolic and political center of the Inca world. In its dual role as the seat of government and the ceremonial center of Tawantinsuyu, the city encompassed aspects of both the sacred and the secular. Cuzco is recognized today as the oldest continuously inhabited city in the western hemisphere (Rowe 1944: 5). Although the importance of Inca Cuzco is obvious, surprisingly little archaeological work has been conducted there (but see Bauer 1992a; Dwyer 1971; Franco and Llanos 1940; Pardo 1957; Rowe 1944, 1957; Valcarcel 1934, 1935; Valencia 1970).

The political heart of the capital was situated between two canaled rivers, the Tullumay and the Saphy (Farrington 1983; Hyslop 1990: 34–35). The central precinct is said to be laid out in the shape of a puma (Gasparini and Margolies 1980: 45–51; Rowe 1968; see Zuidema (1985) for alternative interpretation), with the head being the great temple-fortress of Saqsaywaman, the underbelly the main public square of Huacaypata, and the tail ending in the confluence of the two rivers. The principal roads out of Cuzco, which led to the four quarters of the empire, intersected in the main plaza. These divided the city into quadrants as well as upper (hanan) and lower (furti) halves, reflecting fundamental principles of Inca social and spatial organization (Zuidema 1990).

One of the central features of Cuzco was the large central plaza, the floor of which was said to have been covered with a deep layer of sand imported from the Pacific coast (Hyslop 1990: 37–39; Polo de Ondegardo 1916: 109–110; Sherbondy 1982: 16). In the center of the plaza was a sacred rock sheathed in gold, to which offerings were made (Aveni 1981; Betanzos 1968: 33; Molina 1943: 30–31; Pizarro 1978; Zuidema 1981). The plaza was fronted on three sides by impressive buildings, including the.agllawasi (house of the chosen women), several kallanka (great halls), and the palace of Huayna Capac (Garcilaso 1966, Hyslop 1990: 40–44; Pizarro 1978; Rowe 1979).

Cuzco contained at least three major temples dedicated to the state deities. The greatest of these was the Coricancha, or the Temple of the Sun (Hyslop 1990: 44–48; Gasparini and Margolies 1980: 220–234; Lehmann-Nitsche 1928; Rowe 1979). Although the Coricancha was purportedly erected by Manco Capac as one of his first acts (Betanzos 1968: 14; Hyslop 1990: 32), it was subsequently rebuilt and greatly enhanced by Pachacuti (Betanzos 1968; Cieza 1967; Pizarro 1978). According to Spanish witnesses, the temple was awash in gold and housed both religious idols and the mummies of past Inca rulers (Pizarro 1978; Ruiz de Arce 1933; Sancho de la Hoz 1917). In addition, the Coricancha constituted the origin point of the Inca quque system, an abstract organizational schema involving the use of a series of radiating sight lines that integrated time, space, ritual, and social groups within a coherent framework (Bauer 1992b; Zuidema 1964, 1981, 1990).

At the opposite end of the city from the Coricancha was Saqsaywaman, the greatest architectural complex ever built by the Inca. Situated on a natural hill immediately above Cuzco, the temple-fortress of Saqsaywaman is a construction of Cyclopean proportion. Utilizing enormous cut-stone blocks, many weighing 100 tons or more, the Inca built three immense zigzag ramparts using the finest polygonal masonry (Garcilaso de la Vega 1966; Hemming and Ranney 1982). Above these walls, they constructed at least two great towers that served as storehouses for state property (Hemming and Ranney 1982; Pizarro 1978; Valcarcel 1934, 1935).

Cultural Aspects

Imperial Cuzco was a planned settlement deliberately constructed to showcase the power and wealth of the Inca rulers. The city stood both as a symbol of imperial might and a model of social and cosmological order (Hyslop 1990; Gasparini and Margolies 1980; Rowe 1968). In developing their own imperial style, the Inca likely drew on their knowledge of the architectural history of different Andean cultures gained through conquest: the monumentality of ancient Huari, the fine stonework of Tiwanaku, and the royal compounds of Chanchan (Gasparini and Margolies 1980: 44).

Only the royal Inca lineages (panagnas), priests, and government officials were permitted to live within the central precinct of the city, which served as the seat of religious-political activity. Each Inca ruler, whether living or mummified, maintained a palatial residence within the imperial center for his wives, children, and retainers. All others, including the “Incas-by-privilege,” provincial elites, craft specialists, and general laborers, lived in residential districts outside the limits of the sacred center (Agurto 1980; Chávez Ballón 1970; Hyslop 1990: 35–51). Various rules for entering and exiting the sacred city as well as for how to comport oneself within were strictly followed. The population of the entire metropolitan area at the time of the Spanish conquest has been estimated at 100,000 (Agurto 1980; Azevedo 1982; Ruiz de Arce 1933; Sancho 1917). As the sacred
and symbolic center of the Inca universe, Cuzco was the focal point of political, ritual, and ceremonial activity within the empire (Zuidema 1990).

References


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**Huánuco Pampa**

**TIME PERIOD:** 520-468 B.P.

**LOCATION:** Huánuco Pampa is located in the central Andean highlands of Peru near the headwaters of the Marañón river, approximately 700 km northwest of Cuzco on the royal Inca road to Quito.

**DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY**

**Local Environment**

The site of Huánuco Pampa is situated near the edge of a broad upland plain, or pampa, at an elevation of
nearly 3800 m above sea level. This cold, treeless environment, known as the puna, is characterized by expanses of thick, tough i chu grass punctuated by numerous small lakes and bogs. The puna is typically cold, rainy, and windy, with temperatures ranging from daytime highs of 21°C to near freezing at night. It is the native habitat of the Andean camelids (llamas and alpacas), while potatoes are the primary cultigen of this zone.

Physical Features

Because of its remote location, Huánaco Pampa is one of the best-preserved provincial Inca administrative centers in the empire. Located on the main Inca highway between Cuzco and the northern provinces, Huánaco Pampa contains the remains of nearly 4000 structures and covers an area of 2 sq km (Morris and Thompson 1985: 56). The site is dominated by an immense rectangular plaza over half a kilometer in length. In the center of the plaza sits a massive ushua, 32 × 48 × 4 m tall, constructed of fine-cut masonry (Shea 1966). The rest of the city, which radiates from the central plaza, is divided into four major sections (Harth-terre 1964; Morris 1984; Morris and Thompson 1970). The eastern sector contains the most impressive architecture and is believed to have been the palace compound of the Inca royalty (Morris 1976, 1984). Two magnificent kallanka and a series of eight fine cut-stone gateways with carved pumas link the great central plaza with the smaller interior courts of this compound. Residences of the qollka (chosen women) and associated workshops, where spinning, weaving, and brewing were undertaken, were identified in the northern sector (Morris 1974; Murra and Morris 1976). The numerous small circular structures found around the site, not a common element of Inca architecture, likely represent the residences of the local, non-Inca workforce (Morris and Thompson 1985: 62). On the hillside adjacent to the south of the city, the Inca erected orderly rows of some 500 storehouses, or qollka. Archaeological excavations revealed that these once contained potatoes, maize, and other foodstuffs received by the state as tribute (Morris 1972, 1974, 1976, 1986).

Cultural Aspects

Huánaco Pampa was one of the largest administrative centers in the Inca empire. Founded c. a.d. 1475 during the reign of Topa Inca, the center was constructed on a previously unoccupied site (Morris 1972), although the region immediately surrounding was inhabited by several different ethnic groups (Grosboll 1987; Ortiz de Zúñiga 1967, 1972; Thompson 1968, 1972; Thompson and Murra 1966). There are numerous structures present at the site, but it has been suggested that the permanent population was relatively small (Morris and Thompson 1985). The site contains no features that could be interpreted as defensive or military in nature (Gasparini and Margolies 1980: 103). Based on the archaeological evidence, Morris (1982, 1986) suggests that rather than having had a primarily bureaucratic or military function, Huánaco Pampa served essentially as a center of state hospitality and the ritual fulfillment of state obligations of reciprocity toward its subjects.

References


**Incallacta**

**TIME PERIOD:** c. 528–468 B.P.

**LOCATION:** Near the town of Pucuana, Cochabamba province, central Bolivia, at the eastern edge of the Inca empire.

**DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY**

**Local Environment**

Located at an altitude of approximately 3000 m above sea level, the site occupies a high river terrace between two streams. Vegetation at the site is dense and xerophytic.

**Physical Features**

Incallacta is considered a military fortification because of its defensive features and its strategic location (Hyslop 1990: 176). The central portion of the site, as well as the steep hill to the north, is enclosed by stone walls (Hyslop 1990: 176). The massive north wall reaches 5 m in height and is 1.5–2 m thick (Hyslop 1990: 180). Notable features of this wall include its zigzag layout reminiscent of Saqsaywaman, the small oblique windows built into the wall along certain segments, and the low stone bench attached to the interior side of the wall along which troops could have patrolled (Hyslop 1990: 180).

The central portion of the site is a large, irregularly shaped plaza divided into two halves by a large terrace wall (Ellefsen 1973a, 1973b; Gasparini and Margolies 1980: 119; Hyslop 1990: 83). Situated on the northeast side of the plaza is an immense rectangular structure, or *kallanka*, with 12 doors that face onto the plaza (Gasparini and Margolies 1980: 207–212). Numerous other structures including several stone circular foundations interpreted as *qollka* (storage houses), a possible barracks complex behind the large *kallanka*, and various other groupings of rectangular structures arranged around patios (*kancha*) are also present at the site (Gasparini and Margolies 1980: 119; Hyslop 1990: 179). Buildings at Incallacta are typically constructed of a double row of stones set in mortar; many of the walls were subsequently plastered and painted (Hyslop 1990: 179).

A large rock with an artificially flattened surface presumed to be an *ashnu* feature is found at the edge of the plaza rather than in the center, a situation noted at only a few other Inca sites, including Tambo Colorado and Pachacamac on the Peruvian coast (Hyslop 1990: 85, 179). Another interesting feature of the site is a unique towerlike structure with zigzag walls, thought to have calendrical or astronomical significance (Hyslop 1990: 227). Prominently located on a steep slope in the western sector of the site, the structure is approximately 7 m in length and 4.5 m tall (Hyslop 1990: 227).

**Cultural Aspects**

Incallacta is one of largest Inca military installations in the southern sector of the empire (Nordenskiold 1915). The site formed one of a series of fortifications protecting the Inca frontier against the unconquered tribes of the eastern lowlands (Gonzalez and Cravotto 1977; Hyslop 1990: 82–85, 176–180). Being more elaborate in construction than most Inca fortress sites, it is thought that Incallacta may have also served as the state administrative center for the region (Hyslop 1990: 182).

Construction of the site is attributed to the ruler Topa Inca Yupanqui. Historic sources, which refer to the site as Cuzcotuyo or Cuzcotuyo (Rowe 1985: 215–217), indicate that it was populated by *mitmaqkuna* and Inca lords (*orejones*) who were tasked with defending the area (Hyslop 1990: 176; Wachtel 1982). The site was reportedly attacked and partially destroyed by the Guarani, an eastern lowland tribe, in 1525 (Gasparini and Margolies 1980: 210).

**References**


Ingapirca

TIME PERIOD: 520-468 B.P.

LOCATION: Province of Cañar, southern highlands of Ecuador, about 35 km due north of Cuenca.

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Local Environment

The site is located at the upper, eastern end of the Cañar river basin in the bare, rolling hills of southern Ecuador. At an elevation of 3160 m above sea level, Ingapirca occupies a transitional zone between the fertile sub-Andean valleys and the cold wet grasslands, or paramos. The climate of this region is cool, with an average annual temperature of 10-14° C.

Physical Features

Ingapirca, which means “Inca walls” in Quechua, is a name loosely applied to archaeological ruins throughout the former Inca empire. In Ecuador, Ingapirca is the name given to the best-preserved Inca site in the country (Alcina Franch 1978; Bedoya 1978a; Cueva 1971; Fresco 1983). Located in Cañari territory, the site of Ingapirca contains both monumental architecture and high-quality stonework (Bedoya 1978a; Fresco 1984; Humboldt 1878; Juan and Ulloa 1748). The site is best known for a large oval structure of fine Inca masonry called El Castillo. The oval form is rare in Inca architecture (Gasparini and Margolies 1980: 289-299) and may, in this case, have had some astronomical significance (Ziolkowski and Sadow 1980). Other Inca constructions at the site include rectangular residential structures, storage units, waterworks, and agricultural terraces (Alcina Franch 1978; Bedoya 1978a, 1978b; Fresco 1984).

Archaeological evidence indicates that many of the Inca structures at Ingapirca were erected over preexisting architectural features. Radiocarbon dates and associated Cashaloma pottery indicate that the site was occupied by the local Cañari population prior to the Inca invasion of the region (Hyslop 1990: 262). The sector of the site referred to as Pilaloma is believed to have been the original Cañari precinct. Excavations in this area revealed a walled enclosure containing a series of rectangular rooms organized around a central patio. A monolith in the center of the patio marked the location of a shallow sepulcher containing the remains of 11 individuals and a wealth of funerary offerings, including Cashaloma pottery vessels, copper objects, and Spondylus shell (Fresco and Cobo 1978).

Cultural Aspects

The Cañaris were conquered by Topa Inca Yupanqui toward the close of the 15th century after considerable resistance (Engwall 1995; Oberem 1981; Salomon 1987). Ethnohistoric and archaeological data suggest that Ingapirca, known originally as Hatun Cañar, was the principal settlement and sacred origin place of the ancient Cañari nation (Arriaga 1922; Fock and Krener 1978; Idrovo 1979). A well-known strategy of Inca imperial expansion was to symbolically subordinate local deities and sacred places to the state religion. The superimposition of Inca structures over the Cañari capital likely reflects a conscious effort on the part of the Inca lords to dominate and coopt the sacred significance of this site.

References


Island of the Sun

TIME PERIOD: 528-468 B.P.

LOCATION: In the southern part of lake Titicaca, just off of the Copacabana peninsula, Bolivia.

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Local Environment

The mountainous Island of the Sun is located at the south end of lake Titicaca, the highest navigable body of water in the world. The elevation of the island is 3850 m above sea level, and the climate is generally cold and arid. The Island of the Sun, which is oriented northwest-southeast, is approximately 10 km in length. The associated Island of the Moon (Koati) is located approximately 5 km to the east.

Physical Features

The Island of the Sun, together with the nearby Island of the Moon and the Copacabana peninsula, made up one of the most sacred districts in the Inca empire. The most important part of this religious complex was the northern end of the Island of the Sun. The center of ritual activity at the north end was a large plaza associated with a great rock (Bandelier 1910; Hyslop 1990: 76-77; Stanish and Bauer 1999). In Inca times, this rock was said to have been covered with gold plates on one side and fine cumbi cloth on the other (Cobo 1964, Bk.13: Hyslop 1990: 77). Inca myths relate that the sun arose from within or behind the great rock (Hyslop 1990: 76-77). The plaza reportedly contained an altar and a large basin and was presumably the site of ritual libation and sacrifice (Cobo 1964, Bk.13; Hyslop 1990: 77-78).

The approach to the north end of the Island of the Sun was via a well-defined route along which were located a number of Inca structures and features. The most impressive of these is a two-story building at the south end of the island, known as Pico Kayma. This exceptional structure incorporates corbelled vaults and numerous floor chambers with double- and triple-jamb wall niches (Gasparini and Margolies 1980: 154). Other Inca buildings on the island included qollkas, a possible aqllawasi, and residential structures (Hemming and Ranney 1982: 58; Hyslop 1990). Fine Inca terraces also cover much of the Island of the Sun (Hyslop 1990: 286). At the north end, these terraces, together with a stone wall, form part of a barrier that partitions the sacred precinct (Hyslop 1990: 286).

Cultural Aspects

The islands of lake Titicaca were considered sacred by the local populace long before their appropriation by the Inca. It is likely for this reason that the islands figure so prominently in Inca origin myths. The Island of the Sun was variously construed by the Cuzqueños as the birthplace of the sun, of humankind, and of the Inca dynasty (Hemming and Ranney 1982: 54-64). The Inca structures found on the Island of the Sun and the nearby Island of the Moon were likely built during the reign of Topa Inca Yupanqui, following his reconquest of this region c. a.d. 1472 (Cobo 1964, Bk. 13: 190-191). Decorative elements such as the stepped motif and recessed cruciforms observed on some structures are reminiscent of Tiwanaku and suggest the use of local builders in their construction (Gasparini and Margolies 1980: 154).

Both historical and archaeological evidence indicates that the islands of the Sun and Moon were dedicated exclusively to religious activity and treated as an imperial Mecca by the Inca (Bandelier 1910; Hyslop 1990: 301-303; Mesa and Gisbert 1972; Ramos Gavilán 1976; Reinhard 1992: 101-109; Stanish and Bauer 1999). Pilgrims traveling to the sacred sanctuaries of the islands...
would undergo purification rituals on the Copacabana peninsula prior to crossing (Ramos Gavilán 1976). Landing at the south end of the Island of the Sun, the pilgrims would follow a processional route punctuated by various Inca buildings and features to the sacred northern promontory (Cobo 1964; Stanish and Bauer 1999). These structures presumably served as stations where specific rituals were performed as part of the sojourn (Hyslop 1990: 301–303). Finds of both Tiwanaku and Inca offertory artifacts off the northern tip of the island reflect the historic continuity of religious tradition in this region (Reinhard 1992: 103). Inca materials recovered from the underwater reef include numerous carved stone boxes and several miniature gold statuettes (Reinhard 1992: 101–109).

References

Machu Picchu

TIME PERIOD: c. 550–470 B.P.
LOCATION: 120 km northwest of Cuzco in the Urubamba river valley, Peru.

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Local Environment

The site of Machu Picchu, at 2560 m above sea level, sits atop a mountain saddle that drops precipitously on three sides to the Urubamba river 600 m below. At the north end of this spur rises the towering pinnacle of Huayna Picchu, while behind it hovers the peak of Machu Picchu, which gives its name to the site. The rugged eastern slopes of the Andes in this zone are dissected by fast-flowing streams and steep valleys of sheer granite cliffs. The climate is humid and rainy, supporting an extreme degree of biodiversity. The vegetation surrounding the site includes a dense tropical rainforest of hardwoods, bromelids, ferns, and grasses.

Physical Features

The site of Machu Picchu lay virtually undisturbed from the time of its abandonment in the early 16th century until its dramatic rediscovery by Hiram Bingham in 1911. Occupying a strategic position atop a steep ridge in the Urubamba canyon, this most famous of South American sites is recognized for its remarkable preservation and the extreme beauty of its architecture. Much of the hilltop on which the site sits was terraced. These terraces likely served both for agricultural purposes and erosion control (Hemming and Ranney 1982: 126). Machu Picchu lies at the end of a chain of Inca towns and agricultural stations connected by a spur of the royal Inca road (Hyslop 1990; Meisch 1985). The entire Urubamba valley, from Pisac to Machu Picchu, is full of ceremonial sites, small residential clusters, and large expanses of terraced agricultural works, suggesting the esteem in which the valley was held by the Inca (Fejos 1944; Niles 1988).

The site of Machu Picchu has three basic architectural elements: elite residential compounds, religious structures, and terraces. Staircases and sculpted rocks also abound at the site. The carved stones, with their stepped surfaces, carvings channels, and molded protrusions, were likely considered huacas, or sacred shrines (Hyslop 1990: 108–112; MacLean 1986). Many of the modified outcrops and boulders are incorporated into the architecture and most sectors of the site seem to have a sacred stone around which they were constructed (Bingham 1913: 471). The site is organized according to the Inca principle of upper (hanan) and lower (hurin) halves. These two halves occupy either side of a central plaza (Gasparini and Margolies 1980; Hemming and Ranney 1982). The western (hanan) sector contains the majority of the religious architecture, while the eastern half consists primarily of residential structures (Bingham 1913, 1979).

One of the most important temple groupings in the western sector is the Torrón. The main feature of this structure is a curved wall that surrounds a large carved
rock altar (Hemming and Ranney 1982: 133; Hyslop 1990: 229–232). Immediately below the Torreón is a natural cave into which the Inca carved several large niches and a stepped partition. Adjacent to the Torreón is a series of cascading "baths" or fountains. Beyond it lies a cluster of finely crafted residential structures known as the "King’s Group." From here, a long stairway leads to the most sacred sector of the site, at the heart of which is an open area known as the Sacred Plaza (Bingham 1979; Hemming and Ranney 1982). The plaza, delineated on the east side by the famous Temple of Three Windows, contains three structures into which are incorporated several phenomenally large building stones. Beyond the Sacred Plaza, a series of staircases leads to the summit of the religious complex, which is crowned by the famous carved stone projection known as the Intihuatana ("hitching post of the sun").

The eastern half of the city includes a dense concentration of residential structures representing a variety of architectural types including one-, two-, and three-story buildings, a double masma, and a barracks-like structure, or kallanka (Hemming and Ranney 1982). The domestic structures were typically arranged around a central courtyard to form a self-contained compound (kancha), although each compound at Machu Picchu was unique in some aspect (Bingham 1979: 79). The majority of these structures display features associated with elite architecture such as fine cut-stone masonry or double-jammed doors, suggesting the high status of their occupants. The site contains approximately 200 residential structures, which would suggest a total population of no more than 1000 (Hemming and Ranney 1982: 133).

Cultural Aspects

The construction of Machu Picchu was carefully planned and executed within a relatively short period, probably with the use of mit'a labor. The architecture is uniformly late imperial Inca in style (Hemming and Ranney 1982: 133). The site of Machu Picchu has lent itself to numerous interpretations, including that of frontier citadel (Bingham 1979), military outpost, sanctuary of the Inca's "chosen women" (Bingham 1913, 1979), astronomical observatory (Dearborn and Schreiber 1986; Dearborn and White 1982, 1983; Dearborn et al. 1987), sacred religious center (Reinhard 1991, 1992), and last refuge of the Inca (Bingham 1979; Valcárcel 1935).

However, the small size, fine masonry, and architectural components of the site combine to suggest that Machu Picchu was likely constructed as the royal estate of an Inca emperor (Rowe 1985). Such country estates would be visited periodically by the ruler and his royal retinue. Here the royal family would relax, hunt, and entertain other elites (Niles 1988). A document written in 1568 suggests that the imperial sector within which Machu Picchu is located pertained to the emperor Inca Pachacutí (Rowe 1985).

Over the course of investigations at the site, Bingham's crew located approximately 143 burials, the majority of which had simply been placed in shallow caves and crevices on the slopes below the urban area (Bingham 1913, 1979). The expedient nature of these burials, the paucity of associated grave goods, and the indicators of stress noted on the remains (Eaton 1916) suggest that these individuals were not of the elite class but more likely the servants and retainers of the Inca. This lends support to the interpretation of the site as a country estate of the Inca nobility.

Defensive features of the site include its strategic location atop a narrow ridge, the presence of a deep dry moat and double wall on the one approachable side, the sentry post atop Huayna Picchu, and the single, securable entry to the site at the southwest corner (Hemming and Ranney 1982). Although Bingham (1913, 1979) was impressed by the military value of these features, Fejos was not, suggesting that they more likely served to enforce sacred partitioning.

References

Ollantaytambo

TIME PERIOD: c. 560-468 B.P.

LOCATION: Southern highlands of Peru in the Urubamba river valley, approximately 70 km northwest of Cuzco.

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Local Environment

The site is located at the confluence of Patakancha and Urubamba rivers at an elevation of 2800 m above sea level. The climate is relatively arid, and the average annual temperature is 18°C.

Physical Features

Ollantaytambo is one of the best preserved examples of an Inca town and is particularly interesting for the variety of architectural styles, building types, and masonry techniques it exhibits (Bingham 1916; Pardo 1946; Protzen 1993; Sawyer 1980; Squier 1877). Ollantaytambo is also remarkable for the number of unfinished construction projects found there, the evidence of which remains in situ.

The site is dominated by a hilltop religious precinct known as the Fortress. On the alluvial floodplain below, the town of Ollantaytambo is divided into east and west sectors by the Patakancha river. The larger, eastern half is laid out on a grid that accommodates numerous walled residential compounds or kancha. These highly standardized compounds consisted of a central patio surrounded by four structures arranged so as to leave a small open courtyard in each corner (Bingham 1916; Gasparini and Margolies 1980; Protzen 1993). Each block in the grid system was a double compound that shared a central wall, although they were not otherwise linked. The western sector of Ollantaytambo, situated at the foot of the religious precinct, was not gridded but rather was organized around a central plaza (Protzen 1993: 66-70). The structures facing this main plaza are monumental in scale and exhibit unusually large doorways (Protzen 1993: 68). The area appears less residential and was more likely utilized for ceremonial or military purposes (Hyslop 1990: 194). Many of the structures in Ollantaytambo exhibit trapezoidal niches on the interior walls and prestigious double-jambed doors.

The religious or ceremonial sector of the site occupies a rocky spur overlooking the Urubamba river. An imposing flight of terraces with associated staircases leads to the main temple sector at the top. This component of the site was never fully finished. It is capped, however, by a spectacular megalithic wall of six elegantly carved monoliths, possibly intended to have been part of a temple or platform structure (Protzen 1993). Several aspects of the masonry found in the temple district, such as the subtly “tailed” joints in the “wall of the unfinished gate” (Harth-terre 1965: 158) and the stone fillet between the six great monoliths, are unique to Ollantaytambo (Protzen 1993). The stone for the structures in the temple district was quarried from an area 5 km away on the opposite side of the river (Hemming and Ranney 1982; Protzen 1986). The blocks were dragged to the construction site via an impressive ramp that was integrated into the southwestern flank of the temple hill. In addition to the temple sector, there are two other architectural units on the hilltop. These areas contain simpler rectangular structures of fieldstone and mortar construction (Llanos 1936; Protzen 1993). Above and below the main temple area are numerous carved rocks, fountains, and shrines (Hemming and Ranney 1982; Protzen 1993).

Much of the Urubamba valley in the Ollantaytambo region is elaborately terraced. Although these features were used for agricultural purposes, they also symbolized the ability of the Inca to dominate the landscape and their subject population. Finely engineered irrigation canals around Ollantaytambo brought water to terraces from sources as far as 10 miles away (Protzen 1993). Produce from the Ollantaytambo area was housed in narrow rectangular storage structures that cling to the steep slopes above and behind the main site (Nuñez del Prado 1966-67; Protzen 1993). The town was connected to the royal Inca road (capac runa) by a suspension bridge.
over the Urubamba river, the pier and abutments of which are still in use today (Protzen 1993: 20).

Cultural Aspects

The people of the pre-Incaic settlement of Ollantaytambo and the lower Urubamba valley were reportedly conquered by the Inca Pachacuti (Cobo 1964; Sarmiento de Gamboa 1943, ch. 35). Pachacuti subsequently absorbed Ollantaytambo into his personal estate and ordered the construction of elaborate buildings (Sarmiento de Gamboa 1943, ch. 40). The location of the site, its architectural features, the fine stone masonry, and the documentary evidence suggest that it functioned as a royal country estate of the Inca ruler Pachacuti (Niles 1988; Protzen 1993).

At least two Inca construction phases are recognized at the site (Gibaja 1984; Kendall 1985; Protzen 1993). The first pertains to the initial building period, which probably began around AD 1440. Both documentary evidence and the presence of specific masonry techniques at the site suggest that stonemasons from the Qollasuyu sector of the empire were brought to oversee construction (Hemming and Ranney 1982: 110; Sarmiento de Gamboa 1943, ch. 40: 12; Protzen 1993: 269). Several generations later, Ollantaytambo was used as the temporary headquarters of the rebel leader Manco Inca in his campaign against the Spanish. From this stronghold, Manco repelled Pizarro’s forces in 1536 (Hemming and Ranney 1982: 99–117; Pizarro 1978; Protzen 1993). The second episode of construction activity at the site, which involved both remodeling and new building, is attributed to Manco Inca’s postconquest occupation. A series of defensive features was probably added during this phase, including a chain of fortified guard stations, a strategic rechannelization of the Urubamba river, a flight of step outer terraces, and a formidable walled and gated entry at the eastern end (Protzen 1993).

Rumicucho

TIME PERIOD: 530–468 B.P.

LOCATION: On the equator, approximately 30 km north of Quito, Pichincha province, Ecuador.

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Local Environment

The site sits atop a low hill almost directly on the equator. The elevation of Rumicucho is 2405 m above sea level. The hilltop site is located at the edge of a semidesertic esplanade that drops off steeply into the canyon of the Guayllabamba river immediately to the east. The area receives very little rain (3–4 cm per year), is subject to frequent high winds, and has sandy soils and xerophytic vegetation.

Physical Features

The site of Rumicucho is traditionally described as a puquara or hilltop fortress, on the basis of its strategic...
location and presumed defensive terracing (Almeida 1984; Plaza 1976). But the archaeological materials recovered through excavation, together with other features of the site, suggest additional or alternative functions as well (Almeida 1984). Unlike other Inca fortresses, Rumicucho was not impregnable; there are no defensive ditches or moats, and the construction technique is finer than at most other pucaras.

The hill on which the site is located rises only 24 m above the plain, although it does afford a panoramic view of the surrounding region. Rumicucho occupies a portion of this hilltop, which measures 525 m long by 150 m wide and is oriented north-south. The top of the hill is ringed by a series of three concentric stone-faced terraces that give it the stepped appearance of a wedding cake. The terrace walls vary in height from 1-1.5 m. The hilltop is partitioned into five sectors or levels, each of which exhibits different types of features (Almeida 1984). The northernmost sector has a large open area enclosed by a stone wall and containing a small circular structure and a large rock (Almeida 1984: 27-29). The central sector, which is the highest, consists of a large rectangular platform that may have once held an uchum (Hyslop 1990: 98-99). A set of stairs at either end of this platform provides access to the adjacent levels. The southernmost sector, which contains the most complex architecture on the site, may have been the residential zone (Almeida 1984: 30). Access to this sector is limited to two baffled entryways in the surrounding enclosure wall. All of the walls at the site are of typical pirca construction, which involves the use of minimally finished and fitted stones for the exterior wall surfaces and the filling of the interior core of the wall with rubble (Almeida 1984).

Cultural Aspects

Topa Inca Yupanqui likely ordered construction of Rumicucho during or shortly after the first Inca incursion into northern Ecuador toward the end of the 15th century (Oberem 1981; Salvador Lara 1972, 1980). Its strategic hilltop location and its basic architecture suggest that Rumicucho may have served as a frontier garrison for Inca troops (Almeida 1984; Plaza 1976). The lack of armaments and other defensive features at the site, however, tends to undercut this interpretation. Other aspects of the site, such as the circular structures and its location on the equator, suggest that Rumicucho may have held some ceremonial or religious significance linked to astronomical phenomena (Almeida 1984: 116). The presence of considerable domestic debris, including both local Caranqui and imperial Inca pottery, stone and bone utensils, and quantities of faunal remains, suggests that the site had a significant residential component (Almeida 1984). The vast majority of the faunal remains recovered pertains to llama (Almeida 1984: 97-102). Excavations also produced a substantial number of bone artifacts related to textile manufacture, including needles, spindle whorls, and combs, suggesting specialized on-site production possibly related to tribute requirements (Almeida 1984: 77-84).

References


Samaipata

TIME PERIOD: 528-468 B.P.

LOCATION: Santa Cruz province, southwestern Bolivia.

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Local Environment

The site is located at an elevation of 1650 m above sea level on the eastern slopes of the Andes. The climate is pleasant and the vegetation lush.

Physical Features

Samaipata is the largest of all known carved rock outcrops in the Inca empire, its sculpted surface covering approximately 10,000 sq m (Hyslop 1990: 122; Trimborn 1959, 1967). The general orientation of this massive outcrop of variegated sandstone is east-west, as are the principal channels and troughs carved into its relatively flat upper surface. Hundreds of shelves and steps have been sculpted into the gently sloping south
face of the outcrop, while a series of elaborate rectangular niches adorns the north side (Hyslop 1990: 123). Spectacular relief carvings of felines, a bird, and a snake are found on the eastern side of the monument (D’Orbigny 1835-1847; Hyslop 1990: 123; Pucher 1945). Double zigzag channels forming three long, parallel rows of rhomboids are carved into the top of the outcrop. An unusual set of alternating rectangular and triangular shelves arranged in a ring is found on the highest elevation of the rock.

The Samaipata monument is associated with an Inca settlement that has not yet been fully mapped or tested (Meyers 1998). The estimated size of this settlement is approximately 30 ha (Rivera 1984: 46; Tapia 1984). Recent excavations have unearthed the remains of an Inca kullanka, or barracks, a residential compound (kancha), and storage facilities (yollka) (Meyers 1993).

**Cultural Aspects**

The site was purportedly the seat of the local Inca governor who controlled the easternmost extension of the Inca state (Boera and Rivera 1979; Hyslop 1990: 122). Historical sources suggest that Samaipata functioned as a fortress, but the lack of defensive features and the location of the site some distance from the actual eastern frontier argue against this interpretation (Hyslop 1990: 122; Trimborn 1967). The orderly arrangement of carved motifs and elements on the outcrop gives the overall impression of careful planning. Like other carved stones around the empire, however, the actual function is not entirely clear. Sacred rocks were regularly integrated into Inca architectural planning and obviously exerted some influence on site selection. In some cases, they may have functioned as oratory sites; in others, they may have constituted stations for the performance of ritual activity or the observance of astronomical phenomena (Hyslop 1990: 102-128).

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**Tomebamba**

**TIME PERIOD:** 520-470 B.C.

**LOCATION:** Province of Azuay, southern highlands of Ecuador, beneath the modern town of Cuenca.

**DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY**

**Local Environment**

The site is located in a large river basin in the bare, rolling hills of the southern Ecuadorian highlands at an elevation of 2530 m above sea level. The climate is semiarid, averaging under 1 m of rainfall per year, and relatively mild, with a mean annual temperature of 15° C.

**Physical Features**

The site of Tomebamba was first excavated by Max Uhle in the early 1920s (Uhle 1923). Many of the ruins he described now lie beneath the modern city of Cuenca (see also Bamps 1887). The architectural remains Uhle encountered were vast in scale and included what he interpreted as religious structures, a central plaza, a palatial residence, guard’s quarters, and a monastery (agllawasi). Elaborate waterworks, including pools, baths, and canals, as well as terraces and roads, were also recorded (Cordero and Aguirre 1994; Hyslop 1990: 140-142). The palatial sector, known as Puma Pungo, is believed to have been the royal residence of Huayna Capac (Idrovo 2000; Uhle 1923). Substantial quantities of Inca pottery have been recovered from this portion of the site (Idrovo 1984, 1988). Tomebamba was devastated by Atahualpa during the Inca civil war that ensued following the death of Huayna Capac in A.D. 1527 (Aleina Franch 1986; Engwall 1995; Rostworowski
1988: 148–178). Although the site lay in ruins by the time the Spanish chronicler Cieza de León passed through some 20 years later, it was nonetheless impressive enough for him to describe it as one of the most magnificent Inca sites in all the empire.

Cultural Aspects

Tomebamba was the principal Inca administrative center for the northern sector of the empire. The site was founded by Topa Inca Yupanqui during the military campaigns he led against the indigenous Cañari population A.D. 1460–1470 (Larrea 1971). Huayna Capac, successor to Topa Inca and penultimate ruler of the empire, was born in Tomebamba and resided there for much of his life; it was he who commissioned much of the monumental construction (Alcina Franch 1982; Bamps 1887). Various ethnohistoric sources describe Tomebamba as a second Cuzco, suggesting that the site was deliberately created in the image of the sacred capital of the Inca empire (Cabello Balboa 1951; Cieza 1962 [1553]: 142–147). Indeed, certain features of the local landscape are reminiscent of the Cuzco valley (Idrovo 1984, 2000). This resemblance was not lost on the Inca, who sought to magnify the similarities through the imposition of Cuzqueño place names upon the local topography. Many of these toponyms are still in place today (Arraga 1922).

References


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