

The stories written by Spanish chroniclers about the Inca Empire, an empire that existed for less than a century before the Spanish conquistadores reached the Inca capital at Cuzco, Peru, in 1533, are sometimes referred to as fables. Even though some of them record events in the lives of real persons, the reliability of the informants and their material was often questionable because most of them had not been witness to the events they describe. Both Spanish and Andean authors (after the conquest and following European educational traditions) were acquainted with European classical texts, and the history of the Roman Empire was the paradigm by which many of them explained the Incas. In these narratives the actions of gods and heroes had been interwoven, and the incorporation of fabulous events with reliable historical events was a recognized tradition and did not provide an obstacle to accepting them as history. Similarly, Inca origin stories, myths, cosmological stories, and stories of religion bear witness to a mixture of the fabulous and the real.

Complicating the disentanglement of myth from history is the fact that the native Andeans did not have a recognizable form of written history. The content of records left behind by the Incas, in the form of visual art, song, oral epic poetry, painted wooden tablets (which no longer exist), and quipus (a series of knotted cords suspended from a central cord that, through color, technique, or position, records information) is greatly debated. Thus, the exact context and content of Inca religion, mythology, and cosmology—of what is truly Andean and what is a product of Spanish cultural biases, given the filters of language, religion, and culture—while growing clearer, remains open to debate.

It is believed by many scholars, furthermore, that the Inca relationship to "the world beyond" is grounded in political and social organization; patterns that seem to explain the universe beyond the human realm almost invariably reflect analogous systems as diverse as kin relations, social hierarchy, and water rights. In this sense Inca cosmology is about people and their relationship to the immediate world, to their geographical and political environment, as expressed in stories and rituals that bring them into dialogue with the world beyond them. Unlike the Aztecs and Mayas, who recog-

nized no less than 13 heavens and nine underworlds, the Incas had no such concept. Their world and their place in the universe were thus worked out in stories that integrated social, political, calendrical, and dynastic imperatives. This chapter examines the construction and content of Inca religion, mythology, and cosmology to gain an understanding of how the Incas viewed themselves in relation to both the earthly and heavenly realms.

## STATE RELIGION

Despite Spanish attempts to eradicate all traces of Inca religious practice, the native Andeans displayed such great ingenuity in retaining their rites and rituals that some aspects of their original religion survived with little or no change while other aspects survived in hybrid form. Inca religion emphasized rituals focused on natural phenomena, agriculture, curing, and prognostication. In a sense, it was less spiritual than it was practical. Knowledge of the heavens and the intimate workings of gods dictated the day-to-day life of royalty and commoner alike.

Religious practice among the general population remained largely local in nature, informed by traditions that predated Inca hegemony, even while the centrifugal forces of empire attempted to realign many of those practices to the religious leanings of Cuzco. In some cases, especially in areas outside the heartland, long-standing pre-Inca rituals were either adopted into the Inca system or the Inca system was adopted in theory and then subtly subverted, not unlike what happened under Spanish authority. To their credit, the Incas realized the value of flexibility. It was Inca policy to permit conquered polities considerable religious freedom and continued worship of their own gods so long as they accepted the Inca gods above their own deities and any other demands levied by the state. In many cases, anyway, the conquered peoples worshipped similar gods by a different name. Furthermore, it was not uncommon for the Incas to show a certain amount of respect for local oracles or shrines and even worship or consult them themselves.

Inca political rulers were divine or semidivine descendants of the Sun, and the mummies of deceased rulers were worshipped as deities. The Incas worshipped stone, water, rivers, caves, and springs because they were essential ingredients in their origin stories and myths. They planned their calendar, measured time, and planted crops according to knowledge of the heavens. Many of these ideas were tied together in the concept of *huaca* worship (a *huaca* was any thing or place that had transcendent power). Sacrifice and pilgrimage were vital components of many important ceremonies. Overall, the Inca felt it was their right and their obligation to spread this religion; subsequently, religion was a primary motive and justification for imperial expansion.

## Huacas

The Incas worshipped places, objects, and natural features of the landscape imbued with perceived supernatural forces. Anything unusual and out of the ordinary could be a *huaca*, even an oddly shaped ear of corn. The Incas saw no contradiction between *huaca* worship and worship of the formal pantheon of gods. In the Cuzco region these *huacas* were organized in a pattern referred to as the Cuzco *ceque* system. A *ceque* is generally understood as a line along which the *huacas* were built and connected. It must be noted that *ceque* lines were imaginary and not physically present in the landscape. The Jesuit scholar Bernabe Cobo's 1563 *Historia del nuevo mundo* is dedicated to recording this system; he notes at least 328 *huacas* and 42 *ceque* lines, although other sources suggest there are more *huacas*. In addition, he records the objects offered to the *huacas*, the *huacas'* relative order along the *ceques*, and how they were maintained and worshipped. Contemporary scholarship has sought to clarify the understanding of the system, though with little agreement.

All *huacas*, no matter how large or small, facilitated communication with the supernatural world. Common *huacas* listed for Cuzco included temples, cult objects, tombs of ancestors, stones, fountains, springs, calendar markers, hills, bridges, houses, quarries, caves, and, in general, places associated with mythology or previous rulers. *Huacas* were worshipped to guard against sudden death, to pre-

vent children from dying, for the preservation of corn after harvest, for victory in war, to prevent springs from drying up, and for safe journeys. The major deities—Viracocha, Inti (the Sun), and Inti Illapa (thunder)—received offerings at numerous shrines. The two most important *huacas* were the mountain Huanacauri and the Coricancha in Cuzco. Huanacauri was worshipped because it was believed that a stone on its summit was the transformed brother of the mythical first Inca, Manco Cápac. The *ceque* system itself originated at the Coricancha (Temple of the Sun) in Cuzco; some sources list the Coricancha as a single *huaca*, while others list parts within the Coricancha as *huacas*. After the Spanish conquered the area, they went to extraordinary lengths to eradicate the *huaca* system because to them it exemplified pagan worship. *Huaca* reverence survived, however, often in transformed ways and in some cases still survives today.



6.1 Inca huaca worship (Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala)

## Religious Practitioners

### PRIESTS AND PRIESTESSES

The state religion was organized hierarchically in a manner similar to the state's political organization. The Sapa Inca (Inca king) was the ultimate religious authority. Next, the high priest, called the Uillac Uma in Cuzco, was the head of a hierarchy of priests throughout the empire. As the Incas justified their imperial ambition as a form of religious proselytization—that, in effect, they were obligated to spread their religion—priests took on a very important role. Beneath the high priest was the Hatun Uilca, who functioned like a bishop and was the head of one of 10 dioceses. Beneath him was the Yana Uilca, or ordinary priest.

The Uillac Uma was apparently so revered that he competed in authority with the Sapa Inca. He had power over all shrines and temples and appointed priests. His duties included divining, interpreting oracles, prescribing penance, praying, interceding for the dead, performing sacrifices, diagnosing and treating illness, and presiding over various rituals. Similarly, priestesses were sometimes given positions of high authority. They were generally associated with serving the shrines of the Moon and carrying her silver image. A group of "chosen women," the *acllas*, served in the Coricancha. They formed an order under a high priestess.

### HEALERS

Inca men and women who practiced a type of shamanistic medicine were called either *camasca* or *soncoyoc*. Curing depended on a combination of medicinal and herbal remedies and spiritual intervention. Healers were well paid for their interventions with silver, cloth, and food.

### DIVINERS

Communication with the spirits or deities was achieved through various means. The most solemn came through divination by fire in which the diviner summoned spirits through a banquet around fires built in metal or pottery braziers. When the spirits accepted the offering, the diviner would ask questions of them; flames emitted through openings in

the brazier represented their statements. Assistants manipulated the fire by blowing through tubes. Simpler methods of communication with the spirits included counting objects such as maize kernels, beans, pellets of llama dung, and pebbles. The objects were supposedly charged with something magical. Some diviners chewed coca and spat the juice in their hands; if it flowed evenly over two fingers, the omen was good; if uneven, the omen was bad. Burning llama fat and coca leaves, watching the way animals move, reading dreams, and celestial occurrences such as comets, shooting stars, and eclipses were other forms of augury.

The Incas believed in the necessity of consulting their deities before making important decisions or taking authoritative action. According to the Andean archaeologist Rowe, divination was practiced to diagnose disease, determine the truth of a confession, locate lost property, identify hostile sorcerers, choose between possible heirs, determine the most acceptable sacrifice to a deity being worshipped, and in warfare to determine timing, strategy, and the likelihood of the success of an attack.

The oracle was the most direct type of divination. Each *buaca*, with its attending priest, might be able to answer questions, but only a few oracles had empire-wide prestige and were consulted by distant peoples. In some cases, such as the oracle at Pachacamac on the central coast, the oracle long predated the Incas, and the Incas, in their empire building, recognized the oracles' essentialness and adopted them into their own system. The most famous oracles were the aforementioned Pachacamac, on the central coast; Apurímac, or "lord oracle," on the banks of the Apurímac River near Cuzco; Rimac, or "oracle," near Lima; and the oracle at Wari in the valley of Jauja. In most cases the oracle had to be interpreted by the attendant priest.

## Acts of Devotion

### GESTURES

Religious devotion permeated nearly every element of Inca life. Appropriate gestures were mandated upon approaching a shrine or *buaca*, when drinking *chicha*, when addressing the gods or the emperor, or

when approaching an idol. The appropriate gestures might include tossing chewed coca or maize at a sacred object, flicking a small portion of *chicha* on the earth, removing shoes or earplugs, or when addressing gods or the emperor, bowing solemnly, hands out and palms down, while making smacking sounds with one's lips.

### PRAYER

Inca prayers could be said silently or aloud and could be quite elaborate, following tradition or tailored to the specific occasion. They were addressed to both the pantheon of gods as well as to *buacas*.

### rites

Confession, penance, and fasting were commonly observed rites. Confessions were pronounced out loud to priests, penance was assigned by the confessor and might include fasting or prayer at a shrine or even flagellation, and fasting depended on the occasion and usually included abstentions from salt and chili and, under more serious circumstances, from meat, *chicha*, and sexual relations.

### SACRIFICE

Sacrifice was a common element of Inca religious practice, often forming as integral part of seasonal festivals or ceremonies. The usual sacrifices were of llamas and guinea pigs. Llamas were taken from flocks specifically tended for religious purposes, with part of each flock reserved for a particular *buaca*. The priest determined the appropriate offering according to the god being ritualized, with color, amount of wool, and markings taken into consideration. Brown llamas were offered to the creator Viracocha, white llamas and alpacas, to Inti, the Sun; and multicolored llamas, to Inti-Illapa, the thunder god. The most valuable sacrifice, however, was of human beings. In comparison to the Aztec and Maya civilizations of North and Central America, human sacrifice among the Incas was rare. In times of great importance or stress, such as war, pestilence, or famine, the coronation of a new emperor or when the emperor was sick, or when a new province was conquered, the appropriate offering was of a human life.

The Cápac Hucha ceremony, which can be translated as "royal obligation," though fundamentally foreign and strange to modern eyes, was an elaborate ceremony that ended in the sacrifice and interment of children accompanied by votive figurines of precious metals. The children were chosen for their exceptional beauty and perceived perfection. Children were sent from every part of the empire to Cuzco and, once there, were assembled in the main square in front of statues of the main gods. Inca priests and the ruler himself then sacrificed selected animals, after which the children were paired off and ceremonially married. At the culmination of the ceremonies in Cuzco the children were marched home, in as straight a line as possible, in some cases over many hundreds of miles. Upon arrival at the chosen location in their home territory, the children were given *chicha*, a maize beer, and ceremonially interred, buried in specially constructed shrines alongside metal figurines.

In effect, the extraordinariness of the Cápac Hucha ceremony served to authenticate the role of the village in the empire. In return for the sacrifice of one of their children the village leader rose in the state hierarchy. In terms of Inca cosmology the children did not "die" but transcended to the realm of the ancestors, who watched over villages from high mountain perches. Their death was viewed as an essential restoration of balance after a great upheaval.

## Mummies and Ancestor Worship

The worship and care of mummies was central to Andean and Inca religious practice. Mummies, or *mallquis*, of Inca kings and the ancestors of *ayllus* (kinship groups) were revered and cared for as if they were living, functioning beings. The practice of embalmment was not unique to the Incas, but their intention to maintain the deceased as a functioning member of society marked the practice as unique. The lives and deeds of the dead became mythologized within the broader social fabric and, in a sense, became a form of history for the kin and the empire itself. In the case of the Inca kings'

mummies their remains were publicly displayed and even consulted. In other cases, mummies were stored in caves and cared for by descendants. Their placement in caves was specifically related to Inca myths that tied origin to caves; thus, caves themselves were highly charged spiritual places.

It was believed that caring for and offering food and drink to the ancestral mummies was required to maintain cosmic order, ensure the fertility of crops, and sustain the health of herd animals such as llama. The relationship between the living and the dead reflected a reciprocal contract: The living looked after the dead, and the dead in return ensured sustainability for the living. This relationship was deeply ingrained into the Inca way of thinking. In the Inca sociopolitical system power, prestige, and land and water rights were determined by one's descent from a founding father. The embodiment of that lineage—the titleholder to all the land and wealth, and, thus, power—was the *mallqui*. Loss or harm to the corpse was a very serious matter; therefore, everything possible was done to ensure its survival.

The Spanish considered these indigenous practices idolatrous, and great effort was expended in finding and disposing of mummified remains. So highly valued, however, were these remains that even after the Spanish found and cremated mummies, reports state that *ayllu* members collected the ashes and worshipped these instead. In at least one instance, the Spanish, after witnessing this practice, resorted to pouring the ashes over the side of a bridge into a river, to no avail. It was reported afterward that native peoples returned and gathered at this spot because it had taken on the religious significance of the mummy.

## Inca Pantheon

The Inca pantheon of deities reflects a societal concern for hierarchical organization and ritual practice. The gods had power over food production; the health of humans, animals, and plants; fertility, and water—all of which reflect the acute attention this agropastoral community paid to the intricacies of the physical world upon which they relied. The principal gods of the Inca pantheon follow.

### VIRACOCHA

Viracocha was the creator god and the greatest god in the Inca pantheon, a being without beginning or end. Viracocha had both male and female aspects and was associated with the puma. The Spanish reported seeing representations of the creator god as a golden statue. Viracocha created other deities, humans, animals, and the heavens and the Earth. The name Viracocha is actually a Hispanicization taken from a series of titles by which the creator god was referred. His usual title translated as "Ancient foundation, lord, instructor of the world." The Andeans believed Viracocha lived in the heavens and was the source of all divine power but had delegated authority to a series of lesser, though powerful, supernatural beings. Despite his importance the Incas devoted relatively little energy to his worship, especially when compared to the god Inti, and few temples were built in Viracocha's honor. This is owing in part to his nature as an invisible, elusive, and essential being. The chroniclers often portrayed him as part of a triad of Inca gods, along with Inti (the Sun) and Inti Illapa (thunder), and the rest of the pantheon became servants of the creator god.

Viracocha was responsible for creating humanity at the site of Tiwanaku in Bolivia or on the Island of the Sun in Lake Titicaca, which straddles the border between Peru and Bolivia. Both of these sites became very important pilgrimage sites for the Incas. After creating humanity he traveled throughout the land in the disguise of an old man with a long beard; those who were kind to him were rewarded, and those who were not, he punished. After traveling the length of the Andes he set off across the Pacific Ocean from a point in Ecuador, walking on water. Interestingly, Topa Inca, the 10th Sapa Inca, reportedly went to sea for nine months after defeating the Chimú Empire in the vicinity of where Viracocha had left the mainland—perhaps reenacting this myth. The Incas constructed shrines to Viracocha in all the places where he had stopped on his journey through the Andes.

Some scholars suggest that Viracocha was simply a theoretical construct rather than a deity. This is partly derived from the Spanish chronicler Murúa, whose 1613 *Historia general del Perú* reported that the fifth Inca king, Cápac Yupanqui,

asked his advisers whether Viracocha was more important than Inti, and after long debate Cápac Yupanqui revealed that because the Sun was sometimes obscured by the smallest clouds, it must necessarily be under orders from the greater god. Thus, the argument goes, Viracocha as supreme deity became an intellectual necessity.

### INTI

Inti was the sun god. Sun worship was central to Inca life, and the Sun was believed to be the divine ancestor-father of the Inca dynastic line and the patron of the empire. As a consequence, Inca rulers believed themselves to be the "son of the Sun," an idea that was used to social and political advantage. Inti was thought of as a male, and a golden statue of a young boy often represented the Sun. Similarly, he was represented by a golden disk with rays and a human face; many such disks were reportedly kept in the capital at Cuzco as well as in shrines throughout the empire. The most significant image was found at the Coricancha, the most important temple in the empire, itself referred to as the "Temple of the Sun." This image was called *punchao*, meaning "day"; it was adorned with earspools, a pectoral, and a royal headband; and reportedly had lions and serpents projecting from its body—all of which was in accord with a quasi-mythical dream by the ninth Inca ruler, Pachacuti. Some chroniclers list Pachacuti as the founder of the Sun cult, while others mention Viracocha Inca, Pachacuti's father and the eighth ruler, as the one who established Sun worship.

The worship of and cult of the Sun reflected the importance of the Sun to an agricultural economy. The relation of the Sun to the study of astronomy and calendars, both of which are means of organizing and understanding the world, was fundamental to determining proper agricultural practice, which in turn ensured the health and livelihood of the people of the empire. As such, the worship of the Sun took on paramount significance, and the Incas went to great lengths to ensure Sun worship remained center stage. One way they accomplished this was through the construction of numerous sun temples in provincial centers far from the center at Cuzco. As government constructions, the temples bore the

stamp of Inca authority and therefore served to promote religion and remind people, via architecture, of Inca power. Each temple had priests whose obligation was to serve the Sun. The head priest of the Sun was, of course, in Cuzco. All the various sun priests were chosen from a single *ayllu*, or kin group.

As the patron deity of the empire, numerous rituals and ceremonies were held in Inti's honor to ensure the welfare of the state, the welfare of the ruler, and the harvest. Sun worship was such an elaborate institution that lands were given over to it, temples were built in its honor, and expansive resources set aside (every province was supposed to set aside land explicitly for the cult of the Sun) in order to maintain the appropriate level of worship. Perhaps inevitably, the land burden on already-disenfranchised subject communities led to discontent and in some instances revolt. Nevertheless, the great expenditure on Sun worship was considered essential within the system of reciprocal balance and was therefore thought to ensure viability, continuity, and power.

### PACHACAMAC

Pachacamac was a creator deity in the Andean pantheon. The word *pacha* means "time/space, universe/earth, state of being," and the word *camac* means "one who creates, animator." Pachacamac is also the name of a major oracle site at the mouth of the Lurín River, just to the south of modern Lima. This shrine was the seat of a cult of Pachacamac that long predated the Incas, dating at least to the Middle Horizon (ca. 540–1000). It was one of the most sacred places in all of the Andes; as a result, it was a major pilgrimage destination for people from throughout the Andes seeking the guidance of its oracle. Eventually, the Incas coopted the Pachacamac cult and, despite its apparent conflict with Viracocha, allowed it to flourish. The Incas even enlarged the original adobe platform and pyramid architecture, which is what the Spaniards saw when they arrived at the site in 1533, constructing an *adlabuasi* (house of the chosen women) and a temple of the Sun.

The object of veneration at the site was a powerful, carved wooden idol attended to by priests. Pilgrims intending to consult the oracle had first to pass through three successive gates; supplicants



never interacted with the idol itself, and a priest was there to act as intercessory. Pachacamac idols in museum collections today most likely bear a resemblance to the original idol, which was reported as a staff topped with a rectilinear human figure with two faces, one on each side. Lightly incised relief decorations favoring geometric and/or zoomorphic patterning further characterize idols known today.

## MAMA QUILLA

The female moon deity, Mama Quilla, complemented and was married to the masculine sun deity in the Inca pantheon. As the Inca ruler was associated with the Sun, so his wife was associated with the Moon. And, just as gold was believed to be the sweat of the Sun, silver was regarded as the tears of the Moon. The Moon was especially important to the Incas in calculating time and regulating the festival calendar, as many rituals were based on lunar cycles. The Moon had its own temple in Cuzco and was attended to by its own priestesses.

## INTI ILLAPA

After the Sun, the thunder god, Inti Illapa, also the god of weather and meteorological phenomena such as lightning and rainbows, ranked most powerful. He was a messenger and servant of the Sun. He was often represented as a male wielding a sling or war club, or one in each hand, and wore shining clothes. The crack of the sling represented thunder, lightning bolts were sling stones, and a lightning flash was the shimmer of his garments as he moved. Inti Illapa was associated with the puma; in the highlands he was associated with Venus, the Morning Star. When rain was wanted, the people prayed to this deity; when it rained, it was believed that he broke a rain jug held by his sister. His importance was in direct relation to the absolute necessity of rain in an agricultural environment.

## PACHAMAMA AND MAMACOCHA

Pachamama, or Mother Earth, was associated with the earth and agriculture and was supposed to make the fields fertile. She played a particularly important role in the highlands, where agriculture was especially important. The Incas made sacrifices to Pachamama for successful crops, and farmers

reportedly worshipped Pachamama in the form of a stone in the middle of their fields. It is still common today to make an offering of *chicha*, a maize beer favored since Inca times, to Pachamama by pouring a small amount on the earth. By comparison, Mamacocha was a female sea deity especially important among coastal communities, whose livelihood depended on bountiful waters. Not only did the Incas worship the Pacific Ocean as a goddess, but springs and streams through Inca territory were venerated as daughters of the sea.

## STARS AND PLANETS

The Incas were the last in a long line of Andean communities to devise a complicated mythology around stars, constellations, and planets. Stars were thought of as the children of the Sun and Moon. The Incas made no linguistic distinction between stars and planets, which is perhaps the reason that the planet Venus was their chief representative. The Spanish chronicler Polo de Ondegardo's 1585 manuscript *De los errores y supersticiones de los indios* is the source most commonly cited on Inca stargazing. In it he writes, "Among the stars, as a rule, all of them worshipped one they call Qolqa, which we call the Pleiades. And the other stars were venerated especially by those who believed that they were in need of their assistance. For they attributed various offices to various stars. Thus, the shepherds worshipped and sacrificed to a star they call Urcuchillay, which they say is a sheep [llama] of many colors, which is concerned with the conservation of livestock, and it is understood to be the one the Astrologers call Lyra." Ondegardo goes on to describe other stars that were worshipped for various reasons. In general, the Incas believed that each animal and bird on earth had its equal in the sky. The stars were thought of as doppelgangers and were responsible for their earthly counterparts' preservation and growth in numbers.

## Rituals and Religious Ceremonies

The Incas celebrated regular and numerous ceremonies that correlated with the agricultural cycle,

the solar and lunar cycles, and the calendar. Other festivals were reserved for extraordinary times such as drought or disaster or for the coronation or the burial of a king. Many of the ceremonies took place in Cuzco, which was the empire's religious and ceremonial center. In Cuzco major public ceremonies usually took place in the main plaza, called Huacaypata. Each of the primary festivals had its own month, and they were held in order and according to specific rites and sacrifices. Among the most important ceremonies were Cápac Raymi, which occurred in December and was tied to the summer solstice; Ayriwa, which took place in April and was associated with the maize harvest; Inti Raymi, or the "sun festival," which occurred in June and was associated with the winter solstice; and Ayamarka, which was a time of great preparations for Cápac Raymi. Other ceremonies, to name a few, included Camay, in February, which was intended for the disposal of the previous year's sacrificial remains; Chahua Huarquis, in July, during which sacrifices were made to important water sources; and K'antaray, which was held during October and was associated with rain ceremonies. Many small ceremonies took place every day to ensure good relations with or to seek the aid of the gods; these might include burning wood, food, or cloth to Inti. The following is a brief account of the entire ceremonial cycle. It should be noted that the name of the month and the particular ceremony represent inexact correspondences. The modern calendar months given below provide a general framework for the cycle.

## THE CEREMONIAL CYCLE (RITUAL CALENDAR OF THE STATE RELIGION)

**Cápac Raymi** The Cápac Raymi, or "magnificent festival," was one of the most important for the Incas. It is part of a set of rituals that were celebrated in Cuzco around the first full moon following the December (summer) solstice and lasted up to three weeks of January. During this festival all non-Inca residents of the city—that is, all persons who were born outside the city and not "true" ethnic Incas—had to leave the city. Members of the 10 Cuzco *panaqa*s (lineage or descent groups of rulers) gathered in Cuzco's Huacaypata plaza and sacri-

ficed 10 llamas for the health of the king. Later that night each *panaqa* burned a tunic to a particular deity, two each to the Sun, Moon, thunder, Viracocha, and Earth. Tunics were highly valued possessions, the products of hundreds and sometimes thousands of hours of labor; the ruler himself was said to have worn a new tunic each day, ritually burning it when done.

These rituals were part of a more elaborate routine, including the festival of Camay. In the first stage 100 brown llamas from the four quarters (*suyus*) of the empire were sacrificed by the priests of the Sun, who offered them in the Sun's name to Viracocha. In the second stage newly initiated boys, provided with breechcloths and earplugs—status symbols and symbols of male adulthood—engaged in a ritual battle, and in turn they offered a young llama, which was sacrificed by the priests. In the third stage, held after the day and night of the full moon, llamas were sacrificed for the health of the people in town. At a certain point after the sacrifices, all the ashes from sacrifices made during the previous year were tossed in the Huatanay River in order that they be washed to the ocean, which the Incas viewed as both surrounding and supporting the Earth.

After three weeks the non-Inca citizens were allowed to return to the city, and several days of dancing and drinking ensued. They were fed with a mixture of corn flour and llama blood and told it was a gift of the Sun and that it would stay in their bodies and would inform the deity if they spoke ill of the Sun or the king. Altogether the sacrifices and the rituals, as obligations to the gods, ensured social health, the health of the king, and acted as repayment and tribute to the gods. As the rituals occur during the period when the Sun is at its zenith (the period when the Sun reaches its highest point above the horizon), they are also concerned with the continued cycles of the solar year.

**Hatun Puquy** At the height of the rainy season in February, 100 chestnut-colored llamas were sacrificed. Many people gathered in fields that were to be cultivated and an offering of 20 guinea pigs was made to the Sun along with 20 bundles of firewood. After the sacrifice they implored the Sun to help them with their fields. The *mamakuna* of the Sun—



women dedicated to the service of the Inca gods—were present, and they were supplicated with food. Once finished, the people began working in the fields.

**Paucar Huaray** According to John Rowe, *paucar huaray* means “earth ripening,” and the ceremony corresponds with March. Little else is known about the activities of this festival month.

**Ayriwa (Ariguauiz)** On the first day of the month of April, 100 spotted llamas were sacrificed, and symbols of royal insignia were honored. An old llama that had been previously selected was put in the middle of the square and watched over for the whole month. Unlike the other llamas, it was never killed but was a spectacle in the middle of the plaza. It was given coca and *chicha*, an alcoholic beverage made from fermented maize or fruit. Jars of *chicha* were intentionally placed near the llama so that it might kick one over, thereby making an offering in its own name in the cause of agriculture and fertility. In addition, 15 llamas were burned there so that the maize seeds would develop. The festival culminated with the burning of a large number of guinea pigs and chilis.

**Aymoray (Hatun Cuzqui)** The festival of Aymoray, meaning “great cultivation,” took place during May. During this festival a ritual harvest of sacred maize fields occurred, accompanied by dancing and singing songs whose message asked that the grain not run out before the next harvest. One hundred more llamas of all colors were sacrificed, and the meat was distributed to all the Incas. Later, 30 more llamas were burned and sacrificed for *huaca* maintenance; a little meat was burned at each *huaca*, the amount of which varied by its importance. On the 15th day, five old llamas were sacrificed and their meat again distributed. The young men initiated that year ritually harvested the maize and brought it into the city, and later all the people of the city went out into the fields to plow them as a symbol of the importance of the maize harvest. During this month another ceremony, *Mamasara*, was simultaneously enacted in each family's home. In this ceremony unusually shaped ears of corn were wrapped

in fine textile. Afterward they were considered *huacas* of the corn deity and were asked to predict a good harvest in the coming year.

**Inti Raymi (Aucay Cuzqui)** Celebrated in June, this festival included the June (winter) solstice and a great festival in honor of the sun god, Inti. The festival took place on a hill outside Cuzco called Manturcalla. Only Inca males of royal blood were allowed to participate. On the first day an offering of 100 brown llamas was made to the Sun. On the following day 30 more llamas were sacrificed, this time not only to the Sun but also to Viracocha and the thunder god. The participants made a large number of wooden statues and dressed them in fine cloth; at the end of the festival these were burned. A special dance called the *cayo* was performed four times a day. After the sacrifices were made on Manturcalla, the group divided into halves, with half remaining behind to continue dancing and drinking, while the other half divided once again with one group ascending the hill called Chuquichanca and the other ascending another hill, called Paucacancha, where six more llamas were sacrificed. After the sacrifices, effigy figurines made of gold, sent by the Sun, were buried on three nearby hills. The climax of the festival involved the sacrifice of special young llamas to Viracocha, whose image had been carried in on a litter on the shoulders of important individuals. At the very end of the ceremony all the charcoal and ashes were gathered up and thrown on a flat space near the hill. The celebrants then returned to Cuzco, scattering coca, flowers, and feathers along the way, and gathered in the main square, where they drank and sang for the rest of the day.

**Chahua Huarquis** During this July festival 100 brown llamas were sacrificed. Additional sacrifices were made to the *huaca* of Tocoli, which presided over the irrigation system of Cuzco. One llama was taken to where the valley irrigation began, and one, to where it ended in order to preserve the water in the hopes of ensuring its abundance. This was done because the Incas believed that Inca Roca, the sixth king, had magically increased the water supply from this source.

**Yapaquis** Associated with August, this festival saw the sacrifice of 100 brown llamas to all the *huacas* of Cuzco. One thousand *cuy*, or guinea pigs, were provided by the provinces for sacrifice in the same field that had been sown in May. The *cuy* were sacrificed to ensure protection from inclement weather and to ensure a plentitude of water and sun. This field was then ritually planted.

**Coya Raymi (Citua)** The ninth month of the Inca calendar saw the “queen's festival” take place. During this festival, celebrated at the beginning of the rainy season, 100 white llamas were sacrificed in order to prevent sickness caused by the changing weather. All provincials, the sick, anyone with a physical defect, and dogs (because their howling at the Moon was considered an ill omen) were sent out of Cuzco. The people remaining in the city gathered at the Coricancha and waited for the appearance of the new moon. When it appeared they began to run and shout and playfully struck at each other with lit torches. Then everyone returned to their homes and shook out their clothes and blankets, symbolically throwing out evil, sickness, disaster, and misfortune. Simultaneously, a group of 100 warriors-runners took up the cry of the people and the priests and set out along the four main highways leading out of Cuzco. Each runner passed the message of “Go away, evil, from the land” to a subsequent runner, the last of whom ritually bathed in a river so that the evil would be carried away in the running water. While the message was being relayed along, the people remaining in the city ritually bathed themselves and then took a maize porridge and smeared it on their faces and on the lintels of their doors as a symbol of purification. Dancing and feasting marked the following days, more llama sacrifices occurred, and finally the provincials were allowed to reenter. Divination ceremonies were undertaken to see if the coming year would be bountiful. The ceremonies concluded with all the peoples of the empire bringing their own *huacas* to the central plaza where they would pay tribute to and show allegiance to the Sapa Inca.

**Kantaray (Homa Raymi Puchayquiz)** Activities during this festival month, coinciding with

October, focused on ensuring sufficient water for a healthy crop. One hundred llamas were sacrificed, and if the amount of rain was insufficient additional sacrifices were undertaken to induce the gods to bring rain.

**Ayarmarka** This last festival, held in November, was the precursor to and set the preparation for the Cápac Raymi. On the first day 100 llamas were sacrificed. On the following day all the boys who were to be initiated the following month went to Huanacauri hill and offered a sacrifice to the *huaca* there, one of the most important in the entire *ceque* system. The boys asked permission to be initiated and then slept the night there in imitation of the journey of their mythical ancestors. Each boy drew blood from the ear of a llama they had towed up the hill, drew lines on their faces with the blood, and later sacrificed the animal. The next day the boys returned to the city and fasted. They spent the whole month preparing for the initiation ceremonies that would happen the following month.

**Other Ceremonies** The Incas held certain ceremonies without regard to the calendar. While these ceremonies were not held at a specific time, only specific people were permitted to perform them. The most important of these ceremonies was the *Itu*, which might be held whenever the Incas wanted the gods' help: for example, in time of drought, pestilence, natural disasters, or when the emperor went to war. Leading up to the ceremony all the men fasted, ate nothing with salt or chili, refrained from sexual contact, and did not drink *chicha*. All the women who had dogs or other animals were sent out of the city. Anyone from the provinces was also forced to leave.

Once these preparations had been settled, llamas were sacrificed, their number and color depending on the petition to the gods. If it was especially serious, children might also be sacrificed. Young men up to 20 years old wore special costumes of red tunics with long fringes and ornaments, shell necklaces, and large crowns made of feathers. They carried small dried green birds and drums. Everyone else covered their heads with

mantles or capes, and a strict silence was observed for the whole day.

The young men in costume walked slowly in a procession around the square beating their white drums and then sat down in silence. A noble then repeated the act, circling the square while spreading coca on the ground. After a short interval the boys got up and followed their procession, and more coca was spread on the ground. This ritual was performed eight times. That night they prayed to the Sun as intercessor, directing their prayers toward whatever they needed. When morning arrived, they removed and stored their clothing and began drinking and singing and dancing, which continued for the next two days.

## MYTHS: CREATION AND ORIGIN STORIES

Numerous myths explain the Inca universe and ultimately help shape an understanding of the Incas that is often as complex as it is convoluted. The myths are one part of an interrelated system of thoughts and ideas. Though neither "fact" nor "history," they do tell us something about how the Incas perceived themselves, a situation that is greatly complicated by the lack of a written language. As a consequence, this means that Inca myths (and history, culture, etc.) come to us filtered through the eyes and words of Spanish chroniclers, most of whom were untrained observers, faithful to their own literary and intellectual traditions, and biased in one way or another. The following section provides a brief discussion of the primary resources related to myths, after which a number of fundamental Inca myths are summarized.

### Sources for the Study of Inca Myths

Because the Incas did not have a recognizable written language, or at least a written language

that is currently understood by scholars, the work of a couple dozen Spanish chroniclers writing during the 150 years following the conquest of the Incas provides the material for the study of myth. The following list, by no means inclusive, nevertheless highlights the most significant sources for Inca myths. The list here is based on the work of the Andean scholar Gary Urton, who has researched widely and written eloquently on the nature of Inca myths. The sources mentioned below were written during the colonial period and reflect a process of mixing and blending the two cultures, referred to as syncretism, which was indicative of the period. Syncretism suggests that it is difficult to distinguish what is purely Inca from what has been recorded with the cultural inflections of the Spanish authors themselves. It is important to remember that the further one gets from the date of the conquest, the less reliable the chronicles tend to be.

Pedro de Cieza de León, a Spanish soldier who traveled widely and talked to numerous informants, published *The Chronicle of Peru* in two parts in 1553 and 1554. The second part, *El señorio de los incas*, is one of the earliest sources on the history and mythology of the Inca Empire. Juan de Betanzos, considered one of the foremost translators of his day, married an Inca princess, niece of the last Inca king, Huayna Cápac. Betanzos became fluent in Quechua, the empire's lingua franca, and was ordered in 1551 by the viceroy of Peru to write a history of the Incas. Completed in 1557, his *Narrative of the Incas* is one of the best sources on Inca myths from the perspective of Inca nobility. Juan Polo de Ondegardo was a top colonial administrator of Cuzco with a deep interest in native customs and "superstitions." He produced a number of reports, published in the late 1560s, that later served as source material for other chronicles.

Ideological and political underpinnings inform many of the Spanish chronicles, and they thus must be read critically in order to disassociate Spanish motivations from the narrative. Many chronicles were published in relation to the reorganization of the colonial state under Spanish authority and were thus undertaken as a basis for

instituting reforms. Among the chronicles inflected with this context are Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa's 1572 *Historia india*, Cristóbal de Molina's 1575 *Account of the Fables and Rites of the Incas*, and José de Acosta's 1590 *Natural and Moral History of the Indies*.

Appearing in the 17th century, and written by Quechua-speaking authors, were two of the most important sources recording myths. The first is Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala's 1614–15 *First New Chronicle and Good Government*, a monumental narrative written in the form of a letter to the Spanish king documenting abuses against native Peruvians. While the text is partially suspect, Guamán Poma's manuscript included almost 400 ink drawings illustrating various aspects of Inca life. They are of invaluable worth and constitute one of the best visual sources on daily life, ritual, worship, and dress, among other things. The other text is Juan de Santacruz Pachacuti Yamqui Salcamaygua's 1613 *Relación de antigüedades deste reyno del Perú*, which recounts myths as well as quasi-historical data that can be linked to myths recounted in other authors' works.

Finally, one of the most reliable sources on Inca myths, ceremonies, and religious beliefs and practices comes from Bernabé Cobo, a Jesuit priest who entered Peru in 1599 and spent many years traveling among the native Andeans. Cobo drew extensively on previous chroniclers and synthesized a comprehensive and balanced chronicle of life in the Inca Empire.

### Cosmic Origin Myth

Inca cosmic origin myths center on the Lake Titicaca region in the south-central region of the empire, an area that today straddles the Peru-Bolivia border. It is also, significantly, the region of the pre-Inca imperial culture centered at Tiwanaku, south of the shores of the lake, which existed ca. 200 B.C.E.–1100 C.E. Though versions of the origin story vary, most begin by stating that at the beginning of time the world was in darkness because the Sun, Moon, and stars did not yet exist. The creator god, Viracocha, who appears in vari-

ous versions as Con Ticci Viracocha, Thunupa Viracocha, and Viracocha Pachayachachi, emerged from Lake Titicaca in the period of darkness and created the first race of beings to populate the landscape. Most of the chronicles refer to these first beings as giants. For unspecified reasons this first race angered Viracocha, who sent a great flood over the land and transformed the original inhabitants into stone.

Viracocha then set about creating the second wave of humanity. First, however, he created the Sun, Moon, and stars, calling them forth from the Island of the Sun in Lake Titicaca. (This island subsequently became a major pilgrimage destination during the Inca period.) Having created the Sun, Moon, and stars, Viracocha then created the second race of beings, in some accounts from lake-shore stones and in other accounts from clay. He sent them underground so that later they could emerge from springs, caves, mountaintops, and other places, in effect "seeding" the nations that would later constitute the empire. These landscape points were subsequently recognized as origin places and became sacred shrines, or *huacas*. With his creations in place throughout the territory that would eventually constitute Tawantinsuyu, Viracocha himself, along with two "sons" he had created earlier and kept, set out over the land, each following a different route, and called on the ancestors to emerge, thereby populating the land. Viracocha and his sons continued to the northwestern edge of the empire in Ecuador and there passed over the sea, continuing until they disappeared over the horizon.

### Guamán Poma's Four Ages of the Indians

Guamán Poma's version of the world, *First New Chronicle and Good Government*, recorded in his monumental letter to King Phillip III of Spain, depicts a succession of ages, each a regular episode that ends in a great cataclysm referred to as *pachacuti*, meaning "revolution or turning over/around"; "world reversal." These mythic ages of

destruction and replacement overlap with the notion of cosmic origin discussed above and introduce other cosmological themes.

HANDBOOK TO LIFE IN THE INCA WORLD

A black and white line drawing of a scene from the story of the blind men and an elephant. At the top left, there is a sun with a human-like face and rays. Below it, a stone wall with a crenelated top is visible. In the foreground, a woman with long, wavy hair is sitting on the ground, looking up at a man who is standing and touching the wall. The man is also looking up. There are several lines of text in a non-Latin script, likely Georgian, scattered around the scene. The text includes:

- Top left: *დავით*
- Top center: *დავით*
- Top right: *დავით*
- Middle left: *დავით*
- Middle right: *დავით*
- Bottom left: *დავით*
- Bottom center: *დავით*
- Bottom right: *დავით*

The second age was the period of the Wari Runa, a people who wore animal skin clothing, practiced basic agriculture, and lived without warfare. This age ended in a deluge. In the third age, that of the Purun Runa, or "wild men," civilization was growing increasingly complex. People wore spun and dyed wool clothing, made jewelry, practiced agriculture, migrated outward, but also engaged in greater conflicts and warfare. The fourth age was that of the Aucun Runa, or the "warlike people." During this age the world was divided into four parts, warfare increased, people lived in stone houses, and, in general, technology grew more advanced. He does not state how this age ended.

## Inca Origin Myth: Pacariqtambo Version

RELIGION, COSMOLOGY, AND MYTHOLOGY

Maras and the Tambos, emerged from the flanking caves, which were called Maras Tocco and Sutic Tocco. (According to the legend, the Tambos were later divided into 10 *ayllus*, or ancestor groups, with five assigned to Hanan Cuzco and five assigned to Hurin Cuzco.) The founders of the Inca dynasty emerged from Cápac Tocco; those who accompanied them on their eventual journey, who would come to make up the other tribes of the Andes, emerged from the other caves. The Incas were eight brothers and sisters who emerged in pairs as married couples; Sarmiento refers to them as spouses. These pairs of brothers-sisters/husbands-wives are as follows, listed in order of emergence: Ayar Manco (later, Manco Cápac) emerged with Mama Ocllo;



Ayar Auca with Mama Huaco; Ayar Cachi with Mama Ipacaura/Cura; and Ayar Ucho with Mama Raua. It should be noted that *Ayar* comes from the word for "corpse," thus establishing a link between mythical ancestors and the worship of the mummified remains of kings. It should also be noted that in the chronicles of Guamán Poma and Murúa these ancestors originally passed underground from Lake Titicaca, a version of which is discussed below.

Ayar Manco led the ancestors to the north in search of land to settle. They carried with them a golden bar, which would be plunged into the earth and would signify home. They stopped in numerous places along the way. Ayar Manco and Mama Oello conceived and gave birth to a son who was called Sinchi Roca and would succeed his father as the second king of Cuzco. One of the brothers, Ayar Cachi, reputedly a great burden on the others, was tricked into returning to Pacariqtambo, where he was closed in forever by a great boulder blocking the entrance. Moving on, the ancestors arrived at the foot of the mountain Huanacauri, which they ascended and then saw for the first time the valley of Cuzco. The gold bar was lofted into the air toward the valley. When it hit the ground, it sank all the way into the earth, thereby indicating to the ancestors that they had found their homeland.

The youngest ancestor-brother, Ayar Ucho, was then transformed into stone at the hill of Huanacauri. In other versions he first takes flight, flies into the heavens, and speaks to the Sun, who tells him that the entourage should proceed to Cuzco and that Ayar Manco should hereafter be called Manco Cápac ("supreme rich one," in other words, king), at which point Ayar Ucho returns to the group, repeats what he was told, and then is transformed into stone. Huanacauri was thereafter worshipped as one of the principal *huacas*, and idols of it were even carried into battle. The ancestor group continued on to Cuzco. When they arrived either Manco Cápac or Mama Huaco planted maize. When they reached the center of what would become the city, what was to become the plaza of Huacaypata, Ayar Cápac, the last remaining brother-ancestor of Manco Cápac, transformed into a stone pillar. The remaining members, led by Manco Cápac and the boy Sinchi Roca, founded and built the city that would become the capital of the empire.

## Inca Origin Myth: Lake Titicaca Version

A second version of the Inca origin story is set on the Island of the Sun in Lake Titicaca. Manco Cápac and Mama Oello, rendered in this version as children of the sun god Inti, were given the mission of civilizing the peoples of the world. Manco Cápac and a number of followers set out to do so, bringing along, of course, the familiar golden bar; when they arrived in Cuzco, they tested the soil with the bar and found it suitable. Upon the bar's sinking they knew they had arrived at their chosen land and set about building the royal residence and the Temple of the Sun. Recognizing Manco Cápac as their divine ruler, the inhabitants of the land accepted him and chose to follow his authority.

## Other Origin Myths

A less familiar origin story is recounted in a text written around 1642 by the Spanish chronicler Fernando de Montesinos. While the myth overlaps with the Pacariqtambo myth, it significantly extends the narrative back in time by relating a history of four dynasties and a dynastic list of 108 kings. In this story the powerful Amauta dynasty had ruled for a long time but were defeated in a battle south of Cuzco. The survivors fled, resettled near Cuzco, and founded a new dynasty. After a succession of usurpers overtook the throne, a legitimate heir of the original dynasty took the throne and founded the Inca dynasty. If the dynastic list is accurate, it would extend the Inca lineage back to the Middle Horizon (ca. 540–900 C.E.), when the Wari and Tiwanacu dynasties ruled. Recent archaeological work has been interested in this account, as it better correlates to what some scholars feel is the gradual emergence of what became the Inca Empire, as opposed to the epic florescence traditionally detailed in most chronicles.

## Inca Myth of State Expansion

The story of the Inca war against the Chancas, a powerful nation-state to the west of Cuzco, is of

great importance to the overall narrative of the empire. While the story cannot properly be called history because many of its details are clearly mythical in nature, it nonetheless reflects a critical moment in the evolution of the Inca state from provincial valley dwellers to imperial conquerors.

As the Chanca armies advanced on Cuzco, everyone in the town fled, including the king. The defense of the city was left to a young prince and a few companions, who stayed behind despite the overwhelming odds against success. Some sources say this was Viracocha Inca, the eighth king, while others say it was his son Pachacuti. The defenders held on desperately during the first two waves of the Chanca assault. During the final assault the prince received the aid of rocks and stones in the valley, which were miraculously transformed into warriors. The rocks, called *pururaukas*, assured the Incas of victory, and after the battle they transformed back into stones and were venerated thereafter as important *huacas*. The victory over the Chancas catapulted the Inca toward imperial hegemony.

## Provincial Myths

Not all myths that existed during the Inca period originated with the Incas; some were pre-Inca at their roots, and some were adopted into the Inca mythology. The *Huárochiri Manuscript*, an important early 17th-century document written in Quechua distinctive to the province of Huarochiri, to the east of Lima, records many such myths. One important myth attempts to explain the distinctions and links between the two worlds of the Andean coast and mountains. In doing so it discusses two creator gods, Viracocha and Pachacamac. In highland provincial centers the adopted belief was that Viracocha had made them Inca, while along the coast they believed Pachacamac had made them Inca. In one sense these are simply two different names for the creator deity reflecting the differences between coast and highlands.

Pachacamac, however, was an important oracle site on the central coast that had a very long history of its own, one which the Incas recognized and adapted. Inca-period architecture at the site signals

a colonial history of its own; the Incas conquered the region and took possession of the site but allowed it to retain its privilege as a pilgrimage site. The site, and quite possibly myths tied to the site, was reordered to fit the Inca conceptual model. The conquerors built an Inca-style masonry temple and installed a priest dedicated to the Inca cult of the Sun. In a myth recorded by Antonio de la Calancha, Pachacamac and the Sun are in very close association. According to this myth, Pachacamac created the first man and woman. The man died because there was no food, leaving the desperate woman to plead to the Sun for help. The Sun impregnated her with his rays, and she bore a son after only four days, which greatly angered Pachacamac, who tore the boy to pieces. To solve the problem of the lack of food, he sowed the boy's teeth in the earth and from them grew maize. He planted ribs and bones and grew yucca, and from planted flesh came vegetables and fruit trees.

The Sun then created another son from the remains of the corpse and named him Vichama or Villama. Like his father, he wanted to travel. When Vichama left on a journey, Pachacamac killed the woman, Vichama's mother. Pachacamac then created a new human couple, who began to repopulate the land. When Vichama returned, he reassembled his mother and brought her back to life. Fearing reprisal, Pachacamac fled into the ocean. Vichama then turned the newly created people into stone; his anger later softened, and he transformed some of these into *huacas*. Finally, Vichama asked his father, the Sun, to create a new race of people. Some sources say the Sun sent eggs, and others say he sent stars. Either way, a new race of people then began.

## COSMOLOGY/ WORLDVIEW (STRUCTURE OF THE UNIVERSE)

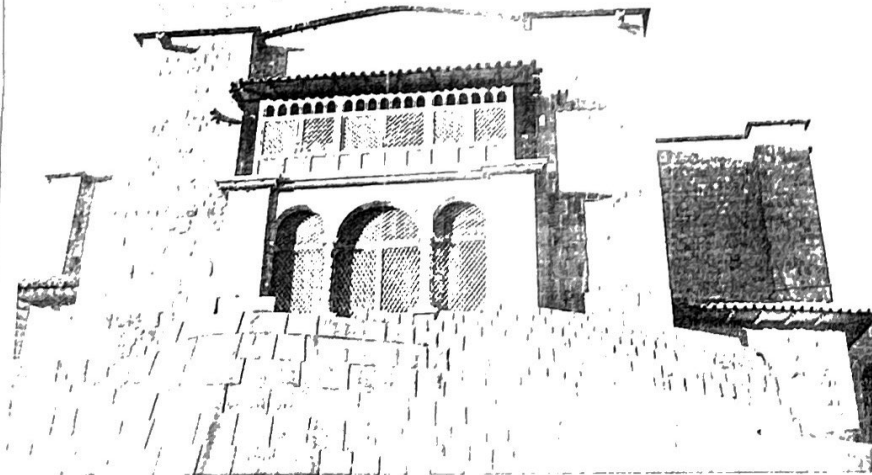
The Andean worldview was based on the principles of duality, the balance between opposing forces,

and reciprocity, the exchange between active elements. The opposing forces in the Andean worldview emphasized fundamental binary relations such as light and dark, male and female, upper and lower, Sun and Moon, and other similar binary oppositions. Keeping these relations balanced was crucial, and proper balance ensured a worldly equilibrium that signified the ideal physical and metaphysical state. Reciprocal exchange ensured balance between these elements. Disequilibrium, however, resulted from real world changes that somehow shifted the sense of equilibrium. A state of disequilibrium could only be restored to a state of equilibrium through the mediating effects of reciprocity. In effect, both positive and negative changes could be made through the appropriate exchange with the supernatural world: Humans made offerings to deities and deities exercised their power in the manner that would restore balance for the affected party. This, then, was the intention behind Andean cosmology—to seek and keep harmony in the form of balanced dualities mediated by reciprocity. These principles were given visual representation in an

important native manuscript written in the early 17th century.

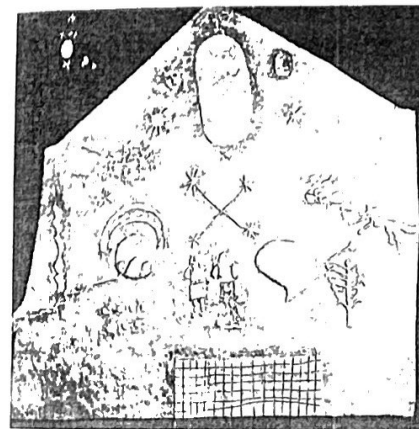
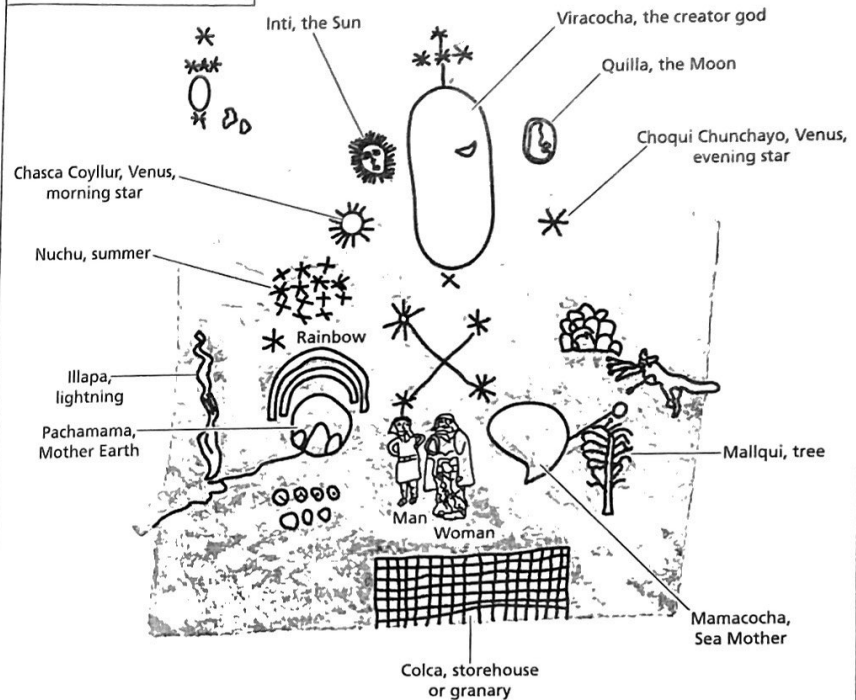
## Worldview Model: Santacruz Pachacuti Yamqui Salcamaygua

The native author Juan de Santacruz Pachacuti Yamqui Salcamaygua published the *Relación de antigüedades deste reyno del Perú* in 1615. In it was included a famous drawing that is generally agreed to be both a conceptual model of the Coricancha, the main Inca temple in Cuzco, and a conceptual model of the Inca universe. In the Inca religious model the Coricancha is the sacred center; Pachacuti Yamqui held his drawing to be a model of the Inca world system and a depiction of the creation of space/time and life, the reproduction of life, and the dynamic conjunction of masculine and feminine forces. Ultimately, it is a depiction of the structure of the universe.



6.6 View of the Coricancha, the most sacred temple in the Inca Empire (Ananda Cohen Suarez)

### Coricancha Drawing



6.7 This diagram depicts both the symbolism of the Coricancha itself and the duality that exists in the Inca universe. The god Viracocha is represented at the top by the oval and divides the image in half. The signs for masculinity are on the left and those for femininity are on the right. The left depicts Venus as morning star, a group of stars that indicate summer, a rainbow covering the earth, lightning, the river of origin, and a man. The right side represents Venus as evening star, winter, hail, a feline, the sea (Mamacocha), a tree, and a woman. (Juan de Santacruz Pachacuti Yamqui Salcamaygua)

The image is read from a perspective internal to the visual space. This means that the left as it is viewed is actually the right in its relation to the cosmological system. Centered at the top is an image of the Inca creator god, Viracocha, rendered as an oval. The oval represents Viracocha's ability to transcend duality. This image serves as an axis dividing the drawing into two sides. To the left of the image of Viracocha is a sun, which the Incas thought represented masculinity. On the right is the idea of femininity, which is drawn as a moon. Beneath the sun there is the image of Venus as morning star, a grouping of starlike images meant to depict summer, an image of a rainbow covering the earth with the word *pachamama* (meaning "earth") inscribed inside it, and finally images of lightning, the river of origin, and man. On the right side, to establish the principles of necessary balance, the images beneath the moon are Venus as evening star, winter, hail, a feline, the sea (*Mama-cocha*), a tree, and woman. The right side symbolizes state functions, and the left, family functions.

The symmetry between the two sides of Pachacuti Yamqui's image encodes a hierarchical relation of domination and subordination that corresponds to *banan*, or "right"—the Andean notion for what is spatially above and dominant—and *burin*, or "left"—the lower, subordinate side. The principles of *banan* and *burin* or, rather, the fusion of the two are exactly the symbolic construction of space that organized the Inca city of Cuzco into two halves, an upper and a lower, a pattern that was extended over the whole empire. *Hanan* and *burin* also define Inca social division into complementary moieties. Overall, the system is simplified in the following equivalencies:

*banan* = upper = masculine = right = Sun = domination  
*burin* = lower = feminine = left = Moon = subordination

Yet, the image also contains symbols of unification that draw the two sides together. An image of a man and a woman, the oval representation of Viracocha, and the stellar cross all suggest unification. As such, the image of the man and woman constitute a central focal point of the diagram, thereby illustrating the centrality of humans to the cosmos. At the very

bottom is a gridlike image that is labeled (in translation) on the masculine side as a "storehouse" and on the feminine side as a "terrace," in both instances indicating the Earth.

In short, Pachacuti Yamqui's conceptual image breaks down the conceived universe into dual symmetrical principles, on the one side dominated by the Sun and the masculine and on the other by the Moon and the feminine. It seems to reinforce the idea that one of the Incas' principal concerns was to maintain a state of equilibrium in a universe where dual forces were constantly threatening to come unbalanced. Situated, then, at the conjunction of the two halves are humans, who mediate the various forces of the universes.

### Three-Part Cosmos

According to the Inca worldview at the time of the conquest, the universe was constructed of three interrelated divisions: *banan pacha* (the world above), *kay pacha* (this world), and *ukhu pacha* (the world below). While this structure may seem connected to Christian concepts of heaven, Earth, and hell, the Incas did not apparently think of them this way. Nevertheless, much of the information recorded by the Spanish chroniclers placed these three parts in that context, thereby confusing their meaning and function. It was an easy mistake for them to make, seeing that the idea of the tripartite universe was so thoroughly ingrained in their way of thinking.

The confusion with heaven and hell is obvious in the translations of the words themselves. In general it seems that the majority of the lay population was said to travel to *ukhu pacha* at death, while only nobles and the elite went to *banan pacha*; in other words, the Inca noble class consciousness even distinguished their resting place from that of the peasantry, in effect allowing the elite to reside "above" with their gods. Further interpretive confusions arise in the notion that "above" and "below" are typically understood in directional terms, with above commonly referenced as north and below commonly understood as south.

At specific times of the year it seems that the Inca ceremonial calendar allowed for rituals that precipitated a bridging between these levels and

spaces, such that the dead could return to Earth, reanimated and commune with the living. This, too, reinstalled a sense of equilibrium in the Inca cosmological formula.

### Cuzco as Sacred City and Axis Mundi

Cuzco was the seat of the royal dynasty, the political core of the Inca polity, and the spiritual and geographic center of the empire. Its reconstruction, following a plan most accounts attribute to the ninth Inca king, Pachacuti, helped define its transition from a small village of minor local interest into an imperial capital. In this role it balanced administrative and bureaucratic functions with its symbolic, cosmological, and religious significance. In effect, Cuzco was a sacred object. Sacredness within the city found expression in function as well as in its physical form, where such things as urban design and masonry construction techniques were deeply ingrained with ritual, mythical, and sacred principles. Furthermore, the city was at the center of a sacred shrine system, the Cuzco *ceque* system, which helped ritualize local religious practice.

The Spanish chronicler Odegarado wrote in 1571 that "the city of Cuzco was the house and dwelling place of the gods, and thus there was not in all of it, a fountain, or road, or wall that they did not say contained a mystery." Further echoing this sentiment, contemporary scholars have suggested that even beyond Cuzco the Andean landscape itself is imbued with sacredness and that there is a deep and profound connection between human centeredness and the spirits of mountains, rocks, springs, rivers, and other topographic features. The native peoples worshipped cosmological powers in the physical topography, most typically in the form of *huacas*, and the structure of the sacred system meant Cuzco was at the center of everything.

According to some theories, urban construction in the imperial hinterlands reflected these sacred and social systems associated with the urban model initially established in Cuzco, creating a kind of recognizable, organized matrix that ultimately reflected imperial might and control. Cuzco, then,

in its role as the center of religious universe, as the anchor of centripetal religious forces, acted as an axis mundi—the conceptualized center of the world around which the Inca physical and metaphysical universe revolved. The city was, for the Inca, the center of the Andean cosmological order.

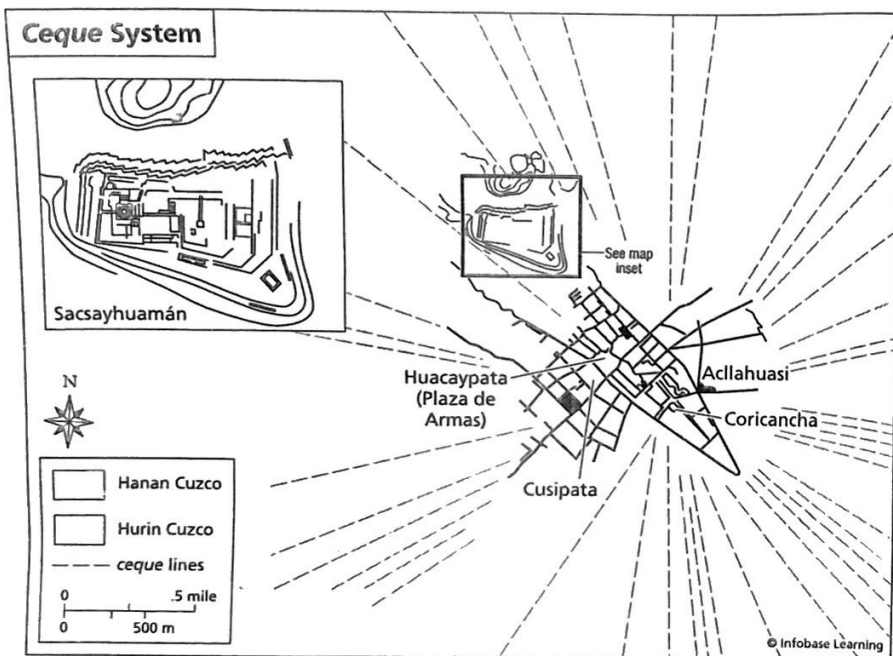
### CUZCO CEQUE SYSTEM

Perhaps the most significant reflection of Cuzco as axis mundi is its centrality in the Cuzco *ceque* system. The *ceque* system is a ritual system defining the sacred landscape of Cuzco and its environs and is composed of several hundred shrines (*huacas*) connected by a system of ritual lines (*ceques*). Cobo's 1653 *Historia del nuevo mundo* provides the most detailed account of the system. Brian Bauer and R. Tom Zuidema, two preeminent contemporary Andean scholars, have done much work advancing knowledge of the *ceque* system.

To understand how the *ceque* system is organized it is first necessary to understand the basic principles by which the city, and thus the empire, was divided. The city was divided into four quadrants that converged at the Huacaypata plaza and followed the four main roads out of Cuzco. These roads then divided the Cuzco Valley into four regions, or *suys*, from which the name for the empire itself derives—Tawantinsuyu, meaning "land of the four parts." The point within the city where the four parts conjoin is a fundamental reflection of its role as axis mundi. The city was further divided into moieties, or halves, which established social divisions based on the urban plan. The upper half was called Hanansuyu, and the lower half was Hurinsuyu. Each of these halves contained two quarters. In Hanansuyu the northwest quarter was referred to as Chinchaysuyu, and the northeast quarter was called Antisuyu. Hurinsuyu was similarly divided, with Collasuyu located to the south-east and Cuntisuyu to southwest. Following and extending the quadripartite division of the city and the valley, the empire itself was divided into analogous divisions.

The *ceque* system, then, is an even more complex, symbolically infused overlay on this system of partitioning. It is ultimately based on the location of sacred *huacas*, or idols or shrines, throughout the





Map 8 The Ceque System, Showing the Theoretical Lines That Emanate from the Coricancha and Connect the Huacas

landscape. The shrines themselves were considered sacred because they were associated with legendary, mythical, or cosmological events or were simply a strange and perhaps powerful aberration in the landscape. In addition to the moieties and the quarters, the ceque system partitioned the landscape with 42 abstract lines (ceques) whose orientations were determined by the location of no less than 328 huacas located in and around Cuzco. According to Cobo, Chinchaysuyu, Antisuyu, and Collasuyu each contained nine ceques. The fourth, Cuntisuyu was more complex and had 15 ceques. The number of huacas associated with any particular ceque varied greatly.

**Ceque and Huaca Maintenance** Inca kin groups were responsible for the proper maintenance of

each huaca. According to Cobo, "Each ceque was the responsibility of the partialities and families of the city of Cuzco, from within which came the attendants and servants who cared for the huacas [sic] of their ceque and saw to offering the established sacrifices at the proper times." In this sense the ceque system was linked to the social organization of the city and imposed ritual obligations. Encountering a huaca required a prayer or an offering, and the number of persons responsible for its maintenance varied from huaca to huaca. Some of the most important huacas had lands designated especially to their maintenance, from which would be drawn all the required kinds and amounts of sacrificial or offertory items.

The offerings presented to a huaca varied according to its importance. The most significant

huacas received offerings in the form of human sacrifice, generally in tandem with the major ceremonial festival the Cápac Hucha (also, Capacocha), during which all the major huacas of the empire were visited. Less significant huacas might receive an offering of a sacrificed llama, guinea pigs (cuy), sheep, a few coca leaves, bundles of carved firewood, buried gold or silver figurines, seashells, or miniature textiles.

**Coricancha** All the lines in the Cuzco ceque system converged in or near Cuzco's primary sacred temple, the Coricancha. Its fine ashlar masonry walls signaled the Coricancha's significance architecturally. Its most prominent wall was a curved wall, one of only a few in the entire empire. Many chronicles relate that the temple housed enormous amounts of gold and silver, ultimately reflecting its affiliation with both the Sun and Moon, respectively. Its walls were reportedly sheathed in gold plates. A golden maize effigy garden graced the interior. Yet, of all the golden items the temple was said to contain the most significant was a golden sun disk, referred to as *punchao*, representing the sun god, Inti, whom the Inca worshipped above all other gods. The Sapa Inca was referred to as the "son of the Sun," and the Coricancha thus became, to a certain extent, his sacred house. The Coricancha was therefore the geographical, religious, and administrative axis point around which the empire revolved. And, as the axis point of the ceque system, and to some extent the axis of the empire itself, the structure was invested with extraordinary symbolic power.

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