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GOVERNADOR DE LOS PUENTES DE
CHACAS VINO GACOSINGA
GUAMBOCHACA



In the Realm of the Four Quarters 8

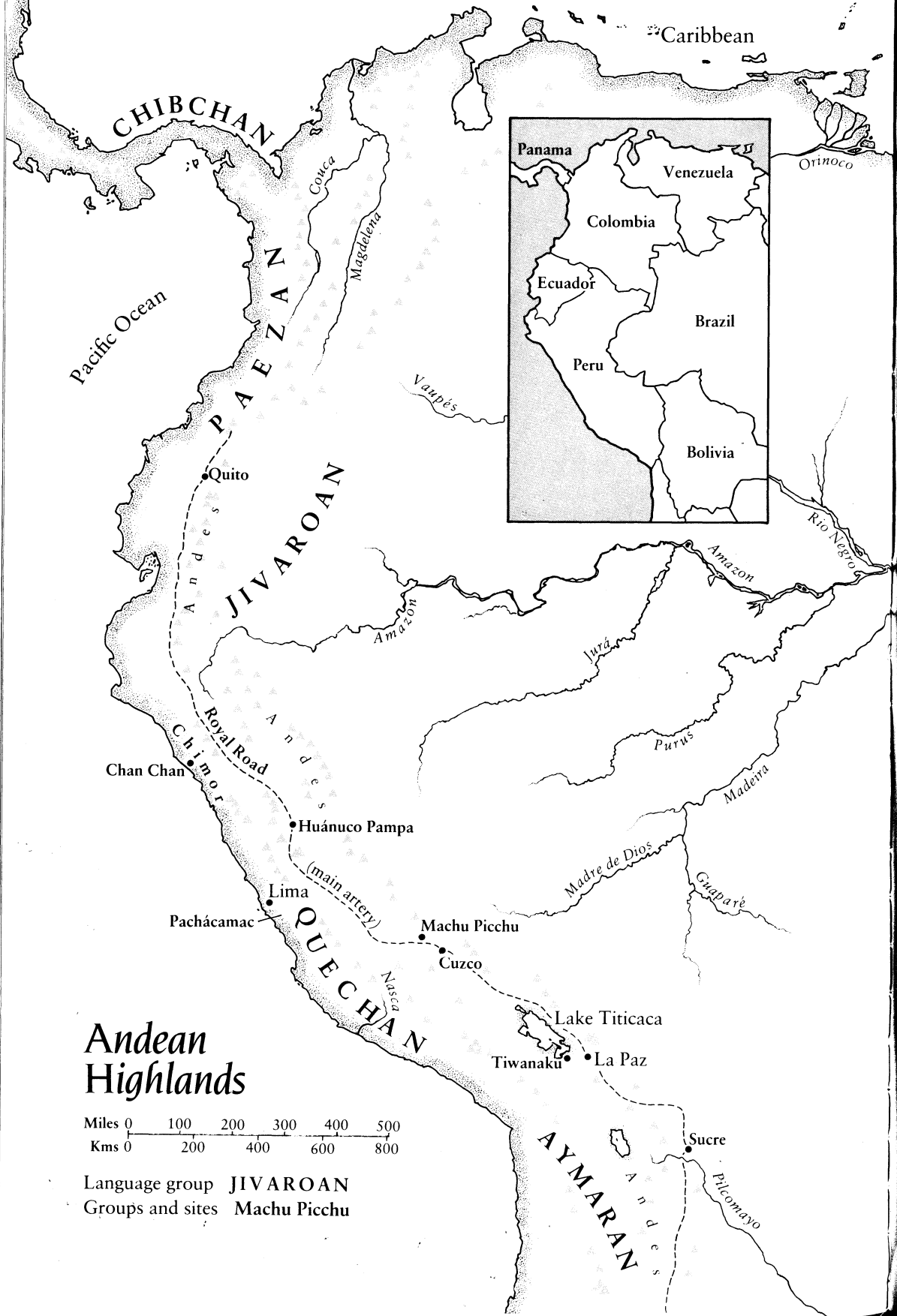
ALAN KOLATA

IN THE FALL OF 1492, as the fleet of Christopher Columbus approached landfall in the Caribbean, far to the southwest a native lord of the Andes was preparing to take dominion over the largest empire ever forged in the Americas. In that year, the Inca Huayna Capac, the last independent heir to a remarkable Andean social tradition grounded in aggressive religious and cultural proselytism, found himself on the verge of coronation as the supreme lord of a domain of startling proportions. The Incas' name for their empire reflected their own belief that they had conquered the Andean world: Tawantinsuyu, the Realm of the Four Quarters.

The lands of this realm incorporated a dazzling and sharply juxtaposed series of physical landscapes that ranged over the territories of five modern Andean republics: Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, and Ecuador. The world of the Inca contained an astonishing array of radically different environmental zones, replete with brusque contrasts in climate, vegetation, topography, soil, and other more subtle biological and physical associations.

The wild diversity of terrain, and therefore of ecological potential, represented a significant impediment to the achievement of regional political integration. Nevertheless, Incan armies were able to extend the power of their lords

On New Year's Day, 1613, an elderly Peruvian Christian named Don Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala completed "A First New Chronicle on Good Government," and sent it off to the King of Spain. A large portion of this plea for imperial reform described life in the Andes prior to the Spanish conquest in 1532. Because the author was Native American, and because he belonged to a family which had served the Inca regime, his "Chronicle" is considered a unique source for the study of ancient Peru, even though we have no evidence that the King of Spain ever read it. Here an Inca governor stands before a suspension bridge along the royal road which ran the length of the mountain kingdom. Note the governor's sandals, formal tunic, and ear spoons—all marks of high status.



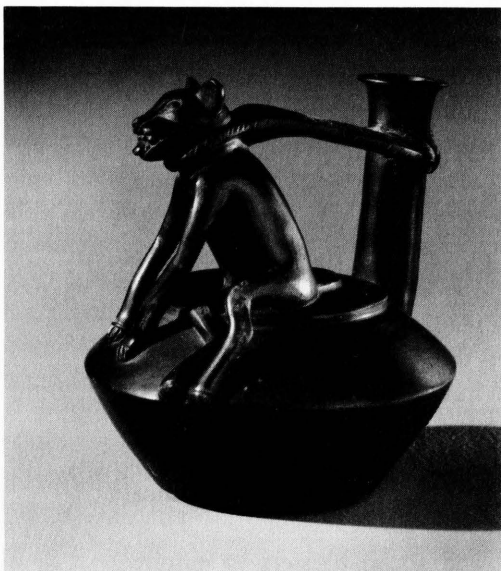
from the tortuous, dissected mountain slopes and valleys of highland Peru to the perpetually arid coasts strung along the western margins of the South American continent, and from the humid, subtropical enclaves encrusted in the great eastern flanks of the Andean massif to the cold, austere, and seemingly endless high plains of the Titicaca Basin.

The social obstacles that confronted the Inca political, economic, and military apparatus in its drive to conquest were no less bewildering in their diversity or daunting in their complexity and power. The Inca empire, at its apogee, incorporated over 200 separate ethnic groups, most speaking mutually unintelligible languages. The imperial bureaucracy strained to conquer, and then to administer, societies that covered the entire spectrum of human organization from small, dispersed bands of hunters and gatherers who inhabited isolated areas in the densely forested selva regions of eastern Ecuador and Peru to the powerful, immensely wealthy indigenous states of the Pacific coast and the Andean altiplano, such as the kingdoms of the Chimor, China, Lupaca, and Colla peoples.

Despite these formidable environmental and social barriers to empire, within the evanescent space of three generations—during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries—the Incas succeeded in transforming themselves from a small tribal group jockeying for power in the circumscribed, relatively peripheral mountainous region around Cuzco in the southern highlands of Peru into the greatest single Indian political entity. Extending their authority over an area of some 3,000 miles in length from north to south, they ruled approximately seven million people.

Throughout the Andes, public works ordained by the emperors of the Incas dominated, and at times transformed, the natural landscape. Monumental cities, temples and fortresses of stone, marvelously engineered roads cut through granite mountain slopes, and, most especially, massive agricultural terraces and hydraulic works were emblematic of Inca power and productive capacity. Yet it is not so much these awesome products of the Inca empire that claim our curiosity but, rather, the processes that brought them into being.

What, for instance, were the cultural institutions that structured and gave impetus to the Incas' imperial ambition? What form of power did the Incas exercise over their conquered provinces far from their imperial capital of Cuzco? How did they mobilize the staggering labor force that was required to sustain their war machine while simultaneously erecting and maintaining the extensive and monumental public works? What kind of perceptions, thought processes, and beliefs informed the Inca worldview, confirming in their own minds that right to rule other nations? And what impact did the radical social transformation that the Incas experienced in their evolution toward statehood and imperial power have on the structure of the Inca nation itself and on other ethnic groups that they subjugated?



This molded pottery water jar decorated with a cat is from the Chimu region of what is now northern Peru. The Incas annexed the Chimus around 1470 and made them a distinct province within a rapidly expanding empire. Objects like this were subsequently traded widely throughout the Andes. Courtesy of the Field Museum of Natural History.

Answering these questions engages us in an exploration of the social history and the dynamics of the evolution of civilization throughout the Andes. The imperial achievements of Tawantinsuyu were not simply the brilliant invention of the kings of Cuzco, as Inca court propagandists, in a virtuoso display of self-aggrandizement, would have had us believe. They had not occurred in a cultural vacuum. The roots of the Incas' civilization, much like that of their Mesoamerican counterparts, the Aztecs, were firmly planted in the deep bedrock of earlier cultural traditions. Before the Incas, the political history of the Andes had been marked dramatically by the ebb and flow of other, more ancient city-states and empires. The Wari and Tiwanaku states of the Andean highlands had left an enduring legacy of aggressive imperial expansion in the same regions that the Incas would conquer some 700 years later. Many of the organizational tools that the Incas used to bind local populations to the yoke of their central government had been devised and elaborated in the centuries before them by these early predatory states, and they had long been common currency in the pan-Andean repertoire of state formation.

Similarly, on the desert coast of northern Peru, the kingdom of Chimor had been ruled by a dynasty of divine kings who had forcefully commanded the resources and the obeisance of a vast population for generations before the Incas even had pretensions to imperial rule. The richly decorated palaces and royal sepulchers at Chan Chan, the remarkable capital city of Chimor, had been the scenes of unimaginable exhibitions of kingly power and wealth when the first leaders of the Incas had been nothing more than a chaotic collection

of competing warlords living in crude fortified compounds. The ideology and practice of divine kingship, like other institutions that became indelibly associated with the Incas, were clearly not exclusive to the lords of Cuzco. A long, rich stream of extant cultural beliefs, social institutions, and economic systems shaped the essential contours, if not the precise course, of Inca state history.

Thus, the story of the Incas, who in 1492 were in the midst of extending their domain in the Andes, was the final pre-Columbian chapter of an exceedingly complex, vibrant saga of human adaptation over several millennia within a setting of formidable environmental extremes. The process of successful cultural adaptation to the harsh physical realities of the Andean world had elicited similar organizational and institutional responses from a broad range of cultures in this important region, one of only two that witnessed the evolution of a pristine civilization in the New World. To understand the historical underpinnings of the Inca state, we must first grasp the intimate relationship between the economy and the environment in the Andean world.

Overall, a singular and most striking aspect of the Andean natural environment is that it is banded, both horizontally and vertically. Proceeding roughly north-south along the Pacific coast, the horizontal bands are formed by coastal rivers piercing the monotonous gray-brown desert, one of the most forbidding tracts of land on earth. These rivers, yielding a series of fertile belts in an otherwise sterile and hostile environment, over the millennia became oases for coastal peoples.

The vertical bands are the product of the Andean range. "Who," wrote Herman Melville in *Moby Dick*, "could show a cheek like Queequeg, which, barred with various tints, seemed like the Andes' western slope, to show forth in one array, contrasting climates, zone by zone?" This climatic stratification that inspired Melville is the result of changes in altitude, correlated with variation in precipitation and topographic relief. Altogether, we can visualize the Andean natural environment as a grid in which changes along the coastal end of the valleys alternate sharply between fertile and sterile zones, while vertical zonal changes are formed by a gradual increase in available moisture. Changes in the grid are stark horizontally but subtle vertically, with different micro-environments grading one into the other.

Because of these manifold bands, each providing access to a different suite of natural resources, it is not surprising that in the ancient Andean world, environment and economic systems were inextricably linked. The linkage was most dramatic in the highland zones—the Andean intermontane basins, mountainous eastern slopes, and altiplano—that were the core regions of the Inca empire. Here the irregular spatial distribution and temporal availability of subsistence resources profoundly influenced the structure of native Andean populations.

Most of the indigenous peoples incorporated by the Incas into Tawantin-



Terraced fields near Cuzco. Andean farmers built these plots along the sides of the Urubamba Valley to make maximum use of their mountainous environment. Courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History.

suju were relatively self-sufficient agriculturalists, generally capable of producing enough food to satisfy their basic caloric requirements. The inhabitants of the highland basins above 9,000 feet in elevation, however, were severely constrained by the kinds of food crops they could cultivate. Agriculture at high altitudes in the Andes is inherently risky, prone to debilitating frosts, hail, wind, droughts, and floods. Only the hardy, high-altitude-adapted tubers such as potatoes, oca, ullucu, and mashwa and the unique chenopod grains, quinoa and cañiwa, grow in that dour environment. In starkest numerical terms, approximately 95 percent of the principal Andean food crops can be cultivated below 3,000 feet, but only 20 percent reproduce readily above 9,000 feet.

The implication of this contrasting resource distribution is clear. In order to enlarge the variety and quantity of their foodstuffs and reduce the risk of subsistence agriculture, people living at high altitudes sought access to the products of lower, warmer climatic zones. The most highly prized of the temperate-land crops were maize and coca. Maize was important both as a bulk food product and as the principal ingredient of chicha, or maize beer, an essential component of ceremonial feasts that were hosted by political leaders throughout the ancient Andean world. Coca was the preeminent ritual plant of the Andes, indispensable for the entire panoply of formal communal ceremonies related to agricultural and animal fertility and transitions in the human life cycle, and for a multiplicity of informal rites performed by individuals and households.

In most of the pre-industrial world, the problem of different resource distribution is resolved by long-distance trade carried on through an institutionalized complex of merchants and markets. These mechanisms result in the flow of desired commodities through relatively long, indirect chains of barter over which the end consumer exercises little control. Although highland Andean peoples participated in such merchant-mediated networks, they relied more heavily on the direct appropriation of desired resources by a strategy of maintaining autonomous production forces in as many ecological zones as possible. The distinct commodities produced in these various zones were extracted, processed, and transported entirely by members of a single group. This economic strategy enhanced community self-sufficiency by directly ensuring the diversification of production and by eliminating the uncertainty engendered by potentially fragile trading relationships and the manipulations of merchant brokers.

Since the principal axis of environmental and natural resource variation in the Andes derives from altitudinal change, the strategy of direct access to a maximum number of ecological zones by a single group has been called "verticality," or vertical economy. Even today, one can see rural communities, particularly along the eastern slopes of the great Andean cordillera, maintaining use rights simultaneously to pasturelands for llama and alpaca in the high, cold

meadows of the mountains above 12,000 feet, to potato, oca, and quinoa fields in the mountainous basins over 9,000 feet, and to plots of maize, coca, and other warm-land crops in regions well below 6,000 feet.

The exploitation of altitudinally stratified resources in the Andes takes many specialized forms, but we can identify two principal variations that capture the essence of this remarkable economic practice. The first is what may be referred to as compressed verticality, in which a single village or ethnic group resides in a physical setting that permits easy access to contiguous or closely located ecological zones.

Different crop zones, pasturelands, or other localized resources such as sources of salt, honey, or fruit trees are within one or two days' walk of the parent community. Generally, the parent community is situated above 6,000 feet in an agriculturally productive mountain basin. Individual members of the community or, at times, the entire village may reside temporarily in one of the lower ecological zones to manage the extraction of products unavailable in the high-altitude homeland. The village maintains temporary dwellings on a number of ecological "floors" and rotates residence among them in accordance with the agricultural and pastoral cycle of the seasons. The efficiency of this system relies heavily on group solidarity and the sharing of reciprocal obligations. Communities engaged in this form of verticality are characterized by strong bonds of kinship and by an ethic of self-help.

The second variation resembles compressed verticality in that a single group maintains residences in multiple, altitudinally stratified environmental zones. But in this stratagem, which has been called the vertical archipelago, the ethnic group or village exploits resources in zones that are noncontiguous and widely dispersed, constituting a series of independent "islands" of production. In some villages engaged in this strategy, community members must trek up to ten to fourteen days from their home base in the mountains to reach distant fields in the tropical lowlands.

Although examples of the vertical archipelago economy still exist in the Andes, this form of land use was most highly developed in the pre-Columbian world by complex societies such as the indigenous Aymara kingdoms of the Titicaca Basin. In these kingdoms, the vertical archipelago was transformed into a formal, specialized system of production in which satellite communities from the home territory were sent to reside permanently as colonists in distant tropical forest and Pacific coastal locations. There, the colonists grew crops and extracted products for their own consumption and for transshipment back to their high-altitude compatriots. By establishing this policy of permanent colonization, these polities enhanced the efficiency of their economic system by producing crops and other goods in multiple ecological zones. In this system, food crops, raw products, and other commodities, rather than people, circulated through the archipelago.

The colonists from the highlands frequently shared the resources of the foreign territories in which they were resettled with the indigenous inhabitants, at times adopting the dress and customs of the local people. The colonists, however, maintained basic rights to marriage, residence, familial lands, and property in their communities of origin in the distant highlands. The number and kind of colonists maintained by the altiplano kingdoms in the various islands of production were highly variable, but could range from single extended families of a few people to entire village communities.

Rather than dismantle the native tradition of the vertical archipelago when they began to reorganize populations and production in their nascent empire, the Incas expanded and intensified this uniquely Andean economic strategy. This trait of co-opting and adapting local institutions, beliefs, and patterns of economic and political behavior to the needs of their empire distinguished the Incas. The success of their imperial expansion owed more to the Inca elite's perceptive manipulation of ancient pan-Andean values, economic strategies, and political concepts concerning the reciprocal relationship of rights and obligations between community leaders and their people than to brute superiority in force of arms. The adoption and further development of the vertical archipelago is one example. But to understand the Incas better, we must first gain a more specific vision of the basic economic and political institutions that formed the organizational armature of their state.

Perhaps the most intriguing questions regarding the Incas concern the social and political means they employed to create rapidly and rule successfully an empire of enormous ethnic, linguistic, and geographic diversity. We can derive at least partial answers by exploring the various organizational tools they used when incorporating a new valley or province into their political orbit.

One of their first steps after absorbing a new territory was to reorganize the prevailing system of land tenure to suit their empire's economic needs. The great Spanish cleric and chronicler of the Incas, Bernabé Cobo, writing in the mid-seventeenth century, provided a thorough account of how the reorganization of productive land was undertaken. When the Incas, he said, "settled a town, or reduced one to obedience, he set up markers in its boundaries and divided the fields and arable land within its territory into three parts. . . . One part he assigned to religion and the cult of his false gods, another he took for himself, and the third he left for the common use of the people. . . . In some provinces the part assigned to religion was greater; in others that belonging to the Inca; and in some regions there were entire towns which, with their territory and all that it produced, belonged to the Sun and the other gods . . . in other provinces (and this was more usual), the king's share was the largest. . . . In the lands assigned to religion and to the crown, the Inca kept overseers and administrators who took great care in supervising their cultivation, harvesting the products and putting them in the storehouses."

Cobo was fascinated by the manner of disposition of the third division of arable land that was to be allocated to the local inhabitants in the nature of commons. "These lands," he remarked, "were distributed each year among the subjects by the chief [the local ethnic lord], not in equal parts, but proportionate to the number of children and relatives that each man had; and, as the family grew or decreased, its share was enlarged or restricted. No man was granted more than just enough to support him, be he noble or citizen, even though a great deal of land was left over to lie fallow . . ."

This brief passage encapsulates a number of fundamental insights into the nature of ancient Andean rural society. It makes clear that productive lands were held in common by the local communities and ethnic groups. Beyond the level of individual nuclear families, these communities and ethnic groups were organized into social groupings known as ayllus. Generally, the Andean ayllu was a group of related families who held land in common and traced their descent from a common ancestor. There was no concentration of arable land or pasturage in the hands of a few wealthy private owners. Individuals as heads of households only held the usufruct, or use right, to parcels of land, and the amount of land that could be exploited for the benefit of the household was not permanently fixed. The political leaders of the community, called curacas in the Andes, determined on a periodic basis the subsistence needs of each household, and readjusted the size of the designated land allotment to conform with changes in the composition of these households. This system of communal disposition of productive lands reflected the age-old Andean ethic of mutual aid: no individuals were allowed to claim basic natural resources as their personal property, but at the same time members of each household retained the right of assured access to sufficient community farmland or pastureland to support themselves and their family.

The system of communal land tenure also played a significant role in maintaining an ecological equilibrium in the sometimes fragile agricultural environment of the Andean highlands. Since individuals were not permitted to acquire land as personal property, they had no opportunity to enrich themselves in the short term by continuously cultivating the greatest amount of land possible and then selling off surplus agricultural products at a profit. This built-in constraint on the potential for entrepreneurship and monopolization of natural resources by individuals ensured that the community as a whole would always have enough productive lands to guarantee its survival. Cobo's bemused observation that this system resulted in large sectors of land left fallow underscored this equilibrating effect of traditional Andean concepts of communal property holding and decision making.

The Incas understood and respected these native notions of community autonomy and self-determination. Although when the Incas absorbed a new province they expropriated substantial tracts of land for the purposes of the

state, they made certain at the same time that sufficient land was allotted for the support of the local communities. More importantly, they chose shrewdly not to usurp the traditional prerogative of the curacas in deciding how this land would be allocated among their members.

Elsewhere in his commentary, Cobo hit upon the true key to the tremendous productive capacity of the Incan state. After the Incas expropriated a certain portion of arable lands in newly conquered provinces for the support of the state cults and the central bureaucracy, "the labor of sowing and cultivating these lands and harvesting their products formed a large part of the tribute which the taxpayer paid to the king." In addition to carving out lands from the conquered provinces for themselves, the Incas also exacted an annual tax from villagers and townspeople in the form of agricultural labor. The local inhabitants were required to prepare, plant, weed, and harvest the state fields. As Cobo described it, the products of these fields were then processed and stored under the watchful eyes of Inca overseers in immense state granaries.

In a world where money was not a principal feature of economic transactions, taxation took the form of labor service for the state. Although payments in kind, such as designated quantities of tropical forest bird feathers, honey, salt, dried fish, mollusks, and other raw products, were assessed by Inca administrators in some provinces, the principal form of taxation and source of revenue for the Inca state was the agricultural labor tax. This intense emphasis on discharging obligations to the state by labor service rather than by payments of currency, standardized manufactured goods, or other forms of primitive money, separates the Andes from other centers of early civilization such as Mesoamerica.

The agricultural labor tax was not an invention of the Incas, but was another ancient feature of the Andean social landscape. Throughout the Andes, local political leaders and ethnic lords had extracted surplus labor in community-owned fields from their subjects for generations before the coming of the Incas. The Incas, operating within an idiom familiar to any pre-Columbian Andean farmer to whom work rather than money was the essential means of discharging economic and social debts, simply assessed additional labor obligations on the local communities.

Although Inca provincial administrators set quotas for the labor tax in each village and province and supervised the accounting of agricultural goods that flowed into the state storehouses, it was the responsibility of the local curacas to give individual work assignments to the heads of households, who then distributed the tasks among their members, including all able-bodied men, women, and children. With the onset of the highland planting season in August and September, the two classes of fields that belonged to the state—those reserved for the support of the state religious cults and the central bureaucracy—were worked first, followed by the fields that remained for the support

TRAVAXA CHACRAMATAPISCO



A farmer keeping birds away from his crops. In October (spring in the Andes), when seedlings began to appear, farmers took their slings to the fields to drive away birds and other predators.

of the local populations. The fields were divided into long strips or sections, called *suyu* by the Incas, and each section became the responsibility of an individual household, or group of related households. By incorporating the local leaders into the supervision of the agricultural labor tax, the Incas reduced their own administrative costs. More importantly, however, they minimized their intrusion into the daily life of the provincial villages and towns, permitting them to maintain the politically valuable illusion that these communities retained local autonomy.

Apart from the agricultural tax assessed at the level of the community, the Incas also demanded a second form of annual labor service from taxpayers. This obligation, called the *mit'a*, varied greatly in kind and length of service. The *mit'a* was used by the Incas to provide temporary work gangs for the construction of huge public monuments, for filling the ranks of the Inca army during its frequent campaigns in the provinces, for cultivating the private estates of the Inca elite, for extracting precious metals from state mines, and for many other services for the state that required heavy manual labor. The scale of some *mit'a* operations was truly astonishing. Spanish chroniclers related that over 30,000 men at a time were mobilized for the construction of Sacsahuamán, the

great fortress-shrine of the Incas perched on the mountain slopes above the imperial capital of Cuzco.

The Inca *mit'a* labor tax system possessed a number of uniquely Andean features that distinguished it from *corvée*, or other forms of forced labor routinely employed by empires elsewhere in the ancient world. Much like the agricultural tax, the *mit'a* system was administered principally through local officials of the various ethnic groups subject to the Incas. When a draft of men was required for a military campaign, or to construct a bridge or an irrigation canal, the Inca governor in the affected province would call upon the heads of the various villages, towns, and ethnic groups, who would each be obliged to supply a designated number of taxpayers to complete the task. These local officials would then select from among the pool of eligible taxpayers (married heads of households) in their community on a rotational basis to supply their quota. In this way, the labor obligation was distributed equitably both among the different local ethnic groups in the province and within the groups themselves. No individual taxpayer was forced to serve the *mit'a* more frequently than another, and, apart from some special exemptions, all communities and ethnic groups participated in the system, contributing labor service according to the size of their population.

Local autonomy in implementing the *mit'a* labor tax was one of the special characteristics of the system that enhanced its efficiency and flexibility. But there was another principle in this system of taxation that reveals its character as a quintessential native Andean institution. To the indigenous peoples of the Andes, the *mit'a* was not perceived as a simple, one-sided tax debt assessed by their political superiors. Rather they viewed the *mit'a* as a complex skein of reciprocal obligations. If the government compelled them to contribute labor on public projects, or on the private estates of the ruling elite, the state, in turn, had the obligation during the period of labor service to provide the taxpayer with food, drink, clothing, tools, and housing if the project was distant from the home community.

To commoners, the Incan *mit'a* was a variant of an ancient pattern of reciprocity among family, kinsmen, and neighbors that, even today, remains a vital principle of social relations in rural Andean communities. In this system, for instance, a newly married couple, with the aid of local officials, may call on their relatives and friends to help them build their first house. In return for this donated labor, the couple, and perhaps their immediate family, provide food, drink, and hospitality while the job is completed. They also incur a future obligation to contribute some equivalent service to those who participated in the house raising. This mix of mutual labor service and hospitality permits individuals to mobilize labor beyond that available in their households and contributes to community solidarity.

When the Incas assessed the *mit'a* labor tax, they acknowledged the recip-

rocal nature of the social obligation by holding large-scale ceremonial banquets in the principal administrative centers of the province. Local political leaders and commoners were feted with great quantities of maize beer and food drawn from the imperial warehouses. At times on these occasions, the Inca administrators would also distribute clothing and sandals to the mit'a work gangs. Of course, if one compared the relative economic value of the labor service contributed by commoners with that of the hospitality and occasional suit of clothes contributed by the central government, there was no equivalency. The purpose and heart of the system, however, was not to exchange work for an equivalent value in goods, but to reaffirm symbolically the fundamental social principle of reciprocity.

That symbolism was projected vividly by a telling ritual convention. Theoretically, the Incas were obliged to "request" mit'a work crews from the local curacas; they could not compel them directly by fiat. In practice, this convention was little more than a fiction. At any time the Incas had sufficient coercive power to force subject communities into compliance. By engaging in this symbolic gesture of reciprocity and ritualized state generosity, the Incas confirmed, in at least a fictive sense, the authority and autonomy of local leaders and their communities, achieving in the process an enormous propaganda coup. The Incas, like any imperial state, held the power to rule by force and intimidation. But whenever possible, they chose instead to govern by persuasion through the local chain of command, respecting at least in name the basic institutions that formed the foundations of traditional Andean societies.

Although the agricultural tax and the mit'a labor service were the two principal sources of generalized revenue for the Incas, there were several specialized institutions that contributed substantially to the productive energy of the Inca state. In addition to their function as tools of production, these institutions performed strategic roles in Inca statecraft, emphasizing the intimate nexus between economic and political behavior in the Inca regime.

The first, known as the mitimae, held special fascination for the Spaniards, possibly because they recognized certain elements embedded in the institution that echoed their own traditions of statecraft. The contemporary Spanish chronicler and soldier Pedro de Cieza de León left a detailed description of the mitimae that portrayed the essence of the institution. "As soon as one of these large provinces was conquered," he wrote, "ten or twelve thousand of the men and their wives, or six thousand, or the number decided upon, were ordered to leave and remove themselves from it. These were transferred to another town or province of the same climate and nature as that which they left . . . and these were called mitimae, which means Indians come from one land to another. They were given land to work and sites on which to build their houses. And these mitimae were ordered by the Incas to be always obedient to what their governors and captains ordered, so that if the natives should rebel, and

Peruvian goldsmiths at work. This engraving from Girolamo Benzoni's 1565 account of travels in Spain's American colonies shows a group of Peruvian craftsmen working before a house that displays the adaptation of Incan stonework to European house design. While the workers on the left melt gold ingots, the craftsman on the right hammers sheets into goblets.



they supported the governor, the natives would be punished and reduced to the service of the Incas. Likewise if the mitimae stirred up disorder, they were put down by the natives. In this way these rulers had their empire assured against revolts and the provinces well supplied with food, for most of the people, as I have said, had been moved from one land to another."

In a passage remarkable for its analytical perceptiveness, Cieza de León went on to distinguish three classes of mitimae—military, political, and economic. The military mitimae served an important function as border guards, populating and commanding army garrisons on the fringes of the expanding Inca state. These were essentially groups of soldier-citizens who maintained a military profile on behalf of the Incas, as well as reclaiming and cultivating lands and herding llama and alpaca on the border zones of the empire. In many respects, these mitimae fulfilled roles similar to those of the army garrisons and civilian colonists who were established in frontier areas of the Roman Empire. Frequently, rudimentary army camps on the Roman frontier were transformed over time into colonial "new towns" through the actions of the legionnaires who remained for many years, establishing farms, roads, markets, and smithies, and engaging in a host of other urban occupations.

The second class of transplanted colonists, the political mitimae, also served security functions. They were more numerous than the military mitimae and were found in every province of the empire. These mitimae had been forcibly removed from their homelands and resettled in other provinces, where they were required to retain their distinctive ethnic costume, headdress, customs, and forms of social organization. The strategic goal underlying the Incas' implantation of political mitimae was to reduce the chances for rebellion in conquered provinces by shattering traditional patterns of shared ethnic

identity among large contiguous populations. By intermixing local inhabitants with pockets of foreigners in self-contained colonies, the Incas substantially inhibited the potential for subversive political coalitions. "In this way," observed Cieza de León, "all was quiet, and the mitimaes feared the natives, and the natives feared the mitimaes, and all occupied themselves only in obeying and serving."

Cieza de León characterized the third use of mitimae colonists as "stranger" than the others. He went on to describe these economic mitimae in the following terms: ". . . if, perchance, they had conquered territory in the highlands or plains or on a slope suitable for plowing and sowing, which was fertile and had a good climate . . . they quickly ordered that from nearby provinces that had the same climate as these . . . enough people come in to settle it, and to these lands were given, and flocks, and all the provisions they needed until they could harvest what they planted . . . For a number of years no tribute was exacted of these new settlers, but on the contrary they were given women, coca, and food so that they would carry out the work of settlement with better will."

To Cieza de León and other Spanish military men the use of frontier garrisons and colonial outposts was entirely familiar. But the Inca principle of economic mitimae was alien to these representatives of an essentially feudal, medieval European tradition. First, the institution incorporated the unfamiliar Andean ideal of reciprocity. In transplanting populations to reclaim productive lands in a new province, the state was obligated to provide the colonists with a "grubstake": food, coca, and women. Second, these mitimae colonists were exempted from taxation until they could reclaim enough land to sustain themselves and produce a surplus for the state. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, few Spanish chroniclers or administrators grasped the significance of the economic mitimae as state expressions of the Andean vertical archipelago economy. The principal intent of the economic mitimae was to enhance the productive capacity of the Inca state by reclaiming marginal land and, in some cases, by focusing the labor of thousands of transplanted colonists on the production of a single prestige crop, maize.

One of the most remarkable and well-documented uses of economic mitimae occurred during the reign of Huayna Capac (1493-1527). This last independent emperor of the Incas expelled the native populations of the Cochabamba Valley, one of the richest and most fertile in Bolivia, in order to install 14,000 new colonists from a variety of ethnic groups, who were placed there under the direct control of two Inca governors. These multiethnic colonists were brought to Cochabamba explicitly to produce maize for the state. The vast quantities of maize that flowed into the imperial storehouses in Cochabamba were eventually shipped to Cuzco for ultimate consumption by the Inca army. Huayna Capac completely reorganized the system of land tenure in Cochabamba to accommodate this grand scheme of repopulation and in-

tensive state maize production. He divided the entire valley into 77 long strips, or *suyu*, and then assigned individual ethnic groups to work the *suyus* or fractional parts of *suyus*, depending on the topographic context of the designated strip and the population size of each colonizing ethnic group. Only 7 of these strips of land, interspersed among the other 70 *suyus*, were allotted to the 14,000 colonists for their own subsistence. The remaining portion, more than 90 percent of the arable land in the valley, was given over to intensive production of maize for the state.

As was the case with other multiethnic mitimae colonization schemes, the work assignments and other internal affairs of each ethnic group were governed by the group's own political leaders. These persons were then responsible to the two Inca governors who headed up the political hierarchy. In return for their service to the Incas, the various ethnic curacas were rewarded with small plots of land within the valley, as well as with some Inca prestige goods such as cotton mantles, and occasionally with women for secondary wives. By Inca governmental decree, each group maintained its own ethnic costume, headdress, and way of life.

It is clear that the Cochabamba economic mitimae served multiple purposes for the Inca state. Primarily, they were a tremendous economic engine, capable of producing massive quantities of maize for the state in at least two annual crops. More than 2,000 preserved Inca stone storehouses on the hillslopes of the Cochabamba Valley attest to the productive capacity of these transplanted colonists. Secondarily, of course, these colonists performed an important security function. A series of transplanted, fragmented ethnic groups working side by side in Cochabamba presented less of a threat to the state than the potentially unified indigenous inhabitants of the valley deported by the Incas.

The three categories of Inca mitimae, then, crosscut each other. Political mitimae frequently served economic functions; military mitimae were, almost by definition, also political mitimae; and large-scale economic mitimae colonization schemes such as in the Cochabamba Valley, by their organization and multiethnic composition, became simultaneously effective security devices. Although the principal colonization projects organized by the Incas focused on agricultural development schemes, mitimae colonists were also established to exploit specific concentrated natural resources such as salt, gold, silver, timber, clay for pottery, semiprecious stones for jewelry, hard stone for construction, and the like. The number of colonists relocated in these projects varied greatly, ranging from extended families to entire villages and ethnic groups reaching into the thousands, as in the case of Huayna Capac's reorganization of the Cochabamba Valley. We have no precise information on the total number of people removed from their homelands and resettled elsewhere. But all sources indicate that it was a substantial portion of the population. Such mas-

sive transfers of communities and villages as mitimae, who became directly dependent upon the Inca state bureaucracy for political security and for the potential of enhancing their own social position and economic well-being, resulted in a gradual dissemination of Inca language, values, expectations, and cultural beliefs. Under the impact of this program of population mixing on an imperial scale, old ethnic identities, loyalties, and beliefs began slowly to transform themselves in conformity with the new Inca ideal, enhancing the unification of the empire itself.

The Incas assiduously promoted identification with the central government through three other forms of labor relations: the yanacona, camayo, and aclla institutions, which were, in essence, Inca names for special status relationships between individuals and the state. The yanacona have been interpreted as everything from a true slave class of the state responsible for the heaviest manual labor to domestic servants for the Inca elite. Perhaps the single most satisfactory definition of the term yanacona is "personal retainer." In many respects, the yanacona were much like vassals in a feudal state. They were attached to the households of individual Inca lords and owed personal fealty to them. In return for personal service to their liege lords, the yanacona were generally exempted from the agricultural and mit'a labor tax obligations assessed against the ordinary citizens of the realm.

The rich variety of services that they performed for their Inca overlords implies that there were many kinds of yanacona situated within a complex hierarchy of status. Some yanacona cultivated the private estates of the Inca elite, others gathered firewood, cooked, managed private llama herds, or served as skilled artisans in the private households of their lord, or in the temples of the state cults. Like some powerful officials of pharaonic Egypt who were originally of commoner status, many yanacona also held privileged and responsible positions in the governance of the empire. They served as petty officials on the staffs of Inca provincial governors, frequently overseeing the labor of transplanted mitimae colonists. In return for faithful service and personal loyalty, these yanacona were rewarded with gifts of land, women, food, clothing, and emblems of their special status in the eyes of the Inca state, such as a particularly fine cotton mantle, or perhaps a copper cup, armband, ring, or other adornment. Since the yanacona, particularly those who served in the royal households of the Incas, owed their relatively high status to personal relationships with the Inca elite, their bond of traditional loyalty to ethnic groups or villages of origin was weakened in favor of their service to the Inca government. Through time the yanacona became essential players in the daily administration of the empire and, like the mitimae colonists, pivotal elements in the Inca strategy of domination and governance in the conquered territories.

The special civic status of camayos was similar to that of the yanacona. They labored full-time on behalf of individual Inca lords in the royal house-

holds in Cuzco and in the provinces; they were exempt from the otherwise universal labor tribute; and, as with the yanacona, their status was inherited, handed down from generation to generation through the male line. Unlike the highest-status yanacona, however, who could hold positions of trust and moderate power as petty managers and enjoy some upward mobility through the social hierarchy of the Inca state, the camayos held specific, fixed occupations that they discharged for the Inca elite throughout their lifetime. Documents of the early sixteenth century preserve for us an expansive list of specialized occupations of people identified as camayos. They were miners of precious metals, stonemasons, carpenters, weavers of fine textiles, potters, dye makers, feather, wood, bone, and shell workers, goldsmiths, hunters, herders, honey gatherers, herbalists, coca cultivators, porters, litterbearers, gladiators, and bodyguards.

Often, entire villages containing one or two hundred people specialized in a particular craft occupation, such as weaving, woodworking, or potting. These villages of camayos supported their daily subsistence needs by cultivating land given to them by the Inca state for that purpose, or by exchanging their craft products for food. Certain camayo groups such as salt miners and silversmiths exploited, or depended upon, concentrated natural resources for their products. Frequently, these groups were moved from their villages of origin by the Inca state to new sources of essential raw materials. Like the more numerous transplanted mitimae colonists engaged in agrarian and pastoral pursuits, these craft-specialized camayos became a strategic part of the state-managed, vertical archipelago economy by providing a constant flow of desired commodities to the Inca elite.

Many of the products of the craft camayos were essential for the massive public demonstrations of generosity and for the private gifts given to assure the loyalty of local curacas, who were the key to Inca political patronage and the control of newly conquered provinces. Some of the finest artisans of the craft camayos achieved wide repute, honor, and prestige within the royal households of Cuzco, and were materially rewarded for their virtuosity in creating exquisite objects of display. But despite the possibility of improving their economic status, the camayos could not aspire to, or attain, an elevated social position. In the Inca state, vertical movement in the hierarchy of power was strictly controlled.

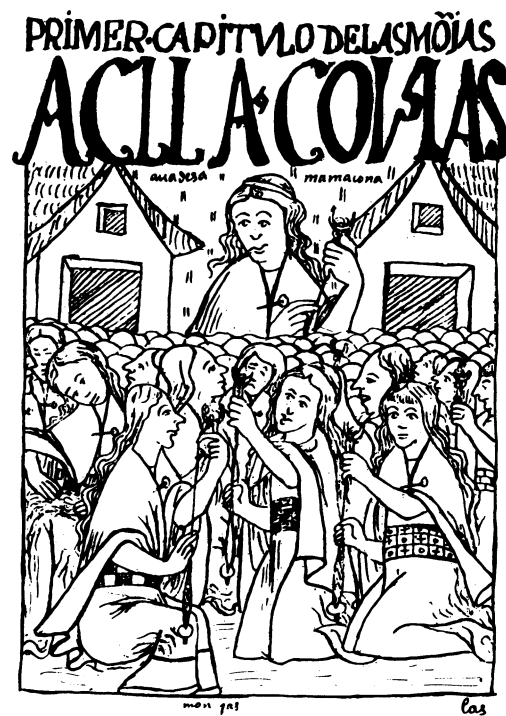
To the modern mind, perhaps the most exotic of the specialized forms of labor relations created by the Inca state was the accla, or "chosen women." The Inca rulers selected young females to live communally in special residential compounds, referred to as the acllahuasi (house of the chosen women), in the larger cities of the empire. There the women performed a variety of services for the state, spinning cotton and wool for the clothing of the Inca elite, weaving particularly luxurious textiles, cooking delicacies and brewing maize beer



Left: Guaman Poma's depiction of Incan granaries. According to Guaman Poma, these storehouses were built throughout the Inca empire to hold tribute that included dehydrated potatoes, dried meat, cotton, chilies, coca, and manioc. A scribe records contributions by means of the quipu. Right: Major Incan shrines were attended by groups of virgins, or "chosen women." Some members of these orders worked in the fields, played instruments, or wove fine cloth, but Guaman Poma's drawing shows a group performing what was considered the most prestigious activity: spinning and weaving cloth for religious figures in the shrine.

in great quantities for public ceremonies, and tending to the daily chores of maintaining the principal shrines of the state cults. Some of the *aclla* were drawn from the families of the highest nobility, and these frequently served as concubines to the emperor himself. Others were distributed by the Inca ruler and his generals as secondary wives to warriors who had distinguished themselves in battle, or to local kings and curacas who had demonstrated loyalty to the Inca cause.

In essence, the *aclla* were sources of concentrated skilled labor for the state, as well as precious commodities for the conduct of diplomacy. Like most monarchies throughout the world, the Incas relied on strategic marriages to strengthen political ties with the provincial nobility. Of course, females who



were direct descendants of the royal household in Cuzco were the most desirable marriage partners for the highest-status native lords of the provinces. These marriages constituted true dynastic alliances and resulted frequently in heirs with aspirations to high positions in the central governmental bureaucracy, or even with pretensions to the throne itself.

But the genius of Inca statecraft was to apply this somewhat circumscribed notion of dynastic alliances among the princes and princesses of royal households to virtually every rung in the social hierarchy of control. The tremendous concentration of unencumbered *aclla* in the provincial capitals of the Inca state was the key to this institutionalization of strategic marriages. Because of their elevated status as "chosen women" of the Incas, the *aclla* were seen as desirable marriage partners, endowed with the prestige of the state, and promising the provincial nobility identification with the power and authority of the central government. It is not surprising that the *acllahuasi* in the principal cities of the empire were jealously guarded by the Incas, and that the violation of a "chosen woman" was designated a capital crime in the state's criminal code. All of these strategic forms of political and economic relations, the *mit'a* and *mitimae*, the *aclla*, *camayo*, and *yanacona*, generated an enormous flow of goods and services for the Inca empire, truly an economic engine of staggering proportions. But how did the Inca manage this economy?

Again, the words of Cieza de León, written in frank admiration of the audacity of Inca imperial organization, offer us vital clues: "... in more than 1,200 leagues of coast they ruled they have their representatives and governors, and many lodgings and great storehouses filled with all necessary supplies. This was to provide for their soldiers, for in one of these storehouses there were lances, and in another, darts, and in others, sandals, and in others, the different arms they employed. Likewise certain buildings were filled with fine clothing, others with coarser garments, and others with food and every kind of victuals. When the lord was lodged in his dwellings and his soldiers garrisoned there, nothing, from the most important to the most trifling, but could be provided. . . ." Perhaps more than any other native state of the ancient Americas, the Incas were justly renowned for the scale and efficiency of their elaborate commodity warehousing system. The progress of the Spanish conquest of the Andes, in fact, would have been slowed substantially had it not been for the endless ranks of Incan storehouses, known in the Quechua language as *qollqa*—filled with food, clothing, arms, and supplies—that the conquistadors found arrayed on the outskirts of Inca towns.

Bernabé Cobo, like Cieza de León, described the Incan storage system, and provides us with intriguing insights into its internal organization. "The storehouses of the Crown and of Religion were different," he wrote, "although they were always together, like the owners of what was stored in them and the uses to which it was put. The storehouses of the Incas were much bigger and longer

than those of Religion; this implies that the Incas' share of lands and animals was greater than that which was given to the gods." This perceptive passage suggests that when the Incas incorporated a new province into their empire, they linked the construction of massive storehouses with the reorganization of the land-tenure system, which, as we have seen, partitioned territories into three principal divisions—central government, state cult, and autochthonous landholdings. Products from the state's two territorial partitions flowed into separate, spatially segregated qollqa. One set of storerooms was designated for the state cults and another for the use of the central government. If Cobo was right, the governmental qollqa were larger and more numerous and contained a wider variety of raw and manufactured goods than those designated for the support of the religious cults.

The qollqa themselves were substantial circular and rectangular structures built of fieldstone, wood, and thatch, and provided frequently with elaborate ventilation systems to assist the preservation of bulk food supplies like potatoes and maize. At the Inca provincial capital of Huánuco Pampa in the north-central highlands of Peru, archaeological investigation has revealed that circular qollqa were used for maize storage, while rectangular qollqa seem to have been assigned to tuber storage.

To control the flow of bulk foodstuffs and manufactured products through the warehousing system, the Incas maintained a corps of civil servants, the "representatives" and "governors" Cieza de León mentioned, who accounted for the collection and transshipment of these valued goods. One class of civil servant that was particularly important to the accounting system was the quipucamayoc, or keeper of the quipu. Quipu were ingenious mnemonic devices that encoded, through a series of complex, recursive patterns of knotted and colored cords, a wide array of economic, political, social, and ritual information critical to the smooth functioning of the state bureaucracy. The quipucamayoc were a hereditary, occupationally specialized (camayo) class of men in the Inca state who recorded on the knotted cords essential information regarding the amount of goods circulating into and out of state storehouses and performed tasks analogous to those of scribes in other archaic states. The quipucamayoc reported directly to the higher echelons of the state bureaucracy, to the provincial or territorial governors, and ultimately to the Inca emperor himself.

The vast bulk of state storage facilities were constructed in the imperial capital of Cuzco and near important towns and provincial capitals along the qhapaq ñan, or royal road of the Incas. The qhapaq ñan was formed by two north-south routes, one in the highlands and the other along the Pacific coast, bound together by a series of east-west lateral linkages through the principal mountain passes of the western mountain chain of the Andes, the Cordillera Negra. The highland route of the qhapaq ñan extended over 3,000 miles, from



Left: An Incan highway under construction. A laborer holds what appears to be a measuring stick while a governor of the royal road gives instructions. Markers like modern milestones indicate distances between major points. Befitting his high station, the governor wears sandals, a tunic, a small crown, and ear spools. Right: Announcing his arrival with his conch-shell horn, an Inca messenger wears a white feather sun hat and carries a stick and sling to protect himself. A container holds food from a nearby granary. Guaman Poma reported that the messengers who traveled along the Incan highways had the speed of "sparrow hawks."



Chile to Ecuador, while the entire Incan road system may have integrated as much as 25,000 miles of disparate, seemingly intractable landscapes, including the deserts of the Pacific coast, the highland pocket basins of Peru and Ecuador, the vertiginous, knotted mountain slopes of the great Cordillera Blanca's eastern flanks, and the trackless high plains of Bolivia and Chile. Radiating out from Cuzco, the various branches of the qhapaq ñan united the four principal geographic segments of the Incan realm—Chinchaysuyu, Antisuyu, Collasuyu, and Contisuyu, the northern, eastern, southern, and western quarters, respectively.

The Incan road system, particularly in the broken, tortuous terrain of the Andean highlands, was an audacious engineering achievement of the first magnitude and, quite likely, the largest single construction project ever attempted

in the ancient Americas. The qhapaq ñan together with its lateral feeders was a powerful tool of political integration for the Incan central government. Messages could be sent along the royal road between Cuzco and its far-flung provincial capitals with incredible speed, using a system of relay runners, called chasqui, who were stationed along designated segments of the road. The developed road system also greatly facilitated the efficient movement of bulk and manufactured goods, mitimae colonists, provincial officials, and, of course, Inca armies throughout the empire.

Provincial capitals, such as Jauja, Cajamarca, and Pachácamac, were established along the length of both the highland and coastal routes of the qhapaq ñan to coordinate local administration and the economic exploitation of natural and human resources. In regions where there was no local settlement that could serve as an appropriate provincial capital, the Incas created cities, such as Huánuco Pampa, building them frequently on a symmetrical grid plan, or modeling large segments of them after the core area of the imperial capital of Cuzco. In conquered territories that already possessed substantial urban centers, the Incas simply absorbed the native town into the network of cities that formed the centralized focus of Inca administration. As at the ancient coastal settlement of Pachácamac near modern Lima, Inca rulers often constructed a few important administrative buildings, such as a temple for the state's solar cult, storerooms, residential compounds for the Inca elite, and perhaps an acclahuasi, placing them in prominent locations within the towns to mark and symbolize their incorporation into the Inca empire.

Along the royal road in the provinces between these principal cities, towns, and capitals, the Inca state maintained a series of "inns," or way stations, called tampu. Each tampu offered basic temporary accommodations and meals for traveling Inca officials and could provide food for the army during military campaigns. Tampu usually consisted of a series of large rectangular structures arrayed around a central plaza intended as residence halls for travelers, communal kitchens, and banks of storehouses that were stocked with food. More elaborate tampu close to the provincial capitals frequently included stone baths and shrines for the state cults. These way stations along the royal road were constructed, maintained, provisioned, and most likely staffed permanently with local mit'a labor from the surrounding region. They were essential links in the chain of command and communication that bound the Inca provinces with the imperial capital of Cuzco.

The network of provincial cities, towns, and tampu, centralized clusters of state storehouses, and a highly developed road system, all constructed and maintained through the coordinated efforts of local mit'a labor forces, constituted an effective physical infrastructure for the Inca imperial enterprise. But the organizational system they devised for administering the empire was no less impressive than these more visible physical artifacts. One fundamental

principle of Inca statecraft in the imperial provinces, reflecting the remarkable shrewdness and political pragmatism of the Inca ruling elite, was to confirm the traditional authority of the local political leaders, or curacas, in dealing with their own communities. Cieza de León, among other Spanish commentators intrigued by Inca principles of command, described this phenomenon in his wondrous chronicle of Peru: "And they had another device to keep the natives from hating them, and this was that they never divested the natural chieftains of their power. If it so happened that one of them . . . in some way deserved to be stripped of his power, it was vested in his sons or brothers, and all were ordered to obey them."

This system of preserving the local mandate of the native elite has been aptly termed indirect rule. For an empire that was rapidly, almost frenetically expanding, and only in the nascent stages of generating formal principles of colonial governance, this system of indirect rule was simple to implement, relatively efficient, and the least intrusive in altering the daily rhythms and decision-making autonomy of potentially hostile local communities. The key to the success of indirect rule was the ability to secure the cooperation and at least the overt political loyalty of the local curacas. As we have seen, one strategy for co-opting these local lords was worked out through marriage alliances with the Inca elite which established irrevocable bonds of kinship. The ritualized exchange of daughters as marriage partners between the Incas and the local elite created powerful incentives for the provincial political leaders to "buy into" the Inca system. The network of real and fictive kinship ties engendered by these alliances provided rich opportunities to local lords for the strategic manipulation of the resulting patron-client relationship.

Of course, this strategy of enticing the local curacas into the patronage system by holding out the promise of wealth and enhanced social prestige was effective only as long as the curacas were able to deliver the labor and productive capacity of their people. The Incas realized this critical linkage and helped the local curacas resolve potential conflict by massive displays of state generosity: "and so, making the people joyful and giving them solemn banquets and drinking feasts, great taquis, and other celebrations that they use, completely different from ours, in which the Incas show their splendor, and all the feasting is at their expense . . ." Like the Romans' policy of "bread and circuses," intended to defuse the potentially explosive problem of a malcontent underclass by occasional distribution of free staples and the staging of massive public entertainments, the Inca practice of periodically redistributing warehoused food, drink, and clothing to commoners during state-sponsored festivals was designed to dissipate social tensions and to incorporate commoners into the new economic and social order of the Inca world.

At the same time that the Incas were governing newly absorbed provinces through the practice of indirect rule, their statesmen were gradually fashioning

more formal, centralized channels of tribute and labor recruitment based on a decimal system of administration. In this system, labor obligations were assessed on an ascending numerical series of tributary households that began with a minimal unit of 10 households (termed *chunka*) and terminated with the maximal unit of 10,000 households (*hunu*). Between these limits, there were decimal groupings for 50, 100, 500, 1,000, and 5,000 tributary households. The Incas periodically took a census to account for fluctuations in the size and residential patterns of the empire's population. On the basis of the census figures recorded on imperial *quipu*, they adjusted membership in these decimal groupings of tributary households to reflect changing demographic realities.

Each decimal unit was headed by an official who, at the lower levels of the household groupings at least, was drawn from the local communities. Officers of the various decimal units were ranked in a formal, pyramidlike hierarchy. Some officials were appointed to their offices by higher-ranking decimal administrators, while others appear to have inherited their positions. The chain of command and reporting responsibility began with the basal *chunka* leader and proceeded upward progressively to the *hunu* officials. Above the rank of the *hunu* heads of 10,000 households, administrative responsibility was vested in individuals with direct consanguineal or political ties to the royal households of Cuzco. These were the surrogates of the emperor himself, serving as provincial governors, or as members of the imperial council, which included extremely high-ranking representatives from each of the four quarters of the realm.

As the Incas began to consolidate their authority in a conquered province, they gradually attempted to streamline the complicated political mosaic of local lords' claims to power and traditional prerogatives by imposing the uniform decimal system of administration. This system had clear benefits for the Inca central government, permitting the state to operate with a relatively homogeneous form of political organization and labor recruitment in a pluralistic social landscape characterized by extreme ethnic, linguistic, and cultural divisions. The advantage to local *curacas* was not as readily apparent. With the emergence of what was essentially an imperial class system of favored officials, those *curacas* who were not designated as decimal officers saw many of their social prerogatives and their traditional access to local labor pools begin to dissolve. The resulting tensions generated by the imposition of the decimal system were substantial, and there are numerous stories in the chronicles of resentful "natural lords" of the provinces promulgating massive rebellions against Inca rule at every opportunity.

Despite the inability of the Incas to consolidate their rule completely and permanently in all provinces of the empire, the organizational infrastructure and facilities that they established ensured a continuous flow of commodities, information, and people along the *qhapaq ñan* to the imperial capital of Cuzco.

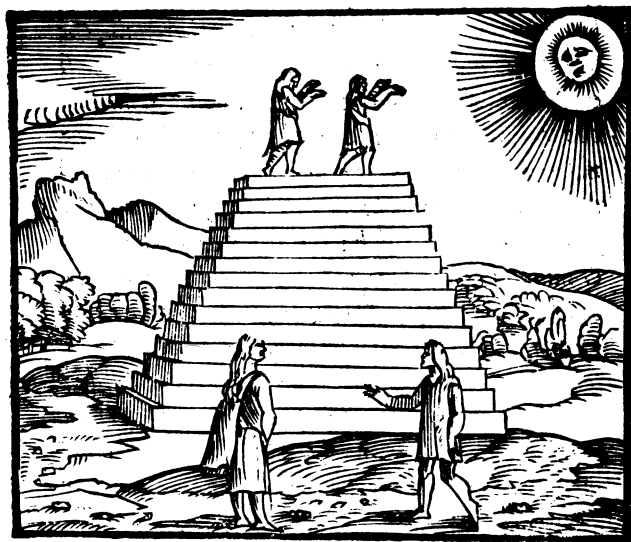
Cuzco, of course, was the principal seat of the Inca ruling caste, the locus of both the royal court and the holiest shrines of the imperial religion.

For the Inca people, Cuzco was a regal, mythic city, redolent with the symbolism of power. The royal city was both an icon of Inca rule and a cosmogram that displayed in the spatial arrangement of its public architecture the structure that framed the natural and social orders. It was conceived as the axis mundi, the city at the center of the empire that bound together the complementary universe of the sacred and the secular. It was the origin point for the royal road extending out into the four quarters of the realm, and the administrative city par excellence. It was, in short, the ultimate nexus and arbiter of wealth and power, social identity, and prestige, cult, and command.

The conquistador Pedro Sancho de la Hoz recorded one of the first European impressions of the Inca royal city: "Cuzco, because it is the capital city and the residence of the Inca nobles, is large enough and handsome enough to compare with any Spanish city," he wrote. "It is full of the palaces of the magnates, for in it reside no poor folk. . . . The streets, all stone-paved and straight, cross each other at right angles and have each a stone-lined water channel running down the middle . . . there are many houses on the hillsides and others below on the plain . . . and in the valley in the middle there are more than a hundred thousand houses surrounded by hills . . . including storehouses." The more taciturn Pedro Pizarro simply noted: "It was astonishing to see the people in Cuzco." Although these fragmentary comments give us few clues to the actual size and social composition of Inca Cuzco, all historical and archaeological sources indicate clearly that the city, befitting its status as the capital of the largest and most pluralistic empire of the ancient Americas, embraced a large, heterogeneous population engaged in a variety of specialized occupations for the Inca state.

We do know that Cuzco was the principal residence of the royal court and of the elite of highest status in Inca society. The physical setting and architectural design of the core metropolitan zone dramatically reflected that reality. This central area was composed of an elegant ensemble of expansive public plazas, palatial residences built of finely cut ashlar masonry, and rich temples all set between the confluence of two great rivers, the Tulumayo and Huatanay, which the Incas artificially canalized within the city.

By the end of the fifteenth century, the Inca elite in Cuzco were organized into twenty distinct social groups, or royal *ayllus*. These *ayllus* maintained separate residential compounds constructed on a grand scale in the heart of the city. Ten of the royal *ayllus* were invested with supreme status as direct descendants by blood of former kings, and were called *panaqas*. *Panaqa* members, as consanguineal relatives of former kings, controlled vast wealth, including enormous agricultural estates, pasture lands, llama and alpaca herds, hundreds of *yanacuna* and *camayos*, and access to a huge *mit'a* labor force.



A stylized illustration of an Inca temple devoted to sun worship. Benzoni was a critic of Spanish imperial policy who wanted his readers to appreciate native religion.

These resources represented the wealth that had been accumulated during the reign of the monarch who in life was the founder and, in death, the divine ancestor of the panaqa that bore his name. Male members of the panaqa were assured high governmental positions during the lifetime of their kingly relative. After the death of the reigning king, his patrimonial estate passed under the control of his principal male heirs, who became the political leaders of the panaqa.

It was the obligation of the panaqa members to perpetuate the memory of the deceased king who had originally founded the panaqa. Ancestor worship was the fundamental bedrock of indigenous Andean religion, the basis of ritual activity in the ancient social unit of the ayllu. Among the elite of Cuzco it took the form of an elaborate cult of the royal mummies, which both fascinated and repelled Spanish chroniclers who vividly recorded this key element of Inca spirituality. The Incas, wrote Pedro Pizarro, "had the law and custom that when one of their rulers died, they embalmed him and wrapped him in many fine garments. They allotted these lords all the service that they had in life, so that their mummy bundles might be served in death as if they were still alive . . ." The panaqa members, Cobo related further, "brought [the royal mummies], lavishly escorted, to all their most important ceremonies. They sat them all down in the plaza in a row, in order of seniority, and the servants who looked after them ate and drank there. . . . In front of the mummies they also

placed large vessels like pitchers, called vilques, made of gold and silver. They filled these vessels with maize beer and toasted the dead with it, after first showing it to them. The dead toasted one another, and they drank to the living . . . this was done by their ministers in their names. When the vilques were full, they poured them over a circular stone set up as an idol in the middle of the plaza. There was a small channel around the stone, and the beer ran off through drains and hidden pipes."

This lurid spectacle of the descendants of dead kings ministering to their ancestors' elaborately costumed, desiccated corpses with offerings of food, drink, and toasts in the plazas of Cuzco obscures the subtle political and religious nuances embedded in the cult of the royal mummies. Although grounded in the pan-Andean religious practice of ancestor worship, the elite cult was something more than the simple veneration of a dead lineage ancestor.

In the first instance, the elaborate feasting of the dead royals was organized around, and intended as, ceremonies of agricultural fertility. "When there was need for water for the cultivated fields," Cobo made clear, "they usually brought out [the dead king's] body, richly dressed, with his face covered, carrying it in a procession through the fields and punas, and they were convinced that this was largely responsible for bringing rain." Dead kings, furthermore, were frequently addressed in the protocols of panaqa toasts as Illapa, the weather deity who personified the atmospheric forces of wind, rain, hail, lightning, and thunder—all the meteorological phenomena responsible for the growth or destruction of agricultural crops.

In another important meaning, the public display of the royal mummies in the principal plazas of Cuzco during state occasions, arranged in "order of seniority," was a graphic affirmation of the legitimacy of Incan dynastic rule. On these occasions, the reigning king would participate in ceremonial processions throughout Cuzco quite literally in company with the complete line of his royal ancestors, who were physically represented by their richly adorned, re-victual bundles. Who could contest the legitimacy of the Incas when the entire dynasty, the distilled history of their ruling mandate, was constantly visible and present to the nation? By these ritual actions, the deceased monarchs and the living emperor symbolically became one—embodiments of legitimate power, emblems of agricultural fertility and abundance, and powerful icons of national identity.

The cult of the royal mummies was an intense expression of social and ritual solidarity within the Inca ruling caste, particularly among the ten panaqas that exploited and benefited materially from the patrimony of their kingly ancestors. Other cults and esoteric beliefs promoted this same sense of solidarity and imperial destiny among the Inca peoples as a whole. One such cult focused on the sun deity, called Inti. The Inca kings identified themselves as descendants of Inti, thereby appropriating symbolically the life-giving essence of the



A fanciful depiction of llamas transporting cargo in the Andes. This illustration from Pierre Vander Aa's sixty-six-volume *Galerie Agréable du Monde*, published in 1729, reflects Europe's fascination with exotic animals. Nevertheless, as the largest domesticated draft animal in the Americas, llamas played a crucial role in the Incan imperial system.

sun. A golden idol of Inti in human form was maintained in the Qorikancha, or "Golden Compound," perhaps the single most important structure in Cuzco. The idol was reputed to contain in its hollow stomach a paste made of gold dust and the ashes of the ritually cremated hearts of former Inca kings.

The great temple of Qorikancha contained many other idols of the state cults, and incorporated in its interior precincts niches for the sacred mummy bundles of Inca royalty. More importantly, it was from the Qorikancha that a symbolic, sacred landscape of Cuzco, and by extension the Inca empire itself, was organized in an incredibly complex, but logically ordered system of shrines arrayed along lines of sight. This sacred landscape was central to the Inca people's notions of their own identity as an ethnic group, and to their belief in their right to rule other nations.

Bernabé Cobo's description of this sacred landscape of Cuzco provides us with an entrée into this fascinating aspect of Incan political and religious belief: "From the Qorikancha, as from the center, there went out certain lines which the Indians call ceques," he wrote. "They formed four parts corresponding to the four royal roads that went out from Cuzco. On each one of those ceques were arranged in order the shrines which there were in Cuzco and its district, like stations of holy places, the veneration of which was common to all. Each ceque was the responsibility of the parcialidades [the Spanish name for groups of people who formed related parts of a larger ethnic whole] and families of the city of Cuzco, from within which came the attendants and servants who cared for the shrines of their ceque and saw to offering the established sacrifices at the proper times."

This remarkable conceptual organization of Cuzco and its near environs incorporated a total of 41 directional sight lines, or ceques, radiating out from the origin point at Qorikancha, along which the Inca recognized 328 individual huacas, places or objects imbued with sacred power. As Cobo noted, different sets of related families (ayllus), or larger social groups (parcialidades), were charged with the responsibility of maintaining the huacas along the ceque line designated to that group. Responsibility for the ceque line included the obligation of offering periodic, ritually prescribed sacrifices at these sacred shrines.

The ceque system of Cuzco carried multiple layers of significance that bound Inca concepts of geographic and symbolic space, time, history, and social organization. Perhaps the most important meaning embedded in the ceque system was reflected in its role as the physical expression of the Incas' sidereal-lunar calendar. Each of the 328 huacas represented one day in this agricultural calendar. Throughout the agricultural cycle of the seasons, members of at least one of the Inca parcialidades resident in Cuzco were engaged in daily communal rituals designed to ensure abundant harvests and the fertility of camelid herds. These increase ceremonies, organized according to the principles of the ceque lines, served as a trenchant reminder to the Incan classes of Cuzco that their success as a people destined to rule other nations hinged on group solidarity, and on their ability to sustain a symbolic concordance between the social and natural orders.

Cuzco, as the political and symbolic center of the Inca world, was, above all else, a monumental representation of power. Here the Inca elite self-consciously designed and audaciously displayed their own conception of themselves as lords of the Andean world. They invested Cuzco with the powerful resonances of constructed public images: the image of the secular power of the empire, suffused with the vast, differentiated wealth of its many subject nations; the image of the sacred power of the Inca ruling classes who appropriated for themselves the essential role of ritually mediating between society and the forces of nature; and the image of dynastic power, the city as seat of

a long lineage of divine emperors, both living and dead, engaged in the exercise of legitimate authority. Incan Cuzco was, in short, the image of concentrated imperial power, a representation of an ideal social order, and a publicly projected cognitive map that related this social order to the perceived physical order of the universe.

Although we can reconstruct the nature of Incan society at its apogee in the late fifteenth century with reasonable accuracy, our sources on the early Incas are veiled in the ambiguity of orally transmitted origin myths and obscured in the self-serving, custom-made pseudohistory of an originally marginal people newly come to power. The Inca elite routinely recast accounts of their origins and place in the Andean world to accommodate emerging imperial ambitions. Ethnic propaganda became easily transformed into official history, the "true" record of Inca rule. In this context, individual identities, actions, and actual historical events merge ineluctably with myth, metaphor, symbolism, and allegory.

With the Spanish conquest, the Incas' own vision of themselves, as transcribed by the chroniclers, was distorted again, but in a different way, through European misconceptions concerning the content and meaning of indigenous narratives. For instance, the presumed roster of thirteen or fourteen Inca kings given to us in the chronicles may not reflect the process of a linear, chronological succession to the throne at all. The Spaniards naturally assumed that the native king list elicited from their Inca informants implied principles of monarchical rule and succession analogous to those in operation in European courts. There is a compelling argument, however, that the concept of sovereignty in the Inca state entailed a system of dual kingship. Many traditional Andean cultures, including the Inca, possessed a system of social organization, called the moiety, in which societies were divided into two complementary halves. The capital of the Incas was itself partitioned into two major sectors, termed Hanan and Hurin (or upper and lower) Cuzco, each of which may have been ruled by a king. In other words, the king list, as well as many other elements of Inca "history," may actually replicate symbolically fundamental organizational principles or religious beliefs of Andean societies. To the Incan mind, history was not necessarily an ordered, chronological narrative, but rather a complex *mélange* of belief, myth, and remembered fact.

Given this situation, scholars of the Incas have turned to a coordinated approach, integrating archaeological research with critical interpretation of textual material. As a result of their efforts, the character of Inca society, economy, and politics has begun to emerge from the ambiguity of fragmentary texts, and from the confusing jumble of decayed cities slumped in ruin. Only in the recent past have we begun to appreciate fully the subtlety of Incan statecraft and the manner in which the Incas formed the largest empire in the Western Hemisphere by the perceptive adaption and manipulation of institutions and social

relations that were basic to the ancient Andean world. The *mit'a* and *mitimae*, *accha*, *camayo*, and *yanacuna*, all betray their origins as specialized forms of labor and status relations that had been worked out by native Andeans over centuries. But the peculiar genius of the Incas was to take this fundamental institutional substratum, transform and magnify it in scale through the shrewd application of political principles such as indirect rule and ritualized state reciprocity, and employ it on a massive scale as a technique of empire-building. Even if the Incas built upon the experiences, innovations, and adaptive skills of their cultural predecessors, their achievements in the arena of politics and statecraft stand unparalleled in the New World.

Through the rapidly clarifying looking glass of Inca society, we can also hope to glimpse a broader reality that underscores the incredible tenacity, ingenuity, and self-reliance with which the ancient peoples of the Andes adapted themselves to their intensely beautiful but demanding environment. This process of adaptation by Andean people to their unforgiving physical landscape continues today, although now framed in the context of increasing integration with national and global economic markets and social trends. Even under the pervasive impact of national assimilation, the lifeways of the native inhabitants of isolated rural Andean enclaves still generate powerful cultural resonances that echo the strategies for survival, beliefs, and structures for communal action that were shaped so successfully by their ancestors in the centuries before the imposition of Western colonial rule.