

Inca Empire




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The **Inca Empire** (Quechua: *Tawantinsuyu*, lit. "The Four Regions"^[2]), also known as the **Inka Empire** or **Incan Empire**, was the largest empire in pre-Columbian America.^[3] The administrative, political, and military center of the empire was located in Cusco in modern-day Peru. The Inca civilization arose from the highlands of Peru sometime in the early 13th century, and the last Inca stronghold was conquered by the Spanish in 1572.


From 1438 to 1533, the Incas used a variety of methods, from conquest to peaceful assimilation, to incorporate a large portion of western South America, centered on the Andean mountain ranges, including, besides Peru, large parts of modern Ecuador, western and south central Bolivia, northwest Argentina, north and central Chile, and a small part of southern Colombia into a state comparable to the historical empires of Eurasia. The official language of the empire was Quechua, although hundreds of local languages and dialects of Quechua were spoken. Many local forms of worship persisted in the empire, most of them concerning local sacred *Huacas*, but the Inca leadership encouraged the worship of Inti—their sun god—and imposed its sovereignty above other cults such as that of Pachamama.^[4] The Incas considered their king, the Sapa Inca, to be the "son of the sun."^[5]

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<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> ← <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 20px; margin-right: 10px;"></div> 1438–1533 <div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center;"> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: red; margin-right: 2px;"></div> <div style="width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: yellow; margin-right: 2px;"></div> <div style="width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: green; margin-right: 2px;"></div> <div style="width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: blue; margin-right: 2px;"></div> </div> <div style="font-size: 0.8em; margin-top: 2px;">→</div> </div> </div>	
 <p style="margin: 0;">Banner of the Tawantinsuyu</p>	
 <p style="margin: 0;">The Inca Empire at its greatest extent</p>	
Capital	Cusco (1438–1533)
Languages	Quechua (official), Aymara, Puquina, Jaqi family, Muchik and scores of smaller languages.
Religion	Inca religion
Government	Monarchy
Sapa Inca	
- 1438–1471	Pachacuti
- 1471–1493	Túpac Inca Yupanqui
- 1493–1525	Huayna Capac

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- 1525–1532	Huáscar
- 1532–1533	Atahualpa
Historical era	Pre-Columbian
- Pachacuti created the Tawantinsuyu	1438
- Civil war between Huáscar and Atahualpa	1529–1532
- Spanish conquest led by Francisco Pizarro	1533
- End of the last Inca resistance	1572
Area	
- 1438 ^[1]	800,000 km ² (308,882 sq mi)
- 1527	2,000,000 km ² (772,204 sq mi)
Population	
- 1438 ^[1] est.	12,000,000
Density	15 /km ² (38.8 /sq mi)
- 1527 est.	20,000,000
Density	10 /km ² (25.9 /sq mi)
Today part of	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Argentina Bolivia Chile Colombia Ecuador Peru

Name

The Inca referred to their empire as *Tawantinsuyu*,^[2] "the four *suyu*". In Quechua, *tawa* is four and *-ntin* is a suffix naming a group, so that a *tawantin* is a quartet, a group of four things taken together. The

empire was divided into four *suyus* ("region" or "province"), whose corners met at the capital, Cusco (*Qosqo*). The four *suyos* were: Chinchay Suyo (North), Anti Suyo (East. The Amazon jungle), Colla Suyo (South) and Conti Suyo (West). The name *Tawantinsuyu* was, therefore, a descriptive term indicating a union of provinces. The Spanish transliterated the name as *Tahuatinsuyo* or *Tahuatinsuyu* which is often still used today.

The term *Inka* means *ruler*, or "lord," in Quechua, and was used to refer to the ruling class or the ruling family in the empire.^[6] The Spanish adopted the term (transliterated as *Inca* in Spanish) as an ethnic term referring to all subjects of the empire rather than simply the ruling class. As such the name *Imperio inca* ("Inca Empire") referred to the nation that they encountered, and subsequently conquered.

History

Origin

Inca oral history mentions three possible places as three caves. The center cave, Tambo Tocco, was named for Capac Tocco. The other caves were Maras Tocco and Suti Tocco.^[7] Four brothers and four sisters stepped out of the middle cave. They were: Ayar Manco, Ayar Cachi, Ayar Auca, and Ayar Uchu; and Mama Ocllo, Mama Raua, Mama Huaca, and Mama Cora. Out of the side caves came the people who were to be the ancestors of all the clans of the Inca people.

Ayar Manco carried a magic staff made of the finest gold. Where this staff landed, the people would all live there. They travelled for a very, very long time. On the way, Ayar Cachi was boasting about his great strength and power, and his siblings tricked him into returning to the cave to get a sacred llama. When he went into the cave, they trapped him inside to get rid of him.

Ayar Uchu decided to stay on the top of the cave to look over the Inca people. The minute he proclaimed that, he turned to stone. They built a shrine around the stone and it became a sacred object. Ayar Auca grew tired of all this and decided to travel alone. Only Ayar Manco and his four sisters remained.

Finally, they reached Cusco. The staff sank into the ground. Before they reached here, Mama Ocllo had already borne Ayar Manco a child, Sinchi Roca. The people who were already living in Cusco fought hard to keep their land, but Mama Huaca was a good fighter. When the enemy attacked, she threw her bolas (several stones tied together that spun through the air when thrown) at a soldier (*gualla*), and killed him instantly. The other people were so scared, they ran away.

After that, Ayar Manco became known as Manco Cápac, the founder of the Inca. It is said that he and his sisters built the first Inca homes in the valley with their own hands. When the time came, Manco Cápac turned to stone like his brothers before him. His son, Sinchi Roca, became the second emperor of the Inca.^[8]

Kingdom of Cusco

The Inca people were a pastoral tribe in the Cusco area around the 12th century. Under the

“ We can assure your majesty that it is so beautiful and has such ”

leadership of Manco Cápac, they formed the small city-state Kingdom of Cusco (Quechua *Qusqu'*, *Qosqo*). In 1438, they began a far-reaching expansion under the command of Sapa Inca (paramount leader) Pachacuti-Cusi Yupanqui, whose name literally meant "earth-shaker". The name of Pachacuti was given to him after conquering over the Tribe of Chancas (modern Apurímac). During his reign, he and his son Tupac Yupanqui brought much of the Andes mountains (roughly modern Peru and Ecuador) under Inca control.^[9]

fine buildings that it would even be remarkable in Spain.
Francisco Pizarro

Reorganization and formation

Pachacuti reorganized the kingdom of Cusco into the Tahuantinsuyu, which consisted of a central government with the Inca at its head and four provincial governments with strong leaders: Chinchasuyu (NW), Antisuyu (NE), Kuntisuyu (SW), and Qullasuyu (SE).^[10] Pachacuti is also thought to have built Machu Picchu, either as a family home or as a summer retreat, although there is speculation that Machu Picchu was constructed as an agricultural station.^[11]

Pachacuti sent spies to regions he wanted in his empire; they brought reports on the political organization, military might and wealth. He would then send messages to the leaders of these lands extolling the benefits of joining his empire, offering them presents of luxury goods such as high quality textiles, and promising that they would be materially richer as subject rulers of the Inca.



The first image of the Inca in Europe, Pedro Cieza de León, *Cronica del Peru*, 1553

Most accepted the rule of the Inca as a *fait accompli* and acquiesced peacefully. The ruler's children would then be brought to Cusco to be taught about Inca administration systems, then return to rule their native lands. This allowed the Inca to indoctrinate the former ruler's children into the Inca nobility, and, with luck, marry their daughters into families at various corners of the empire.

Expansion and consolidation

Traditionally the Inca's son led the army; Pachacuti's son Túpac Inca Yupanqui began conquests to the north in 1463, and continued them as Inca after Pachacuti's death in 1471. His most important conquest was the Kingdom of Chimor, the Inca's only serious rival for the coast of Peru. Túpac Inca's empire stretched north into modern-day Ecuador and Colombia.

Túpac Inca's son Huayna Cápac added a small portion of land to the north in modern-day Ecuador and in parts of Peru. At its height, the Inca Empire included Peru and Bolivia, most of what is now Ecuador, a large portion of what is today Chile north of the Maule River in central Chile. The advance south halted after the Battle of the Maule where they met determined resistance by the Mapuche. The empire's push

into the Amazon Basin near the Chinchipe River was pushed back by the Shuar in 1527.^[12] The empire also extended into corners of Argentina and Colombia. However, most of the southern portion of the Inca empire, the portion denominated as Qullasuyu, was located in the Altiplano.

The Inca Empire was an amalgamation of languages, cultures and peoples. The components of the empire were not all uniformly loyal, nor were the local cultures all fully integrated. The Inca empire as a whole had an economy based on exchange and taxation of luxury goods and labour. The following quote reflects a method of taxation:

"For as is well known to all, not a single village of the highlands or the plains failed to pay the tribute levied on it by those who were in charge of these matters. There were even provinces where, when the natives alleged that they were unable to pay their tribute, the Inca ordered that each inhabitant should be obliged to turn in every four months a large quill full of live lice, which was the Inca's way of teaching and accustoming them to pay tribute".^[13]



Manco Cápac and Mama Ocllo, children of the Inti

Inca civil war and Spanish conquest

Spanish conquistadors led by Francisco Pizarro and his brothers explored south from what is today Panama, reaching Inca territory by 1526.^[14] It was clear that they had reached a wealthy land with prospects of great treasure, and after one more expedition in 1529, Pizarro traveled to Spain and received royal approval to conquer the region and be its viceroy. This approval was received as detailed in the following quote: "In July 1529 the queen of Spain signed a charter allowing Pizarro to conquer the Incas. Pizarro was named governor and captain of all conquests in Peru, or New Castile, as the Spanish now called the land."^[15]

When they returned to Peru in 1532, a war of the two brothers between Huayna Capac's sons Huáscar and Atahualpa and unrest among newly conquered territories—and perhaps more importantly, smallpox, which had spread from Central America—had considerably weakened the empire. Pizarro did not have a formidable force; with just 168 men, 1 cannon and 27 horses, he often needed to talk his way out of potential confrontations that could have easily wiped out his party.

The Spanish horsemen, fully armored, had great technological superiority over the Inca forces. The traditional mode of battle in the Andes was a kind of siege warfare where large numbers of usually reluctant draftees were sent to overwhelm opponents. The Spaniards had developed one of the finest military machines in the premodern world, tactics learned in their centuries-long fight against Moorish kingdoms in Iberia. Along with this tactical and material superiority, the Spaniards also had acquired



One of the main events in the conquest of the Inca Empire was the death of Atahualpa, the last Sapa Inca on 29 August 1533

tens of thousands of native allies who sought to end the Inca control of their territories.

Their first engagement was the Battle of Puná, near present-day Guayaquil, Ecuador, on the Pacific Coast; Pizarro then founded the city of Piura in July 1532. Hernando de Soto was sent inland to explore the interior and returned with an invitation to meet the Inca, Atahualpa, who had defeated his brother in the civil war and was resting at Cajamarca with his army of 80,000 troops.

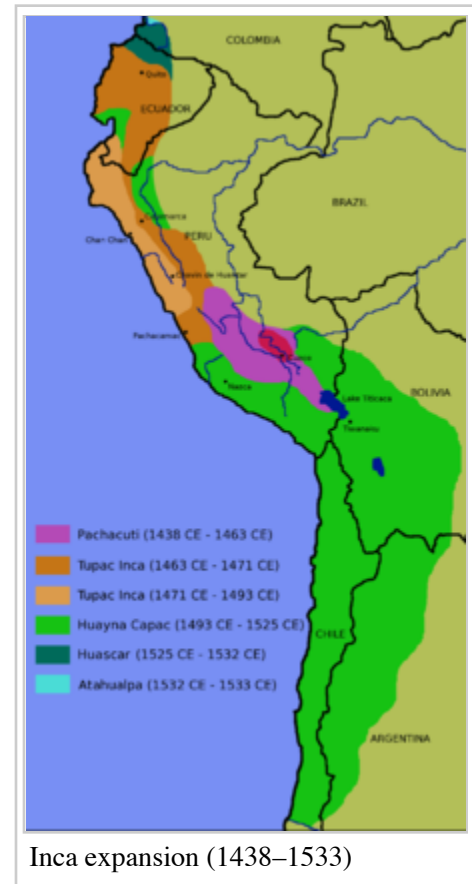
Pizarro and some of his men, most notably a friar named Vincente de Valverde, met with the Inca, who had brought only a small retinue. Through an interpreter Friar Vincente read the "Requerimiento" that demanded that he and his empire accept the yoke of King Charles I of Spain and convert to Christianity. Because of the language barrier and perhaps poor interpretation, Atahualpa became somewhat puzzled by the friar's description of Christian faith and was said to have not fully understood the envoy's intentions. After Atahualpa attempted further enquiry into the doctrines of the Christian faith under which Pizarro's envoy served, the Spanish became frustrated and impatient, attacking the Inca's retinue and capturing Atahualpa as hostage.

Atahualpa offered the Spaniards enough gold to fill the room he was imprisoned in, and twice that amount of silver. The Inca fulfilled this ransom, but Pizarro deceived them, refusing to release the Inca afterwards. During Atahualpa's imprisonment Huáscar was assassinated elsewhere. The Spaniards maintained that this was at Atahualpa's orders; this was used as one of the charges against Atahualpa when the Spaniards finally decided to put him to death, in August 1533.^[16]

Last Incas

The Spanish installed Atahualpa's brother Manco Inca Yupanqui in power; for some time Manco cooperated with the Spanish, while the Spanish fought to put down resistance in the north. Meanwhile an associate of Pizarro's, Diego de Almagro, attempted to claim Cusco for himself. Manco tried to use this intra-Spanish feud to his advantage, recapturing Cusco in 1536, but the Spanish retook the city afterwards. Manco Inca then retreated to the mountains of Vilcabamba, Peru, where he and his successors ruled for another 36 years, sometimes raiding the Spanish or inciting revolts against them. In 1572 the last Inca stronghold was conquered, and the last ruler, Túpac Amaru, Manco's son, was captured and executed.^[17] This ended resistance to the Spanish conquest under the political authority of the Inca state.

After the fall of the Inca Empire many aspects of Inca culture were systematically destroyed, including their sophisticated farming system, known as the vertical archipelago model of agriculture.^[18] Spanish colonial officials used the Inca mita corvée labor system for colonial aims, sometimes brutally. One member of each family was forced to work in the gold and silver mines, the foremost of which was the



Inca expansion (1438–1533)

titanic silver mine at Potosí. When a family member died, which would usually happen within a year or two, the family would be required to send a replacement.

The effects of smallpox on the Inca empire were even more devastating. Beginning in Colombia, smallpox spread rapidly before the Spanish invaders first arrived in the empire. The spread was probably aided by the efficient Inca road system. Within a few years smallpox claimed between 60% and 94% of the Inca population, with other waves of European disease weakening them further. Smallpox was only the first epidemic.^[19] Typhus (probably) in 1546, influenza and smallpox together in 1558, smallpox again in 1589, diphtheria in 1614, measles in 1618 – all ravaged the remains of Inca culture.

Society



View of Machu Picchu



Manco Capac, First Inca, 1 of 14 Portraits of Inca Kings, Probably mid-18th century. Oil on canvas. Brooklyn Museum

Population

There is some debate about the number of people inhabiting Tawantinsuyu at its peak, with estimates ranging from as few as 4 million people, to more than 37 million. The reason for these various estimates is that in spite of the fact that the Inca kept excellent census records using their quipu, knowledge of how to read them has been lost, and almost all of them had been destroyed by the Spaniards in the course of their conquest.^[20]

Language

Since the Inca Empire lacked a written language, the empire's main form of communication and recording came from quipus, ceramics and spoken Quechua, the language the Incas imposed upon the peoples within the empire. The plethora of civilizations in the Andean region provided for a general disunity that the Incas needed to subdue in order to maintain control of the empire. While Quechua had been spoken in the Andean region, like central Peru, for several years prior to the expansion of the Inca civilization, the type of Quechua the Incas imposed was an adaptation from the Kingdom of Cusco (an early form of "Southern Quechua" originally named Qhapaq Runasimi = The great language of the people) of what some historians define as the Cusco dialect.^{[21][22]}

The language imposed by the Incas further diverted from its original phonetic tone as some societies formed their own regional varieties, or slang. The diversity of Quechua at that point and even today does not come as a direct result from the Incas, who are just a part of the reason for Quechua's diversity. The civilizations within the empire that had previously spoken Quechua kept their own variety distinct from

the Quechua the Incas spread. Although these dialects of Quechua have a similar linguistic structure, they differ according to the region in which they are spoken.^[22]

Although most of the societies within the empire implemented Quechua into their lives, the Incas allowed several societies to keep their old languages such as Aymara, which still remains a spoken language in contemporary Bolivia where it is the primary indigenous language and various regions of South America surrounding Bolivia. The linguistic body of the Inca Empire was thus largely varied, but it still remains quite an achievement for the Incas that went beyond their time as the Spanish continued the use of Quechua.^[22]

Religion

Inca myths were an oral tradition until early Spanish colonists recorded them; however, some scholars believe that they may have been recorded on quipus, Andean knotted string records.^[23]

The Inca believed in reincarnation.^[24] Death was a passage to the next world that was full of difficulties. The spirit of the dead, *camaquen*, would need to follow a long dark road and during the trip the assistance of a black dog that was able to see in the dark was required. Most Incas imagined the after world to be very similar to the Euro-American notion of heaven, with flower-covered fields and snow-capped mountains. It was important for the Inca to ensure they did not die as a result of burning or that the body of the deceased did not become incinerated. This is because of the underlying belief that a vital force would disappear and threaten their passage to the after world. Those who obeyed the Inca moral code—*ama suwa*, *ama llulla*, *ama quella* (do not steal, do not lie, do not be lazy) —"went to live in the Sun's warmth while others spent their eternal days in the cold earth". The Inca also practiced cranial deformation.^[25] They achieved this by wrapping tight cloth straps around the heads of newborns in order to alter the shape of their soft skulls into a more conical form; this cranial deformation was made to distinguish social classes of the communities, with only the nobility having cranial deformation.

The Incas made human sacrifices. As many as 4,000 servants, court officials, favorites, and concubines were killed upon the death of the Inca Huayna Capac in 1527, for example.^[26] The Incas also performed child sacrifices during or after important events, such as the death of the Sapa Inca or during a famine. These sacrifices were known as *capacocha*.^[27]

Deities

- Viracocha (also Pachacamac) – Created all living things



Diorite Inca sculpture from Amarucancha

- Apu Illapu – Rain God, prayed to when they need rain
- Ayar Cachi – Hot-tempered God, causes earthquakes
- Illapa – Goddess of lightning and thunder (also Yakumama water goddess)
- Inti – sun god and patron deity of the holy city of Cusco (home of the sun)
- Kuychi – Rainbow God, connected with fertility
- Mama Kilya – Wife of Inti, called Moon Mother
- Mama Occlo – Wisdom to civilize the people, taught women to weave cloth, and build houses
- Manco Cápac – known for his courage and sent to earth to become first king of the Incas, taught people how to grow plants, make weapons, work together, share resources, and worship the Gods
- Pachamama – The Goddess of earth and wife of Viracocha, people give her offerings of coca leaves and beer and pray to her for major agricultural occasions
- Qochamama – Goddess of the sea
- Sachamama – Means Mother Tree, goddess in the shape of a snake with two heads
- Yakumama – Means mother Water, represented as a snake, when she came to earth she transformed into a great river (also Illapa)



Viracocha, is the great creator god in Inca mythology

Economy

The economy of the Inca Empire has been characterized as involving a high degree of central planning. While evidence of trade between the Inca Empire and outside regions has been uncovered, there is no evidence that the Incas had a substantial internal market economy. While axe-monies were used along the northern coast, presumably by the provincial *mindaláe* trading class,^[28] most inhabitants of the empire would have lived in a traditional economy in which male heads of household were required to pay taxes both in kind (e.g., crops, textiles, etc.) and in the form of the *mit'a* corvée labor and military obligations,^[29] though barter (or *trueque*) was also present in some areas.^[30] In return, the state provided security, food in times of hardship through the supply of emergency resources, agricultural projects (e.g. aqueducts and terraces) to increase productivity, and occasional feasts. The economy rested on the material foundations of the vertical archipelago, a system of ecological complementarity in accessing resources,^[31] and the cultural foundation of *ayni*, or reciprocal exchange.^{[32][33]}

Government

Beliefs

The Sapa Inca was conceptualized as divine and was effectively head of the state religion. Only the *Willaq-Umu* (or Chief Priest) was second to the emperor. Local religious traditions were allowed to continue, and in some cases such as the Oracle at Pachacamac on the Peruvian coast, were officially venerated. Following Pachacuti, the Sapa Inca claimed descent from Inti, which placed a high value on imperial blood; by the end of the empire, it was common to wed brother and sister. He was “son of the sun,” and his people the *intip churin*, or “children of the sun,” and both his right to rule and mission to conquer derived from his holy ancestor. The Sapa Inca also presided over ideologically important festivals, notably during the *Inti Raymi*, or “warriors’ cultivation,” attended by soldiers, mummified rulers, nobles, clerics, and the general population of Cusco beginning on the auspicious June solstice and culminating nine days later with the ritual breaking of the earth using a foot plow by the Inca himself. Moreover, Cusco itself was considered cosmologically central, loaded as it was with *huacas* and radiating *ceque* lines, and geographic center of the Four Quarters; Inca Garcilaso de la Vega himself called it “the navel of the universe.”^{[34][35][36][37]}



Illustration of Inca farmers using a *chakitaqlla* (Andean footplough)

Organization of the empire

The Inca Empire was a federalist system which consisted of a central government with the Inca at its head and four quarters, or *suyu*: Chinchay Suyu (NW), Anti Suyu (NE), Kunti Suyu (SW), and Qulla Suyu (SE). The four corners of these quarters met at the center, Cusco. These *suyu* were likely created around 1460 during the reign of Pachacuti before the empire assumed its largest territorial extent. It is probably the case that at the time the *suyu* were established they were roughly of equal size and only later changing their proportions as the empire expanded north and south along the Andes.^[40]

The capital area, Cusco, was likely not organized as a *wamani*, or province. Rather, it was probably somewhat akin to a modern federal district, like Washington, D.C. or Mexico City. The city sat at the center of the four *suyu* and served as the preeminent center of politics and religion. While Cusco was essentially governed by the Sapa Inca, his relatives, and the royal *panaqa* lineages, each *suyu* was governed by an *Apu*, a term of great esteem used for men of very high status and for venerated mountains. Just as with so much of Andean society and Inca administration, both Cusco as a district and the four *suyu* as administrative regions were grouped into upper *hanan* and lower *hurin* divisions. As the Inca did not have written records, it is impossible to exhaustively list the constituent *wamani*. However, records created during the Spanish colonial period allow us to reconstruct a partial list. There were likely more than 86 *wamani*, with more than 48 in the highlands and more than 38 on the coast.^[41]

The four *suyu*

The most populous *suyu*, **Chinchaysuyu**, encompassed the former lands of the Chimú empire and much of the northern Andes. At its largest extent, this *suyu* extended through much of modern Ecuador and



The Inca Empire's southern border defined by the Maule or Maipo River (scholars differ).^[38] Inca troops never crossed the Bío Bío River.^[39]

just into modern Colombia. '

Collasuyu or **Qollasuyu** was named after the Aymara-speaking Qolla people and was the largest of the quarters in terms of area. This *suyu* encompassed the Bolivian Altiplano and much of the southern Andes, running down into Argentina and as far south as the Maipo or Maule river in Central Chile.^[38] In Central Chile, historian José Bengoa has pointed out Quillota as being perhaps the foremost Inca settlement.^[42]

The second smallest of the *suyu*, **Antisuyu**, was located northwest of Cusco in high Andes. Indeed, it is the root of the word "Andes."^[43]

Cuntisuyu or **Kuntisuyu** was the smallest *suyu* of all, located along the southern coast of modern Peru, extending into the highlands towards Cusco.^[44]

Laws

The Inca state had no separate judiciary or codified set of laws. While customs, expectations, and traditional local power holders did much in the way of governing behavior, the state, too, had legal force, such as through *tokoyrikoq* (lit. "he who sees all"), or inspectors. The highest such inspector, typically a blood relation to the Sapa Inca, acted independently of the conventional hierarchy, providing a point of view for the Sapa Inca free of bureaucratic influence.^[45]

Administration

The colonial-era sources are not entirely clear or in agreement about the nature of the structure of the Inca government. However, its basic structure can be spoken of broadly, even if the exact duties and functions of government positions cannot be told. At the top of the chain of administration sat the Sapa Inca. Next to the Sapa Inca in terms of power may have been the *Willaq Umu*, literally the "priest who recounts", who was the High Priest of the Sun.^[46] However, it has been noted that beneath the Sapa Inca also sat the *Inkap rantin*, who was at the very least a confidant and assistant to the Sapa Inca, perhaps along the lines of a Prime Minister.^[47] From the time of Topa Inca Yupanqui on, there existed a



The four *suyus* or quarters of the empire.



Inti, as represented by José Bernardo de Tagle of Peru

"Council of the Realm" composed of sixteen nobles: two from *hanan* Cusco; two from *hurin* Cusco; four from Chinchaysuyu; two from Cuntisuyu; four from Collasuyu; and two from Antisuyu. This weighting of representation balanced the *hanan* and *hurin* divisions of the empire, both within Cusco and within the Quarters (*hanan suyukuna* and *hurin suyukuna*).^[48]

While there was a great deal of variation in the form that Inca bureaucracy and government took at the provincial level, the basic form of organization was decimal. In this system of organization, taxpayers—male heads of household of a certain age range—were organized into corvée labor units (which often doubled as military units) that formed the muscle of the state as part of mit'a service. Each level of jurisdiction above one hundred tax-payers was headed by a *kuraka*, while those heading smaller units were *kamayuyq*, a lower, non-hereditary status. However, while *kuraka* status was hereditary, one's actual position within the hierarchy (which was typically served for life) was subject to change based upon the privileges of those above them in the hierarchy; a *pachaka kuraka* (see below) could be appointed to their position by a *waranqa kuraka*. Furthermore, it has been suggested that one *kuraka* in each decimal level also served as the head of one of the nine groups at a lower level, so that one *pachaka kuraka* might also be a *waranqa kuraka*, in effect directly responsible for one unit of 100 tax-payers and less directly responsible for nine other such units.^[49]

Kuraka in Charge	Number of Taxpayers
<i>Hunu kuraka</i>	10,000
<i>Pichkawaranqa kuraka</i>	5,000
<i>Waranqa kuraka</i>	1,000
<i>Pichkapachaka kuraka</i>	500
<i>Pachaka kuraka</i>	100
<i>Pichkachunka kamayuyq</i>	50
<i>Chunka kamayuyq</i>	10

[50]

Arts and technology

Monumental architecture

Architecture was by far the most important of the Inca arts, with textiles reflecting motifs that were at their height in architecture. The main example is the capital city of Cusco. The site of Machu Picchu was constructed by Inca engineers. The stone temples constructed by the Inca used a mortarless construction that fit together so well that a knife could not be fitted through the stonework.

This was a process first used on a large scale by the Pucara (ca. 300 BC–AD 300) peoples to the south in Lake Titicaca, and later in the great city of Tiwanaku (ca. AD 400–1100) in present day Bolivia. The rocks used in construction were sculpted to fit together exactly by repeatedly lowering a rock onto another and carving away any sections on the lower rock where the dust was compressed. The tight fit

and the concavity on the lower rocks made them extraordinarily stable.

Measures, calendrics, and mathematics

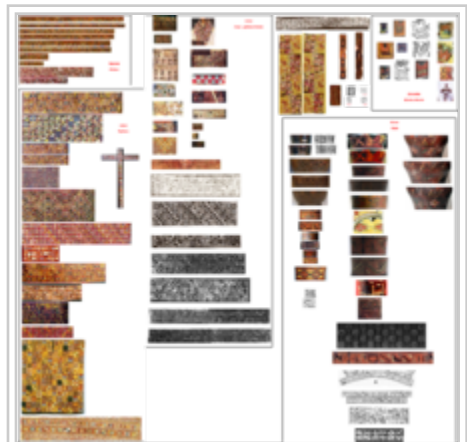
Physical measures employed by the Inca were based upon human body parts. Fingers, the distance between thumb to forefinger, palms, cubits, and wingspans were among those units used. The most basic unit of distance was *thatkiy* or *thatki*, or one pace. The next largest unit was reported by Cobo to be the *topo* or *tupu*, measuring 6,000 *thatkiys*, or about 4.8 miles (7.7 km); careful study has shown that a range of 2.5–3.9 miles (4.0–6.3 km) is likely. Next was the *wamani*, composed of 30 *topos* (roughly 144 miles (232 km)). To measure area, 25 by 50 wingspans were used, reckoned in *topos* (roughly 1,266 square miles (3,280 km²)). It seems likely as well that distance was often conceptualized as being one day's walk; the distance between *tambo* way-stations varies widely in terms of distance, but in far less so in terms of time to walk that distance.^{[51][52]}

Inca calendrics were strongly tied to astronomy. Inca astronomers understood equinoxes, solstices, and likely zenith passages, not to mention the Venus cycle. They could not, however, predict eclipses. The Inca calendar was essentially lunisolar, as two calendars were maintained in parallel, one solar and one lunar. As twelve lunar months fall 11-days short of a full 365-day solar year, those in charge of the calendar had to adjust every winter solstice. The twelve lunar months were each marked with specific festivals and rituals.^[53] There apparently were no names for days of the week, and it may be the case that there were no subdivisions of time into weeks at all. Similarly, months were not grouped into seasons. Time during a given day was not reckoned in hours or minutes, but rather in terms of how far the sun had traveled or in how long it takes to perform a task.^[54]

The sophistication of Inca administration, calendrics, and engineering necessitated a certain facility with numbers. Numerical information itself was stored in the knots of *quipu* strings, allowing for large numbers to be stored in a small amount of space.^[55] These numbers were stored in base-10 digits, the same base as used by the Quechua language^[56] and used in administrative and military units.^[57] These numbers, stored in *quipu*, could be calculated on *yupanas*, grids with squares of positionally varying mathematical values perhaps functioning along the lines of an abacus.^[58] Moving piles of tokens, seeds, or pebbles between the different compartments of the *yupana* allowed for calculations to take place. It is likely that, "at minimum", Inca mathematics were capable of division of integers into integers or fractions and



Inca tunic



Tokapu. Textiles worn by the Inca elite consisting of geometric figures enclosed by rectangles or squares. There is evidence that the designs were an ideographic language

multiplication of integers and fractions.^[59]

According to the mid-seventeenth-century Jesuit chronicler Bernabé Cobo (1983 [1653]: 253–254),^[60] the Inca designated certain officials to perform accounting-related tasks. These officials were called *quipo camayos*, and the Incas had great confidence in them. In the study of *kipu* sample VA 42527 (Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin), Sáez-Rodríguez (2013)^[61] observed that the numbers arranged in calendrically significant patterns were used for agricultural purposes in the “farm account books” kept by the *kipukamayuy* (accountant or warehouse keeper) to facilitate the closing of his accounting books.^[62]

Ceramics, precious metal work, and textiles



Camelid Conopa, 1470–1532, Brooklyn Museum, Small stone figurines, or *conopas*, of llamas and alpacas were the most common ritual effigies used in the highlands of Peru and Bolivia. These devotional objects were often buried in the animals’ corrals to bring protection and prosperity to their owners and fertility to the herds. The cylindrical cavities in their backs were filled with offerings to the gods in the form of a mixture including animal fat, coca leaves, maize kernels, and seashells.

Almost all of the gold and silver work of the empire was melted down by the conquistadors.

Ceramics were painted using the polychrome technique portraying numerous motifs including animals, birds, waves, felines (which were popular in the Chavin culture) and geometric patterns found in the Nazca style of ceramics. In place without a written language, ceramics portrayed the very basic scenes of everyday life, including the smelting of metals, relationships and scenes of tribal warfare, it is through these preserved ceramics that we know what life was like for the ancient South Americans. The most distinctive Inca ceramic objects are the Cusco bottles or “aryballos”.^[63] Many of these pieces are on display in Lima in the Larco Archaeological Museum and the National Museum of Archaeology, Anthropology and History.

Communication and medicine

The Inca used assemblages of knotted strings, known as *Quipu*, to record information, the exact nature of which is no longer known. Originally it was thought that *Quipu* were used only as mnemonic devices or to record numerical data. *Quipus* are also believed to record history and literature.^[64]

The Inca made many discoveries in medicine. They performed successful skull surgery, which involved cutting holes in the skull in order to alleviate fluid buildup and inflammation caused by head wounds. Anthropologists have discovered evidence which suggests that most skull surgeries performed by Inca surgeons were successful. In pre-Inca times, only one-third of skull surgery patients survived the procedure. However, survival rates rose to 80–90% during the Inca era.^[65]

Coca

The Incas revered the coca plant as being sacred or magical. Its leaves were used in moderate amounts to lessen hunger and pain during work, but were mostly used for religious and health purposes.^[66] When the Spaniards realized the effects of chewing the coca leaves, they took advantage of it.^[66] The Chasqui (messengers) chewed coca leaves for extra energy to carry on their tasks as runners delivering messages throughout the empire. The coca leaf was also used during surgeries as an anaesthetic.



Coca leaves

Weapons, armor, and warfare

The Inca army was the most powerful in the area at that time, because they could turn an ordinary villager or farmer into a soldier, ready for battle. This is because every male Inca had to take part in war at least once so as to be prepared for warfare again when needed. By the time the empire had reached its largest size, every section of the empire contributed in setting up an army for war.

The Incas had no iron or steel, and their weapons were not much better than those of their enemies. They went into battle with the beating of drums and the blowing of trumpets. The armor used by the Incas included:

- Helmets made of wood, copper, bronze, cane, or animal skin; some were adorned with feathers
- Round or square shields made from wood or hide
- Cloth tunics padded with cotton and small wooden planks to protect the spine.



The Battle of the Maule between the Incas (right) and the Mapuches (left)

The Inca weaponry included:

- Bronze or bone-tipped spears
- Two-handed wooden swords with serrated edges
- Clubs with stone and spiked metal heads
- Woolen slings and stones
- Stone or copper headed battle-axes
- Bolas (stones fastened to lengths of cord)

Roads allowed very quick movement for the Inca army, and shelters called *tambo* were built one day's distance in travelling from each other, so that an army on campaign could always be fed and rested. This can be seen in names of ruins such as Ollantay Tambo, or My Lord's Storehouse. These were set up so the Inca and his entourage would always have supplies (and possibly shelter) ready as he traveled.

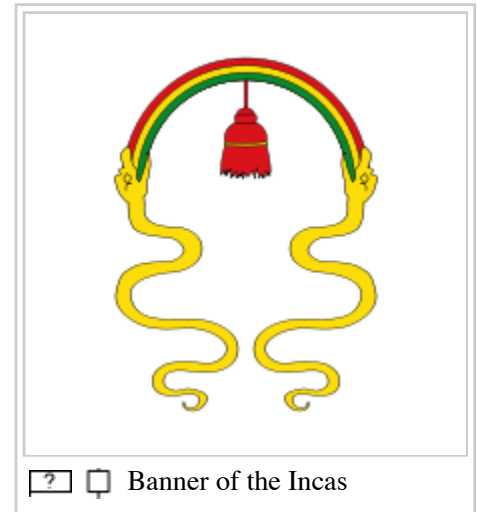
Inca flag

There are 16th and 17th century chronicles and references that support the idea of a banner. However, it represented the Inca himself, not the empire.

Francisco López de Jerez^[67] wrote in 1534:

... todos venían repartidos en sus escuadras con sus banderas y capitanes que los mandan, con tanto concierto como turcos.

(... all of them came distributed into squads, with their flags and captains commanding them, as well-ordered as Turks.)

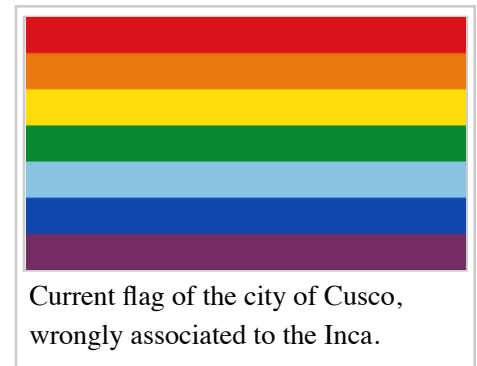


The chronicler, Bernabé Cobo, wrote:

The royal standard or banner was a small square flag, ten or twelve spans around, made of cotton or wool cloth, placed on the end of a long staff, stretched and stiff such that it did not wave in the air, and on it each king painted his arms and emblems, for each one chose different ones, though the sign of the Incas was the rainbow and two parallel snakes along the width with the tassel as a crown, which each king used to add for a badge or blazon those preferred, like a lion, an eagle and other figures.

(... el guión o estandarte real era una banderilla cuadrada y pequeña, de diez o doce palmos de ruedo, hecha de lienzo de algodón o de lana, iba puesta en el remate de una asta larga, tendida y tiesa, sin que ondease al aire, y en ella pintaba cada rey sus armas y divisas, porque cada uno las escogía diferentes, aunque las generales de los Incas eran el arco celeste y dos culebras tendidas a lo largo paralelas con la borda que le servía de corona, a las cuales solía añadir por divisa y blasón cada rey las que le parecía, como un león, un águila y otras figuras.)

-**Bernabé Cobo**, *Historia del Nuevo Mundo* (1653)



Guaman Poma's 1615 book, *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno*, shows numerous line drawings of Inca flags.^[68] In his 1847 book *A History of the Conquest of Peru*, "William H. Prescott ... says that in the Inca army each company had its particular banner, and that the imperial standard, high above all, displayed the glittering device of the rainbow, the armorial ensign of the Incas."^[69] A 1917 world flags book says the Inca "heir-apparent ... was entitled to display the royal standard of the rainbow in his

military campaigns."^[70]

In modern times the rainbow flag has been wrongly associated with the Tawantinsuyu and displayed as a symbol of Inca heritage by some groups in Peru and Bolivia. The city of Cusco also flies the Rainbow Flag, but as an official flag of the city. The Peruvian president Alejandro Toledo (2001–2006) flew the Rainbow Flag in Lima's presidential palace. However, according to Peruvian historiography, the Inca Empire never had a flag. María Rostworowski, a Peruvian historian known for her extensive and detailed publications about Peruvian Ancient Cultures and the Inca Empire, said about this: *«I bet my life, the Inca never had that flag, it never existed, no chronicler mentioned it»*.^[71] Also, to the Peruvian newspaper *El Comercio*, the flag only dates to the first decades of the 20th century,^[72] and even the Congress of the Republic of Peru has determined that flag is a fake by citing the conclusion of National Academy of Peruvian History:

"The official use of the wrongly called 'Tawantinsuyu flag' is a mistake. In the Pre-Hispanic Andean World there did not exist the concept of a flag, it did not belong to their historic context".^[72]

National Academy of Peruvian History

People

Andean civilization probably began c. 9500 BP (c. 7600 BCE). Based in the highlands of Peru, an area now referred to as the *punas*, the ancestors of the Incas probably began as a nomadic herding people. Geographical conditions resulted in a distinctive physical development characterized by a small stature and stocky build. Men averaged 1.57 m (5'2") and women averaged 1.45 m (4'9"). Because of the high altitudes, they had unique lung developments with almost one third greater capacity than other humans. The Incas had slower heart rates, blood volume of about 2 l (four pints) more than other humans, and double the amount of hemoglobin which transfers oxygen from the lungs to the rest of the body.

Archaeologists have found traces of permanent habitation as high as 5,300 m (17,400 ft) above sea level in the temperate zone of the high altiplanos. While the Conquistadors may have been a little taller, the Inca surely had the advantage of coping with the extraordinary altitude. It seems that civilizations in this area before the Inca have left no written record, and therefore the Inca seem to appear from nowhere, but the Inca were a product of the past. They borrowed architecture, ceramics, and their empire-state government from previous cultures.

In the Lake Titikaka region, Tiwanaku is recognized by Andean scholars as one of the most important precursors to the Inca Empire, flourishing as the ritual and administrative capital of a major state power for approximately 500 years.



Sacsayhuamán, the Inca stronghold of Cusco

See also

Important Incan archeological sites

- Choquequirao
- Cusco
- Llaqtapata
- Machu Picchu
- Moray
- Ollantaytambo
- Písac
- Pukara of La Compañía
- Saksaywaman
- Vilcabamba
- Vitcos

Incan-related

- Amauta, Inca teachers
- Amazonas before the Inca Empire
- Incan aqueducts
- Inca Civil War
- Inca cuisine
- Incas in Central Chile
- Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala
- Garcilaso de la Vega (chronicler)
- Spanish conquest of the Inca Empire
- Tambo
- Tampukancha, Inca religious site
- Religion in the Inca Empire

General

- Ancient Peru
- Cultural periods of Peru
- History of Peru

Historical states in present-day Argentina



before 1500

Inca Empire (1438–1533)

Indigenous peoples in Argentina

1500–1600

Governorate of New Castile (1528–1542)

Viceroyalty of Peru (1542–1824)

1600–1700

Governorate of the Río de la Plata (1617–1782)

- History of smallpox#Epidemics in the Americas
- Demographic history of the indigenous peoples of the Americas

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1700–1800

Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata (1776–1811)

1800–1830

United Provinces of the Río de la Plata

(1810–31)

Liga Federal (1815–20)

Republic of Entre Ríos (1820–21)

1830–present

Argentine Confederation (1831–61)

State of Buenos Aires (1852–61)

Kingdom of Araucanía and Patagonia (1860–

present, unrecognized)

Argentine Republic (1861–present)

more

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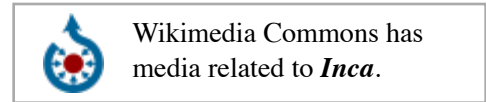
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- Conquest nts.html Inca Land (<http://www.antiquebooks.net/readpage.html#peru>) by Hiram Bingham (published 1912–1922 CE).
- Inca Artifacts, Peru, and Machu Picchu (<http://www.destination360.com/south-america/peru/machu-picchu>) 360 degree movies of inca artifacts and Peruvian landscapes.
- Ancient Civilizations – Inca (<http://www.projectshum.org/Ancient/inca.html>)
- "Ice Treasures of the Inca" (<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/mummy/index.html>) National Geographic site.
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- Incan Religion (<http://philtar.ucsm.ac.uk/encyclopedia/latam/inca.html>)
- Engineering in the Andes Mountains (http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=3839), lecture on Inca suspension bridges
- A Map and Timeline (http://www.concharto.org/search/eventsearch.htm?_what=%22inca+empire%22&_mapttype=1) of Inca Empire events
- Ancient Peruvian art: contributions to the archaeology of the empire of the Incas (<http://libmma.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/search/searchterm/Ancient%20Peruvian%20art%20%3A%20contributions%20to%20the%20archaeology%20of%20the%20empire%20of%20the%20Incas/order/nosort>), a four volume work from 1902 (fully available online as PDF)



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