

Ancient Inca Empire Religious Rituals, Tribal Traditions, the Contribution of Inca Empire to World Civilization

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Annotation: Five facts about the Incas are: they built the mountain city of Machu Picchu, they worshipped the Sun, they created the largest empire in the world at that time, they had no writing but used quipu (string and knots), and they had a very efficient postal system which used their excellent road system.

Keywords: Inca empire, history, ceremony, religion, sun, people, revolution.

INTRODUCTION

Inca religion, religion of the Inca civilization in the Andean regions of South America. It was an admixture of complex ceremonies, practices, animistic beliefs, varied forms of belief in objects having magical powers, and nature worship—culminated in the worship of the sun, which was presided over by the Inca priests. Though there was an Inca state religion of the sun, the substrata religious beliefs and practices of the pre-Inca peoples exerted an influence on the Andean region prior to and after the conquest of most of South America by the Spaniards in the 16th century¹.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Viracocha was the creator god of the Inca and of pre-Inca peoples. Creator of earth, humans, and animals, Viracocha had a long list of titles, including Lord Instructor of the World, the Ancient One, and the Old Man of the Sky. Some have said that he also was the creator of the Tiwanaku civilization, of which the Inca were the cultural heirs. Viracocha went through several transmogrifications (often with grotesque or humorous effects). He made peoples, destroyed them, and re-created them of stone; when they were re-created, he dispersed humankind in four directions. He was also a culture hero, and he taught people various techniques and skills. He journeyed widely until he came to the shores of Manta (Ecuador), where he set off into the Pacific—some say in a boat made of his cloak, others say he walked on the water. This part of the myth has been seized upon by modern mythmakers, and, as Kon-Tiki, Viracocha was said to have brought Inca culture to Polynesia.

Viracocha was the divine protector of the Inca ruler Pachacuti Inca Yupanqui; he appeared to Pachacuti in a dream when the Inca forces were being besieged by the Chanca, a group from the lands west of the Inca territory. Upon victory, Pachacuti raised a temple to Viracocha in Cuzco. He was represented by a gold figure “about the size of a 10-year-old child.”²

¹ Alden Mason, J. *The Ancient Civilizations of Peru*. Penguin Books, 2018.

² Baudin, L. *Daily Life of the Incas*. Dover Publications, 2011.



Fig 1. Statue of Pachacuti Inca Yupanqui in Aguas Calientes, Peru.

Inti, the sun god, was the ranking deity in the Inca pantheon. His warmth embraced the Andean earth and matured crops, and he was beloved by farmers. Inti was represented with a human face on a ray-splayed disk. He was considered to be the divine ancestor of the Inca: “my father” was a title given to Inti by one Inca ruler.

The family was a fundamental component of Inca society, and strong attachments were made between even distant relations, not just close family. For example, the words for father and uncle were the same, as were mother and aunt, and the word for cousin was the same as brother and sister. Naming conventions illustrate that the male line was regarded as the most important by the Incas.

The wider family would all have been members of the same kin group or *ayllu*. Some of these, composed of hundreds of small family units, were large enough to be categorised as a subtribe. Marriage outside of this group was unusual so that all members of the *ayllu* were, in practice, related. They believed they came from a common ancestor, usually a legendary figure or even a mythical animal. Ancestors were often mummified and revered in regular ritual ceremonies. A further collective identity besides blood was the fact that an *ayllu* owned a particular piece of territory and the elders parcelled it out for individual families to work on so that they might be self-sustainable³.

³ Mann, C.C. 1491. Vintage, 2006.



Fig 2. Map of the inca Empire

The *ayllu* system of social governance was much older than the Incas themselves, but following their **conquest** of local tribes they used its conventions – for example, common labour in the service of the *ayllu* chief or chiefs and role as a political and trading body for relations with other *ayllu* – to good effect to better govern their empire. The Incas also put greater emphasis on the geographical ties between individuals and introduced a new aristocratic class which could not be accessed from a lower social group through marriage. Even new *ayllus* were created (each Inca king created his own, and forced resettlement was another reason), and above all, warriors now no longer pledged allegiance to the leader of their *ayllu* but to the Inca ruler at **Cuzco**. In the same way, the worship of particular local deities by any one *ayllu* was permitted to continue, but these were made subservient to the Inca gods, especially the sun god **Inti**. Finally, the Incas kept precise census records using their *quipu* (*kipu*) devices of knotted-string, in which males within the empire were classified according to their age and physical capacity for work in mines, fields, or the army⁴.

CONCLUSION

The Inca civilization is known for creating the largest empire ever seen in the Americas, their impressive agricultural techniques, and their art and architecture which uniquely combined geometrical stonework with the natural landscape.

⁴ Moseley, M.E. *The Incas and Their Ancestors*. Thames & Hudson, 2001.

The Inca empire collapsed after the arrival of Francisco Pizarro and the Spanish Conquistadors in 1533. A civil war and European diseases also greatly contributed to their downfall.

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