

# The Rise and Fall of the Inca Empire

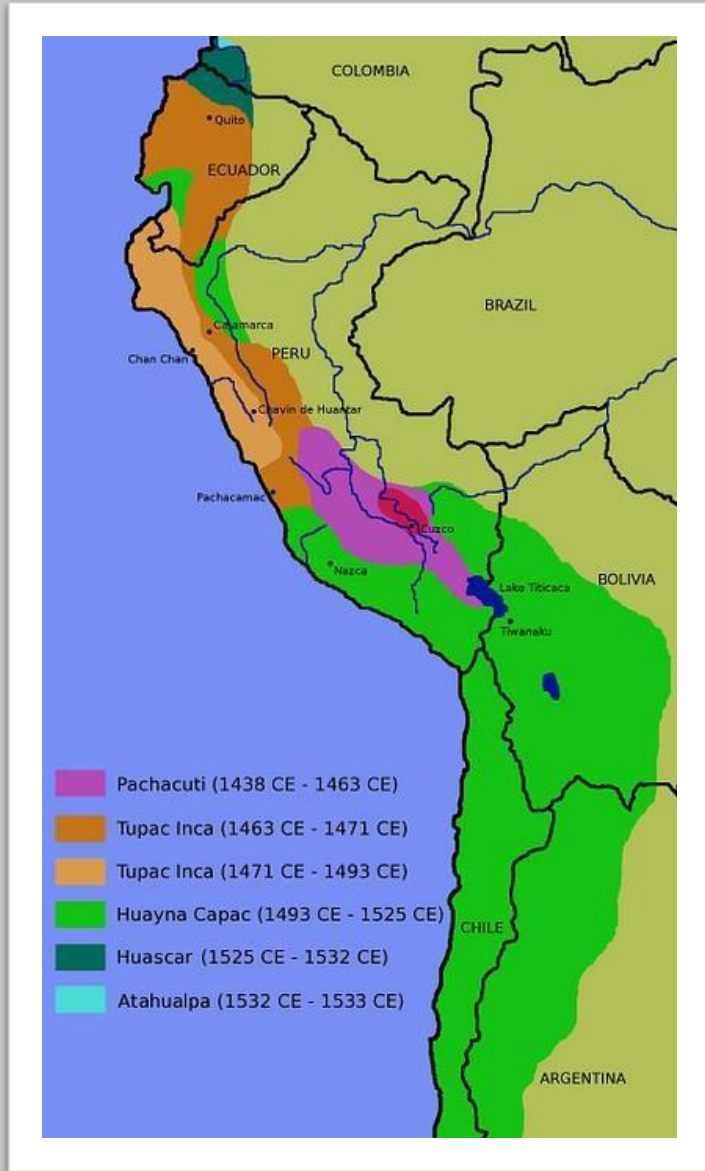
- The Rise and Fall of the Inca Empire was spectacularly quick. It lasted barely a century 1438 - 1532
- The Incas explained their origin through legends, the best known are the legend of the Manco Capac and Mama Ocllo who emerged from Lake Titicaca and the Legend of the Ayar Brothers
- The Incas believed the myths gave them the divine right to rule over conquered peoples
- Manco Capac, established what became the Inca capital, Cuzco
- Despite these myths, it is commonly believed the Incas arrived in the Urubamba Valley in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century when they fled from Aymara. The Aymara live on high-altitude plains in the Bolivian Andes, on the Lake Titicaca plateau near the border with Peru.
- During the 12<sup>th</sup> to early 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries the eight Inca Emperors ruled over a modest area close to Cuzco

- Under the ninth Inca Emperor, **Pachacuti** the Incas began to expand first to the south and then in all directions.
- In 1438 the Incas gained control of the Cuzco Valley.
- In 1450 Pachacuti is thought to have built Machu Picchu
- **Thupa Inca** , Pachacuti's successor from 1471 to 1493, expanded the empire by 4,000 km (2,500 miles).
- The Incas eventually built an empire which stretched across the Andes. They called their empire 'Land of the Four Quarters'. It was organised according to a centralised system, and ruled with the use of an official language, Quechua.
- Cuzco was considered the navel of the world and radiating out were highways and sacred sighting lines to each quarter or suyu: northeast, east, south, and west.
- Spreading across ancient Ecuador, Peru, northern Chile, Bolivia, upland Argentina, and southern Colombia and stretching 5,500 km (3,400 miles) north to south, 40,000 Incas governed a huge territory with some 10 million subjects speaking over 30 different languages.
- From 1493 to 1527 **Huayna Capac the 11<sup>th</sup>** Inca leader constructed fortresses, religious temples and roads throughout the empire.

- The Inca Empire was founded on, and maintained by, force
- The ruling Incas were often unpopular with their subjects (especially in the northern territories)
- The Inca Empire, was still establishing itself when it faced its greatest challenge, a Spanish invasion. Rebellions were rife, and the Incas were engaged in a war in Ecuador where Capac had established a second Inca capital at Quito
- Even more serious, the Incas were hit by an epidemic of European diseases, such as smallpox and the common cold, which spread from Central America killing 65 -90% of the population
- In 1525 the epidemic killed Inca leader Huayna Capac and his first born son. As a result, his other two sons, **Huascar his legitimate heir** in Cuzco, and **Atahualpa a son by his wife in Quito**, initiated a civil war each wanting to control the whole country
- In 1532 **Atahualpa** defeated Huascar. The victory left the country exhausted and unable to withstand attack from the Spaniard Francisco Pizarro
- In November 1532 Atahualpa was captured and held for ransom by the Spanish forces
- In 1533 Pizarro had Atahualpa murdered and in November of that year Pizarro took the Inca capital of Cuzco
- In 1535 Pizarro founded Lima as the capital of Spanish Peru
- This combination of factors - rebellion, disease, and Spanish invasion - brought down the mighty Inca Empire, the largest and richest ever seen in the Americas

A map showing the various stages of expansion of the Inca empire.

A map showing the four administrative quarters or *suyus* of the Inca Empire; Antisuyu (Northeast), Chichasuyu (Northwest), Contisuyu (Southwest) and Collasuyu (Southeast).



# Society, Government & Administration

- Inca society was highly stratified; divided into four social classes:
  - The emperor was an absolute ruler.
  - Under the emperor was the royalty, comprising the sons of the Sapa Inca and his close relatives.
  - The third social class was the nobility which included royal relatives and those who attained distinction through their services such as priests and chiefs and those who spoke the Inca language, Quechua.
  - At the bottom of the social structure was the *ayllu* which included the majority of the population.
- Locally recruited administrators oversaw an ayllu, which was a collection of households, typically of related families who worked an area of land, lived together and provided mutual support in times of need. In the ayllu land was distributed according to family size.
- Local administrators reported to over 80 regional-level administrators who, in turn, reported to a governor responsible for each quarter of the empire
- The four governors reported to the supreme Inca ruler in Cuzco.
- To ensure loyalty, the heirs of local rulers were also kept as well-kept prisoners at the Inca capital. The most important political, religious, and military roles within the empire were, then, kept in the hands of the Inca elite, called by the Spanish the 'big ears' because they wore large earspools to indicate their status.

- For tax purposes censuses were taken and populations divided up into groups based on multiples of ten
- As there was no currency in the Inca world, taxes were paid in kind - usually foodstuffs, precious metals, textiles, exotic feathers, dyes, and spondylus shell - but also in labourers who could be shifted about the empire to be used where they were most needed, known as mit'a service.
- Agricultural land and herds were divided into three parts:
  - production for the state religion and the gods
  - for the Inca ruler, and
  - for the farmers own use
- Local communities were also expected to help build and maintain such imperial projects as the road system which stretched across the empire.
- To keep track of all these statistics, the Inca used the quipu, a sophisticated assembly of knots and strings which was also highly transportable and could record decimals up to 10,000.
- The *Quipu* were fringes of coloured strings attached to a horizontal string and made of cotton or llama wool. The hanging strings would contain knots which carried a meaning.
- There were different types of knots such as the single, figure eight and the four turn long knot.
- The position in which the knots were tied, the sequence of the knots and the colour of the string had a particular meaning
- The Incas used the *quipu* as an accounting system to record taxes, keep track of supplies in the storehouses, keep track of livestock, measure parcels of land, record census, as a calendar, keep track of weather and many other uses.



# Cuzco

Cuzco was the religious and administrative centre of the Inca empire and had a population of up to 150,000 at its peak.



The capital was laid out to make it look like a puma, an animal sacred to the Incas. The shape is still recognisable today with the temple complex known as Sacsayhuaman forming the head.

Although the Incas imposed their religion and administration on conquered peoples, extracted tribute, and even moved loyal populations to help integrate new territories into the empire, the Incas also brought certain benefits such as food redistribution in times of environmental disaster, better storage facilities for foodstuffs, work via state-sponsored projects, state-sponsored religious feasts, roads, military assistance and luxury goods, especially art objects enjoyed by the local elite.

# Achievements of the Incas

## Roads and Bridges

- The Incas were great engineers. They built a network of roads. It comprised two north-south roads, one running along the coast and the other inland, along the Andes with many interconnecting links
- Bridges were built connecting roads through rivers and deep canyons. Suspension bridges or rope bridges were built using natural fibres
- The Inca road network covering over 40,000 km allowed the easy movement of armies, administrators, and trade goods.
- Goods were transported across the empire along these roads using llamas and porters (there were no wheeled vehicles)
- The roads had rest stations along their way, and there was a relay system of runners who carried messages up to 240 km in a single day from one settlement to another
- The road network greatly helped the Spanish conquest of the Inca Empire



Zig zag road



Rope bridge

# Agriculture

Basically, each family unit produced its own food. Family units were part of an *allyu* which collectively owned farmland.

Agriculture was a community practice, and farmers worked in small teams of seven or eight, with the men hoeing and women following behind, breaking up clods and sowing seeds. Meanwhile children and young adults were responsible for tending to the family herd of livestock.

Land was worked using simple tools such as a hoe, clod breaker, and foot plough, which consisted of a wooden or bronze pointed pole that was pushed into the ground by placing one's foot on a horizontal bar. Hoe blades were typically made using sharpened cobble stones.

Crops cultivated included: maize, coca, beans, grains, potatoes, sweet potatoes, ulluco, oca, pepper, tomatoes, peanuts, cashews, squash, cucumber, quinoa, gourd, cotton, carob, custard apple, lucuma (egg fruit), guava, and avocado.

Livestock was mainly llama and alpaca herds. These animals were vital to many aspects of Andean life as they provided wool, meat, leather, moveable wealth, transportation - especially for the army, and they were often sacrificed in religious ceremonies.

## Storehouses

- Foodstuffs were stored in storehouses (*qollqa*) which were built in the tens of thousands across the empire
- They were arranged in neat rows and near population centres, large estates, and roadside stations.
- Qollqa were single-roomed stone buildings, either round for storing maize or rectangular for potatoes and tubers.
- They were placed on hillsides to take advantage of cool breezes
- They were designed to maximise the storage time of the perishable goods with which they were filled.
- They had drainage canals, gravel flooring, and ventilation in both the floor and roof in order to keep the interior as cool and dry as possible so that ordinary goods could be stored for up to two years



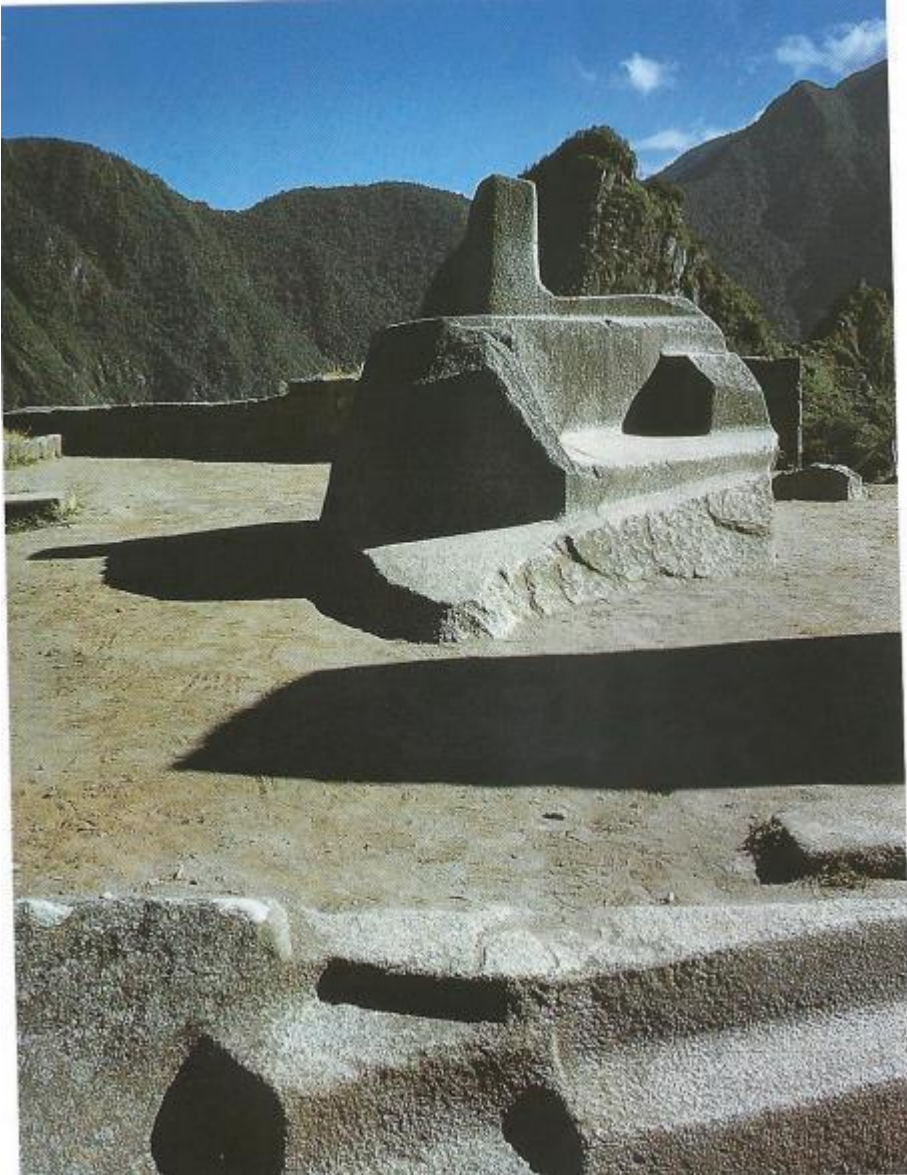
## Inca Architecture

- Inca greatness is reflected in its architectural works
- Numerous sites featuring outstanding Inca construction and design are found all across the Andes
- Many of the most impressive are in the city of Cusco and its surrounding region – the Urubamba Valley also known as The Sacred Valley
- The Inca city of Machu Pichu is the best known
- Other Inca sites we will be looking at to demonstrate their ingenuity are - Inca Pisac, Ollantaytambo and Sacsayhuman
- A major characteristic of Inca architecture is its harmony with the natural surroundings
- Walls and hillsides blend, irregular shapes are left untouched, and natural bedrock makes up the foundations. This aspect reflects the close spiritual connection of the Incas with the Mother Earth

## The Sacred Rock at Machu Pichu



This giant flat stone takes on the same shape as the mountain Putucusi that looms behind it. The small square in front of it may have been where poetry and music recitals took place



The profile of the Intiwatana “sun stone” at Machu Picchu resembles the peak of the mountain behind, confirming once again the relationship of Inca architecture with the natural environment.

- The Incas were skilled stonemasons
- They used granite or limestone to build their finest structures – religious temples, large buildings, walls and fortifications in their cities. These materials were available from local quarries
- To cut the rocks they used stones, metal tools made of bronze or copper, pieces of wood and water. Using the natural fracture lines of the stones they used tools to crack them open introducing pieces of wood and then pouring water so that the wood would expand, as the crack becomes bigger they would insert a bigger piece of wood and repeat the process until the piece was completely separated
- Many of the stones used to build weighed more than 50 tonnes. They were moved from the quarries in their rough state to their destination, often hill top cities, by hundreds of men using ropes, and tree trunks as axles and sticks as levers pulling and pushing the heavy rocks up the steep mountain side. The wheel was not known

# The High Priests House and Quarry At Machu Picchu



Some of the stones to build Machu Picchu were taken from the quarry. Sometimes to break the rocks they poured water into holes; during the night the water froze and with the sun the next day there was a pressure that split the rock to enable them to carve it with greater precision. All stones were transported by humans. The Incas did not know of the wheel.



# Inca Stone tools



# Examples of Inca Blockwork



This uncompleted Temple of the Sun at Ollantayambo holds the wall of the Six Monoliths. Each stone weighs 50 tonnes and were brought from a nearby quarry



- Next, the stones were shaped into rectangles or polygons by pounding them and then polishing them with sand. Each stone was shaped with precision as they had to fit perfectly with each other
- Structures were built with a technique called **ashlar**. The perfectly cut stones fit together without mortar. Remarkably, not even a piece of paper can fit in between two stones
- The Inca refrained from using mortar because the loose fitting was more resistant to earthquakes and the whole Urubamba Valley was prone to experiencing them
- Most Inca buildings were rectangular, had a single entrance and only one room
- The walls were usually slanted, with rounded corners. This aided stability in earthquake prone areas
- The roofs were steep (about 60 degrees) as it rained a lot. They were usually made of thatch from grasses or reeds placed on poles made of wood or cane. The poles were tied together using rope and fixed to the stone walls using stone pegs which protruded from them. These pegs could be fitted into the wall or carved from one of the blocks, they could be circular or square.
- If the building had windows they were usually trapezoid
- These rectangular buildings could be grouped in threes (or more) and arranged around an open but walled courtyard or patio. This mini-complex is known as a **kancha** and functioned as administrative buildings, workshops, temples, accommodation or a mix of these
- Very large buildings known as a **kallanka** usually had several doors and faced a large open space that was often used for public gatherings and accommodation for the Inca administration

A common house in the residential area of Machu Picchu. Note the inward leaning walls.



## Kallanka Buildings



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