El Gran Camino Inka

1

The Great Inka Road

Engineering an Empire

Tawantinsuyu
The Inka Empire

The Inka called their empire Tawantinsuyu, which means “the united four regions.” During its heyday, this empire included the major western parts of South America.

“The entire road is a single system ... handmade and interrupted by mountains and slopes ... it is one of the greatest constructions the world has ever seen.”

-Miguel de Estete, Noticia del Perú (Account of Perú), 1535. (Originally in Spanish)

“Building the 45.000 miles of the United States interstate highway system that unites our nation and powers our economy took 40 years and $425 billion. Five hundred years earlier, a large empire was unified by a 24,000-mile web of roads constructed without the benefit of either iron or the wheel. Today, there are indigenous people of South America still using some parts of this engineering marvel: The Inka Road.”

-G. Wayne Clough, Emeritus Secretary of The Smithsonian Institution, 2011

Ancestros Dinastia

Ancestors

The Beginning of the Road

The antiquity of the Inka Road is part of Andean civilizational history. It developed along with urbanism, temple building, and the expansion of the Chavín culture (1000 BC – 100 AD) in the first millennia before the Christian era. The evolution continued with the Andean empires of Tiwanaku (400 – 1000 AD), Wari (600 - 1100 AD), and Chimú (1100 – 1400 AD), among the most emblematic cultures.

“A long time before Inka reign, there were, in those areas, giant people as tall as shown on figures sculpted in the rocks.”

-Pedro de Cieza de León, Chronicler of Perú, 1553

Temple of Tiqzi Wiracocha
Raqchi, Perú
Photo by Doug McMains

The vestiges of the central wall are all that remains of the temple dedicated to the creation God. The size of the original structure is estimated to be 12 meters (39 ft.) in height.

Dinastía Inka

3

The Inka Dynasty

For Andean peoples both past and present, the Qhapaq Ñan (Inka Road) is not just a road but also symbolizes a spiritual connection with the universe. It shares the same divine essence with the Pachamama- the sacred Mother Earth.

Tiqzi Wiracocha, The Creator

For the ancient Andean peoples, the God of the universe was Tiqzi Wiracocha. He created Inti (Father Sun), the Mamaquilla (Mother Moon), the stars, the plants, the animals and humans. He also depicted the first routes of the Qhapaq Ñan.

Photo (top)

Wetlands of Lake Titicaca
Lake Titicaca, Perú
Photo by Doug McMains, NMAI, 2014

According to Inka creation myth, the first couple emerged from Lake Titicaca's water and began their trip, inaugurating the first Inka Road.

Photo (bottom)

Image of Tiqzi Wiracocha holding two scepters above the Gate of the Sun at Tiwanaku
Tiwanaku, Bolivia
Photo by Wayne Smith, NMAI, 2009

Los Hijos Del Sol

Children of the Sun

4

According to the Inka origin myth, Inti (Father Sun) sent two of his children -Manco Capac and Mama Ocllo- to bring order and civilization to humankind. The couple emerged from Lake Titicaca and set out walking north to found a city. That city was Cusco and the path became the first Inka Road. Manco Capac became the first Shapa Inka, ruler of the Andean people.

Shapa Inka portraits
Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala
(quechua, ca. AD 1535-1616)
La Primera Nueva Crónica y Buen Gobierno, (The First New Chronicle and Good Government) 1615
Royal Library, Copenhagen (GKS 2232 4)

Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, a Quechua noble, was the first native Quechua writer and ethnographer. His illustrated manuscript, La Primera Nueva Crónica y Buen Gobierno (The First New Chronicle and Good Government), was based on natives' testimonies and introduces the history of the Andes. It focuses on Inka government and the drastic changes generated by the Spanish invasion.

Mythic Inka rulers (left)

1) Manco Capac
2) Sinchi Roca
3) Lloque Yupanqui
4) Mayta Capac
5) Capac Yupanqui

Historical Inka rulers (right)

6) Inka Roca
7) Yahuar Huaca
8) Wiracocha (ca. 1410-1438)
9) Pachacutic (1438-1471)
10) Tupac Inka Yupanqui (1471-1493)
11) Huayna Capac (1493-1527)
12) Huáscar (1527-1532) (Without photography)
13) Atahualpa (1532-1533) (Without photography)

Cusco: El Corazón del Universo Inka

Cusco: The Heart of the Inka Universe

"And to think that God has permitted that something so big remain hidden from the world for a long time, unknown by men, and then left to be found, discovered, and won, all in our time!"

-Pedro de Cieza de León, Chronicler of Perú, 1545

Cusco was a sacred city. It was the capital of the Inka empire, the residence of Shapa Inka (the Inca ruler), and the principal religious center. For the Inka, Cusco was the chawpi (center) of both the empire and the universe. From the principal square of Cusco, the roads of Qhapaq Ñan led to the four regions of Tawantinsuyu.

Photo (top)

The Gate of Rumi Colca
Cusco, Perú
Photo by Doug McMains, NMAI, 2014

From this gate, the Qhapaq Ñan leads from Cusco to the Collasuyu region.

Photo (bottom)

Wanakuari
Cusco, Perú
Photo by Ramiro Matos, NMAI, 2011

Vista of the Cusco valley from the Wanakauri slopes. Here Manco Capac and Mama Ocllo stopped their journey, and from this site they founded the

Cusco: Un Laboratorio

Cusco: A Laboratory

A Puma Shaped City

It is said that the city of Cusco has the shape of a puma. The puma symbolizes the earth's power.

The puma's head was the temple of Saqsaywaman. Two rivers outline the body. The principal square, Hawkaypata, was the belly. Elite city residents lived inside the puma silhouette. Everyone else resided outside.

Hanan and Hurin- Up and Down

Cusco was organized in two halves: hanan (up) and hurin (down). Each half was further divided in two. Each quarter was related to one of the four regions of the empire.

Saqsaywaman occupied the puma's head according to the design of Cusco. This temple, dedicated to Inti, the sun, was situated in hanan Cusco (up), in opposition to Qorikancha, the temple of hurin Cusco (down).

The Qorikancha (The Golden Temple) was the religious center of the empire. Dedicated to the sun, it was the most important temple of Tawantinsuyu. Its walls were covered in gold and it was distinguishable throughout the valley of Cusco. From Qorikancha emanated 41 ceques (paths or sacred lines) that connected the temple with wakas (sacred places) throughout the valley.

Map of Cusco (top left) and its administrative sectors
Image by R. Mar and J. A. Beltrán-Caballero. C Smithsonian, NMAI, 2015

Photo (top right)

Convent of Santo Domingo
Cusco, Perú
Photo by Doug McMains, NMAI, 2014

In 1534 AD the Spanish built the convent of Santo Domingo on top of the Qorikancha

Map of Cusco (bottom left) showing hanan and hurin sections of the city
Image by R. Mar and J. A. Beltrán-Caballero. C Smithsonian, NMAI, 2015

Photo (bottom)

View of Saqsaywaman
Saqsaywaman, Cusco, Perú
Photo of Doug McMains, NMAI, 2014

Los Arquitectos Del Imperio

The Architects of the Empire

Between 1438 and 1532, three Inka rulers conducted ambitious military and diplomatic campaigns to expand the territory. The Cusco kingdom thus extended to develop into the Tawantinsuyu empire.

The Inka's purpose was to control resources from subjugated lands as well as to bring order and religion to the entire world, as Inti (the Sun God) had ordered to their ancestor Manco Capac.

Image (left)

Portrait of Pachacutic, 9th Shapa Inka (1438-1471)
Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala
(Quechua, ca. AD 1535-1616)
The First New Chronicle and Good Government, 1615 (Originally in Spanish)
Royal Library, Copenhagen (GKS 2232 4)

Pachacutic means "he who shakes the Earth." He transformed the Inka state and turned Cusco into the center of an extensive empire.

Image (middle)

Portrait of Tupac Inca Yupanqui, 10th Shapa Inka (1471-1493)
Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala
(Quechua, ca. AD 1535-1616)
The First New Chronicle and Good Government, 1615 (Originally in Spanish)
Royal Library, Copenhagen (GKS 2232 4)

Tupac Inka Yupanqui, Pachacutic's son, expanded the empire to the north along the Peruvian and Ecuadorian coasts, and as far north as Pasto, Colombia. He founded the city of Quito (Ecuador) in resemblance to Cusco.

Image (right)

Portrait of Huayna Capac, 11th Shapa Inka (1493-1527)
Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala
(Quechua, ca. AD 1535-1616)
The First New Chronicle and Good Government, 1615 (Originally in Spanish)
Royal Library, Copenhagen (GKS 2232 4)

The empire and the Qhapaq Ñan reached their maximum extension under Huayna Capac. He spent most of his life campaigning in Ecuador, trying to control and pacify rebels in the north, such as the Cañari group. In the middle of the campaign, he died in Tomebamba (Ecuador) from smallpox.

Map (right) depicting the extent of the Inka Empire 1438-1527
Map generated by Daniel G. Cole, Smithsonian Institution, and Nancy Bratton Design based on data extracted from ESRI. com and NaturalEarth.com

Un Camino Para la Integración 8

A Road of Integration

The Tawantinsuyu empire included four regions or suyus characterized by diverse people, geography, and resources. The Qhapaq Ñan, through its roads system, reservoirs, religious spaces, and administrative stations, integrated the suyus into an empire.

To conquer a territory, the Inka used distinct strategies, from war to diplomacy, including marriage alliances. The Inka state supplied security, resources, and services; the conquered communities contributed their loyalty and workforce to the empire.

Who was the road for? For state functionaries. The Shapa Inka (ruler) was considered the son of God. His usage of the Qhapaq Ñan sacralized it. When the Shapa Inka traveled, the Inka state manifested itself in all its splendor. The retainers consisted of hundreds of people, including singers, dancers, guards, warriors, and servants.

What resources characterized each suyu (region)?
North: Agriculture products
East: Coca and medicinal plants
South: Metals and wool
West: Marine resources

Mit'a and Ayni- Tribute by Work and Reciprocity

The mit'a was a form of labor-tribute to the state. Under the Inka government, each family head was required to work for the state annually for a period of time. The work could include agricultural labor, road construction, military service, or other tasks. In return, the state provided food and other resources to its citizens.

Photo (bottom left)

Inka Road with embankments
Near Cusco, Perú
Photo by Doug McMains, NMAI, 2014

The Qhapaq Ñan is an engineering marvel: 40.000 kilometers of roads through plains, jungles, deserts, valleys, and mountains, constructed without help of wheels, iron tools, or large draft animals. The Inka engineers adapted the road design to geography, utilizing local resources and workforce.

Photo (top right)

The Inka Road through arid zones
Jujuy Province, near the Peruvian border with Bolivia and Argentina
Photo by Megan Son and Laurent Granier, 2006

Map of Tawantinsuyu's four regions (middle right)
Map generated by Daniel G. Cole, Smithsonian Institution, and Nancy Bratton Design based on data from ESRI.com and NaturalEarth.com.
Image by R. Mar and J. A. Beltrán-Caballero. C Smithsonian, NMAI, 2015

Photo (bottom right)

An Inka elevated road heading to Pomata
Lake Titicaca, Perú
Photo by Megan Son and Laurent Granier, 2006

Un Camino Para la Religión

A Road for Religion

The cult of Inti, the sun god, was the driving force to the Inka conquest. The Inka assumed the mission of imparting the veneration of Inti to the rest of the world, since the natural resources from the conquered territories provided generous offerings to Inti. The Qhapaq Ñan (Inka Road) ensured that this sacred mission was possible.

The Arybalo Inka

This peculiarly shaped vessel constituted a symbol of the Inka empire. The arybalos can be found in all Inka conquered territories, with regional variations. The largest was used to store chicha (maize beer).

Photo (middle left)

Arybalo Inka, ca. AD 1450-1532
Ceramic, paint
109.2 x 86.4 x 73.7 cm
Lima, Peru (14/5679)
Photo by Ernest Amoroso, NMAI, 2014

Photo (top right)

Ushnu
Caramba, Perú
Photo of Megan Son and Laurent Granier, 2006

Ushnu- Altar of the Sun
The ushnus were stone platforms that served as altars to venerate Inti (Father Sun). The Inka constructed these throughout the empire to confer sacredness upon the conquered territory. From the top platform, a priest would offer a ceremonial drink to Inti.

Photo (bottom left)

Apachetas on the Inka Road
Atacama Desert, north of Chile
Photo by Ramiro Matos, NMAI, 2011

Apachetas (altars) - Offerings for a safe journey
Along the Qhapaq Ñan are sacred spaces or altars called apachetas. They are characterized by small rock mounds. Travelers left offerings to thank the road, the Pachamama (Mother Earth), and the Apus (mountain gods) for protecting them during the journey. Today, Andean people bring objects -rocks, shells, coca, flowers, or small figurines- to leave at the apachetas.

Un Camino Para la Administración

10

A Road for Administration

Qhapaq Ñan means “Lord’s Road.” The road was reserved for state functions. The Inka bureaucracy utilized Qhapaq Ñan to mobilize the workforce, transport raw materials and crops from one area to another part of the empire as well as to satisfy many other state needs, including military campaigns to conquer territories and quell rebellions.

Chaski- Messengers

News was carried quickly along the Qhapaq Ñan. Chaskis (official messengers) carried khipus (a rope/knot system to register information), oral messages, and small parcels throughout the empire. They used a post system, running on foot, interchanging messages and goods in stations called chaskiwasi, set at intervals of approximately 10-15 kilometers.

Khipu- Communications

The Inka did not develop a writing system. In its place, officials utilized the khipu, a system of variously knotted colored ropes. The khipus were used to register data about the census, goods, and people movements throughout the empire, as well as religious and military information. The officials in charge of the khipu were called khipucamayuc.

Image (top left)

A chaski (messenger)
Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala
(quechua, ca. AD 1525-1616)
The First New Chronicle and Good Government, 1615 (Originally in Spanish: La Primera Nueva Crónica y Buen Gobierno)
Royal Library, Copenhagen (GKS 2232 4)

Image (bottom right)

Khipucamayuc
Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala
(Quechua, ca. AD 1535-1616)
The First New Chronicle and Good Government, 1615
Royal Library, Copenhagen (GKS 2232 4)

Chinchaysuyu

11

The Chinchaysuyu was the most extensive of the suyus (regions), as well as the agricultural zone of utmost importance. It encompassed most of the territory that is currently Peru, Ecuador, and much of Colombia. Its geography of great open valleys, deep canyons, raised grasslands, coastal valleys, and deserts presented countless challenges to road construction.

Chinchaysuyu means the route to the Chicha region or Chinchayacocha.

The Chinchaysuyu and the Antisuyu were part of the hanan, or the upper half of the Tawantinsuyu.

The mullu -spiny oyster shell (Spondylus princeps)- was a sacred object, a symbol of water and fertility. It is found only along the north coast of Chinchaysuyu. Its abundance or scarcity predicted the weather for the following 12 months. In times of drought, priests offered mullu to the deities, imploring for rain.

The mullu were found only in warm waters off Ecuador's coast at a depth of 50 meters (165 feet). The procurement of these shells was difficult and dangerous, and they were thus treated as rare and valuable objects.

Photo (bottom left)

Spondylus princeps shell from the collection of the National Museum of the American Indian, Half of the pair, 11/5048
Photo of Ernest Amoroso, NMAI, 2014

Photo (top right)

Quispi Orjo, Vilcanota basin
Cusco region, Perú
Photo by Doug McMains, NMAI, 2014

Map (middle) depicting the extent of the Chinchaysuyu region
Map generated by Daniel G. Cole, Smithsonian Institution, and Nancy Bratton Design based on extracted data from ESRI.com and NaturalEarth.com

Photo (bottom left)

Inka Road bordered by Lake Junín, south Pumpu, a great Inka administrative center
Lake Junín, Perú
Photo by Megan Son and Laurent Granier, 2006

El Puente Colgante Q’eswachaka

12

The Q’eswachaka Suspension Bridge

The Q’eswachaka suspension (hanging) bridge over the Apurímac river in Perú has been in use for 500 years. As it is constructed with grasses, vines, and other perishable materials it has to be maintained periodically. Communities congregate to do this task enlivened by rituals, music, dance, and banquets. Each chaka (bridge) of the Qhapaq Ñan was constructed according to local traditions, using local natural resources and the people’s knowledge.

Q’eswachaka is the name of a hanging bridge, made of ichu (puna grasses), that crosses the Apurímac River in Perú. Q’eswa means tied rope, and chaka means bridge in Quechua. A single rope or q’eswa forms the base for the cables that make up the bridge.

Image (bottom left)

A chakacamayuk (bridge expert/engineer)
Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala (quechua, ca. AD 1535-1616)
The First New Chronicle and Good Government, 1615 (Originally in Spanish: La Primera Nueva Crónica y Buen Gobierno)
Royal Library, Copenhagen (GKS 2232 4)

Image (top left)

Inka suspension bridge over the Pampas River, 1877
Ephraim George Squier (1821-1888)
Perú: Journey Incidents and Exploration of the Land of the Inca. (Originally in Spanish: Perú: Incidentes de Viaje y Exploración de la Tierra de los Incas)
Courtesy of Smithsonian Institution Libraries, Washington, D. C.

Photo (top right)

Q’eswachaka suspension bridge
Q’eswachaka, Apurímac River, Canas Province,
Cusco, Perú
Photo by Doug McMains, NMAI, 2014

Antisuyu

13

The Antisuyu corresponds to the upper basin of the Amazon, characterized by incessant rains, humidity, and tropical forest. This is the ecosystem of medicinal plants, coca plants, exotic birds, and gold mines. Due to the environmental characteristics of the region, disease, and tribal inhabitants, it was difficult for the Inka to conquer.

Antisuyu means the route to the rainforest people's territory

Coca leaf

The coca plant is sacred to Andean peoples; they use it as an offering to the gods and as medicine, to gain energy, or to relieve symptoms related to altitude and other ailments. (Note that coca leaf is not cocaine). The Inka state controlled the production and distribution of coca.

Medicinal plants

Healers collected medicinal plants in the rainforest. One such medicine is quinine, extracted from the quina (cinchona) tree and used in the treatment of malaria.

Photo (left)

White quina (cinchona) trees in flower
Kosñipata valley, high Amazon, Perú
Photo by Samantha Pary Ghayour Mcknew, NMAI, 2013

Photo (bottom left)

Community members of Chawaytiri greet the Apus (mountain deities) with coca leaves
Near Ausangate, Perú
Photo by José Barreiro, NMAI, 2010

Photo (top right)

Qosñipata, Paucartambo
Cusco region, Perú
Photo by Doug McMains, NMAI, 2014

Map showing the extent of the Antisuyu region
Map generated by Daniel G. Cole, Smithsonian Institution, and Nancy Bratton Design based on extracted data from ESRI.com and NaturalEarth.com

Photo (top right)

The Qhapaq Ñan (Inka Road) in the Antisuyu
Near Machu Picchu, Perú
Photo by Ramiro Matos, NMAI, 2012

El Control Del Agua

14

The Control of Water

Machu Picchu was the residence of Pachacutic Inka, constructed on the top of the mountain at the border of Antisuyu. It has survived the centuries due to ingenious water drainage methods. Heavy rainfall between December and March can cause landslides and erosion. The Inka engineers invented ways to channel water, diverting it to where necessary, away from roads and buildings.

Water is a powerful natural force with the capacity to destroy roads and other structures. Inka engineers understood that this threat is especially important in Machu Picchu, where torrential downpours during the rainy season (from October to April) could cause erosion of the land as well as landslides.

With the objective of reducing the water's force, the Inka constructed terraces on mountainous slopes, with a sophisticated drainage system for water control.

Photo (top right)

View of Machu Picchu with Huayna Picchu Mountain
Machu Picchu, Perú
Photo by José Barreiro, NMAI, 2008

Background photo

View of Machu Picchu with Huayna Picchu mountain
Machu Picchu, Perú
Photo by Amy Van Allen, NMAI, 2013

Collasuyu

Collasuyu, the second-largest suyu (region) of the empire, encompassed southern Peru and parts of Bolivia, Argentina, and Chile. Colla means “plateau.” This extensive puna (grassy plateau) was ideal for raising llamas and alpacas. The region was also abundant in salt, potatoes, gold, silver, and copper.

Collasuyu means the route to the collas (plateaus).

Both the Collasuyu and the Contisuyu formed the hurin, or the lower half of Tawantinsuyu.

Metals: Gold, Silver, and Copper

The access to gold and silver mines was one of the main objectives that pushed Inka expansion to Collasuyu. These metals -symbols of the sun and the moon- were sacred, and their use was restricted to religious purposes only. The gold and silver objects were used as offerings or for the clothing of Inka rulers, priests, or royal family members.

Long before the Inkas, Andean cultures had discovered bronze, resulting from the alloy of copper with other metals. The Andean people of Collasuyu perfected an alloy of bronze and tin which was more resistant than iron. The Inkas venerated this metal and they utilized it to fabricate axes and other tools.

Potatoes

Andean people have cultivated potatoes for thousands of years and they domesticated hundreds of suitable varieties for almost any weather. The region of Cochabamba in Bolivia exported enormous quantities of potatoes to all of Tawantinsuyu. The potato sustained the fast-growing population of the empire, even in the face of the failure of other crops

Photo (top left)

The Qhapaq Ñan in the Collasuyu
Between Quehuillani Grande and Tomave, Bolivia
Photo by Megan Son and Laurent Granier, 2006

Photo (top right)

The Raya (mountain range)
Puno, Perú
Photo by Doug McMains, NMAI, 2014

Map depicting the extent of the Collasuyu region
Map generated by Daniel G. Cole, Smithsonian Institution, and Nancy Bratton Design based on data extracted by ESRI.com and NaturalEarth.com

Photo (bottom Right)

Grazing Llamas on a slope
Marcapata, Cusco, Perú
Photo by Doug McMains, NMAI, 2014

Tampus: Albergues Para Viajeros

Tampus: Refuge for Travelers

Travelers on the Qhapaq Ñan could spend the night in way stations called tampus. There were thousands of these shelters scattered along routes across the empire, approximately 20-25 kilometers apart, a day's walking distance

Llamas for Transport

Large herds of llamas and alpacas from Collasuyu supplied wool, meat, and fertilizer, but principally they were means of transport. Especially in the harvest season, the road was crowded with caravans. Before leaving, the animal herd leader was blessed and each llama was decorated.

The llamas are capable of bearing about 40 kilograms (88 lbs.) of cargo. During harvesting, they transported potatoes, corn, cotton, and wool on the Inka Road.

The llamas are not demanding in terms of subsistence. They like a great variety of plants and do not need much water. This means that they can conserve their strength and work hard even in the high mountains and altitudes, where food and water sources are scarce.

The wool of llamas, alpacas, and vicuñas was used to knit a wide variety of textiles. Practically all in Tawantinsuyu, from high-ranking Inkas to workers and soldiers, wore wool clothing.

Photo (bottom left)

Tampu Catarpe
Catarpe, San Pedro de Atacama, Chile
Photo by Ramiro Matos, NMAI, 2011

Photo (top right)

Pariachuco Tampu along the Inka Road
Near Tauli, Perú
Photo by Megan Son and Laurent Gramier, 2006

Photo (top left)

Leader of a llama caravan
Lipez, Bolivia
Photo by Axel E. Nielsen, 1995

Photo (bottom Right)

Tampu Raqchi
Raqchi, Perú
Photo by Doug McMains, NMAI, 2014

Contisuyu

The Contisuyu, the smallest of the four suyus (regions), supplied important marine resources to the Inkas. This region is characterized by impressive ravines rising from sea level, reaching the western Andean heights. Considering its relief of peaks, volcanoes, and gorges, the Contisuyu presented complex challenges to the Inka Road engineers.

Contisuyu means the route to the west.

Marine Resources

The Contisuyu offered Cusco direct access to the sea, and to resources including fish, mollusks, seaweed, and wanu (guano, sea bird excrement used as fertilizer).

Cotton

In the Contisuyu valleys, wild cotton grew and was highly coveted. Strong, thick, resistant, and durable, it was utilized for making durable fabrics, blankets, fishing nets, and ropes. The Inka state closely controlled its production, distribution, and consumption.

Photo (left)

Peruvian Pacific coast
Pueblo Nuevo, Perú
Photo of Doug McMains, NMAI, 2014

Photo (bottom left)

Desert coastal route
Pachacamac, Perú
Photo by Amy Van Allen, NMAI, 2013

Photo (bottom middle)

Upward curve of the Qhapaq Ñan on a slope
Cañón del Colca, Perú
Photo by Doug McMains, NMAI, 2014

Photo (top right)

Mollendo
Cusco Region, Perú
Photo by Doug McMains, NMAI, 2014

Map depicting the Contisuyu region
Map generated by Daniel G. Cole, Smithsonian Institution, and Nancy Bratton Design based on data extracted by ESRI.com and NaturalEarth.com

Photo (bottom Right)

Agricultural terraces
Colca Canyon, Perú
Photo by Doug McMains, NMAI, 2014

Colcas: Los Depósitos del Imperio

18

Colcas: The Empire's Warehouses

Machu Picchu was the residence of Pachacutic Inka, constructed on the top of the mountain at the border of Antisuyu. It has survived the centuries due to ingenious water drainage methods. Heavy rainfall between December and March can cause landslides and erosion. The Inka engineers invented ways to channel water, diverting it to where necessary, away from roads and buildings.

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Photo (top)

Archaeological remains of colcas (storerooms)
Mauqallaqta, Cusco, Perú
Photo by Doug McMains, NMAI, 2014

More than 1.000 colcas are located in Mauqaqta, the largest group known.

Image (bottom)

Colcas (storerooms) and Inka officials
Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala
(Quechua, ca. AD 1535-1616)
The first New Chronicle and Good Government, 1615 (Originally in Spanish: La Primera Nueva Crónica y Buen Gobierno)
Royal Library, Copenhague (GKS 2232 4)

Invasión: El Camino Colonial 19

Invasion: The Colonial Road

“Where before have men seen the things that they have seen here? Where has it been seen or read that so many riches have come from a kingdom?”

-Pedro Cieza de León, Crónica del Perú, 1545 (Originally in Spanish)

When the Spanish arrived in Tawantinsuyu in 1532, the Qhapaq Ñan (Inka Road) offered them easy access to an empire weakened by civil war and the smallpox epidemic. Under the Spanish government, the Qhapaq Ñan soon deteriorated. Although they admired the road, the Spanish did not maintain it or concern themselves with its conservation. Their horses and carriages damaged the paths originally constructed for foot traffic and llamas.

The Spanish invasion led to the destruction of the Inka empire and its infrastructure. The invaders founded European-style cities, imposed a new religion, language, and customs, in an attempt to destroy indigenous traditions. European diseases led to the death of about 80% of the native population. Imported plants and animals from Europe altered the natural and social environments.

Although the Spanish dismantled the Tawantinsuyu and were antagonistic to indigenous beliefs, the Andean people endeavored to keep their traditions alive. They continued speaking Quechua and Aymara, and merged their customs and beliefs with the western ones. The apachetas (altars for offerings for safe travel) survived across the Qhapaq Ñan, commonly in the company of the Catholic cross.

Image (bottom left)

Travels of discovery in the New World
Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala
(quechua, ca. AD 1535-1616)
The First New Chronicle and Good Government, 1615 (Originally in Spanish)
Royal Library, Copenhagen (GKS 2232 4)

Photo (top right)

Indigenous Quechua people at the market in Huancayo, Perú, 1924
Photo by A. Hyatt Verrill (1871-1954)
NMAI N10150

Photo (middle left)

Apachetas (travel altars) of Walla Walla
Near Marcapata, Cusco, Perú
Photo by Ramiro Matos, NMAI, 2011

Photo (bottom Right)

Christian cross in front of the palace of Manco Capac, ca. 1863-1865
Cusco, Perú
Photo by Ephraim George Squier (1821-1888)
NMAI N19013

El Tawantisuyu Today

Tawantinsuyu Today

The road links us to the past

Inka descendants today inhabit Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, and Chile. Many people hold to their languages and traditions, such as the Inti Raymi celebration dedicated to the Sun during the summer solstice on June 21. Ayni (reciprocity) is still practiced and the Qhapaq Ñan is still in use, linking the present and past.

Some sectors of the ancient road have been utilized as the basis for modern highways, such as the Pan American Highway crossing Peru and Chile, and route 40 in Argentina.

One way or another, Tawantinsuyu has affected each one of us; its achievements of 500 years ago have influenced the world we live in. The Spanish came looking for gold, but Tawantinsuyu provided them with other, more important treasures. Andean crops modified the dietary habits of the world. Corn, potato, and quinoa, originally from the Andes, are today cultivated and consumed around the world.

Silver from the Potosí mines (in the Bolivian Andes) turned Spain into the world's richest nation during the 16th and 17th centuries. This wealth fueled further conquest and expeditions across the globe and supported the development of Spanish arts and letters in their "golden age." European history would be very different without the silver from the Andes.

In June 2014, UNESCO declared the Qhapaq Ñan to be a Cultural Heritage of Humanity site, a tribute to Andean peoples and the Inka presence in the world's history.
http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1459

Photo (bottom left)

Saraguro hat maker
Saraguro, Ecuador
Photo by Megan Son and Laurent Granier, 2005

Photo (bottom middle)

Inti Raymi procession
Cusco, Perú
Photo by Doug McMains, NMAI, 2014

Photo (below right)

Dancer in a parade during Inti Raymi festival
Cusco, Perú
Photo by Doug McMains, NMAI, 2014

Photo (top right)

A woman walking on the road along the shore of Lake Titicaca
Near Pomata, Perú
Photo by Megan Son and Laurent Granier, 2006

Photo (below left)

Quinoa plants
Pisac, Perú
Photo by Dan Davis, NMAI, 2014

Map of the Inka Road and the Pan American Highway
Map generated by Daniel G. Cole, Smithsonian Institution, and Nancy Bratton Design based on data extracted from ESRI.com and NaturalEarth.com

Background Photo (Bottom Right)

Modern route near the suspension bridge Q'eswachaka
Canas Province, Perú
Photo by Doug McMains, NMAI, 2014